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Kin, Kith, and Same-Sex Couple Quality

Davis G. Patterson

A dissertation
submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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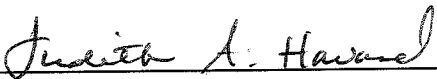
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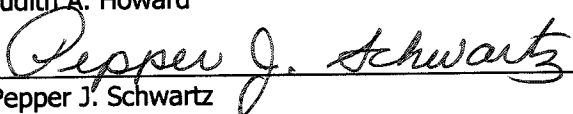
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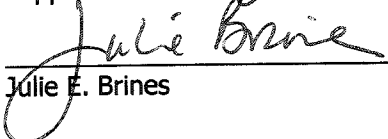
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Abstract

Kin, Kith, and Same-Sex Couple Quality

Davis G. Patterson

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This study maps the social networks of lesbian and gay couples and shows how their networks affect couple relationship quality. Respondents had to be ages 30 to 55 inclusive, living together at least one year, without children, and residing in Washington State. Recruitment of equal numbers of women and men residing equally within Seattle and elsewhere around the state yielded 83 same-sex couples well distributed in these categories. This cross-sectional study combines both quantitative and qualitative data from written questionnaires and intensive interviews completed separately and confidentially by both partners in each couple. Both instruments assessed multiple measures of family and community relations, relationship quality, and sociodemographics. Respondents completed an inventory of associates providing specific types of support—the support exchange network—and enumerated five types of family and close friend groups—the family and friend network. Respondents named a total of 3,662 persons (991 listed by both partners) in their networks. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques, including multiple linear regressions, informed analyses of the impact of gender, geographic location, gay community involvement, and network interactions on several aspects of couple quality, including relative relationship commitment, autonomy, and power; conflict; dyadic adjustment; satisfaction; and perceived stability. Regardless of couple sex, location, or level of gay community involvement, couples' networks looked remarkably similar and had similar impacts on relationship quality. Different aspects of networks played distinct roles in relationship quality. The support exchange network and "chosen families" (consisting primarily of friends) were sources of social support targeting the individual more than the couple. These individual resources had no impact

on positive couple quality indicators but they could decrease one's dependence on the relationship and increase one's relative power within the relationship. Problematic network associates had pervasive negative effects on relationship quality. Immediate families (containing a high proportion of biolegal relatives), overlap between partners' networks, and lesbian support were associated with enhanced relationship satisfaction, adjustment, and perceived stability. The implications for gender, sexual communities, and kinship are considered.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures	ii
List of Tables	iii
Chapter 1: The Couple Relationship: Population Two?	1
Chapter 2: The Study Design	7
Chapter 3: The Participants	16
Chapter 4: Reckoning and Reconciling Family and Friends	40
Chapter 5: Supporters and Detractors	93
Chapter 6: Kin, Kith, and Couple Quality	170
Chapter 7: The Power of Networks.....	239
Bibliography.....	273
Appendix A: Consent Form and Data Collection Instruments	280
Appendix B: Dependent Variables by Couple Sex and Location.....	319

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Number	Page
3.1. Early relationship histories by sex and location	24
3.2. Community size of Partner 1 and Partner 2 samples (in 1,000s)	28
3.3. Annual income of Partner 1 and Partner 2 samples.....	32
4.1. Male associates in family and friend lists	88
4.2. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual associates in family and friend lists	89
4.3. Biolegal and friend associates in family and friend lists	90

LIST OF TABLES

Table Number	Page
3.1. Numbers of couples at each stage of study recruitment	17
3.2. Sample recruitment methods by couple sex and location.....	18
3.3. Sexual identification by couple sex and location.....	22
3.4. Mean age in years by couple sex and location	23
3.5. Socioeconomic status characteristics by couple sex and location.....	29
3.6. Race/ethnicity by couple sex and location	33
3.7. Mean rating of own overall religiosity/spirituality by couple sex and location	34
3.8. Membership in a spiritual or religious belief community by couple sex and location.....	35
3.9. Median number of prior same-sex relationships by couple sex and location	36
3.10. Total individual network associates by couple sex and location	37
3.11. Couple network associates by sex and location.....	38
4.1. Coworkers in individual partners' family and friend networks.....	46
4.2. Neighbors in individual partners' family and friend networks	47
4.3. Members of the same organization in individual partners' family and friend networks	48
4.4. Individual partners' family and friends v. all associates	49
4.5. Individual partners' family and friend associates	50
4.6. Individual partners' family and friend associates by sex and sexual orientation	51
4.7. Individual partners' total family and friend associates by relationship to respondent	52
4.8. Individual partners' immediate family associates by sex and sexual orientation	53
4.9. Individual partners' immediate family associates by relationship to respondent	54
4.10. Individual partners' extended family associates by sex and sexual orientation	61
4.11. Individual partners' extended family associates by relationship to respondent	62
4.12. Individual partners' family of origin associates by sex and sexual orientation.....	66
4.13. Individual partners' family of origin associates by relationship to respondent.....	67
4.14. Individual partners' close friend associates by sex and sexual orientation.....	69
4.15. Individual partners' close friend associates by relationship to respondent.....	70
4.16. Chosen families by couple sex and location	72
4.17. Individual partners' chosen family associates by sex and sexual orientation.....	73
4.18. Individual partners' chosen family associates by relationship to respondent.....	74
4.19. Comparison of chosen families in Weston (1991) and this study	80
4.20. Percentage overlap between lists of family and close friends	91
5.1. Individual partners' total exchange network by sex and location.....	103
5.2. Individual partners' support exchange associates.....	105
5.3. Individual partners' support exchanges by sex and sexual orientation of associates and sex of respondent.....	108
5.4. Individual partners' support exchanges by sex and sexual orientation of associates.....	110
5.5. Relationship of support exchange associates to respondent.....	112

5.6. Support exchange associates: support ties and multiplexity by relationship to respondent	114
5.7. Comparison of exchange networks with family and friend networks	116
5.8. Family and friend: total ties and multiplexity by relationship to respondent	118
5.9. Couple network structural properties	121
5.10. Characteristics of couple network associates	125
5.11. Monogamy, non-monogamy, and infidelity	128
5.12. Gay community involvement: Means and standard deviations	137
5.13. Relations with friends and relatives: Means and standard deviations	144
5.14. Openness about sexual orientation	146
5.15. Reaction to knowledge of one's sexual orientation	147
5.16. Network support for the couple relationship	149
5.17. Relations with friends and relatives: Satisfaction and couple conflict	152
5.18. Couples' disputed associates by sex and sexual orientation	158
5.19. Disputed associates by relationship to respondent	159
6.1. Variable means, standard deviations, and transformations	174
6.2. Dependent variable intra-couple correlations	183
6.3. Independent and dependent variable correlations	189
6.4. Standardized regression coefficients for commitment	206
6.5. Standardized regression coefficients for autonomy from relationship	209
6.6. Standardized regression coefficients for life disruption if relationship ended	210
6.7. Standardized regression coefficients for having a say in important decisions	212
6.8. Standardized regression coefficients for altering habits to please one's partner	214
6.9. Standardized regression coefficients for influence over daily decisions	217
6.10. Standardized regression coefficients for conflict	221
6.11. Standardized regression coefficients for Dyadic Adjustment Scale scores	223
6.12. Standardized regression coefficients for satisfaction	226
6.13. Standardized regression coefficients for expectation of being together in 20 years	228
6.14. Standardized regression coefficients for relationship quality regression models	231

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DEDICATION

To Dennis Sedgely, who helped me find purpose and realize my dreams;
to the couples, who opened their homes and hearts;
and to all who strive against the odds.

Chapter 1

The Couple Relationship: Population Two?

Man drowning his sorrows, to bartender: "My boyfriend is the son my parents always wanted."

—*New Yorker* cartoon (Haefeli 2000)

People look at longer relationships as an entity – they like that we've been together so long. Our friends would feel terrible if we broke up. I wouldn't want to disappoint them, not wanting to fail in their eyes.

—Carmen J., realizing how upset her friends would be if her lesbian relationship ever ended.

I consider Rob's sister's [lesbian] partner to be a member of my extended family, but I'm not sure if she thinks of me the same way. The connection with me might be too tenuous for her.

—Kirk M., reflecting on his relationship with his partner's sister's partner.

All couples are enmeshed in a larger web of relationships. Shakespeare and the Elizabethan audiences viewing *Romeo and Juliet* knew that successful coupling could only occur in the proper social context. Family antagonisms destined the pair to tragedy. More recently, hopeful contestants on "reality" TV shows meet the parents of *The Bachelor* or *The Bachelorette* near the end of each series of dates, reflecting a popular awareness that even modern couples in the United States are not immune to parental influences.

Yet students of intimate relationships frequently forget, or conveniently ignore, that coupling is not simply one plus one; it is a grouping of many. Most scholarship on couples tells the story of "boy meets girl" (or common variations on this theme: "boy and girl marry; boy and girl

divorce”), completely disregarding anyone else. Sociologists in particular, who study “the ways groups influence their members” (Doob 1991:5), should know better.

The opening quotes evoke the multiple ties that partners create with each others’ social groups. We grasp these images immediately either because of our own experiences in couple relationships or because of our ties to others in couples. Our understanding is based on instant familiarity with terms such as “parent,” “sister,” “friend,” and, less familiar to some, “partner.”

Same-sex couples require us to rethink some of those taken-for-granted notions of family relationships. To consider the nature of the relationship between Kirk M. and his male partner’s sister’s female partner stretches us beyond the common cultural categories available to describe such a relationship. Kirk M. himself is hard put to say with certainty just what their connection is. And she may not reciprocate his feeling for her or put him in the same relationship category. “Girl meets girl,” and “boy meets boy,” it turns out, add new twists to age-old questions about relations with friends and family.

WHY SAME-SEX COUPLE NETWORKS?

The couple relationship is an enduring goal for most people, straight and gay alike. The market research firm Overlooked Opinions found in one survey that as many as 75% of lesbians and 60% of gay men were in an on-going intimate relationship of some sort in 1990 (Eskridge 1996). The most recent evidence that coupling remains a potent organizing force in society is the uproar over the issuance of the first marriage licenses for same-sex couples in several U.S. locales in 2004. Those who truly value the institution of marriage have strong feelings about this development. Either same-sex marriage strengthens the entire institution, by allowing it to expand and encompass the commitment of any two consenting adults, or it is the ultimate desecration of a sacrament that should be reserved for one man and one woman. The entrenched positions of people on both sides of this issue indicate that couple relationships touch a deep cultural nerve.

Coupling brings with it a shift in the partners’ social ties. As each partner discards or modifies pre-existing attachments and forges new ones, this reordering of priorities creates a new network of associates for both partners. Families join or tear apart, and friendships consolidate or

atrophy, but rarely do these relationships stay the same as two persons couple (or uncouple: see Vaughan, 1986).

Network ties are relatively understudied in the discipline of couple relationships and in other fields of sociological inquiry as well—a missing link between larger social structures and individual behavior. As we will see, the sorting process of coupling brings both problems and opportunities to same-sex couples, some unique, and others that are not unique, but are more prevalent among them than among other kinds of couples. Same-sex couples allow us to approach the study of networks in novel ways of theoretical and practical interest.

FRIENDS AND FAMILY CIRCLES

All couples are susceptible to opposition from loved ones for any number of reasons; add to the list sexual orientation discrimination against gay and lesbian individuals and couples. This bias, real or perceived, almost certainly accounts for the fact that gays and lesbians receive less social support from families of origin than heterosexuals (Kurdek and Schmitt 1987; Kurdek 1988a). Same-sex couple networks also tend to consist of a smaller proportion of family of origin associates (Julien, Chartrand, and Bégin 1999) than others' networks. When relations with kin or kith are less than congenial, what effect does outright rejection or cool emotional distance have on couples? Research into this question is scant.

The other side to this equation is that people can choose supportive associates and build new networks, though these ties also evolve contingent on social constraints and opportunities. Lesbian and gay people often develop vibrant and extensive networks of loved ones outside biolegal families and communities of origin—accepting straight and gay friends and “chosen” family (Weston 1991; Laird 1996; Slater 1995; Stacey 1996). Weston (1991) argues that chosen families “are capable of validating, marking, and celebrating the boundaries of the gay couple” (p. 238).

If family relationships are not as voluntary as friendship, then the idea of chosen family is truly radical. Yet families of choice are no longer such a novelty, and perhaps they never truly were, nor are they unique to sexual minorities. Lindsey's (1981) popular treatment of the “deliberate family” among both heterosexuals and homosexuals pre-dates Weston's work by ten years. Even earlier, in 1972, Irving proposed the notion of the “relevant family” in debunking the myth of the

isolated (heterosexual) nuclear family, showing that couples are highly interdependent with others, though he did not stretch so far as to include friends in his conception of family. Chosen families also have parallels with “fictive kinship” in African American families (Mays et al. 1998).

The false dichotomy of chosen (friend) as opposed to unchosen (family) ignores the fact that people can and do selectively activate or set limits on all kinds of relationships. Both heterosexual and same-sex couples constantly make choices about whom to engage, how frequently, with what intensity, for what purpose—family or otherwise (Laird 1993), creating their kin “as needed” (Settles 1987:160). What may differentiate some lesbians and gay men from most heterosexuals is the extent to which they consciously refashion kinship without reference to blood or legal criteria, seeking out new relations and “pruning” those contacts to get their needs met. The existence of sexual communities has contributed not only to lesbian and gay political activism (d’Emilio 1983) but also to changes in the way people do family and friendship (Laird 1993).

At the same time, the gay and lesbian communities in which many same-sex couples find each other and their networks have not always been supportive of coupling. Gay communities in the 1970s encouraged a “singles” life, presented alternative partners, and fostered relationship ideologies challenging marital ideals of permanence (Blumstein and Schwartz 1983). Same-sex couples have far greater visibility now, but it is still not clear how much support sexual communities offer their relationships. Some gays and lesbians take a more strategic and ideological approach to family than others, but we do not know much about how their choices, and the environments in which they make their choices, affect couple relationships.

THE GENDER OF NETWORKING

Each partner’s interactions with the couple’s social networks are highly sensitive to the division of household and paid work (Moore 1990). Past research has shown that same-sex partners contribute more equal measures of paid and unpaid labor and income to the relationship (Blumstein and Schwartz 1983; Klawitter 1995). In married couples, kin and friend relations affect marital quality for husbands and wives in different ways (Burger and Milardo 1995), but as more women achieve economic parity with men, and as more same-sex couples become parents, heterosexual and homosexual couples might increasingly come to resemble each other.

But even similarly situated men and women appear to have a different hierarchy of priorities for friendship and kinship: employed women make time for these relationships while men's work and work relationships take priority over other obligations (Cohen 1992; Rubin 1985). Men are consistently less involved with kin than women (Fischer 1982; Fischer et al. 1989; Irving 1972; Komarovsky 1962; Moore 1990; Pugliesi and Shook 1998; Rosenthal 1985) and have fewer friends and non-kin confidants (Irving 1972; Rubin 1985). In addition, women tend to form new friendships throughout their lives, while men's friendships decline with age (Oliker 1989). These differences in the ways friendship and kinship affect married men and women do not tell us whether, if men and women shared similar positions in the social structure, these differences would persist. A study of General Social Survey data by Moore (1990) suggests that some differences between men and women, such as women's greater ties to kin, persist even after controlling for structural variables.

Do these gendered properties of networks carry over into same-sex couple relationships? If so, male and female couples in similar economic and work situations would still look different in the properties of their networks. Green, Bettinger, and Zacks (1996) found greater role flexibility and cohesiveness among same-sex couples than among heterosexual couples, and they speculated that lesbians and gay men are possibly in another, distinct, category (or categories) of gender. If so, they proposed further that male and female gender could somehow be irrelevant to same-sex couples in a multi-category system. If kin-keeping is truly "women's work," what happens when two women are available for the job? Would two men do it differently? Out of a "man's" domain, would they be incompetent? And what about keeping friendships? What special advantages or disadvantages in friendship and family-making does gender confer, if any, on couples with two partners of the same sex?

COUPLING AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

Whether or not gender matters in any systematic way, what effects do network patterns have on couples' lives? How does the integration of each partner with her own and her partner's networks affect couple solidarity? Does the balance of power and dependence within the couple rest on the relative balance of each partner's social contacts and opportunities outside the relationship? Do social network resources confer bargaining power the way financial resources can? Does network support or interference alter couple life in any way, making it more or less desirable and durable?

Gays and lesbians are one case of a more general phenomenon, a conscious approach to building networks of intimates. Couple relationships increasingly require people to question who will count as family, how the new blend will look, and what choices will be made in the creation of family, unlike the old assumption that friends were secondary to the pre-fabricated bundle of roles, obligations, and rewards of the family. How same-sex couples engage and are engaged by their social networks is the subject of this study, which maps the social networks of both men and women in same-sex couples and attempts to assess the consequences of these arrangements for couple life.

Chapter 2

The Study Design

Another study of couple networks, by Julien et al. (1999), lays important groundwork that provides a fruitful point of departure for the present study. I review the study here in detail to show the similarities between their subject and methods of inquiry and my own and to outline the improvements that the present study offers over their work.

Julien et al. examined the social networks and conjugal adjustment of 50 heterosexual, 50 gay male, and 33 lesbian cohabiting couples in Montreal. They assessed the exchange networks of both partners in each couple with a structured interview eliciting the names of associates who performed various support functions (helping with household tasks, sharing leisure pursuits, etc.), using a technique developed by Fischer (1982). They counted the numbers of friends and family named uniquely by each partner and common to both partners. They also counted the numbers of ties with each type of associate. This is a measure of multiplexity, or how many different support functions each associate performed, i.e., the richness of the ties. Finally, they calculated a measure of network overlap, the proportion of joint network members relative to the total number of separate network members identified by either partner. Using these variables they were able to predict the impacts of separate and joint network associates on the adjustment of each type of couple.

They found that gay, lesbian, and married heterosexual couples did not differ in their levels of conjugal adjustment, but they did differ in the structure of their networks and in the effects of network structure on adjustment. Gay and lesbian couples shared a higher proportion of their social networks, composed of a higher proportion of friends, than heterosexual couples. But all types of couples more often named common friends than family members who gave support. Same-sex partners did not, however, have fewer separate kin or more separate friends, nor were their ties more or less multi-stranded, than the separate networks of heterosexuals; i.e., the separate networks of all couples were similarly composed. Lesbian and gay couple networks

showed no differences from each other, but there were differences in the effects of network structure on adjustment in lesbian and gay couples.

The less gay male partners depended on separate friends and joint friends (the less multi-stranded their ties to all friends), the higher their levels of adjustment. For lesbians, the fewer the number of separate friends and the less multi-stranded their ties to separate kin were, the higher their adjustment. Thus separate ties threatened the happiness of both gay and lesbian couples. By comparison, only imbalance in the number of each partner's kin composing the joint network affected heterosexual couples (usually with more of wives' than husbands' kin named jointly), decreasing their adjustment. Network overlap did not affect any type of couple.

Julien and colleagues show that over-involvement with friends disrupts same-sex couples, possibly presenting other attractions and, along with separate kin ties for lesbians, reduces interdependence. Kin support seems to matter more to women regardless of sexual orientation. These results are provocative, but there are significant substantive and methodological differences between their study and this one. This study moves the study of same-sex couples in new directions on several fronts:

- (1) Urban-rural differences in networks and in gay and lesbian life may be substantial, and very few studies look at gays and lesbians outside of large urban settings. This important source of variation is usually completely overlooked, and I therefore included less urban couples in my sample, half of whom lived outside a major city.
- (2) Children are known to change the networks of the couples who have them, by drawing in kin and squeezing out friends (Fischer 1982; Hill 1988), and relationship satisfaction also decreases with children's arrival (Whyte 1990). Children were present to different degrees in all three types of couples that Julien et al. sampled, a flaw in their treatment of both the independent and dependent variables of interest, networks and couple adjustment. As they readily admit, the presence of children could explain the effect of kin imbalance between husbands and wives on adjustment (and the lack of this finding in same-sex couples), given that women and their kin are more involved than husbands and their kin in childrearing. By one estimate, 79% of lesbian couples and 91% of gay male couples did not have children in the late 1980s (Bryant and Demian 1994). More recent data based on Census estimates suggest that 27.5 percent of same-sex couple

households have children under 18 living in the home (Gates and Ost 2004).¹ Same-sex couples with children are without question an important population to study, but I exclude couples with children—whether they live with the parents or not—to eliminate a source of variation in networks and relationship quality that is beyond the scope of this study.

- (3) This study avoids splitting the sample by couple type. Keeping both male and female couples in the same analyses allows direct comparisons between them to investigate explicitly questions of gender and community influences.
- (4) Relationship quality is a property of both couples and individuals, requiring both levels of measurement. Couples are inhabited by individuals, and though partner adjustment scores tend to be highly correlated, in any given couple two partners can have widely discrepant views of the relationship. Julien et al. made the couple the unit of analysis by using couple means and partner difference scores, thus, for example, assigning the same adjustment level to a couple where one partner scored high and the other low as to a couple where both were in the middle. I am not aware of any theoretical basis for this kind of global quality measure or any sound method to combine couple scores, either with the measure I propose to use, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier 1976; see Miller [1991] for a discussion of this restriction), or with any other measure. My statistical analyses will utilize one member of each couple by random selection, including partner variables and appropriate joint properties of the relationship, rather than averaging away qualitative differences between couples with harmonious and discordant views of the relationship.
- (5) Establishing a couple identity presents a special challenge for same-sex couples (Blumstein and Schwartz 1983; Slater 1995), which some of Julien et al.'s results seem to capture (e.g., the salience of separate networks for same-sex couples vs. joint networks for married couples). I seek to explore this issue more directly by assessing multiple aspects of network support for the couple as a couple entity, in addition to looking at individual support exchanges.

¹ This figure was not broken down by sex, but the authors cite other Census Bureau estimates indicating one in three female couples may have children, compared to one in five male couples. They note, however, that these figures did not take account of likely measurement errors that they factor into their 27.5% total estimate. In any case, all population estimates need to be viewed with caution because some couples are probably unwilling to identify themselves as such to the government.

(6) Network studies tend to neglect negative exchanges and hostile ties (Milardo 1988).

Same-sex couples are exposed to blatant and subtle forms of depreciation. I supplement the method of asking only about positive connections with data about negative network exchanges.

(7) Beyond couple adjustment, which is one measure of quality, I plan to investigate how networks affect partners' sense of relationship commitment, autonomy, power, conflict, satisfaction, and durability. These are important relationship qualities that the concept of adjustment alone does not fully capture.

(8) This study examines multiple network properties besides multiplexity and overlap that also likely affect couples, such as sex and sexual orientation composition, and partnership status of network members. Julien et al.'s results, though an important start, do not tell us much about whether different kinds of friends or family matter to couples in different ways.

The network mapping procedure used by Julien et al. and this study allowed respondents to specify more than one type of relationship to a network member (e.g., both friend and coworker). Julien et al. made an *a priori* distinction between immediate family of origin members and all others. If a respondent was a member of both the family of origin and another category, they gave precedent to the family of origin classification, lumping all those who were not immediate family into the friendship category, including co-workers, neighbors, even extended family of origin members. My analytical strategy uses a multi-dimensional classification of network ties.

To their credit, the analysis of networks, with seemingly infinite permutations, quickly becomes unwieldy without the aid of some simplifying assumptions. But the data from the three pilot questionnaires and interviews for this study suggested to the contrary that a two-category classification of social network relationships is inadequate, perhaps more so for lesbians and gays. Therefore, I have developed additional procedures that allow respondents themselves to classify types of family members and friendships and to reflect on their lists of associates in a qualitative way. Using this method, the unique elements of same-sex couple life and community ties are not lost in a strictly quantitative and one-dimensional approach. These extra data about

network members will show whether all friends are equal to all other friends, all family equal to all other family, and in fact, whether the either-or distinction between friends and family is the most meaningful way to think about the personal communities of lesbians and gay men.

In short, unlike past research in this area, this study explores how couples think about friends and family to contextualize what they do with friends and family, and how these patterns affect the quality of the couple relationship in multiple ways. These issues are critical to bear in mind as we consider in detail the questions and methods of this study. The rest of this chapter presents the development and general design of the study.

THE SAMPLING STRATEGY

To be eligible for participation, same-sex couples had to have spent at least one year living together. Sharing a residence changes patterns of couple and network interaction and is likely to signify a higher level of commitment to the relationship and to each other's friend and family networks (Julien et al. 1999). Spending a year or more living together exposes all couples to at least one full round of birthdays, holidays, and other yearly events that bring company together and allow opportunities for couples to identify themselves and be identified as couples.

Participants also had to be age 30 to 55 to capture couples at the stage of life where partners have active work lives before retirement and obligations to older and younger generations—aging parents and the children of loved ones (Fischer 1982). As noted above, couples with children (no matter who had custody or parenting responsibilities, and whether or not the children were from prior or current relationships) were excluded from participation.

To examine community effects, I focused on a significant geographic divide: (1) urban Seattle and its inner suburbs, and (2) suburban areas outside of Seattle and other areas of Washington State. The main principle guiding this sampling strategy was to ensure that not all respondents were inhabitants of or participants in Seattle's urban gay and lesbian communities. Research on gays and lesbians tends to net convenience samples of urban, highly educated, wealthy, and less closeted white respondents. Several characteristics of interest—openness about being gay (Linneman 2003; Lynch 1987), and network composition (Fischer 1982), to name two—vary systematically with locality. Therefore, sample recruitment was targeted to yield equal numbers of couples residing in the city of Seattle and outside of Seattle, around Washington State.

Finally, to investigate the central questions about gender and sexual communities, the sampling strategy sought to obtain roughly equal numbers of male and female couples in each location.

There is no way to obtain a representative sample of gays and lesbians, whether coupled or not. The 2000 U.S. census provides some important clues about the distribution of cohabiting same-sex couples throughout the country (Gates and Ost 2004) but the data rely on the willingness of couples to reveal themselves to a government that many sexual minority persons do not trust with such personal information. Rates of disclosure are likely to vary systematically with location and other characteristics.

Without the possibility of random sampling, this study relied on four main recruitment strategies: "gay pride" and other community gatherings, the Internet, print media, and "snowball" sampling. Clearly, each strategy has problems and advantages. Because no one method is perfect, I hoped that the use of multiple strategies would compensate to some extent for the deficiencies of each. Recruitment through printed media and the Internet is likely to replicate the income, education, and ethnic bias typical of lesbian and gay samples. A special advantage of the Internet is the ability to transcend geographic barriers with the potential to locate couples with little connection to physical lesbian and gay communities.

Snowball sampling has to be conducted carefully in a study of networks. Because network variations are of prime interest, and people's networks tend to consist of those who are similar to themselves, it is important to ensure that different couples do not share too many of the same network members. In smaller communities (in either the geographic or socio-cultural sense), some network overlap across couples may be unavoidable, and indeed, an accurate reflection of the "natural" environment. I paid special attention to the number and type of referrals provided by any one couple to maximize community variation as much as possible.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The data for this study were collected using a written questionnaire followed by an interview. The written questionnaire contained essentially quantitative items, whereas the interviews yielded both quantitative and qualitative data. Descriptions of specific analyses and indicators are introduced in each relevant chapter. Here I describe in general the main features of data collection, including the process of participation and the instruments.

All participants filled out a 202-item confidential questionnaire (the male version is included in Appendix A; pronouns were changed where appropriate in the female version). Respondents were directed not to discuss items with their partners or anyone else until they had returned it. I had no way of knowing whether they followed this instruction, but some mentioned that they had discussed their responses after completing them. Once both partners had sent in questionnaires, I set up a confidential interview with each partner lasting about two hours, usually one after the other in the couple's home (the instrument is in Appendix A). I included in the final sample for analysis only couples where both partners returned questionnaires and completed interviews. I did not provide compensation for returning written questionnaires but offered those who also completed interviews a pair of movie passes, or in some cases \$20 cash or other comparable compensation.² A full breakdown of the participants at each step of study participation is given in the next chapter.

The written questionnaire contained sections about the couple relationship, including multiple relationship quality measures, family and community, and sociodemographic items about the respondent and partner. To compare with other studies and to avoid unnecessary proliferation of measures, the questionnaire used appropriate items already in existence whenever possible. After reviewing instruments used in numerous studies of various types of couples and populations, I drew mostly from items developed by Blumstein and Schwartz (1983) to construct the written questionnaire. Items from other sources and those I designed are noted where relevant.

Most items adopted from Blumstein and Schwartz I used as is, changing a few to reflect possible changes in gay and lesbian life since the 1970s or to suit better the purposes of this study. For example, I modified items about bar activities to ask both men and women the same questions: how frequently they went to any gay or lesbian bar, primarily lesbian bar, primarily gay male bar, and mixed gay and straight bars or clubs. The original questionnaire did not ask anyone about mixed gay and straight bars, of which there are now several in Seattle, and did not ask men about lesbian bar attendance. These changes reflect the greater mixing of men and women and the greater mixing of gay and heterosexual people since the 1970s.

The written questionnaire contained several items measuring aspects of relationship quality, including relative power, dependence, satisfaction, and stability. Spanier's Dyadic Adjustment

² Seven male couples and one female couple refused compensation.

Scale (Spanier 1976) deserves special mention here because it was the source of 33 written items, including the original 32-item scale and one global satisfaction item that was modified to obtain respondent's rating of the partner's degree of relationship happiness.

Following the written instrument, the interview included both highly structured and completely open-ended questions. The interview provided an opportunity to explore in greater depth the issues in the written questionnaire and to elicit detailed information about various types of network members and the nature of their relationships with the respondent and partner.

One partner of a male couple and both partners of a female couple, ranging in age from 35 to 54, pre-tested the instruments. I deliberately chose to pilot the interview first with two persons who had large social networks. My target duration for the interview was two hours, but in general, the larger the network, and the more talkative the respondent, the longer the interview. The first testers' interviews each lasted two and a half hours or more. The final version of the interview was significantly shorter. Most study participants completed interviews within about two hours, ranging from one hour and fifteen minutes to four hours.

Couple relationships can be studied through the eyes of one or both partners in each couple. Collecting data from one partner only is convenient, particularly given the time investment. This method can also capture respondents otherwise missed if the couple cannot coordinate the participation of both partners. This lack of coordination is not likely to be completely random, but related to the subject of study. Couples with one partner who has little time for a social life (let alone a survey about it), or those in troubled relationships, are less likely to get involved when the participation of both partners is required. Furthermore, participants may be more likely to respond with complete candor knowing that the researcher will not be speaking to their partners. These considerations are not trivial, because sampling intact couples in a cross-sectional rather than longitudinal design already effectively eliminates the unhappiest couples who have exited the population by breaking up.

But interviewing only one partner in a couple has the potential to introduce its own biases. The data would tend to reflect just one side of the relationship, and that perspective would come from the partner who is either more gregarious, more self-disclosing, or more at leisure—more available for research in any number of ways—than the other partner.

In piloting the instruments, it became clear that to fully capture couple experiences, particularly certain network properties, I would have to collect data from both partners of each couple. Piloting also prompted some revisions to the instruments, but overall, the testers thought the questions were clear, engaging, and thought-provoking. The next chapter provides an in-depth description of the recruitment process and the participants who became the study sample.

Chapter 3

The Participants

Because this is a study of social networks, and networks played a role in the recruitment of participants, it is worth taking the time to describe in detail study recruitment and the background characteristics of the participants. Couples' social backgrounds are likely to shape their networks and relationships. Education and geographic location, for example, are just two of several documented influences on the social topography of one's networks (Fischer 1982). In reality, however, the direction of influence goes both ways: networks also shape one's education, income, religion, and other "background" characteristics. I treat these sociodemographic characteristics as background to couples' networks and relationships but try to be mindful of the reciprocal feedback between individual and couple identities, social statuses, and group memberships. This chapter, then, tells how the couples and I found each other and what they brought to this study.

STUDY RECRUITMENT

I targeted recruitment at four groups of couples based on sex and location. The recruitment goal was 20 to 25 couples in each of the following categories: women in Seattle, men in Seattle, women in Washington State outside Seattle, and men in Washington State outside Seattle.

I collected data from March 2001 through September 2002. Participation in the study was a two-step process. Both partners had to complete written questionnaires, then separate interviews. These instruments are fully described in the previous chapter and included in Appendix A.

During the course of recruitment, I received contact information for 165 couples, either directly from them or by referral. Many more than this learned about the study in a variety of ways, described later in detail. I sent surveys with postage-paid return envelopes to most couples, while some downloaded copies from the Internet. It is not possible to compute a response rate, since recruitment materials were distributed to both eligible and ineligible persons, and an

unknown number of couples accessed recruitment information and surveys from the recruitment Web site.

Eighty-two couples declined to participate or dropped out before completing both the written questionnaires and interviews. Nearly the same number, 83, participated fully and became the final sample. Table 3.1 details the number of couples at each step of the recruitment process.

Table 3.1. Numbers of couples at each stage of study recruitment

Stage of recruitment	N
Couples who provided their contact information or were referred	165
Declined participation without receiving written questionnaires	(34)
Received written questionnaires by mail or Internet:	131
Neither partner returned a written questionnaire	(17)
One partner only returned a written questionnaire	(3)
Both partners returned written questionnaires	111
Both partners returned written questionnaires, but declined interviews	(28)
Both partners completed written questionnaires and interviews	83

Two-thirds (67.3%) of couples who gave me their contact information or were referred to me completed written questionnaires. Three-quarters of couples (74.8%) who passed the threshold of completing written questionnaires also completed interviews. Of couples who declined or ceased participation, 60% were men and 55% were Seattle residents.¹ Common reasons for not participating included lack of time, illness, and not wanting to be interviewed, but in many cases, no reason was given.

The following comparisons of couples who only returned written questionnaires ("partial participants") with those who also completed interviews (the final sample of "full participants") excludes data from the three written questionnaires returned by only one of the partners. There were 28 partial participants and 83 full participants.

¹ Couple sex could not be determined in one case, and location could not be determined in five cases. Percentages are based on the proportions of the 82 couples for whom sex and location were known.

Partial participants differed from full participants in two ways. More men declined to be interviewed, and partial participants had been together 2.4 years fewer than full participants.² In all other respects the final sample of couples was not significantly different from partial participants: both groups were similar in terms of geographic distribution, community size, residential proximity to other gays and lesbians, overall relationship satisfaction, perceived likelihood of remaining together as a couple, level of disclosure of sexual orientation to others, age, education, and income.

Table 3.2 breaks down the final sample of couples by the principal strategies through which I recruited them. Beginning with the highest yield, a description of each method in order of success follows the table.

Table 3.2. Sample recruitment methods by couple sex and location

Method	<i>Men in Seattle</i>	<i>Women in Seattle</i>	<i>Men outside Seattle</i>	<i>Women outside Seattle</i>	Total
Gay pride events	5	4	12	4	25
Personal contacts	5	6	1	6	18
Print media	4	6		5	15
Other study participants	5	5	2	3	15
Internet sites or listservs	1		4	3	8
Other		1	1		2
Total	20	22	20	21	83

Gay pride events: With the occasional help of some friends and my partner, I recruited participants by approaching strangers at gay pride or other gay community events for two consecutive years in Seattle and in five other locations throughout the state.

Personal contacts: Some participants were friends of friends of mine, or coworkers of friends of mine, but many couples counted in this group were even further removed from my personal acquaintance (a coworker of a friend of a friend).

² The mean length of relationship for full participants was 9.4 years; for partial participants, it was 7.0 years, and the difference was statistically significant. Significant differences in means for continuous variables reported throughout this chapter are based on two-tailed t-tests, $p < .05$.

Print media: I placed ads in gay and lesbian print media (*Lesbian Resource Center Newsletter*, *Tacoma Rainbow Center Newsletter*, *Gay Standard*), the newsletters of more specialized organizations (e.g., the Seattle Men's Chorus *Chorus Quarterly*, distributed to season subscribers and others on the mailing list) and smaller communities, and I left flyers at lesbian and gay resource centers.

Other study participants: Study participants connected me to other couples. The greatest number of other couples recruited through a given couple was three.

Internet sites or listservs: Notable sources of couples included Ruralgay.com, a now-defunct national Web site for rural lesbians and gays, and other local groups of gays and lesbians connected through Internet listservs in areas outside of Seattle.

Other: One couple was unsure of where they had learned of the study, and I recruited another couple in a public establishment where gays and lesbians regularly gathered.

Male couples were easier than female couples to identify in the recruitment process, perhaps because I myself am a man, with less access to women's networks. Women may have been less comfortable with me initially than men were: it is not often that women in same-sex couples are approached by a man to talk about their relationships. But of all potential study subjects identified, it was the men who participated at lower rates than women at each step of the way: men were less likely to complete questionnaires, and even when both partners did return questionnaires, men were less likely to participate in interviews than were women. Finding male couples outside Seattle who were willing to participate in the study was the most challenging part of recruitment, resulting in their disproportionate recruitment through gay pride events. These couples may have been more "out" and willing to be identified publicly than other same-sex couples, especially those outside of Seattle. They may also have been less isolated and more involved in gay communities than other couples in their locales. If so, these sample characteristics may limit what I can say about the effects of being in the closet on networks and relationship quality.

All in all, though the sampling strategy was not perfect, the networks that different couples listed were remarkably unique, with little overlap between them. Very few couples or network members of couples showed up in the networks of other couples, and never more than a few of the same people were listed by different couples. The effort to recruit couples from outside of Seattle also helped to eliminate some of the typical biases of "convenience" samples of gays and lesbians and same-sex couples. This sample is fairly heterogeneous in terms of income, and by design,

geographic location. To a lesser extent, the sample was also diverse in educational attainment. These and other characteristics are discussed in detail in the next section.

Couples often commented that they found interesting the process of reflection in doing the questionnaires and interviews. Both partners of many couples were enthusiastic participants, but it was apparent with some couples from the start that one partner had cajoled the other into participating. Once the process was finished, however, the more reluctant partners often commented that the experience turned out to be less threatening than they had imagined. Despite discomfort at times, the men and women who took part in interviews disclosed intimate details of their relationships with remarkable courage and generosity of spirit.

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

This description of sample characteristics and all subsequent analyses are presented for a randomly selected sample of one partner from each couple. This selection results in two samples, the first arbitrarily designated "Partner 1" and the second, "Partner 2." This strategy has the advantage of being able to replicate statistical analyses in both samples. To set the stage for these replications, this chapter will present the characteristics of both samples in detail. Results in all but the final analysis chapter will usually be presented only for the Partner 1 sample. Reliance on the Partner 1 findings for discussion is for convenience, but significant statistical findings will generally be presented only when they are replicated in both samples. This conservative strategy lends greater strength to the findings.

Sample Criteria

Couples had to meet several criteria to qualify for participation in the study. Most obviously, the couple had to be a same-sex relationship, but this requirement did not necessarily imply a gay or lesbian sexual identity for the individual partners. Both partners had to be ages 30 to 55 inclusive. The couple had to have lived together for at least one year. Roughly equal numbers of male and female couples had to be, in roughly equal numbers, residents of Seattle and residents of Washington State outside of Seattle. Neither partner could have children, whether from a prior or current relationship. This section describes the couples in terms of these criteria for participation.

Subsequent to study recruitment, Gates and Ost (2004) created the *Gay and Lesbian Atlas* using U.S. Census 2000 data on same-sex couples, including state-by-state maps and statistics. Same-

sex couples were able to identify themselves as unmarried partners in the Census (see Black et al. [2000] for a discussion of the methodological challenges in using these data). Fortuitously, the existence of these data thus allows some general comparisons to the population of same-sex couples enumerated by the Census.

Out of all states, Washington had the third highest overall concentration of same-sex couples in 2000 (Gates and Ost 2004). Though available data in the *Atlas* do not include absolute numbers of same-sex couples by county or census tract throughout the state, census tract maps of relative concentration both confirm and challenge the prevailing view of Seattle as the gay collectivity in Washington. The concentration of same-sex couples is very high in King County, where Seattle is located, but high or very high concentrations can also be found in a number of unexpected places,³ including the rural part of Whatcom County on the northern border with Canada; a census tract in Adams County whose largest town is Othello, an agricultural community whose largely Hispanic population was just under 6,000 in the year 2000 (Washington State Office of Financial Management 2004); and part of rural Lincoln County (west of and adjacent to Spokane County in Eastern Washington) with a total 2000 population of about 10,000 and whose largest town of Davenport had a population of 1,730 (Washington State Office of Financial Management 2004).

County maps also confirm what many suspected: lesbian couples are less concentrated in Seattle and King County than gay male couples, with notable enclaves in Olympia, the state capitol, and the Olympic Peninsula region. Though it is impossible to compare the distributions with precision, my sample roughly follows this pattern: men in Seattle lived nearer to the gay neighborhood of Capitol Hill than women, while men outside Seattle lived farther from gay neighborhoods than the women did.⁴

The split between male and female couples in Washington exactly mirrors the 48%-52% split in this sample. Seventy-eight percent of same-sex couples had no children living in the household with them, but the true number of couples where neither partner has parenting responsibilities (whether co-resident with children or not) is likely to be lower. Seventy-nine percent of persons

³ That is, unexpected to the urbanites among us with limited knowledge of these communities.

⁴ Based on an analysis of variance of travel times and *post hoc* comparisons between the four types of couples (based on Least Significant Differences, $p < .05$), $F = 14.73$, $p < .001$. Abbreviations used for the four types of couples in notes are as follows: Men in Seattle (MS), Women in Seattle (WS), Men outside Seattle (MO), Women outside Seattle (WO). Mean travel times for each group were as follows: MS = .14 hours; WS = .20 hours; MO = 1.74 hours; WS = 1.42 hours.

in same-sex couples were ages 25 to 54 (the cutoff at age 30, the lower limit in this sample, was not available from the analysis by Gates and Ost [2004]). Thus a large proportion of same-sex couples in the state were eligible for participation in the study, though of course the results should not be taken as representative of the same-sex couple population sampled. With a high concentration of same-sex couples overall, Washington's population may not be representative of same-sex couples nationally. These limitations must be borne in mind, but the inclusion of couples outside of Seattle helps to correct the urban bias of most research on sexual minorities and same-sex couples.

Sexual identification. This study uses the terms "same-sex" and "gay and lesbian" interchangeably to refer to romantic relationships and couples composed of two people of the same sex. Although "gay" can also be a generic term for both men and women, it is most often used for relationships between two men; "lesbian" for relationships between two women. These terms of reference for couple relationships are convenient, but they are not always accurate when referring to the individuals in a couple. For example, a lesbian couple may consist not of two lesbians, but of a lesbian and a bisexual woman.

Study participants were asked an open-ended question about their sexual identities, without pre-determined categories. Table 3.3 shows how the two samples compared in terms of sexual identification.

Table 3.3. Sexual identification by couple sex and location

Sexual identification	<i>Men in Seattle</i>		<i>Women in Seattle</i>		<i>Men outside Seattle</i>		<i>Women outside Seattle</i>	
	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2
Gay	19	18		2	20	19		4
Lesbian			19	19			20	14
Bisexual		1	3	1		1	1	2
Queer	1							
No label		1						1
Total	20	20	22	22	20	20	21	21

Most of the study participants did identify as gay men and lesbians, but 5% of all men did not identify primarily as gay; 16% of all women did not identify primarily as lesbian. Further probing revealed that most of these respondents did not reject the label of "gay" or "lesbian," but that identity was secondary to another. Seven women and two men identified as bisexual. Six women identified more as "gay" than "lesbian." One man identified as "queer." One man and one woman resisted labeling of any kind. The greater variation in sexual identities among women in this sample is similar to the findings of other research (Rust 2000).

Age. As required for inclusion in the study, participants ranged in age from 30 to 55. Table 3.4 shows the ages of respondents for the four couple sex and location subgroups in Partner 1 and Partner 2 samples. Respondents in the Partner 1 sample ranged in age from a mean of 40.0 years for men outside Seattle to 42.7 years for women outside Seattle. Partner 1 respondents did not differ significantly in age by couple sex and location. The spread among Partner 2 respondents was wider. The low mean was for men in Seattle at 38.9 years, up to a high of 44.7 years for women outside Seattle. Women as a group in the Partner 2 sample were more than three years older than men on average.⁵ Women in the Partner 1 sample were also slightly older than men, but the difference was only statistically significant among Partner 2 respondents.

Table 3.4. Mean age in years by couple sex and location

<i>Men in Seattle N = 20</i>		<i>Women in Seattle N = 22</i>		<i>Men outside Seattle N = 20</i>		<i>Women outside Seattle N = 21</i>	
Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2
41.2	38.9	41.9	42.9	40.0	41.8	42.7	44.7

Relationship length. At the time of data collection no same-sex couple could legally marry. Even with same-sex civil unions in Vermont since 2000 and legal marriage in Massachusetts since 2004, legal unions and even non-legal union ceremonies still remain somewhat of a novelty for same-sex couples. Same-sex couples have never had standard markers of relationship stages. For these reasons, relationship length can be measured in a variety of ways, depending on which event signifies the start of which relationship stage.

Every couple in this study had to have lived together for at least one year prior to study

⁵ Partner 2 women's total mean age was 43.74; men's total mean age was 40.35 ($t = 2.32$, $p < .05$).

participation. Respondents were asked to provide four time points in their relationship trajectory: how long ago they had met, started “going out,” first considered themselves a couple, and began living together. There were minor discrepancies between partners in the same couple regarding the relationship’s exact trajectory, but overall, perceptions between partners were extremely consistent. For simplicity, results are reported for Partner 1 only.

Some of the couples had been together just one year, but others had been together for more than 27 years. Figure 3.1 shows the early relationship trajectories of couples by sex and location. Mean values for time since meeting and time since the partners considered themselves a couple are labeled for each couple type.

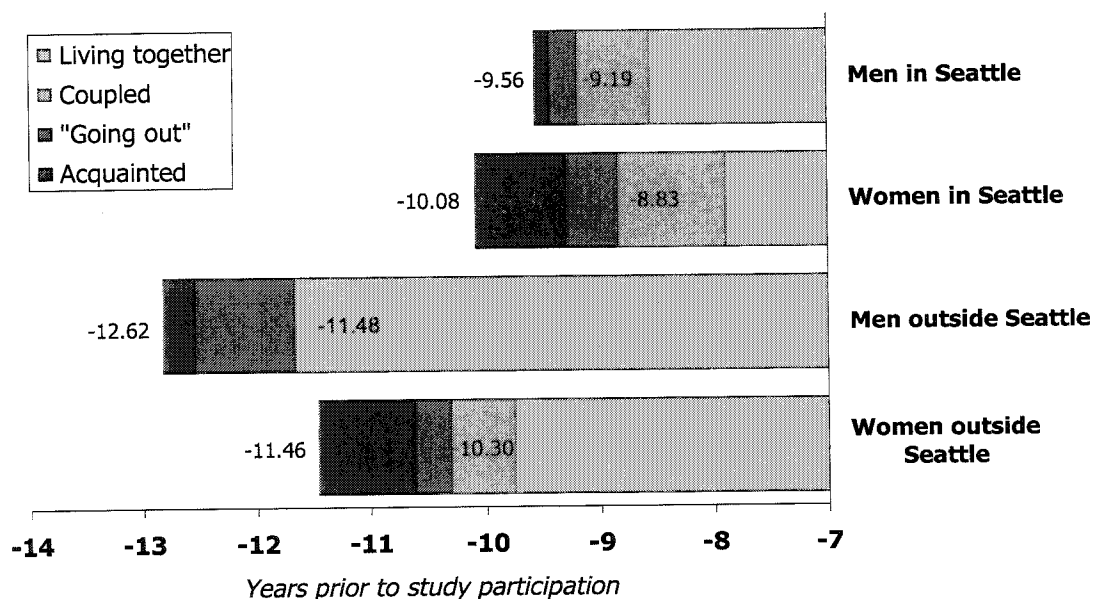


Figure 3.1. Early relationship histories by sex and location

Men were quicker than women to start “going out” after meeting.⁶ Men also spent less time between meeting and moving in together, by a year.⁷ These results call into question the widely-

⁶ The mean time between meeting and “going out together” for all men was 0.20 years; for all women it was 0.81 years ($t = 2.13, p < .05$).

⁷ The mean time between meeting and moving in together for men was 0.98 years; for all women it was 1.96 years. This difference approached significance for the Partner 1 sample ($t = 1.97, p = .05$), and was

held belief that women enter relationships and move in more quickly than men.⁸ Yet the patterns are consistent with other common images of gay men and lesbians. Lesbian friendship communities offer women the opportunity to know each other first before beginning a courtship. In contrast, men often meet in sexualized environments or get sexual quickly, which may then jump start the emotional aspects of courtship.

Respondents in Seattle reported considering themselves a couple for 9.00 years, spending 8.21 of those years living together. Outside of Seattle the means were 10.88 years and 10.69 years respectively. Thus Seattle couples moved in together after about nine and one half months of being a couple, on average, while couples outside Seattle moved in together much more quickly, after about two months and a week. Though differences in time living together approached significance in both samples, none of these differences were statistically significant.

Note that for men outside Seattle, Figure 3.1 shows no period of time between when they started "going out" and when they moved in together: they appear to have skipped the stage of considering themselves a couple entirely. In fact, these men on average spent 2.4 months living together while they were "going out" before the time that they actually reported considering themselves a couple. This effect is due entirely to a reversal of this part of the courtship process for two of the twenty couples in this group. One of these couples lived together for eight years and two months before considering themselves a couple, while the other spent nine months in this situation. They were not the only couples in the sample who lived together before becoming a couple, but they were the only ones where the time difference was large enough to significantly affect the means on these items. This phenomenon indicates that the amount of time spent living together is less meaningful as a standard metric of relationship length than the time since partners first considered themselves a couple. Entering into a relationship with someone is thus more clearly marked for the participants by cognitive and emotional events than by concrete or tangible circumstances.

It could be argued that partners would have more discrepant memories and perceptions about when they first considered themselves a couple, given the very ambiguity of same-sex couple courtship described above, than they would pinpointing the date that they moved in together. On

significant for Partner 2, where the mean time for men was also 0.98 and for women was 2.13 years ($t = 2.24, p < .05$).

⁸ Reflected in this joke about lesbian dating: Question: What do lesbians bring on their second date? Answer: A U-Haul.

the other hand, joining households is not always an event that takes place on one moving day. It can be a process that extends over weeks, months, perhaps even years. Which of these two questions yields answers from both partners that match most consistently? In fact, both items correlate nearly perfectly between partners, each with a Pearson coefficient of .99.

But because living together does not always mean couplehood, relationship length will be measured in all subsequent analyses as the time since partners first considered themselves a couple. Based on this standard, men had longer relationships than women within each geographic grouping. Men had been coupled an average of 10.34 years, compared to women's average of 9.55 years. This difference in length of relationship, however, was only statistically significant in the Partner 2 sample when controlling for age.

Community location and size. The geographic and political boundaries of the community where one resides have profound implications for one's social circumstances. Couples were intentionally recruited in roughly equal numbers by residence either in Seattle or outside Seattle around the state. The dividing line between these two subsamples was Seattle's geographic city limit. This method of sampling and categorizing couples, though not perfect, was not arbitrary. Dividing the sample in this way was more than a crude attempt at approximating more urban and less urban areas, both in a general population demography sense and also in terms of gay community. While Seattle is decidedly the most urban of environments in Washington, the rest of the state has both rural and urban areas. But the conditions and opportunities that same-sex couples face in Seattle are distinct from those of other parts of the state.

Seattle is the largest center of lesbian and gay community in the Northwest region of the United States. One of the aims of this study was to find out if and how same-sex couples' lives varied with proximity to this community, and what the tradeoffs were. Seattle is not the only city in Washington that offers domestic partnership benefits, but lesbians and gays also perceive its climate as more hospitable to them than do those living elsewhere (see, for example, comprehensive documentation by Linneman [2003] of the distinct social and political climates of Seattle and Spokane). There are few, if any, places in Washington outside Seattle where many same-sex couples feel comfortable showing affection in public on any day of the year, not just in the comfort and safety in numbers of a gay pride event. At the same time, gay community is not the sole province of the big city, and the beauty of the natural settings surrounding some couples' homes was the most visible of many potential rewards of living outside Seattle.

A handful of the couples recruited from outside Seattle resided in communities that either immediately bordered Seattle or were close to Portland, Oregon, another city with sizeable lesbian and gay communities.⁹ These couples may represent an in-between status combining all the trappings of suburban life with fairly easy access to urban gay places and gay culture when desired. But most of the couples in the sample resided either within a comfortable distance of Seattle or a comfortable distance away. I computed distance to gay community as travel time to Seattle's Capitol Hill (or to Portland's Burnside Triangle neighborhood for a small handful of couples).¹⁰ Seattle couples lived an average of ten minutes from Capitol Hill, while couples outside Seattle lived an average of one hour, thirty-five minutes from either Capitol Hill or the Burnside Triangle in Portland.

I obtained a finer-grained description of couples' communities by asking about community size. Respondents chose the best of seven descriptors of the community where they currently lived, ranging in size from a rural farm to a large city or metropolis with a population greater than 500,000. This item measured both perceptions of population and type of community.

Respondents' perceptions did not correlate perfectly with the actual population within the political boundaries of the community of residence, but they came close. As expected, those within the city limits of Seattle perceived their community size as significantly larger than those outside of Seattle. The vast majority of Seattle residents viewed their community as a large city with more than half a million inhabitants, a perception that corresponds to census data (Washington State Office of Financial Management 2004). Everyone in communities bordering Seattle perceived their communities as no larger than half that size (ranging from small town of less than 50,000 to small city or large suburb of 100,000-249,000). With one exception, no respondents outside the Seattle city limits perceived that their community was a large city or metropolis of greater than 500,000 inhabitants.¹¹

⁹ Communities in Washington immediately across the Columbia River from Portland, Oregon are often thought of as part of a greater Portland, Oregon/Vancouver, Washington metropolitan area.

¹⁰ I calculated distance using the mapping Web site Mapquest.com. Travel time was preferable to road distance in miles to reflect practical access to gay community. Time takes account of traffic and unique features of Washington State, such as extensive travel by ferry to and from the Olympic Peninsula and islands in Puget Sound, areas that are not physically distant from Seattle but far in terms of time.

¹¹ One resident of Tacoma chose "large city or metropolis," but Tacoma's true size was actually two steps on the scale below that size. Tacoma's population in 2000 was 193,556, compared to Seattle's population of 563,376, about three times as large (Washington State Office of Financial Management 2004).

Those residing outside of Seattle came from a wide range of communities. The responses on this item were highly similar for the Partner 1 and Partner 2 samples, as Figure 3.2 illustrates. The median community size for men outside Seattle was a small city (100,000-249,999); for women, it was a medium-sized town or suburb (50,000 to 99,999).¹²

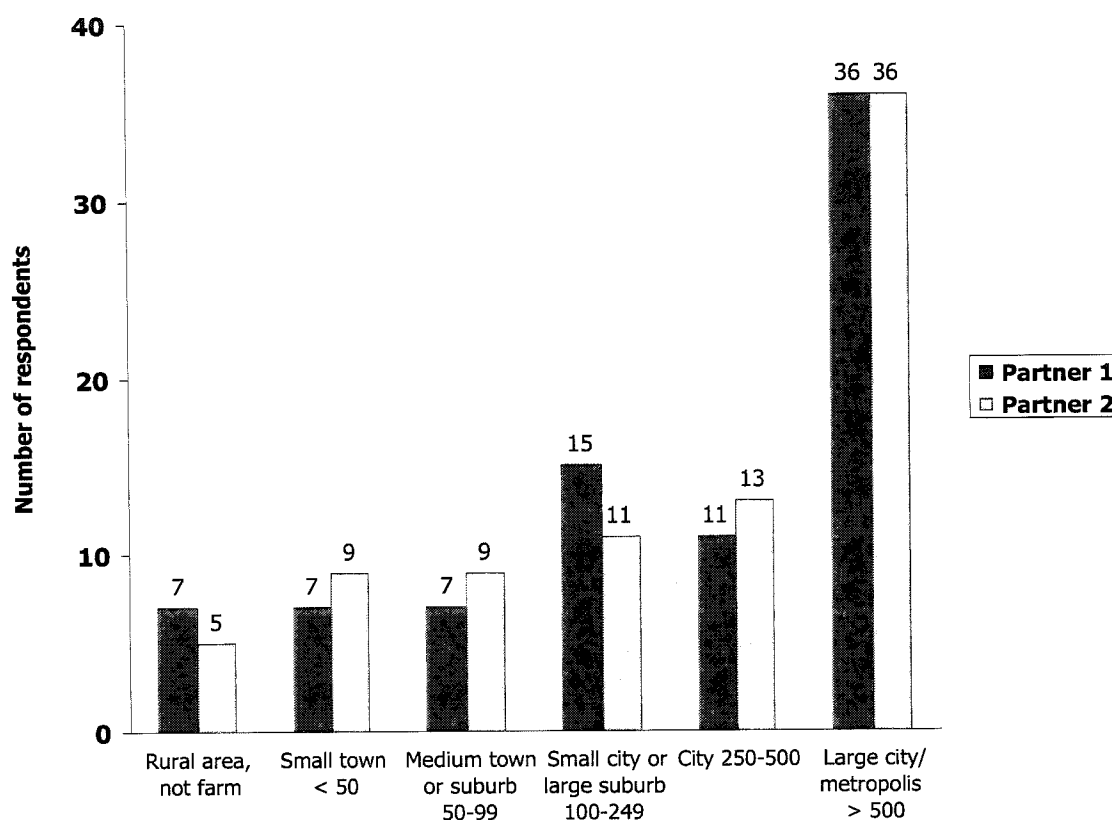


Figure 3.2. Community Size of Partner 1 and Partner 2 Samples (in 1,000s)

Looked at both empirically—in terms of respondents' own perceptions of community size—and theoretically—in terms of lesbian and gay environments—the Seattle city boundary probably does represent a meaningful distinction that can be used to create two groups of couples for analysis, as was hoped for in the sampling strategy. At the same time, there is considerable variation within each group, particularly between couples outside Seattle, but even between couples in Seattle, a city of distinct neighborhoods. To aid in the analysis, when appropriate, I also use the

¹² With 1 representing a "farm" and 7 representing "large city or metropolis," the mean for Seattle couples was 6.86; for couples outside Seattle, the mean was 4.10 ($t = 12.95$, $p < .001$).

measure of travel time to Seattle, in addition other measures of gay community immersion introduced later.

One final point about community: I did not ask respondents about their communities of origin. Because of the great geographic mobility of the U.S. population, this is a question that for many people does not have an easy, straightforward answer. This question is one of many that I would like to have asked, but given the already lengthy interview, ultimately decided was beyond the scope of the study. This study is fundamentally a snapshot of couples' lives in one time and place.

Socioeconomic Status: Education, Employment, and Income

Table 3.5 presents the socioeconomic status characteristics—education, employment, and income—for both Partner 1 and Partner 2 samples:

Table 3.5. Socioeconomic status characteristics by couple sex and location

Characteristic	<i>Men in Seattle</i> N = 20		<i>Women in Seattle</i> N = 22		<i>Men outside Seattle</i> N = 20		<i>Women outside Seattle</i> N = 21	
	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2
Mean years of education (16 = bachelor's degree)	16.0	16.2	16.5	16.6	15.0	15.5	15.7	15.2
Employment status:								
Full time	17	17	17	14	16	15	13	14
Part time	2	3	3	8	3	3	8	3
Not employed	1		2		1	2		4
Median individual annual income (estimated)	\$65,000	\$45,000	\$45,000	\$35,000	\$45,000	\$45,000	\$35,000	\$25,000
Median household income (estimated)	\$115,000		\$90,000		\$95,000		\$70,000	

Education. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 28% of Washington residents age 25 or higher had at least a bachelor's degree (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2004b). The study couples as a whole are a highly educated group of people. Seventy-three percent of both samples, or more than two-and-a-half times as many as in the state population figure, had bachelor's degrees or

higher. In general, Seattle respondents had more education than those outside of Seattle, by about a year to a year and a half.¹³

Employment status. Employment was categorized as full-time, part-time, and unemployed. The unemployed category included those seeking and not seeking employment, for example, those who were actively looking for work, those temporarily unemployed due to illness or those who were retired.

The vast majority of the sample consisted of dual-earner couples, and a majority of respondents in each of the four subgroups were employed full-time. Partner 1 respondents showed no differences in the level of employment by sex or location. In the Partner 2 sample, none of the Seattle respondents were unemployed, compared to six (15%) of those outside Seattle. This difference was statistically significant.¹⁴

Income. Although not all same-sex couples pool their income, it was clear from visiting couples in their homes that the standard of living of individuals tended to be a function of the combined incomes of both partners or the income of the higher-earning partner. This was most obvious in several couples where low-earning or non-earning partners were paired with high-earning partners. These couples' basic living conditions—the kind of house and neighborhood they lived in—usually reflected the buying power of the higher-income partner. Carrington's research (1999) on "lesbigay" families found that the ability to create family depended on socioeconomic status. Like networks, socioeconomic status is both an individual and a couple-level phenomenon, and both levels of income may have distinct effects on networks and couple quality. For this reason, the analyses in this study will examine the effects of both partners' incomes on relationship quality.

Income was measured with nine response categories ranging from one (\$0-9,999) to nine (\$80,000 and up). Income scores for individuals and couples are based on ranges and therefore

¹³ Based on an analysis of variance and *post hoc* comparisons between the four types of couples (based on Least Significant Differences, $p < .05$). In the Partner 1 sample, MS and WS had significantly more education—a year to a year and a half—than MO, but not more than WO ($F = 3.56$, $p < .05$). In the Partner 2 sample, MS and WS had significantly more education by about a year than WO ($F = 3.63$, $p < .05$). WS also had significantly more education than MO.

¹⁴ In the Partner 2 sample only, Seattle respondents reported higher levels of employment than those outside Seattle (Pearson chi-square = 7.53; $p < .05$). Throughout this chapter, significant differences in distributions on categorical are tested with Chi-square statistics using two-tailed tests at the .05 level of significance.

not exact. Precise dollar figures given in Table 3.5 are estimated based on the mid-points of each value's range.¹⁵

Total Couple Income

Not surprisingly, both sex and location made a difference in couples' incomes. Men in Seattle earned significantly more than all other types of couples, and women in Seattle earned significantly more than women outside Seattle.¹⁶

To put couples' incomes in context, the median 1999 household income in Washington, according to the 2000 U.S. Census, was \$45,776 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2004a). Male full-time workers in Washington earned a median annual income of \$40,687; female full-time workers earned \$30,021. Median household income for all male couples was \$100,000; for all female couples, \$80,000. Even considering the fact that both partners were employed in most of the couples, the individual income data that follow show that overall this is a high income sample.

Individual Incomes

The two partner samples differed more on income than on any other characteristic. Partner 1 incomes were significantly higher than those of Partner 2 by about \$10,000 a year.¹⁷ This difference was largest between male partners in Seattle, where Partner 1 earned significantly more than Partner 2 by about \$20,000. Partner 1 incomes were higher than those of Partner 2 in the other three subgroups, but not significantly so.¹⁸ As Figure 3.3 shows, although the income levels differed between partners in each sample, the income gradient across the four groups is similar in both samples, from highest among men in Seattle to lowest among women outside Seattle:

¹⁵ For example, the precise dollar amount assigned to a respondent choosing the \$0-9,999 category is \$5,000. For the "\$80,000 and up" category, a value of \$85,000 is used, which is likely an underestimate, since the upper bound is unknown. This underestimate is also likely to affect values for total household income where one or both partners are in this top earnings category, particularly true for Seattle residents, especially men.

¹⁶ Based on an analysis of variance ($N = 83$; $F = 8.45$; $p < .001$). Mean responses for individual partners in each type of couple were as follows: MS = 6.2; WS = 5.2; MO = 4.8; WO = 4.0.

¹⁷ Mean incomes scores for Partner 1 and 2 were 5.48 and 4.60, respectively ($t = 2.60$, $p < .05$).

¹⁸ Mean income scores for men in Seattle were 7.20 for Partner 1 and 5.25 for Partner 2 ($t = 3.05$, $p < .01$).

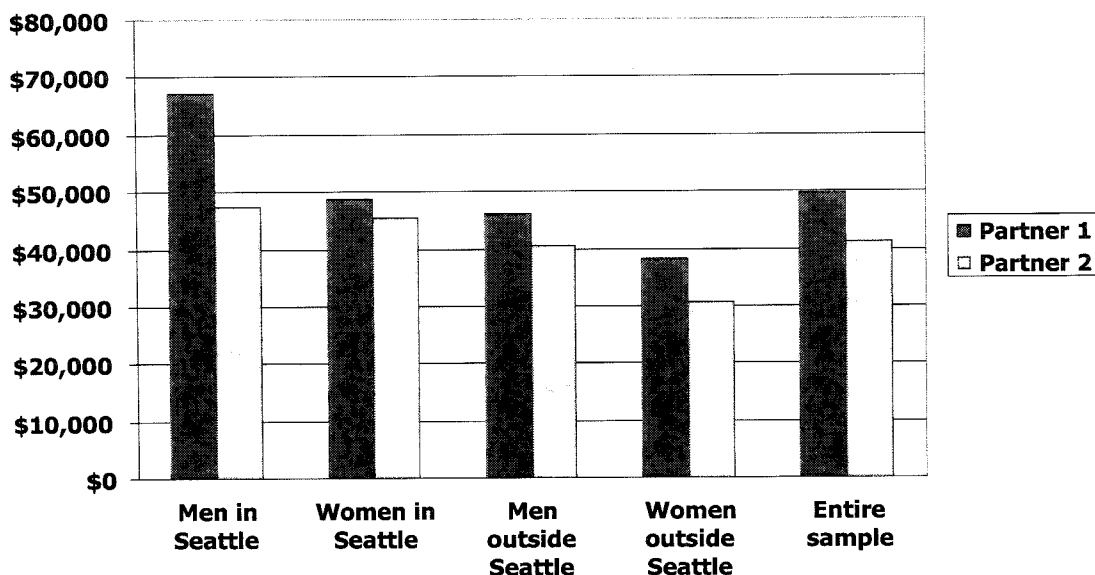


Figure 3.3. Annual Income of Partner 1 and Partner 2 Samples

Within each sample of partners, there were differences by sex and location, but these patterns were not always statistically significant in both samples. Men as a group in the Partner 1 sample earned significantly more than women.¹⁹ The income differential by sex in the Partner 2 sample was in the same direction, but not statistically significant. Respondents in Seattle earned significantly more than those outside Seattle in both samples, though the disparity was smaller among Partner 2 respondents.²⁰

Comparing all four subgroups, Seattle men in the Partner 1 sample earned significantly more than all other types of couples.²¹ In the Partner 2 sample, both men and women in Seattle had higher incomes than women outside Seattle.²² Taken all together, the results for both couple and individual partner incomes suggest that both gender and location made a difference in income, with men and Seattle individuals and couples better off than women and couples outside Seattle.

¹⁹ The mean income score for men in the Partner 1 sample was 6.15; for women, 4.86 ($t = -2.74$, $p < .01$).

²⁰ Partner 1 income mean scores were as follows: in Seattle = 6.24, outside Seattle = 4.71 ($t = 3.32$, $p < .01$). For Partner 2: in Seattle = 5.14; outside Seattle = 4.05 ($t = 2.42$, $p < .05$).

²¹ Partner 1 income mean scores were as follows: MS = 7.20; WS = 5.36; MO = 5.10; WO = 4.33 (ANOVA: $F = 7.48$, $p < .001$).

²² Partner 2 income mean scores were as follows: MS = 5.25; WS = 5.05; MO = 4.55; WO = 3.57 ($F = 2.76$, $p < .05$). In the Partner 1 sample, the difference between women in Seattle and women outside Seattle approached significance ($p < .10$).

The two partner samples had similar, but not identical, patterns of significant differences between types of couples.

Group Memberships

I asked respondents about race and ethnicity and about religious denomination or spiritual identification. Membership in different racial/ethnic and religious categories may affect the composition of one's social networks.

Race/ethnicity. Given the complexities of racial and ethnic identity in the United States, rather than supplying categories, the written questionnaire asked respondents to categorize themselves with an open-ended question. The interview provided an opportunity to follow up for clarification when necessary. Table 3.6 displays the responses broken down into the four couple sex and location subgroups.

Table 3.6. Race/ethnicity by couple sex and location

Racial/ethnic identity	<i>Men in Seattle</i>		<i>Women in Seattle</i>		<i>Men outside Seattle</i>		<i>Women outside Seattle</i>	
	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2
White/Caucasian	19	18	18	20	18	19	19	18
All others:	1	2	4	2	2	1	2	2
Hispanic/Latina/Latino	1	1	3				1	
Mixed race					2	1		1
Jewish				1			1	
Asian		1	1	1				1
African American								1
Total	20	20	22	22	20	20	21	21

Respondents who gave a specific European nationality, such as "Italian" or "Italian-American" were counted in the "White/Caucasian" category. Two women categorized themselves as Jewish in response to this question, and they are listed separately to reflect that being Jewish for them was a matter of ethnic identity, as opposed to or in addition to the religious identity that it may also connote.

Despite recruiting assistance at gay pride events from an African American man, and my own efforts to reach out to Latino and Latina acquaintances, the sample was less diverse in terms of race and ethnicity than the state's population as a whole. Ninety-one percent of respondents were non-Hispanic white, compared to 84% of those living together in same-sex couples that identified as non-Hispanic white in 2000 (Gates and Ost 2004). The lack of sample diversity in this regard likely resulted from recruiting through the internet and gay pride events, where racial and ethnic minorities still may be underrepresented.

Spiritual or religious belief communities. Membership in a spiritual or religious belief community is both a background characteristic and a social network location. Washington State is in a region that is less churched than other parts of the country. It is also a place where a variety of spiritual alternatives to Judeo-Christian denominations flourish. Categorizing people in terms of their expression of those beliefs through involvement in spiritual or religious communities is therefore especially challenging.

Respondents rated themselves in terms of how religious or spiritual they were overall. Table 3.7 shows respondents' self-ratings of overall religiosity or spirituality (from one, "not at all," to nine, "extremely"). All of the means fell within the middle range of the scale, and there were no significant differences in either sample by couple sex or location.

Table 3.7. Mean rating of own overall religiosity/spirituality by couple sex and location

<i>Men in Seattle N = 20</i>		<i>Women in Seattle N = 22</i>		<i>Men outside Seattle N = 20</i>		<i>Women outside Seattle N = 21</i>	
Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2
5.85	5.20	6.00	5.82	6.05	4.68	5.86	5.38

Note: Scale values ranged from 1 ("Not at all") to 9 ("Extremely").

Respondents also answered questions about membership in a spiritual or religious belief community in the same open-ended manner as with race and ethnicity, eliciting a wide variety of responses. For concise presentation and for preservation of some respondents' confidentiality,

responses have been aggregated into larger categories.²³ Table 3.8 breaks down belief community affiliations by couple sex and location.

Table 3.8. Membership in a spiritual or religious belief community by couple sex and location

Community membership	<i>Men in Seattle</i> N = 20		<i>Women in Seattle</i> N = 22		<i>Men outside Seattle</i> N = 20		<i>Women outside Seattle</i> N = 21	
	Partner 1 N (%)	Partner 2 N (%)	Partner 1 N (%)	Partner 2 N (%)	Partner 1 N (%)	Partner 2 N (%)	Partner 1 N (%)	Partner 2 N (%)
No community membership	11 (55)	9 (45)	6 (27)	4 (18)	7 (35)	11 (55)	11 (52)	11 (52)
Community membership:	9 (45)	11 (55)	16 (73)	18 (82)	13 (65)	9 (45)	10 (48)	10 (48)
Protestant	7	4	3	7	5	5	6	2
Roman Catholic	1	3	2	1	2	1	1	2
Jewish		2	3	2	1		2	1
Religious Science			2	2	1			1
Buddhist		1	1	1				2
Hindu			2	2				
Unitarian Universalist					2		1	
Other community	1	1	3	3	2	3		2

Forty-two percent of respondents in both samples indicated membership in some religious or spiritual belief community. Those who specified an affiliation rated their overall level of spirituality or religiosity more than two points higher than those specifying none, in both samples.²⁴ In the Partner 2 sample only, there was a significant difference in the proportions of respondents in Seattle and outside Seattle who reported membership in a spiritual or religious community. More Seattle residents, 69%, reported having some affiliation with a spiritual or religious community, compared to just 46% of those outside Seattle.²⁵ Seattle women, with the highest rates of

²³ Examples of "Other" belief communities included atheist, pagan, Wiccan, and twelve-step groups.

²⁴ For statistical tests of differences in belief community affiliation by sex and location, and by level of religiosity or spirituality, respondents were grouped into those with any belief community membership and those with none. In the Partner 1 sample, mean levels of religiosity/spirituality for members of any belief community was 6.81 v. 4.74 for non-members ($t = -4.17$, $p < .001$). In the Partner 2 sample, comparable means were 6.43 and 3.71 ($t = -4.86$, $p < .001$).

²⁵ Chi-square = 4.39; $p < .05$.

affiliation of the four subgroups, accounted for this difference. The other three subgroups had similar levels of affiliation in a belief community. Although the Partner 1 sample exhibited a similar trend, the difference was not significant: 60% of those in Seattle and 56% of those outside Seattle reported some belief community affiliation. The greater representation of minority faiths, such as Judaism, Religious Science, Buddhism, and Hinduism, seems to be the greatest difference between Seattle women and other types of couples. One would expect to find more religious diversity in Seattle than elsewhere, as well as more "open and affirming" congregations that embrace sexual diversity. But these aspects of urban community do not explain why religious identity was more pronounced among Seattle women than Seattle men in this sample, and the data do not offer any further insights into this pattern.

Prior Same-Sex Relationship History

Prior same-sex relationships are of interest because of their potential implications for relationship skills, inclusion of past intimates in one's social network, and history of involvement in gay community. Table 3.9 presents the median numbers of all past same-sex relationships that lasted more than a month (whether or not partners lived together) and number of times the respondent lived with a same-sex partner for more than a month.

Table 3.9. Median number of prior same-sex relationships by couple sex and location

Relationship item	<i>Men in Seattle N = 20</i>		<i>Women in Seattle N = 22</i>		<i>Men outside Seattle N = 20</i>		<i>Women outside Seattle N = 21</i>	
	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2
Number of prior same-sex relationships of > 1 month	3	3	3	5 - 10	3	1.5	4	2
Number of times living with prior same-sex partners for > 1 month	1	0	1	2	1	0.5	1	1

There were significant differences between women and men in the Partner 2 sample, even after controlling for age, but not in the Partner 1 sample. Partner 2 women reported one more of each—a past same-sex relationship that lasted over a month and living for over a month with a same-sex partner—than did men on these items.²⁶ This difference was due to the fact that

²⁶ These two items were measured with a seven-point scale ranging from "none" to "eleven or more times." Because the top two values in the scale are ranges, "five to ten" and "eleven or more," mean scores do not represent true mean numbers of relationships. Partner 2 sample tests of differences were as follows.

women in Seattle had had significantly more relationships than either group of men.²⁷

Individual and Couple Networks

The last set of characteristics introduced in this chapter is a preview of the networks that study participants enumerated. Unless otherwise noted, network associates under age 16 are excluded from all analyses. The 166 participants (83 couples) listed a total of 4,653 associates age 16 and over, including duplicates that were named by both partners.

Table 3.10 shows the distribution of all network associates for both samples by couple sex and location. Respondents in all categories had mean and median numbers of network associates ranging from 24 to 32 (across both samples). The smallest number of unique associates named by any respondent was 13; the largest was 67. There were no significant differences between couple types in the number of associates named.

Table 3.10. Total individual network associates by couple sex and location

Associates	<i>Men in Seattle N = 20</i>		<i>Women in Seattle N = 22</i>		<i>Men outside Seattle N = 20</i>		<i>Women outside Seattle N = 21</i>	
	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2
Minimum	18	19	16	18	13	13	13	13
Maximum	67	42	46	46	46	55	36	55
Median	26	29	29	32	24	28.5	25	25
Mean	28.4	28.5	28.9	31.3	25.9	30.2	24.7	26.2
Std. Dev.	11.5	6.9	7.3	8.2	9.5	11.4	5.8	9.3

A couple's total network size is the number of unique associates mentioned by both partners. Shared associates—those mentioned by both partners—are counted only once in the total. Of the total of 4,653 associates named by all respondents, 991 were shared between partners, about one-fifth. Table 3.11 shows the total couple network size for each type of couple:

Women's mean score on the item measuring prior same-sex relationships for over a month was 3.45, compared to 2.43 for men ($t = 2.34$, $p < .05$). Women's mean score on the item measuring prior same-sex partners lived with for over a month was 2.12 compared to 0.98 for men ($t = 3.16$, $p < .01$).

²⁷ In the Partner 2 sample, an analysis of variance on number of past partners respondents had lived with showed significant differences ($F = 3.52$, $p < .05$). Mean scores on this item were as follows: MS = 2.00; WS = 3.36; MO = 1.95; WO = 2.86.

Table 3.11. Couple network associates by sex and location

Associates	<i>Men in Seattle N = 20</i>	<i>Women in Seattle N = 22</i>	<i>Men outside Seattle N = 20</i>	<i>Women outside Seattle N = 21</i>
Minimum	34	26	20	16
Maximum	80	71	69	65
Median	44	47	41	37
Mean	46.2	48.0	44.3	38.0
Std. Dev.	11.4	10.9	13.9	10.4

The smallest couple network was 16 and the largest was 80. The mean number of couple network associates ranged from 38 to 48. Couples' total networks did not vary significantly in size by couple sex alone or by location alone, but men in Seattle had 16% more and women in Seattle had 26% more associates than women outside of Seattle, a difference that was significant.²⁸

Later chapters will examine in detail the types, functions, and other aspects of couples' relationships with associates in their networks, investigating similarities and differences between the four types of couples.

SUMMARY: IMPLICATIONS OF SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS FOR THE STUDY

This chapter has focused on describing the study participants with particular attention to how the two samples of partners, randomly drawn from each couple (Partner 1 and Partner 2), compare on key characteristics. The following points briefly summarize the differences between the Partner 1 and Partner 2 samples covered in this chapter:

Significant Differences between Samples

Age. Women in the Partner 2 sample were older than the men. This difference was not significant in the Partner 1 sample.

Employment. More respondents outside Seattle in the Partner 2 sample were unemployed

²⁸ Based on an analysis of variance ($F = 2.98, p < .05$).

compared to Seattle respondents. There was no significant difference in the Partner 1 sample.

Income. The difference in employment patterns in the two samples translated into similar differences in patterns of income. Partner 2 incomes were significantly lower than Partner 1 incomes, accounted for mostly by differences between the men in Seattle in each sample. But the distribution of income within each sample was similar. Men earned more than women in each location, and Seattle respondents earned more than those outside Seattle, though the magnitude of the differences and patterns of statistical significance varied in each sample.

Membership in a spiritual or religious belief community. The two samples did not differ in their overall levels of religiosity or spirituality, and an identical number of respondents in each sample were members of some belief community. In the Partner 2 sample, however, more Seattle women were affiliated with a spiritual or religious community than others, a pattern that was not significant in the Partner 1 sample.

Prior relationships. In the Partner 2 sample, women reported about one more same-sex relationship lasting over a month than did men, while in the Partner 1 sample, there was no difference.

In samples with smaller subgroups, such as the two partner samples in this study, some variations are not surprising. Despite the differences between samples, Partner 1 and Partner 2 exhibited fairly similar sociodemographic profiles overall, and replication of subsequent analyses on both samples will reveal which patterns of results are robust in the chapters that follow.

Chapter 4

Reckoning and Reconciling Family and Friends

DEFINING FAMILY AND FRIENDSHIP

Who counts as family is a construct that is shifting not only in the minds and hearts of people who have families but also in public and private sector policies. Policies and laws, however, are usually slow to catch up to these changes in people's experiences of family life. Gays and lesbians are not the only ones who live in non-nuclear or non-marital family relationships or who have made claims for recognition of their familial rights and responsibilities. African American extended kinship patterns (Stack 1974; Mays et al. 1998), "palimony" lawsuits (Blumstein and Schwartz 1983), and even grandparents' rights disputes (Cook 2005) all illustrate a substantial lack of consensus about who should count as family, despite the persisting cultural hegemony of the nuclear family ideal.

How do couples negotiate who counts as kin, especially where one or both partners consider non-biolegal associates to be family? The hub-and-spokes imagery of individual-centered "chosen" families, where reciprocity of family membership is not even a requirement (e.g., I might count you in my family even if you do not count me in yours: see Weston [1991]), provides few clues as to whether and how same-sex couples achieve network integration. When members of a chosen family may not even know each other, are two partners able to bring about a blending of their families? Is consensus even necessary for the quality and stability of couple relationships?

Pilot interviews revealed even greater complexity in the ways people think of family and friends than I had at first imagined. Who counts as family to same-sex couples, individually and as a couple, and how those definitions affect couples thus become questions of both theoretical and empirical interest that call for an appropriate study methodology able to take into account abundant variations.

This chapter focuses on the “psychological network”—those significant individuals considered family and close friends who are psychologically important and to whom one has emotional attachment—whether or not one is involved in regular exchanges with them (Milardo 1992). Psychological networks tend to look different from networks defined purely by active exchange relations, “behavioral networks” (Fisher 1982). Family of origin relations and geographically distant friends may populate the psychological network more than active friendships (Fischer 1982; Milardo 1992). Members of the psychological network usually stimulate strong emotions, whether positive, negative, or a complicated *mélange* of impulses.

The instrument developed by Fisher (1982) contains a full set of questions eliciting behavioral, or exchange, networks, which is the subject of the next chapter. Although family of origin, close friends, and chosen family may also appear in exchange networks, it was necessary to develop a set of questions to capture significant portions of the psychological network and identify these associates as such.

The interview was the most appropriate setting to ask respondents to enumerate their families and close friends. Rather than assuming blood or legal relationships or defining family for respondents *a priori*, the interview required each respondent to consider who they counted as family and then reflect on why they listed those persons. This method allowed me to examine whether and how the respondents themselves distinguished between five categories of relationship. These categories either had widespread cultural currency, or they challenged the cultural dominance of traditional forms: immediate family, extended family, close friendships, family of origin, and chosen family. The categories were not necessarily mutually exclusive, as the analysis will illustrate.

The procedure was roughly the same for obtaining information about each of the five categories of relations:

- (1) ask the respondent to identify the names of persons belonging to each category, if any;
- (2) elicit the nature of each relationship, including terms of reference, such as “sister,” “father,” etc.;
- (3) determine whether or not the respondent had a biolegal relationship with each person;
- (4) find out a respondent’s criteria for including people in that category; and

- (5) determine whether any of the relationships were not reciprocal (and if not, why not) by asking if the person named would think of the respondent in the same way, for example, as a family member or close friend.

Respondents could name as many people in each category as they wished, with one exception: since extended families had the potential to be quite large, respondents were allowed to name no more than five extended family members.

I began by asking "Who are all the persons you presently consider your immediate family members?" without specifying a definition of immediate family. After probing the nature of those relationships as above, I then asked for the names of extended family members, again without defining terms. I followed this question by asking about family of origin, i.e., the family members of one's birth and growing years.

The first three family categories were followed by close friends. I asked respondents to distinguish close from casual friends by giving the definitions of Nardi and Sherrod (1994:191) in their study of gay and lesbian friendships: a casual friend is "someone who is more than an acquaintance, but not a close friend; your commitment to the friendship would probably not extend beyond the circumstances that bring you together; for example, a work friend or neighbor." In contrast, a close friend is "someone to whom you feel a sense of mutual commitment and continuing closeness; a person with whom you talk fairly openly and feel comfortable spending time with." Offering this definition excluded less important friends from consideration. Close friends were the subject of this inquiry because it was thought they would be more likely to count also as "chosen family," immediate family, or a variety of other possible relationships, distinctions that are of prime interest in describing the networks of contemporary gays and lesbians. Even having offered this preliminary definition, I still explored with respondents why each person counted as a close friend. The working definition was sufficiently unrestrictive to allow respondents some leeway in the persons they chose to count.

I completed this set of family and friend questions by asking about chosen family in the following way:

Nearly all of us have some identifiable family of origin, whether they were blood relatives, adoptive parents, or some other type of family we grew up in. Some only

consider the family of origin, the one that they grew up with, and any new additions such as in-laws or new babies born into the family, as their family. Other people make a distinction between this family of origin and another set of people who make up a 'chosen' family, a group of people that has evolved into a family that is distinct from the family of origin. Some members of this chosen family *could* be from a family of origin, but a chosen family might also include other people. Are there people who you think of in this way, as "chosen" family, or does this idea not really fit the way you think about family? Keep in mind that people use different terms: a chosen family, family of creation, or kinship circle, but you also might have your own way of referring to them.

The sequence in which I asked about the five family and friend categories mattered. I allowed respondents to decide what immediate and extended family meant and also found out who their family of origin and close friends were before asking whether they had a chosen family. If I had started off by asking about chosen family, respondents might have felt pressure to produce one on the spot, thinking that they should have one since I asked about it, even when they did not actually think of anyone in this way. Beginning with chosen family could also unduly influence the enumeration of immediate and extended family and close friends.

THE COMPOSITION OF FAMILY AND FRIEND NETWORKS

In addition to talking about the meanings of family and friend relationships, respondents also classified each associate according to Fischer's (1982) seven categories. Respondents were instructed to list all the ways they were connected, if there was more than one: relative, coworker, neighbor, member of the same organization, friend, acquaintance, and other (with probing to specify).

This multiple classification system, along with the myriad relationship descriptors that respondents gave during the open-ended exploration described above, presented me with a similar dilemma to the one that faced Julien et al. (1999) in using Fischer's instrument: how to categorize an immense variety of relationships in a way that lends itself to analysis without losing important distinctions between people? My task was somewhat complicated by having even more information about each associate than in these earlier studies. I begin by presenting more rather than fewer categories, unlike the method of Julien et al., which collapsed all associates into just two groups, family of origin and all others. The following tabulations of family and friends are based on eleven categories of relationship.

Respondents classified some of their associates in just one way—as friend or neighbor or some other category—presenting no complications for analysis. But for those associates who fit into multiple categories—both relative and coworker for example—I used a hierarchy of ties to assign a single category. No perfect system for making these decisions exists. The rationale for this categorization scheme was based on a combination of factors—the questions of interest in this study, relationship origin and history, and the strength of the connection. Making inferences about the history and strength of the connection depended on certain necessary assumptions, even though they might not fit every relationship.

Four categories were based on a combination of sex of associate and biolegal connections to self and partner. Preserving the biolegal/non-biolegal distinction was important to understanding the true extent to which these categories of people are represented in the various types of family and friend relationships. All associates with biological or legal ties to the respondent were grouped in the biolegal category. This category, then, captures those with the longest history of connection to the respondent, such as blood relatives of the parent and grandparent generations, and persons connected primarily to those same blood relatives. Clearly one can imagine all kinds of possible exceptions to this rule and potential ramifications (e.g., a best friend who becomes a sister-in-law: which connection is more consequential for the respondent? For the respondent's couple relationship?). It was not possible to know all the intricacies of ties with network associates, but to some extent, this limitation is remedied by the qualitative data, which give a sense of the complexity of relationships.

Non-biolegal associates were categorized eight ways, in the following order of priority: partners, ex-partners, friends, coworkers, neighbors, members of the same organization, acquaintances, and family satellites. (A "family satellite" is someone who is connected to one's own or one's partner's biolegal associates but does not have a biolegal relationship with the respondent, such as a sister's boyfriend. The majority of those who might have fallen into this category were already classified in another category, sometimes as friends or acquaintances. Thus most family satellites were truly people whose only significance to the respondent was their attachment to a family member.) According to this order of priority, if a particular associate was named both as a friend and a coworker, the friend category took precedence under the assumption that the tie would be stronger to this person than to someone who was only described as a coworker. Relationships with ex-partners often involved multiple types of connections, but the ex-partner

relationship was given its own category that took precedence over other classifications because ties to past romantic intimates were of special interest.

Respondents frequently classified coworkers, neighbors, and members of the same organization in more than one way. Since these categories were lower in the classification priority scheme, they were often subsumed under higher-priority relationships such as friendship. In other words, classifying someone who was both a coworker and friend as a friend only meant losing a piece of information in the analysis—the coworker connection to that associate. To see how much information I might lose by using this priority scheme for classifying associates—how many would be affected—I examined the presence of all coworkers, neighbors, and members of the same organization in the five family and friend groupings, regardless of any other ways they related to respondents. The following analyses are based on the Partner 1 sample, but results for Partner 2 were similar. Although respondents outside Seattle listed more of these associates in their family and friend networks than Seattle respondents (both in terms of absolute numbers and proportions), no differences between types of couples by sex and location were statistically significant.

Table 4.1 shows that respondents listed few coworkers, less than one per respondent and less than 6% of associates on average in all family and friend lists combined. Coworkers showed up on every list except for family of origin, and they were most likely to be close friends.

Table 4.1. Coworkers in individual partners' family and friend networks

Category	<i>Men in Seattle</i> N = 20	<i>Women in Seattle</i> N = 22	<i>Men outside Seattle</i> N = 20	<i>Women outside Seattle</i> N = 21	<i>All couples</i> N = 83
Immediate family	.0 (0)	.2 (2)	.2 (3)	.3 (5)	.2 (2)
Extended family ^a	.3 (5)	.0 (0)	.5 (11)	.1 (2)	.2 (5)
Family of origin	.0 (0)	.0 (0)	.0 (0)	.0 (0)	.0 (0)
Close friends	1.0 (12)	.4 (6)	1.1 (21)	.6 (7)	.8 (11)
Chosen family ^b	.0 (0)	.3 (4)	.8 (14)	.4 (5)	.4 (5)
Mean number of all coworkers	1.0 (6)	.5 (3)	1.3 (10)	.6 (4)	.8 (6)

Note: Mean percentages of all associates named within each couple type are given in parentheses. Values are based on the 80 employed respondents in the Partner 1 sample. The numbers of coworkers in the five family and friend categories do not sum to total coworkers among family and friend associates because the categories are not mutually exclusive (some coworkers are listed in more than one category).

^a Values are based on the 74 employed respondents listing an extended family in the Partner 1 sample.

^b Values are based on the 56 employed respondents listing a chosen family in the Partner 1 sample.

Table 4.2 shows that neighbors were similarly distributed across family and friend lists, except that they were mentioned even less frequently. Neighbors accounted for just 3% on average of family and friend networks.

Table 4.2. Neighbors in individual partners' family and friend networks

Category	<i>Men in Seattle</i> N = 20	<i>Women in Seattle</i> N = 22	<i>Men outside Seattle</i> N = 20	<i>Women outside Seattle</i> N = 21	<i>All couples</i> N = 83
Immediate family	.1 (1)	.1 (1)	.1 (1)	.0 (1)	.1 (1)
Extended family ^a	.0 (0)	.0 (1)	.2 (6)	.5 (9)	.2 (4)
Family of origin	.0 (0)	.0 (0)	.0 (0)	.0 (0)	.0 (0)
Close friends	.4 (4)	.2 (2)	.3 (4)	.7 (9)	.4 (5)
Chosen family ^b	.1 (1)	.3 (2)	.3 (9)	.5 (7)	.3 (5)
Mean number of all neighbors	.4 (1)	.4 (2)	.4 (2)	.8 (5)	.5 (3)

Note: Mean percentages of all associates named within each couple type are given in parentheses. The numbers of neighbors in the five family and friend categories do not sum to total neighbors among family and friend associates because the categories are not mutually exclusive (some neighbors are listed in more than one category).

^a Values are based on the 77 respondents listing an extended family in the Partner 1 sample.

^b Values are based on the 58 respondents listing a chosen family in the Partner 1 sample.

Members of an organization that the respondent belonged to were the most plentiful of these three types of associates but still amounted to an average of less than one per respondent among family and close friends (see Table 4.3). Once again, these associates were most common among close friends.

Table 4.3. Members of the same organization in individual partners' family and friend networks

Category	<i>Men in Seattle</i> N = 20	<i>Women in Seattle</i> N = 22	<i>Men outside Seattle</i> N = 20	<i>Women outside Seattle</i> N = 21	<i>All couples</i> N = 83
Immediate family	.1 (1)	.1 (1)	.4 (5)	.4 (7)	.2 (4)
Extended family ^a	.1 (2)	.2 (4)	.4 (9)	.4 (9)	.3 (6)
Family of origin	.0 (0)	.0 (0)	.2 (1)	.1 (4)	.1 (1)
Close friends	.5 (5)	.5 (5)	1.0 (13)	1.1 (13)	.8 (9)
Chosen family ^b	.2 (9)	.5 (12)	.4 (7)	1.1 (14)	.6 (11)
Mean number of all organization members	.5 (3)	.5 (3)	1.2 (8)	1.4 (9)	.9 (6)

Note: Mean percentages of all associates named within each couple type are given in parentheses. The numbers of members of the same organization in the five family and friend categories do not sum to total members of the same organization among family and friend associates because the categories are not mutually exclusive (some members of the same organization are listed in more than one category).

^a Values are based on the 77 respondents listing an extended family in the Partner 1 sample.

^b Values are based on the 58 respondents listing a chosen family in the Partner 1 sample.

All in all, there were relatively few coworkers, neighbors, or members of the same organization who were listed as family or close friends. Thus few family and friend associates fell outside the partner, biolegal, ex-partner, and friend categories. Using the priority scheme described earlier for the following analyses, most coworkers, neighbors, and members of the same organization end up in other, higher priority categories, such as friends. Because the numbers of coworkers, neighbors, members of the same organization, acquaintances, and family satellites who could not be classified into other categories are so few, the remainder of these associates are usually subsumed under an "all others" category in the reporting of results that follows. An even smaller handful of associates, such as an ex-partner's father or a counselor, could not be classified into any of the above categories. These miscellaneous associates are always grouped in the "all others" category.

Besides types of relationships, I also looked at the composition of each network in terms of sexual orientation, sex, and the proportion of associates shared between partners. After making all of these fine-grained distinctions between the people in same-sex couples' lives, what do we learn?

Perhaps the most general finding, also the most surprising, is that the four couple types, whether male or female, and whether in or outside Seattle, had remarkably similar friend and family networks, with few exceptions. Though there was considerable variation from individual to individual, and from couple to couple, the mean numbers and proportions of each type of associate varied little across the four couple types, and these differences were rarely statistically significant. The following descriptions of individual partners' networks bear out this conclusion. This discussion is largely based on the results for Partner 1, and significant differences between couple types are only reported when found in both Partner 1 and Partner 2 samples.

Individual Partners' Total Family and Friend Networks

Individuals' combined family and friend networks had on average between 16 and 19 associates, accounting for 59% to 65% of the total network, depending on the individual's sex and location (see Table 4.4). The remainder of the associates came uniquely from the enumeration of the support exchange, or behavioral, network, discussed in the next chapter. Unless otherwise noted in the remainder of the chapter, none of the differences between men and women or between those in and outside Seattle were statistically significant.

Table 4.4. Individual partners' family and friends v. all associates

Associates	<i>Men in Seattle</i> N = 20	<i>Women in Seattle</i> N = 22	<i>Men outside Seattle</i> N = 20	<i>Women outside Seattle</i> N = 21	<i>All couples</i> N = 83
Family and friend associates	18.6 (62)	16.9 (59)	16.6 (64)	16.2 (65)	17.0 (63)
Total associates	28.4 (100)	28.9 (100)	25.9 (100)	24.7 (100)	27.0 (100)

Note: Mean percentages of all associates named within each couple type are given in parentheses.

The breakdown of associates by the five lists of family and close friends is given in Table 4.5. Respondents enumerated the most associates in the immediate family and close friend lists; extended family lists were the shortest because respondents were allowed to name no more than five associates.

Table 4.5. Individual partners' family and friend associates

Type of associate	<i>Men in Seattle</i> N = 20	<i>Women in Seattle</i> N = 22	<i>Men outside Seattle</i> N = 20	<i>Women outside Seattle</i> N = 21	<i>All couples</i> N = 83
Immediate family	8.7 (45)	6.8 (40)	8.6 (48)	6.9 (41)	7.7 (43)
Extended family ^a	4.0 (26)	3.9 (25)	4.0 (26)	3.8 (26)	3.9 (26)
Family of origin	4.4 (30)	4.3 (30)	4.8 (32)	4.6 (32)	4.5 (31)
Close friends	8.6 (49)	7.2 (42)	7.4 (46)	7.1 (46)	7.6 (46)
Chosen family ^b	4.0 (25)	5.7 (30)	4.8 (31)	5.9 (37)	5.1 (31)
Total	18.6 (100)	16.9 (100)	16.6 (100)	16.1 (100)	17.0 (100)

Note: Mean percentages of each type of associate (of total family and friend associates) within each couple type are given in parentheses. The five family and friend categories do not sum to total family and friend associates because the categories are not mutually exclusive (some associates are listed more than once across categories); total values represent unique associates.

^a Includes six respondents who did not list extended families and who are given a value of zero associates in this category.

^b Includes 25 respondents who did not list chosen families and who are given a value of zero associates in this category.

The numbers and proportions of male associates in the network were greater for male respondents than for female respondents, and the difference was statistically significant¹ (see Table 4.6). Heterosexual women were listed most frequently regardless of sex or location of the respondent. The next most common category was same-sex, same-orientation associates, except for men in Seattle, where heterosexual men slightly outnumbered gay men. For women in Seattle and all those outside Seattle, heterosexual men followed. The number of heterosexual men in all four couple types was similar to the number of same-sex, same-orientation associates. This seemingly high concentration of heterosexual men among family and friends is mostly a result of listing biological relatives—fathers, brothers, brothers-in-law, and so on (as shown in Table 4.7, below). Least common were same-orientation but opposite-sex associates. Intriguingly, there were no significant differences by sex or location in the number or proportion of lesbian, gay, and

¹ T-tests of mean differences between men and women were as follows: women listed a mean number (proportion) of 5.2 (.31) male associates in their total family and friend network, while men listed a mean number (proportion) of 9.5 (.55) male associates, $t = -4.27$ (-8.07), $p < .001$. Though I do not present the test statistics, except for the family of origin, the statistically significant difference between male and female respondents in their listing of male and female respondents was replicated in each subcategory of the family and friend network.

bisexual associates in the total family and friend network. This homogeneity is further confirmed by the absence of any significant correlation between the sexual orientation composition of the family and friend network and the measure of distance to the urban gay communities of Capitol Hill in Seattle (or the Burnside Triangle in Portland).²

Table 4.6. Individual partners' family and friend associates by sex and sexual orientation

Type of associate	<i>Men in Seattle N = 20</i>	<i>Women in Seattle N = 22</i>	<i>Men outside Seattle N = 20</i>	<i>Women outside Seattle N = 21</i>	<i>All couples N = 83</i>
(1) Heterosexual women	7.4 (40)	6.5 (38)	6.2 (36)	6.5 (39)	6.6 (38)
(2) Heterosexual men	5.9 (29)	4.2 (26)	4.5 (26)	4.0 (25)	4.6 (26)
(3) Lesbian or bisexual women	.9 (5)	5.0 (30)	1.7 (9)	4.8 (30)	3.2 (19)
(4) Gay or bisexual men	4.5 (27)	1.1 (7)	4.2 (30)	.9 (5)	2.6 (17)
All male associates	10.3 (55)	5.4 (32)	8.7 (55)	4.9 (30)	7.2 (42)
All lesbian, bisexual, or gay associates	5.4 (31)	6.1 (36)	5.9 (39)	5.6 (35)	5.7 (35)
Total (rows 1-4) ^a	18.6 (100)	16.9 (100)	16.6 (100)	16.2 (100)	17.0 (100)

Note: Mean percentages of all associates named within each couple type are given in parentheses.

^a Column totals may not equal the exact sum of component values due to rounding.

Table 4.7 shows the distribution of associates by their relationships to individual respondents. Friends and persons who were biolegally related to the respondent were represented in nearly equal proportions for all except women in Seattle, who had slightly more friends than biolegal relatives in their networks. Adding in biolegal relatives of one's partner tipped the balance in favor of associates who were biolegally related to one or the other partner in the couple. One's own biolegal relatives were about four times as prevalent as those of one's partners. Respondents named an average of one or two of their partner's biolegal relatives in the family and friend network.

² Using the measure introduced in Chapter 3, travel time to these communities from couples' homes (transformed by computing the natural logarithm to normalize the distribution).

Table 4.7. Individual partners' total family and friend associates by relationship to respondent

Type of associate	<i>Men in Seattle N = 20</i>	<i>Women in Seattle N = 22</i>	<i>Men outside Seattle N = 20</i>	<i>Women outside Seattle N = 21</i>	<i>All couples N = 83</i>
Biologically related women	4.1 (23)	2.9 (18)	3.9 (22)	3.6 (22)	3.6 (21)
Biologically related men	3.8 (18)	2.7 (17)	3.0 (17)	3.0 (19)	3.1 (18)
Total of biologically related associates	7.9 (41)	5.6 (35)	6.9 (39)	6.6 (41)	6.7 (39)
Partner's biologically related women	.7 (3)	1.4 (7)	1.1 (7)	1.2 (8)	1.1 (6)
Partner's biologically related men	.7 (3)	.8 (4)	.6 (4)	.5 (3)	.6 (4)
Total of partner's biologically related associates	1.3 (6)	2.1 (11)	1.7 (11)	1.7 (10)	1.7 (10)
Ex-partners	.1 (0)	.2 (1)	.1 (1)	.2 (1)	.1 (1)
Friends	7.8 (43)	7.6 (44)	6.6 (40)	6.4 (38)	7.1 (41)
Partners	.9 (6)	1.0 (7)	1.0 (7)	1.0 (7)	1.0 (7)
All others	.6 (3)	.3 (2)	.4 (1)	.4 (3)	.4 (2)
Total	18.6 (100)	16.9 (100)	16.6 (100)	16.2 (100)	17.0 (100)

Note: Mean percentages of all associates named within each couple type are given in parentheses.

Together, friends and persons biologically related to the respondent or partner accounted for about 90% of all family and friend associates. The remaining associates consisted of partners, in addition to other types of associates (such as ex-partners) who accounted for less than one associate on average. Partners were on nearly everyone's list. For the four individuals who did not name their partners on one of the family and friend lists, this omission may or may not have been intentional. Some may have viewed the partner relationship as something altogether distinct from any of the five categories offered in the interview, but I did not explore this issue with them.

Thus the key significant pattern of group differences in the total network of family and friends was that women listed more lesbians, while men listed more gay men. On average, a combination of biolegal relatives of the respondent and partner outnumbered friends, which meant that respondents listed more heterosexual than sexual minority associates. Proximity to urban gay community made no difference in the overall contours of the family and friend

network, even the number of lesbian or gay male associates; respondents in all four couple types had an equal propensity to recruit others of the same sex and orientation. Similarly, men and women were equally unlikely to list a person of the same orientation but opposite sex—about one such associate per respondent.

Immediate family. Table 4.8 shows the distribution of immediate family members by sex and sexual orientation. Immediate families averaged seven to nine members who were age 16 and older. There were no significant differences in total size of immediate families by couple sex or location. More than half were women across all couples, and female respondents listed more women than did male respondents.

Table 4.8. Individual partners' immediate family associates by sex and sexual orientation

Type of associate	Men in Seattle N = 20	Women in Seattle N = 22	Men outside Seattle N = 20	Women outside Seattle N = 21	All couples N = 83
(1) Heterosexual women	3.8 (44)	3.1 (42)	3.5 (42)	3.2 (47)	3.4 (44)
(2) Heterosexual men	3.4 (33)	2.2 (33)	3.1 (36)	1.9 (25)	2.6 (32)
(3) Lesbian or bisexual women	.2 (1)	1.1 (22)	.7 (5)	1.6 (25)	.9 (13)
(4) Gay or bisexual men	1.4 (22)	.3 (4)	1.4 (17)	.2 (3)	.8 (11)
All male associates	4.7 (55)	2.5 (37)	4.5 (53)	2.1 (28)	3.4 (43)
All lesbian, bisexual, or gay associates	1.6 (23)	1.4 (25)	2.1 (23)	1.8 (28)	1.7 (25)
Total (rows 1-4) ^a	8.7 (100)	6.8 (100)	8.6 (100)	6.9 (100)	7.7 (100)

Note: Mean percentages of all associates named within each couple type are given in parentheses.

^a Column totals may not equal the exact sum of component values due to rounding.

Respondents listed almost two immediate family members on average who were lesbian, bisexual, or gay, one quarter of the total. These two associates typically were one's partner, and usually a friend (sometimes an ex-partner) as shown in Table 4.9, which displays relationships to the respondent. About two-thirds of immediate family members were biologically related to the respondent, followed by partners, friends, and those biologically related to one's partner.

Table 4.9. Individual partners' immediate family associates by relationship to respondent

Type of associate	Men in Seattle N = 20	Women in Seattle N = 22	Men outside Seattle N = 20	Women outside Seattle N = 21	All couples N = 83
Biologically related women	2.9 (36)	2.5 (34)	2.8 (37)	2.5 (37)	2.7 (38)
Biologically related men	2.9 (29)	1.9 (29)	2.6 (33)	1.6 (23)	2.2 (28)
Total of biologically related associates	5.8 (65)	4.4 (63)	5.4 (71)	4.1 (61)	4.9 (65)
Partner's biologically related women	.3 (1)	.4 (5)	.6 (6)	.6 (6)	.5 (4)
Partner's biologically related men	.3 (1)	.3 (4)	.4 (4)	.3 (2)	.3 (3)
Total of partner's biologically related associates	.6 (2)	.7 (9)	1.0 (10)	.9 (8)	.8 (7)
Ex-partners	.1 (0)	.1 (1)	.1 (1)	.1 (1)	.1 (1)
Friends	1.4 (17)	.8 (11)	1.1 (6)	.9 (13)	1.0 (11)
Partners	.8 (14)	.8 (16)	.8 (12)	.9 (17)	.8 (15)
All others	.2 (2)	.1 (1)	.3 (1)	.1 (1)	.2 (1)
Associates age 16 and over ^a	8.7 (84)	6.8 (95)	8.6 (97)	6.9 (89)	7.7 (91)
Children under 16	1.6 (16)	.4 (6)	.3 (3)	.8 (11)	.8 (9)
Total	10.3 (100)	7.1 (100)	8.9 (100)	7.7 (100)	8.5 (100)

Note: Mean percentages of all associates named within each couple type are given in parentheses.

^a The number of associates age 16 and over is the sum of biolgal and partner's biolgal associates, ex-partners, friends, partners, and all others. The percentage value within each couple type for associates age 16 and over refers to the proportion of the total (last row), including both associates 16 and over and children under 16.

Children in the lives of childless couples

Table 4.9 also shows the number of children under age 16 that respondents listed. Because no one had children of their own as a condition of study participation, all were children of biolgal relatives or friends. Children under age 16 were not of prime interest in this study, and indeed, respondents mentioned relatively few in any part of the interview. I collected a limited amount of information about those under 16 and included them in few analyses, tabulating them within each category of family and close friends.³

³ I did not cross-classify individual children among all five categories of a respondent's family and friends, nor track them across both partners in each couple. The number of associates under age 16 can only be identified uniquely within each specific category of family or friends, for example, in the immediate family. Therefore, I do not incorporate them in enumerations of either couples' or individual partners' total family

Data from the 2000 U.S. Census show that female couples are generally more likely to have children in the household than male couples, and that same-sex couples with children are more likely to live in areas where there are lower concentrations of same-sex couples, outside of urban enclaves (Gates and Ost 2004). Even though couples in this sample were childless, one might still expect to see differences between types of couples in the numbers of children in their networks—more children in the lives of female couples and couples outside Seattle—if childless couples socialized with parenting couples in their communities.

Individuals listed just under one child on average in their immediate families. The number of children listed in any other category was negligible by comparison. Thus there were few children in the networks overall, and there were no significant differences in the presence of children in any part of respondents' networks by either sex or location. This includes families as well as other types of associates queried during the interview (e.g., people with whom one has socialized in the past three months, a topic discussed in the next chapter). The children in these same-sex couples' families were more often related to straight relatives or friends than to gay or lesbian parents. These results suggest that childless same-sex couples are fairly segregated from parents and children regardless of where they live, at least in this sample, reflected in the words of this woman outside Seattle:

We consciously have relationships with people who don't have children. We've lost relationships with people who've had children, and the time pressures that involves.

Terms of Kinship: Immediate Families

I asked about the terms of kinship, both in the sense of terminology ("What do you call this person?") and in the sense of the circumstances and conditions of the relationship between the respondent and each group of associates ("What makes these persons count as 'family' to you?"). I repeated these questions for each family and friend list.⁴ All results are based on the responses of Partner 1.

and friend networks. This same restriction also holds true in the presentation of behavioral networks in the next chapter.

⁴ Regarding the "close friends" list, I asked respondents "What makes these persons count as close friends." For chosen family members, the question was amplified: "How is it that you have come to include these persons as part of your chosen family [or whatever term respondents used]? What makes them 'family'?"

My primary interest in kinship terminology was to document how respondents referred to their non-biolegal associates, particularly friends and the biolegal relatives of partners, for clues about family- and friendship-making and the integration of partners' networks. I expected, and found, great variety. Most friends were called by that name, while about seven percent of friends in immediate families were "like" sisters, "like" a brother, or a "surrogate" sister.

Far more common, though still a minority practice, were family terms for a partner's biolegal relatives. Respondents referred to 68% of these associates in terms of their relatedness to the partner, not to oneself, as for example, "my partner's father" or "my partner's sister's husband." But 32% of references expressed a more direct quasi-legal relationship between the respondent and the partner's relative, such as "mother-in-law," or "brother-in-law." Sometimes these terms were used matter-of-factly, communicating the same taken-for-grantedness of "in-law" relationships as heterosexual couples do. Occasionally respondents qualified terms with quotation marks (with fingers), or the creative "father-*out*-law." But unlike heterosexual spouses, whose "in-law" relationships are legally-determined with no clear implications about the quality of the relationships, same-sex couples' use of this terminology tended to indicate the closeness, warmth, or high mutual regard in relationships with a partner's biolegal relatives. This was no less true of the "out-law" relationship, a term used to point out that same-sex partners create relationships with each other's biolegal families despite the fact that they could not legally marry at the time of the study, and to suggest humorously that creating family outside of any legal sanction made all of them, the couple and their supportive biolegal relatives, "outlaws" for challenging the status quo.

I also examined the accounts people gave for including five types of associates on each list: partners, biolegal relatives, partners' biolegal relatives, friends, and others.⁵ Some respondents had reasons that were particular to each associate in a list. Others had a clearly developed set of criteria defining a category such that all associates listed within that category met the same criteria. For example, a respondent might have said, "All my close friends are people I can turn to for support when I need it. And John and I go a long way back too." In this case, supportiveness is a general criterion defining this person's close friendship, and length of relationship is a criterion specific to one associate. Both themes were recorded in this analysis as qualities of close friendship.

⁵ In all direct quotes or descriptions of study participants, information that might identify the respondent or the couple has been altered as necessary to protect confidentiality, with care not to change essential meanings.

Looking at immediate families, three common themes emerged for listing the most common associates in this category (partners, biolegal relatives, and friends). The most salient common theme was mutual sharing between immediate family associates and the respondent: material property; emotional closeness and communication; family events such as holidays; and other categories of life experience, including both joyful and difficult times. About a third of respondents listed their partners and their biolegal relatives for this reason. One man outside Seattle named a very large set of biolegal relatives as immediate family but went on to include numerous friends because of their sharing in family occasions:

We always invite friends to family gatherings. They have had roles in family weddings and funerals, and they were longtime neighbors of my family.

Other themes in relationships with immediate family members included their supportiveness of the respondent in a variety of ways (cited by 13% to 18% of respondents for partners, friends, and biolegal relatives), and the lengthy history of these relationships (mentioned 10% to 17% of the time). One woman outside Seattle listed her partner and friends as immediate family and spoke of both history and support. Support for her meant meeting her needs for social contact and ways of communicating about important personal matters:

It's availability, and frequency of contact...These people feel like they would always be accessible, though this can change. History is a part of it—these are the “return stars” in my life, people who consistently fill a need. One of them processes things the same way as I do, so I can talk to her differently than I can with my partner.

A woman in Seattle connected a sense of history with mutual love between siblings in her family:

I have a shared history and memories with my siblings. We all have a basic love even when we don't ‘like’ each other.

Respondents had reasons in addition to the themes of sharing, support, and history for listing partners and biolegal relatives. Seventeen percent of respondents listed partners because of aspects of commitment to and investment in the relationship, including the commitment involved in being “married” or “spouses.” Immediate family was also the place where ten percent of

respondents talked explicitly about love and caring for their partners, a theme hardly mentioned about any other associates or in any other part of the interview.

The overwhelming reason for mentioning biolegal relatives, given by 58% of respondents, was the simple fact of having a blood or legal relationship with these associates. Some respondents spoke of ties to parents as assumed and not needing explanation, implying that blood ties were taken for granted. Some conflated blood ties with a sense closeness or intimacy, expressed most emphatically by this woman in Seattle:

These are my [biolegal] relatives. Friends are friends. It's a close family—these are the people I'm closest to. I don't consider my partner's family to be part of my immediate family.

More often, even when blood was an important criterion, it was not sufficient in and of itself. Not all nuclear family ties qualified instantly, as a woman outside Seattle explained:

My parents are immediate rather than extended family. But my brother isn't speaking to me, so he's not even on the list—there needs to be a *relationship*.

Another woman outside Seattle listed her partner and then her own biolegal relatives, saying of them that “even if they weren't biological, they would be chosen.” But even while claiming the prerogative of choosing their immediate families, people often had recourse to blood ties that in a very basic sense they had not chosen. Some listed biolegal relatives as immediate family without mentioning blood ties explicitly, but what they described was the *de facto* practical consequence of blood relationships: growing up together. For example, the associates on this Seattle man's list—all biolegal relatives except his partner—were all connected through this theme:

These are the people I grew up with, or added to the people I grew up with because they were important to the people I grew up with [i.e., siblings' spouses].

The inclusion of a partner's biolegal relatives often depended on the same criteria for including one's own: they were people with whom respondents shared important parts of their lives,

people who were supportive, and people connected by law or biology to one's partner, and by extension, to oneself:

I consider my partner's dad and mom part of my own blood family. They're related by blood to my partner. (woman in Seattle)

I feel close to my partner's mother because she's close to my partner, even though I am not that close to her. (woman outside Seattle)

Yet the absence of a true in-law relationship between this woman outside Seattle and her partner's mother caused her to pause and ponder:

I didn't think of my partner's mother as automatically as I would have thought of my ex-husband's parents, because we're *not* legally married.

As with one's own biolegal relatives, blood or legal ties often provided necessary but not complete justification for the inclusion of a partner's biolegal relatives. This Seattle woman grouped her own and her partner's biolegal relatives all together as blood, including her mother, both partners' siblings, their spouses, and others. Blood alone was not the reason they were immediate family to her; frequent communication and continuing connection also mattered:

All these people, except my mother, are of my generation, but I would also include nieces and nephews, and aunts and uncles. It's not just that they're blood, but also the people they partner with. They're connected. It's a package. I talk to all my siblings every week, except for one. They live all over, and there's a seven-year spread between us. And I've included the only ones who are left of my partner's family. If you get her, you get her family too. Brothers and sisters stick together.

Or as a Seattle man put it, "Yes, we have a biological connection, but we are also very involved in each other's lives." In fact, naming of one's own, and especially a partner's, biolegal relatives was most often conditioned on their acceptance of the couple's relationship, as this man outside Seattle attested:

It's the traditional biological connections. My partner is accepted into my California family, and I'm accepted here in his Washington family. The two families consider us a marriage, and it's through us that they're linked.

Though just a third of respondents named a partner's biolegal relatives as immediate family members, they listed these associates most often in this category, more than friends. In 55% of couples, at least one partner named the other's biolegal relatives as immediate family. More than anywhere else, the immediate family was the place where both partners and their families of origin might come together. Thus the immediate family seemed to offer important clues about the integration of the two partners' lives—both the partners themselves, by naming each other, and important associates of each.

Reciprocity

The last question I asked respondents to consider about family members was whether anyone on the list would not also think of the respondent as family. Seventeen respondents (20%) named 27 immediate family members who might not reciprocate the family designation. Respondents expressed uncertainty about several types of associates, including friends, a partner's biolegal relatives, siblings, and in-laws. The greatest skepticism was reserved for friends, heterosexuals, and those perceived to have "enough" family or families of their own:

I'm not sure about two of my "friend family" members. They're heterosexual, and they have families of their own, so they may have a different definition of immediate family. The third "friend family" member is not heterosexual. She's more likely to feel the same way I do about seeing each other as immediate family. (Seattle woman)

Those who included heterosexual friends in their immediate families typically perceived that these associates accepted the respondent's gayness and same-sex relationship. But their acceptance did not guarantee that straight friends had an expansive, non-traditional definition of family comparable to that of the respondent, a definition of family that could incorporate friends as well as non-nuclear family associates. These seemingly one-sided relationships raise questions about the nature of the social exchange involved in counting kin. One would appear to under-benefit by considering a partner's sister "family" when she does not feel the same way—unless one reaps benefits from the partner by doing so. The meaning of non-reciprocal kin ties such as

these would be clearer only in the context of further detailed probing into the dynamics of these family (and friendship) systems, a provocative phenomenon which was beyond the scope of this study.

Extended family. Six respondents did not find the term "extended family" meaningful or applicable enough to their lives to list any associates in this category; accordingly, the following tables and discussion are based on just 77 respondents.⁶

More than half of extended family members were women for all types of couples, except men in Seattle, who listed slightly more men than women (see Table 4.10). About a third of associates in this category were lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

Table 4.10. Individual partners' extended family associates by sex and sexual orientation

Type of associate	Men in Seattle N = 20	Women in Seattle N = 22	Men outside Seattle N = 20	Women outside Seattle N = 21	All couples N = 83
(1) Heterosexual women	1.5 (34)	1.6 (42)	1.8 (43)	1.7 (39)	1.6 (39)
(2) Heterosexual men	1.2 (28)	1.2 (29)	.8 (18)	.9 (26)	1.1 (25)
(3) Lesbian or bisexual women	.5 (13)	1.0 (25)	.6 (12)	1.1 (25)	.8 (19)
(4) Gay or bisexual men	1.0 (26)	.2 (4)	1.3 (28)	.4 (10)	.7 (16)
All male associates	2.2 (54)	1.4 (33)	2.1 (46)	1.4 (36)	1.8 (42)
All lesbian, bisexual, or gay associates	1.5 (39)	1.2 (29)	1.8 (39)	1.5 (35)	1.5 (35)
Total (rows 1-4) ^a	4.2 (100)	4.1 (100)	4.4 (100)	4.2 (100)	4.2 (100)

Note: Mean percentages of all associates named within each couple type are given in parentheses.

^a Column totals may not equal the exact sum of component values due to rounding.

Table 4.11 displays extended family members by relationship. Almost half of associates were friends (45%), followed by biolegally related associates (29%). Partners' biolegal family members accounted for a fifth of those listed in this category, though in absolute terms, their numbers

⁶ For this reason, the total numbers of extended family members shown here do not match those of Table 4.5, which gives mean numbers of associates across all 83 respondents, regardless of whether they named any extended family members or not (those who did not name extended family received a value of zero in that analysis).

were small, and only about one quarter of respondents listed any of these associates in their extended families. Extremely few children counted as extended family.

Table 4.11. Individual partners' extended family associates by relationship to respondent

Type of associate	Men in Seattle N = 20	Women in Seattle N = 22	Men outside Seattle N = 20	Women outside Seattle N = 21	All couples N = 83
Biologically related women	1.0 (22)	.4 (8)	.8 (20)	.7 (17)	.7 (17)
Biologically related men	.7 (16)	.3 (8)	.3 (7)	.7 (21)	.5 (13)
Total of biologically related associates	1.7 (38)	.7 (15)	1.2 (28)	1.4 (37)	1.2 (29)
Partner's biologically related women	.4 (7)	.8 (19)	.6 (13)	.4 (11)	.5 (13)
Partner's biologically related men	.4 (7)	.5 (12)	.3 (7)	.1 (3)	.3 (7)
Total of partner's biologically related associates	.7 (15)	1.2 (30)	.8 (20)	.5 (14)	.8 (20)
Ex-partners	.0 (0)	.0 (0)	.0 (0)	.1 (2)	.0 (1)
Friends	1.4 (40)	1.8 (46)	2.3 (51)	1.9 (42)	1.9 (45)
Partners	.0 (0)	.1 (1)	.0 (0)	.0 (0)	.0 (0)
All others	.3 (7)	.2 (7)	.1 (1)	.2 (4)	.2 (5)
Associates age 16 and over ^a	4.2 (98)	4.1 (98)	4.4 (100)	4.2 (98)	4.2 (98)
Children under 16	.1 (3)	.1 (2)	.0 (0)	.1 (3)	.1 (2)
Total	4.3 (100)	4.1 (100)	4.4 (100)	4.3 (100)	4.3 (100)

Note: Mean percentages of all associates named within each couple type are given in parentheses.

^a The number of associates age 16 and over is the sum of biological and partner's biological associates, ex-partners, friends, partners, and all others. The percentage value within each couple type for associates age 16 and over refers to the proportion of the total (last row), including both associates 16 and over and children under 16.

Terms of Kinship: Extended Families

Just four percent of friends, who were abundant in this category, were described with kinship terms such as "blood brother," "sister," "surrogate sister," or "son-like." The rest were called simply "friends," sometimes "best friends." A lesser proportion of partners' biological relatives—22%—compared to 38% in immediate families, were referred to as "in-laws" (or "out-laws").

The lower propensity to describe non-biological extended family members with more intimate kinship terms, as compared to immediate family members, likely reflects the greater social and

emotional distance that many respondents felt in their relationships with these associates: they truly were less “immediate” and more “extended” in any number of ways. The extended family was commonly understood as the family next to, after, beyond, or outside of the immediate family.

This general perspective on extended family still admitted a wide variety of possibilities. The reasons people gave for listing associates reflected a hodgepodge of understandings about what extended families meant and whether and how they mattered. Compared to other types of family and friends, describing this category required a larger cognitive or emotional reach for quite a few respondents. Some had to think about whether or not anyone in their lives fit their notion of this category. People who declined to list extended family members sometimes could name extended biolegal relatives such as cousins or grandparents but declined to do so because these relationships lacked significance for them. Those who listed only biolegal relatives beyond the nuclear family usually subscribed to a traditional definition of extended family. Often these extended biolegal associates were highly significant relationships, but sometimes calling biolegal relatives “extended” rather than “immediate” was a way of signifying distance or indifference. Others interpreted extended family as important friends, something along the lines of “chosen families.” Still others thought of a partner’s close relatives (in the blood or legal sense) as the “next” family that belonged in this category.

Once again, the most common criteria for counting associates as extended family involved mutual sharing, especially to describe relationships with friends (for 32% of respondents), biolegal relatives (14%), and partners’ biolegal relatives (12%). A few respondents made a point of mentioning that making extended family with friends was a couple enterprise: “Both my partner and I get together with these people, and we’ve been through thick and thin with them” (Seattle woman).

The second most common theme, blood or legal ties, accounted for the inclusion of biolegal relatives (27%) and a partner’s biolegal relatives (12%). This Seattle man summed up how both blood and life sharing mattered in naming his partner’s biolegal relatives:

Four of them are my partner’s family. I am quite close to them, and the reason I don’t name other people here that I’m close to is that I have a biological connection

with these people through my partner. We do family events together with them—vacation, holidays—even though there are other people in my life that I’m closer to.

Another man, outside Seattle, placed cousins and his partner’s mother together in this category using a combination of both blood and quasi-legal rationales: “This is the second tier on my bloodline, except my partner’s mother is here by default because she’s my ‘mother-in-law.’”

The comments of this Seattle man show how biolegal relatives are relegated to extended family when the relationship is not close, while conversely, friends attain membership in this category by having met the “test of family,” presuming a closer relationship:

With my brothers [counted as extended family], blood matters, but we’re not that close. We don’t talk much, it’s fairly superficial. With my friend [also extended family], I can get angry enough with her to consider her family. She’s crossed the threshold where you can be annoyed with her and the relationship continues. That’s the test of family.

Support of the respondent was another theme, mentioned by 22% of respondents in explaining why they had included the friends on their lists. Extended family members were thought of as the second responders in times of need:

These are the people to go to if there is some kind of need, for example, money. If immediate family weren’t there, I’d ask these people. (woman outside Seattle)

Or as another woman outside Seattle put it:

I’m less comfortable asking these four friends for financial support than with the first group [immediate family].

Respondents mentioned the theme of shared history mostly to describe friendships on their extended family lists (22%):

These five friends are the next circle out from my immediate family. They’re people I have a lot of history with. (woman outside Seattle)

As with immediate family, some respondents doubted the reciprocity of the bond with extended family members. Fourteen respondents (18%) named 26 associates who they doubted, roughly evenly divided between friends and partners' biolegal relatives. Most commonly, respondents were simply unsure of their friends' definition of the relationship, though they also wondered whether friends with large friendship circles or families of their own were as invested in the relationship with the respondent.

When respondents felt uncertainty about a partner's biolegal relatives, it was usually because respondents perceived these associates as holding conservative views of family, sometimes to the point of not accepting same-sex relationships. In these cases, including a partner's biolegal relatives in the extended family was a way of recognizing the significance of their bond with one's partner more than the bond with oneself. This logic illustrates once more how placing someone in the "extended family" sometimes meant holding that person at arm's length.

Thus the overall profile of motives for listing associates as extended family was similar to that of immediate family in its broad themes, but biolegal relatives on this list were seen as less of a support resource than those in the immediate family, whereas the inclusion of friends in this family grouping signified a high degree of interdependence with the respondent. Some respondents emphasized the "extended" nature of the relationship, while others emphasized the "family" nature of the relationship.

Family of origin. Families of origin are distinct from all other categories in at least two ways: these associates come entirely from the distant past, and they are largely predetermined. For the majority of people and cultures in the United States, families of origin are wholly governed by biological and legal relationships. Given these conditions, it is no surprise that the families of origin enumerated by the participants in this study resembled most closely conventional mainstream family ideals, in contrast to the newer, more constructed relationships represented in other family and friend groupings. Families of origin had nearly equal numbers of men and women, and an average of just 3% of associates were not heterosexual (see Table 4.12).

Table 4.12. Individual partners' family of origin associates by sex and sexual orientation

Type of associate	<i>Men in Seattle N = 20</i>	<i>Women in Seattle N = 22</i>	<i>Men outside Seattle N = 20</i>	<i>Women outside Seattle N = 21</i>	<i>All couples N = 83</i>
(1) Heterosexual women	2.2 (52)	2.1 (50)	2.3 (45)	2.4 (53)	2.2 (50)
(2) Heterosexual men	2.1 (47)	2.1 (48)	2.2 (48)	2.1 (45)	2.1 (47)
(3) Lesbian or bisexual women	.1 (1)	.0 (2)	.3 (5)	.0 (0)	.1 (2)
(4) Gay or bisexual men	.0 (0)	.0 (0)	.1 (3)	.1 (2)	.0 (1)
All male associates	2.1 (47)	2.1 (48)	2.2 (50)	2.1 (46)	2.1 (48)
All lesbian, bisexual, or gay associates	.1 (1)	.0 (2)	.3 (7)	.1 (3)	.1 (3)
Total (rows 1-4) ^a	4.4 (100)	4.3 (100)	4.8 (100)	4.6 (100)	4.5 (100)

Note: Mean percentages of all associates named within each couple type are given in parentheses.

^a Column totals may not equal the exact sum of component values due to rounding.

The results in Table 4.13 further confirm the overall conventionality of respondents' families of origin. Every single associate listed was biologically related to the respondent.⁷ The total mean number of associates, 4.5, represented only surviving family of origin members. All Partner 1 respondents had at least one surviving family of origin member. An average of just under one family member per respondent was deceased at the time of the interview, bringing the total mean family of origin size to 5.4, not including the respondent.

⁷ The only exception was the inclusion of a housekeeper, now deceased, and therefore not included in the tables. In the Partner 2 sample, not all families of origin conformed to convention: a few of these associates had never had a biological relationship with the respondent. For example, one Partner 2 respondent grew up on a commune with multiple "moms" and "dad-like" figures.

Table 4.13. Individual partners' family of origin associates by relationship to respondent

Type of associate	Men in Seattle N = 20	Women in Seattle N = 22	Men outside Seattle N = 20	Women outside Seattle N = 21	All couples N = 83
(1) Mother, adoptive mother, stepmother	.9 (22)	.9 (24)	.9 (21)	.9 (21)	.9 (22)
(2) Sister, half-sister	1.4 (30)	1.1 (26)	1.4 (24)	1.1 (25)	1.2 (26)
(3) Other female biolegal relatives	.1 (1)	.1 (3)	.3 (6)	.5 (9)	.2 (5)
Biologically related women	2.3 (53)	2.1 (52)	2.6 (50)	2.5 (54)	2.4 (52)
(4) Father, adoptive father, stepfather	.6 (14)	.8 (20)	.9 (22)	.7 (19)	.7 (19)
(5) Brother, half-brother	1.5 (32)	1.2 (27)	1.1 (25)	1.1 (24)	1.2 (27)
(6) Other male biolegal relatives	.1 (1)	.1 (3)	.3 (4)	.3 (5)	.2 (4)
Biologically related men	2.1 (47)	2.1 (48)	2.2 (50)	2.1 (46)	2.1 (48)
Total (rows 1-6)	4.4 (100)	4.3 (100)	4.8 (100)	4.6 (100)	4.5 (100)
Associates age 16 and over ^a	4.4 (100)	4.3 (100)	4.8 (99)	4.6 (100)	4.5 (100)
Children under 16	.0 (0)	.0 (0)	.1 (1)	.0 (0)	.0 (0)
Total	4.4 (100)	4.3 (100)	4.8 (100)	4.6 (100)	4.5 (100)

Note: Mean percentages of all associates named within each couple type are given in parentheses.

^a The number of associates age 16 and over is the same as the total of rows 1 through 6, but the percentage value within each couple type for associates age 16 and over refers to the proportion of the total (last row), including both associates 16 and over and children under 16.

Over 90% of all family of origin members were mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers—nuclear families—with a small handful of adoptive family, stepfamily or half-siblings. Some respondents also named other types of biolegal associates, but fewer than one per respondent on average. These non-nuclear family members included grandparents (and stepgrandparents), aunts and uncles (and first cousins once removed), cousins (first, second, third), nieces and nephews, and persons married to other family of origin members.

Close friends. Writing of gay and lesbian close friendships in 1985, Rubin noted that lesbians counted more friendships with women and fewer with men—usually gay men—while gay men were more often close to straight women than to lesbians. Close friends among this sample's respondents also tended to be persons who were similar to the respondent in terms of

sex and sexual orientation. Both men and women listed close friends in the following order of frequency: same-gender, same-orientation friends; heterosexual women; heterosexual men; and opposite-gender, same orientation friends (see Table 4.14).

Women's networks were the most exclusive in terms of sex and sexual orientation: fewer than one in five of their close friends were men, and more than half of their close friends were lesbian or bisexual women. Heterosexual women were the next largest group of women's close friends. Men's close friend networks had a majority of men but were not as exclusively same-sex as women's networks because men had about the same proportion of heterosexual women in their networks as did women respondents. This sample showed a small shift in the pattern Rubin described 20 years ago: gay men fell to the bottom of the list for lesbians, even below the number of close friendships with heterosexual men. Women averaged only one or two male close friends of any persuasion.

These patterns may signify a return to a pre-AIDS separation between lesbians and gay men (Adam 1987). As AIDS activism declined through the 1990s, some of the context for cross-sex socializing may have disappeared along with it. It is possible, too, that reports of integration between gay men and lesbians through AIDS activism (Schneider 1992) represented only a specific segment of gay and lesbian communities rather than a more general phenomenon. Some support for this interpretation comes from Smith and Brown's (1997) study of 156 gay male couples. They found that other gay men and heterosexual women topped the list of supporters, followed by heterosexual couples, female relatives, and lesbian friends, with heterosexual men at the bottom. Lesbian friends near the bottom of the list indicate limited integration of lesbians into male couple networks in the 1990s, similar to the results of this study.

Table 4.14. Individual partners' close friend associates by sex and sexual orientation

Type of associate	<i>Men in Seattle</i> N = 20	<i>Women in Seattle</i> N = 22	<i>Men outside Seattle</i> N = 20	<i>Women outside Seattle</i> N = 21	<i>All couples</i> N = 83
(1) Heterosexual women	2.8 (33)	2.2 (32)	1.8 (24)	2.0 (30)	2.2 (30)
(2) Heterosexual men	1.5 (15)	.5 (7)	1.1 (13)	.9 (11)	1.0 (11)
(3) Lesbian or bisexual women	.5 (4)	3.9 (53)	1.1 (11)	3.7 (52)	2.3 (31)
(4) Gay or bisexual men	3.9 (47)	.5 (8)	3.5 (52)	.6 (7)	2.1 (28)
All male associates	5.4 (62)	1.0 (15)	4.6 (65)	1.4 (18)	3.0 (39)
All lesbian, bisexual, or gay associates	4.4 (52)	4.5 (62)	4.5 (63)	4.2 (59)	4.4 (59)
Total (rows 1-4) ^a	8.6 (100)	7.2 (100)	7.4 (100)	7.1 (100)	7.6 (100)

Note: Mean percentages of all associates named within each couple type are given in parentheses.

^a Column totals may not equal the exact sum of component values due to rounding.

Table 4.15 shows that about four-fifths of close friends were not biologically or legally related to the respondent, consistent with common notions of friendship. Most named their partners as close friends. One third of respondents (28) named at least one biolegal relative—mostly sisters and mothers, followed by a few brothers and others—as close friends. Eleven respondents named ex-partners or ex-spouses, and three named at least one of their partners' biolegal relatives.

Table 4.15. Individual partners' close friend associates by relationship to respondent

Type of associate	Men in Seattle N = 20	Women in Seattle N = 22	Men outside Seattle N = 20	Women outside Seattle N = 21	All couples N = 83
Biologically related women	.4 (5)	.4 (5)	.7 (7)	.4 (8)	.5 (6)
Biologically related men	.2 (2)	.1 (1)	.2 (2)	.2 (3)	.2 (2)
Total of biologically related associates	.6 (7)	.5 (6)	.9 (9)	.7 (10)	.6 (8)
Partner's biologically related women	.0 (0)	.1 (1)	.0 (0)	.0 (0)	.0 (0)
Partner's biologically related men	.1 (1)	.0 (0)	.0 (0)	.0 (0)	.0 (0)
Total of partner's biologically related associates	.1 (1)	.1 (1)	.0 (0)	.0 (0)	.0 (0)
Ex-partners	.1 (1)	.2 (2)	.1 (1)	.2 (2)	.1 (2)
Friends	7.1 (81)	5.8 (81)	5.6 (77)	5.4 (72)	6.0 (78)
Partners	.6 (9)	.7 (10)	.8 (12)	.8 (14)	.7 (11)
All others	.2 (2)	.0 (0)	.1 (1)	.1 (1)	.1 (1)
Associates age 16 and over ^a	8.6 (100)	7.2 (99)	7.4 (99)	7.1 (100)	7.6 (100)
Children under 16	.0 (0)	.1 (1)	.1 (1)	.0 (0)	.0 (0)
Total	8.6 (100)	7.2 (100)	7.4 (100)	7.1 (100)	7.6 (100)

Note: Mean percentages of all associates named within each couple type are given in parentheses.

^a The number of associates age 16 and over is the sum of biological and partner's biological associates, ex-partners, friends, partners, and all others. The percentage value within each couple type for associates age 16 and over refers to the proportion of the total (last row), including both associates 16 and over and children under 16.

Terms of Kinship: Close Friends

Some of the same friends who were called "blood brother" or "like a sister" on prior family lists also showed up on lists of close friends, but associates referred to in this way were just one percent of all friends listed. Thus 99% of close friends were referred to as that—"friends"—or other terms (e.g., partner, neighbor) that did not expressly denote kinship.

Respondents mentioned multiple criteria for close friendship that applied consistently to all types of associates—non-biological friends, partners, and biological relatives—listed as close friends. About ten percent of respondents made specific reference to the definition I provided to distinguish casual from close friends, characterized by mutual commitment, continuing closeness, open

communication, and comfort spending time together. But most went on to elaborate in their own words what close friendship meant to them, or explained without mentioning the definition at all.

Over half of respondents (52%) described their friends as people with whom they shared life experiences and involvement in multiple parts of each other's lives. Almost half of respondents (48%) mentioned that close friends provided support and caring. A long history as friends was significant to 30% of respondents. Commitment to the relationship (24%), mutuality (25%), and positive characteristics of friends (17%) were also frequently mentioned themes. This Seattle woman's description of her close friendships touched on virtually all of these common themes:

They're people I've known for a long time—we've grown together. We're kindred spirits. We'll be friends no matter what. We'll always be in each other's lives. There's no mask with them, and there's a give-and-take. We share significant events and emotions, and we have mutual love. And we *like* each other too.

Those who did not consider their partners close friends were a minority. For these respondents, the couple relationship was a completely different category of experience that their notion of friendship could not encompass. But more often, respondents named their partners as close friends because they fit all the criteria for close friendship that described others on their lists. One Seattle man reasoned from the outside looking in, citing societal definitions that provided no legal footing to distinguish his couple relationship from other friendships:

The fact that my partner and I are still not legally married means therefore that friendship is implied.

But more respondents saw friendship as an aspect of the relationship with their partners that they actively constructed and cherished, not determined by legal default. Many spoke of their partners using phrases such as "best friend," "most important" friend, or "top of my list," echoing the "best friends" model of same-sex coupling advanced by Peplau (1991). This Seattle woman thought that friendship was an added bonus that gave same-sex couples an advantage over heterosexual couples:

I think people in heterosexual relationships are apt to separate the spouse relationship from friendship.

Another woman outside Seattle explained it this way:

My partner couldn't be my partner without being my friend. Our relationship is not based on sex, but friendship. Our attraction is what makes her a partner.

Chosen family. "Chosen family" was the least common of the five groupings of associates, as the numbers in Table 4.16 show. About two-thirds of respondents identified a chosen family. The distribution of chosen families was fairly even across the four couple types in both partner samples. In 43 couples, or about half, both partners listed chosen families. In 27 couples, or about a third, one partner or the other had a chosen family, but not both. In 13 couples, or about one sixth, neither partner had a chosen family. I expected that more women might have chosen families because of the greater resonance for women of feminist critiques of traditional family. A greater proportion of women than men had chosen families, 74% compared to 65%, but this difference was not large and not statistically significant.⁸ Although not as universal as the other types of family, the idea of chosen family—however respondents defined it—has nevertheless attained widespread currency, at least among gays and lesbians.

Table 4.16. Chosen families by couple sex and location

Listed chosen family	<i>Men in Seattle</i>		<i>Women in Seattle</i>		<i>Men outside Seattle</i>		<i>Women outside Seattle</i>	
	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2
Yes	13	15	15	14	13	10	17	16
No	7	5	7	8	7	10	4	5
Total	20	20	22	22	20	20	21	21

Note that the overall breakdown of the five categories of family and friends in Table 4.5 presented at the beginning of this discussion of family and friend networks gives the distribution of associates in each category across all 83 respondents, whereas these tables are based only on the 58 Partner 1 respondents who listed chosen families. For this reason, the mean numbers of chosen family associates presented earlier (where those without chosen families received a value of zero associates in this category) do not match those that follow.

⁸ Pearson Chi-Square = .97, $p = .35$.

Table 4.17 shows that about three-fifths of chosen family members were lesbian, bisexual, or gay, equally split between men and women. On average, a chosen family contained about four lesbian, bisexual, or gay associates, two heterosexual women, and one heterosexual man. As with close friends, men's and women's networks were heavily skewed toward others of the same sex and orientation.⁹

Table 4.17. Individual partners' chosen family associates by sex and sexual orientation

Type of associate	<i>Men in Seattle N = 20</i>	<i>Women in Seattle N = 22</i>	<i>Men outside Seattle N = 20</i>	<i>Women outside Seattle N = 21</i>	<i>All couples N = 83</i>
(1) Heterosexual women	1.8 (23)	2.5 (26)	1.7 (21)	2.2 (33)	2.1 (26)
(2) Heterosexual men	1.1 (12)	1.1 (12)	1.4 (20)	1.2 (14)	1.2 (15)
(3) Lesbian or bisexual women	.2 (3)	3.7 (53)	1.0 (10)	3.2 (45)	2.2 (30)
(4) Gay or bisexual men	3.0 (62)	1.0 (9)	3.2 (49)	.5 (8)	1.8 (29)
All male associates	4.1 (74)	2.1 (21)	4.6 (69)	1.8 (22)	3.0 (44)
All lesbian, bisexual, or gay associates	3.2 (65)	4.7 (62)	4.2 (59)	3.8 (53)	4.0 (59)
Total (rows 1-4) ^a	6.1 (100)	8.4 (100)	7.3 (100)	7.2 (100)	7.3 (100)

Note: Mean percentages of all associates named within each couple type are given in parentheses.

^a Column totals may not equal the exact sum of component values due to rounding.

Although friends made up the largest share of both men's and women's chosen families, associates who were biologically related to one or the other partner accounted for close to a quarter of associates listed (see Table 4.18). Because of limited evidence that lesbians experience greater birth family rejection than gay men (Muller 1987), I thought that women might have fewer biological relatives and more friends in their chosen families. On the other hand, the fact that even employed women continue to perform a disproportionate share of family caretaking functions, one might also expect to see more of these relations represented in their chosen families. In the end, there was virtually no difference between men and women in the proportion of biological relatives in their chosen families.

⁹ No other significant differences were found in chosen families by sex and location of respondents, but the sample size of 58 is small for an analysis of variance, with one group numbering only 13.

Table 4.18. Individual partners' chosen family associates by relationship to respondent

Type of associate	Men in Seattle N = 20	Women in Seattle N = 22	Men outside Seattle N = 20	Women outside Seattle N = 21	All couples N = 83
Biologically related women	.4 (5)	.6 (7)	1.0 (8)	.9 (11)	.7 (8)
Biologically related men	.4 (5)	.3 (4)	.8 (7)	.8 (9)	.6 (6)
Total of biologically related associates	.8 (11)	.9 (11)	1.8 (15)	1.7 (20)	1.3 (15)
Partner's biologically related women	.1 (1)	.5 (3)	.2 (3)	.7 (7)	.4 (4)
Partner's biologically related men	.1 (1)	.2 (2)	.2 (3)	.2 (2)	.2 (2)
Total of partner's biologically related associates	.2 (2)	.7 (5)	.3 (6)	.9 (9)	.5 (6)
Ex-partners	.1 (1)	.1 (1)	.1 (1)	.2 (2)	.1 (2)
Friends	4.2 (60)	5.7 (66)	4.3 (63)	3.6 (55)	4.4 (61)
Partners	.8 (24)	.9 (16)	.9 (14)	.7 (12)	.8 (16)
All others	.2 (2)	.1 (1)	.0 (0)	.2 (2)	.1 (1)
Associates age 16 and over ^a	6.1 (96)	8.4 (98)	7.3 (97)	7.2 (94)	7.3 (96)
Children under 16	.2 (4)	.2 (2)	.2 (3)	.5 (6)	.3 (4)
Total	6.3 (100)	8.6 (100)	7.5 (100)	7.7 (100)	7.6 (100)

Note: Mean percentages of all associates named within each couple type are given in parentheses.

^a The number of associates age 16 and over is the sum of biolgal and partner's biolgal associates, ex-partners, friends, partners, and all others. The percentage value within each couple type for associates age 16 and over refers to the proportion of the total (last row), including both associates 16 and over and children under 16.

Chosen family from the outside

Why did 25 respondents, or 30% of the sample, not list a chosen family? Comments like this were unusual for their lack of awareness:

I'm not really familiar with the idea. It's the first time I'm hearing of it. [*With some prompting:*] I've seen it discussed at the housing agency for people with AIDS where I volunteer.

Apparently, the ideology and practice of choosing family that was spurred in part by the AIDS epidemic had largely passed this Seattle man by. Most people were familiar with the idea. What

were their experiences and opinions of it? Here we begin exploring the meaning of chosen family as viewed from the outside.

Perhaps ironically, the most consistent definition of chosen family came from people who had none. These respondents usually either saw themselves as having more traditional notions of family or, if open to the possibility, simply did not believe that they had a group of people in their lives who fit their image of a chosen family. They typically thought that it was a group for those who “needed” it, usually a “gay” family that substituted for a rejecting family of origin. A few had experienced chosen families but those families had changed profoundly over time, leaving those respondents with unsettling, perplexing, and often sad feelings:

As recently as a year ago, I would have considered our friends Trish and Anna [a lesbian couple] a chosen family. Now they are ‘unchosen’ family—we have grown apart in some ways. Both my partner and I feel tension. It’s hard. Were they chosen family if we’re ditching them? I don’t know how to answer that. (Seattle woman)

I have a sense of sadness as I age that my family of choice is susceptible to change as my family of origin was—people come and go. I’m trying to get perspective on this—to enjoy people while I can, including my partner. To love people when they’re here, then let them go. I feel sadness that people come and go. (Seattle man)

The vast majority of the 25 respondents without a chosen family had never had one, and their impressions of it did not necessarily match the reality of the other respondents’ chosen families. The negative attitude of this man outside Seattle, who only considered biolegal family to be real, was rare:

It’s a phony category. Yet I do consider my partner and his mother family. People that “choose” family are people who cop out. Family is very, very important. It’s not something you can pick and choose.

In contrast, the vast majority of respondents liked the idea of chosen family, and some wished they had one:

Chosen family is a wonderful idea. I'd like to hear what my partner has to say about this. I think she does [have a chosen family], but I weigh this out more. (Seattle woman)

This woman's statement points out the individual nature of chosen families in couples where one partner had one and the other did not. She suspected her partner had one, but it was clear that the two had not discussed it.

Others felt that a chosen family was unnecessary for themselves even if it served an important purpose for others. These respondents usually had biolegal families who accepted their sexual orientation and relationships, or they had traditional beliefs about family as blood and friends as friends:

I don't feel a need for the 'Barbary Lane'¹⁰ type of family. I tend to think of this kind of family as all interrelated, all knowing each other well. We have different groups. (man outside Seattle)

A few did not feel that having family of any kind was important to them from a practical standpoint, while others were skeptical of chosen family from a more ideological stance:

My mom's special because she's my *friend*. 'Family' is artificial. It's not what ought to be important.

In stark contrast to the man who thought chosen family was "phony" because blood was irreplaceable, this woman from outside Seattle privileged friendships, which included being friends with biolegal relatives, over family. Her perspective was at once the most radical critique of chosen families—that they are still beholden to a flawed idea of "family"—and an embodiment of the core logic behind chosen families as put forth by Weston (1991)—that the values of friendship are what count the most. Thus attitudes about chosen families fit somewhere between traditional and radical views of the culturally dominant family/friend dichotomy. In this sense, chosen families had become a popularly accepted, middle-of-the-road option, at least for same-sex couples. That I was able even to ask questions about chosen families and receive few blank

¹⁰ Referring to the fictional account of a community of friends living at 28 Barbary Lane in San Francisco (Maupin 1978).

stares, that most people claimed to have them and told me who they were, and that those who had no chosen family had opinions about them that spanned the social and political spectrum—these facts show that chosen families are a recognizable and relevant category, not only in urban Seattle, but in remote areas of the state as well.

Chosen families then and now

The view of chosen family from the inside proved to be far more nuanced and varied than the conceptions of people who had little or no experience of it. The work of Weston (1991) remains the most complete theoretical and empirical treatment of “families we choose.” I do not intend to duplicate her effort here, but a review of relevant pieces of Weston’s work is the best springboard from which to launch a discussion of what constituted chosen families for the participants in this study who had them.

First, a note about methodological differences. Weston used extensive participant observation combined with theoretic sampling of 80 self-identified lesbians and gays in the San Francisco Bay Area for in-depth interviews. Compared to my sample, hers was younger, more ethnically diverse, more urban, and it included a mix of single and coupled persons, with and without children. She conducted her fieldwork in 1985-6, 15 years before data collection for this study. Despite the obvious differences between her methods and mine, she devoted significant attention to chosen families in the context of couple relationships. Thus her conclusions are highly relevant to this study, which both extends her work in new ways and suggests some revisions.

Weston’s concept of chosen families is grounded in her own and her study participants’ experiences of lesbian and gay kinship. She argues that chosen families arose out of historically specific circumstances in which coming out as gay or lesbian became a way of testing the durability of family of origin ties, claiming kinship status for “gay families,” and attempting to bridge the two. Being out to biolegal family is not compulsory; one can skip this step and still construct a chosen family. But chosen families offer an implied challenge, if not a direct confrontation, to the “natural” order and “master status” of biogenetic kinship.

Chosen families are not institutionalized, and therefore individuals ascribe varied meanings to the idea and use variable criteria for membership. An individual is the center of her or his chosen family (a “hub and spokes” model); one’s designated chosen family members may or may not

have relations with each other. The choice of someone as family is not always mutual. Chosen family boundaries may be fluid and not clearly defined.

Yet chosen families are more palpable than mere exchange networks or even friendship groupings. They grow out of, but extend, the notion of friendship. Chosen family members have a shared history, they render mutual emotional and material support, and they are able to withstand conflicts in ways that ordinary friendships might not endure.

Built out of friendships that affirm significant aspects of self and identity in the context of a larger heterosexist culture, chosen families are usually largely made up of other gays and lesbians. Coupled lesbians and gays tend to count their partners. Ex-partners or ex-lovers are frequently included by virtue of continuing or restored friendship that transcends severed romantic bonds. Biolegal kin are more rare, and only included by virtue of their acceptance of one's gay identity or relationship (at a minimum). Romantic partners tend to incorporate each others' chosen families into their own, creating substantial overlap between their circles, but individuals—not the couple relationship—remain the organizing principle.

These are the qualities of chosen families as described by Weston that informed some of the questions in this study. Weston pointed out that the gay kinship ideologies she documented were a product of a specific time in history. The chosen families of her study may have been particular in some ways to that time and place. Some of the central features of chosen family remained the same among participants in the current study, but some of the differences may be related to changes in the social context of same-sex coupling and family-making that have occurred since the mid-1980s.

One such difference is the growing social acceptance of homosexuality and same-sex couples (Treas 2002). One piece of evidence suggesting greater acceptance among the respondents' kin was the infrequency with which respondents themselves had severed ties with biolegal relatives. Although nearly a third of respondents, 31%, did not consider one or more of their biolegal relatives to be family, unchoosing family was most often the result of a lack of contact or closeness, unhealthy or abusive relationships, or the biolegal relative's estrangement from the entire family. Several respondents made a point of saying that the rift had nothing to do with homophobia. Indeed, just one respondent who denied a family relationship with selected biolegal

relatives mentioned that they had rejected him for being gay.¹¹ Perhaps even more relevant to the exploration of chosen family is the fact that the right to unchoose family was exercised equally by those with, and without, a chosen family. By this measure, there was no connection between coming out, rejection by kin or rejection of kin, and creating a chosen family.

An improving social climate since Weston's time was also evident in other aspects of same-sex couples' lives. Respondents in her study tended to feel that life in a small town was not an option. Undoubtedly a significant number of urban respondents in my sample probably continue to feel this way, though I did not ask. But this study shows that gay community and kinship can now happen virtually anywhere. The level of hospitability to same-sex couples varies from community to community, but in general, small towns are perceived to be friendlier places than they once were. The internet also facilitates community among lesbians and gays even in remote rural areas. These two trends open possibilities for same-sex couples beyond urban gay enclaves and institutions to live in places where many feel more at home in other ways.

Increasingly, gays and lesbians' ability to claim family and kinship is not seen as revolutionary, even though *legal* recognition of these families in the U.S., with the rights and responsibilities of civil unions and same-sex marriage for example, still is revolutionary. AIDS helped to create gay kinship in the 1980s, through the establishment of both activist and caretaking communities among and between men and women. Almost no one in my study mentioned AIDS in any part of the interview; these couples no longer made a conscious connection between AIDS and chosen families. Other social and cultural forces may now be influential in sustaining chosen families. Table 4.19 compares the similarities and differences between Weston's chosen families and those that I document here in the discussion that follows.

¹¹ Other respondents spoke of being rejected for being gay or lesbian, but they continued to recognize these biologically-related persons as family.

Table 4.19. Comparison of chosen families in Weston (1991) and this study

Similarities between Weston (1991) and this study's chosen families:

Variable meanings and criteria, but based on an extension of friendship

Fluid boundaries

Ego-centered, not couple-centered / "hub and spokes" model

Shared history

Mutual emotional and material assistance

Differences between Weston (1991) and this study's chosen families:

<u>Weston (1991)</u>	<u>This study</u>
Composition:	Composition:
Varied, but mostly partners and other lesbians and gays	Less exclusively lesbian, gay, and bisexual
Some accepting biolegal kin	Substantial representation of biolegal kin
Peer, not intergenerational, relationships	Both peer and intergenerational relationships
Ex-lovers/partners common	Ex-lovers/partners rare
Non-reciprocal ties common	Most ties reciprocal
High degree of overlap between two partners' chosen family members	Low degree of overlap between two partners' chosen family members

Meanings, criteria, and boundaries. As with earlier categories, we begin examining the meaning of chosen family to the respondents in this study with a discussion of the descriptive terms they used, both for the associates they named and the chosen family itself.

Respondents were no more likely to use kinship terms such as "like a brother" with friends in the chosen family category than elsewhere. Ninety-four percent of friends were called friends, neighbors, or other terms that did not explicitly denote kinship. Respondents referred to 29% of partner's biolegal relatives with kin terms such as "auxiliary father," or "sister-in-law."

The ways that people labeled—or did not label—these network members as a collective were both illuminating and perplexing. To discuss labeling I use responses from all 113 partners in

both samples who found this category meaningful. A large minority, 45%, had no label for the chosen family they listed. The other 55% of the respondents used a wide variety of terms. In asking about this category, I used the term "chosen family" as the one that might be most familiar, which may have influenced some respondents to adopt this as their own term. The greatest number, one quarter (28 persons in the two samples combined), reported using the terms "chosen family" or "family of choice." On the other hand, I also suggested "kinship circle" and "family of creation" when asking this question, terms that no one used. Thus it seems likely that "chosen family" and "family of choice" are the most common vernacular for denoting this group among those who had a label for it (perhaps in part a legacy of Weston's work).

The next most common term was simply "family" or "my family," used by 13 respondents. Five respondents described their chosen family groups as "friends," "my friends," "a close circle of friends," or, straddling the two concepts, a "family of friends." Four respondents resorted to the label "extended family," even though their chosen family lists did not usually correspond to the extended families they had enumerated earlier.

Finally, twelve respondents listed unique terms including the following: adult family, community, family of fact/*de facto* family, gay family, kindred spirits, "like family" (i.e., in the analogous sense), my practical family, my gang, our group, and our people. These terms suggest a plethora of understandings of the significance of these associates. Indeed, even those using the most common terms noted above often pondered exactly what to call this set of important people, for example, by clarifying further that these people were "closer than 'real' family" or that they were "not that defined" as a group.

All together, these labels suggest relationships that were governed alternatively by sexual orientation criteria (or not), emotional or practical needs, individual- or couple-centered ties, a sense of bonafide or "fictive" kinship, and other possibilities. The extent to which people struggled to find a label describing the nature of these relationships, and the variety of emphases in the labels chosen, indicate a high degree of ambiguity and flexibility in the meaning of this category.

The criteria for counting someone as chosen family were highly variable from respondent to respondent and sometimes from associate to associate within a single person's chosen family. In this regard, chosen families looked similar in both Weston's and the current study. Though nearly

everyone who listed a chosen family configured it differently in some way from other family and close friend lists, many of the same themes emerged around chosen families as for other types of family.

Membership was sometimes fluid, evolving gradually as new associates entered the circle while others drifted. Thus chosen families could be reconfigured as necessary, consistent with Weston's findings. Respondents occasionally spent time during the interview pondering whether someone truly belonged or not. This was in sharp contrast to the rapid enumeration of families of origin.

Ego-centered family structure. The overwhelming majority of chosen families conformed to the individual-centered "hub and spokes" model of relationships described by Weston. For a few, the couple was the center, but much more often it was the individual. Twenty-one percent of respondents did not name their partners. In some instances respondents may have simply assumed that partners were included by default, but intentional omissions provided further evidence that the individual's definition of chosen family took precedence over ties with one's partner or the couple's joint ties to others.

Sometimes chosen family members knew each other, sometimes there were family clusters among them. And for a small handful, all chosen family members were some sort of family to each other (whether chosen family, blood, etc.). But most often, chosen family members had not also chosen each other; some had never met.

Sharing history and support. Some chosen family associates lived far from the respondent, especially biolegal relatives. This pattern contrasts with the picture of daily sharing that characterized the chosen families Weston described. Nevertheless, geographic distance was not necessarily a barrier to involvement in each other's lives. When asked why associates were counted as chosen family, respondents most often mentioned aspects of shared experience and intimate involvement in each other's lives, consistent with Weston's findings. This theme characterized friends (for 57% of respondents), partners (41%), and to a much lesser extent, biolegal relatives (19%).

Emotional support and caring was the second most common theme, mentioned by 29% of respondents to describe why they counted friends as chosen family, in addition to partners (14%) and biolegal relatives (12%). Respondents mentioned a shared history mostly when

talking about friends as chosen family (16%). Although several mentioned “being there for each other” or “being able to count on” members of their chosen family, perhaps implying material assistance in times of need, or perhaps not, only one of the 58 respondents explicitly mentioned giving or receiving material support as a criterion for inclusion in this category.

To the list of shared intimacies with chosen family members, Weston also added conflict. A relationship’s ability to withstand conflict signified to her study participants that a friendship had become something stronger and more durable. I did not specifically probe this dimension, and no one explicitly mentioned in a spontaneous way this quality as defining their relationships with chosen family members. The Seattle man who described how being able to get past anger with one extended family associate was the “test of family,” quoted earlier, also named this associate as chosen family. Based on the way respondents described going through “thick and thin” with these associates, further probing might have revealed more widespread confirmation of this aspect of chosen families.

Compositional differences. The substantial representation of heterosexual men and women, often biolegal family members, made this study’s chosen families more than simply “friends as family” or “gay family,” in the words of Weston, though these descriptions applied in some cases. As one woman outside Seattle put it, “I would say these people are like family just the way any straight person would—sexuality doesn’t enter into the idea for me.” Twenty-one percent of chosen family members on average were biolegal relatives of either the respondent or partner. The presence of these relatives also meant that intergenerational ties with respondents were not uncommon, in contrast to the peer basis for Weston’s chosen families.

Most of Weston’s respondents wanted to stay connected to ex-lovers as family. Past lovers were like in-laws to some, and continued estrangement was reportedly often met with surprise by one’s friends. Weston contrasted this tendency to heterosexual divorce, which she argued was more often a permanently unfriendly separation. She further argued that inclusion of past partners in chosen families put a whole new twist on the notion of relationship stability, given that common lore and limited empirical data suggest that same-sex couples break up at a higher rate than heterosexuals. She thus reasoned that gay families might be more, not less, stable than ties rooted in heterosexual marriage, because there appeared to be greater continuity between gay and lesbian lover and friend relationships.

If this was the case in the Bay Area gay families of fifteen years ago, it was not so for present-day same-sex couples in Washington State. Despite a median of three or four past relationships of more than one month (one of whom had been a live-in partner) per person, the respondents in this study listed few past lovers in chosen families or, indeed, in their entire family and friend networks. Only seven of 58 respondents mentioned an ex-partner (some of whom were heterosexual ex-spouses) in chosen families. Casting an even wider net by including anyone with whom the respondent had had sexual or romantic involvement (liaisons that did not attain the status of partner, past and present "sex buddies," etc.), one finds that the proportion of chosen families with these associates still only reaches 28%. But it seems unlikely that Weston meant to include every "trick" and tryst when comparing relationship stability between heterosexual and homosexual couples.

Contrary to popular belief, given further credence by Becker (1988) in her book, *Unbroken ties: Lesbian ex-lovers*, there was no clear difference by sex (or location) in the propensity to build chosen families out of past or present sexual or romantic intimates.¹² Perhaps one might observe a different pattern with single men and women, who would not face the potential difficulty of incorporating a past partner with a present partner, but coupled women did not hang on to more past partners than coupled men. The achievement of those who worked through breakups to settle into stable connection with past lovers should not be minimized, but this pattern was not a defining feature of most chosen families (nor close friendships, nor any other group of associates) in this study. In general, current partners were in, and past flames were out.

Reciprocity of ties. Respondents perceived most chosen family relationships as reciprocal, meaning that they believed associates on their lists also counted the respondent as family. Weston did not argue otherwise, but did make the case that chosen family relationships were more often non-reciprocal than traditional biolegal kinship ties, where all relatives usually recognize each other as family, at least in name.

¹² One might attempt to draw a distinction between men and women strictly on the basis of those designated "ex-partners," or "ex-lovers," eliminating casual sex playmates and romances of lesser longevity. In the Partner 1 sample, women appeared to maintain close ties with more ex-partners, through inclusion in chosen families, than men (16% v. 8%). However, the pattern is reversed in the Partner 2 sample: 24% of men count an ex-partner in their chosen families, compared to just 17% of women. Neither of these differences is statistically significant. Men in both samples had had sexual or romantic involvement with a greater proportion of their chosen families than had women, though again, these differences were not statistically significant (Partner 1 sample proportions: men, 10%; women, 3%. Partner 2 sample: men, 13%; women, 7%).

Looking at different categories of family—immediate, extended, chosen—the data from this study do not indicate much variation in patterns of reciprocity between a respondent and other members of each family. In fact, a smaller proportion of respondents, 16%, cited non-reciprocal chosen family relationships than was the case for immediate families (20%) and extended families (18%). Most non-reciprocating associates were friends. Respondents were uncertain about whether a friend's definition of family was more traditional or whether the friend was less committed to the respondent than to other friends or family. Overall, the distinction that Weston made between reciprocity in chosen family versus biolegal family was not as evident in this sample. One-way family ties did characterize some chosen family relationships, but most respondents were confident in the mutuality of the connection with associates in all their circles of family.

Families I choose, or families we choose? Despite chosen families being an individual, not a couple, phenomenon, Weston reported a high degree of overlap between partners' chosen families. Recall that in this sample, in about a third of couples, only one partner listed a chosen family. For these couples, overlap—strictly defined as only those associates named as chosen family members by both partners—was not possible. A more liberal measure of overlap would be the proportion of one's chosen family that a partner named on any family and friend list. Only about half of chosen family associates met this criterion. More true to the spirit of Weston's argument, less than a third of one's chosen family associates (about two associates on average) were also named as chosen family by partners.¹³ Thus partners did not share the vast majority of their chosen family associates.

Chosen families: Substitution, Addition, or Multiplication?

Weston theorized that if gay families were just substitutions for straight family, they would consist of intergenerational rather than peer or "sibling" relationships. Her argument seems to focus on generational differences as an essential element of biolegal families and thereby circumvent the more fundamental questions of what these families might offer in terms of love, support, or symbolic connection and why some people substitute or supplement biolegal families with chosen families. In a larger theoretical sense, it is true that chosen families do not exist by virtue of displacing blood ties, but are rather an addition that challenges blood as the determinant or "master status" of kinship. Yet it is clear from the descriptions reported here that

¹³ The proportion of Partner 1's chosen family associates who were also chosen family of Partner 2 was 30%; for Partner 2 this proportion was 27%.

there is no “unified theory” or practice of chosen family on the ground. Some created new families while maintaining rich ties with families of origin, but others clearly viewed their chosen families as substitutes for lost or unsatisfying relationships with biological relatives.

What did the 70% of respondents listing chosen families add to their networks, compared to the 30% of respondents who did not? Many spoke of chosen family members as friends and family both, switching back and forth easily between the two terms, and cross-listing them in multiple family and friend categories. To what extent did chosen families substitute for other family ties? Did having a chosen family add new associates not represented in other parts of the family and friend network? Or did chosen families merely offer one more out of multiple ways of thinking about the same kinds of associates that were common to all respondents?

Those with chosen families did not have significantly more family and friend associates than those without (17.1 for those with versus 16.9 for those without). In fact, even excluding associates who were only named as chosen family, the total family and friend networks of individuals with chosen families versus those without did not differ significantly.¹⁴ In other words, those with chosen families by and large drew their chosen family members from the same pool of associates they had listed previously as family and friends in other, more conventional categories. In fact, just 14% of chosen family members were uniquely listed in this category; the other 86% had been listed at least once before as immediate or extended family, family of origin, or close friends.¹⁵

Thus chosen families did not add a substantial number of associates that those without chosen families did not have. They did not appear to somehow compensate for a deficit in other categories of associates, at least not in terms of sheer body counts. Rather, the chosen family was simply another way of thinking about important associates that were comparably abundant in the networks of those without chosen families. This does not necessarily mean that a chosen family did not add some extra value to one’s network of significant others. Did thinking about

¹⁴ For Partner 1, the number of associates in the total friend and family network for those without a chosen family was 16.9; for those who listed chosen families, and excluding those associates only listed as chosen family, the comparable number was 16.1. For Partner 2, these numbers were 16.0 and 18.7, respectively. In other words, Partner 2 individuals with chosen families listed even more associates in their family and friend networks (minus chosen family) than those without chosen families.

¹⁵ Comparable figures for Partner 2 were virtually identical: 13% of chosen family associates who were unique versus 87% who had been listed in other family or friend categories.

these “chosen” associates in a different way (regardless of the label used) reflect some particular quality of those associates or of the respondent who named them, or of both?

Weston argued that the ability to choose family associates, regardless of whether or not they chose you, is the maximum expression of both individual creativity and queer collective self-determination. But social status and opportunities shape and constrain the strategies available to create family (Carrington 1999). Being part of a couple, a corporate entity, exerts powerful limits on individual choice in family-making. With its individual-centered orientation, it remains to be seen whether a chosen family yielded any advantages for the couple relationship. The very act of coupling can greatly expand one’s social resources and obligations through acquiring both a partner and the partner’s network. As one man in Seattle commented about the changes in his social status since becoming involved with his partner,

My circle is larger, tighter, and longer lasting...It has increased my social standing. You’re viewed differently when you’re part of a couple.

How does an ego-centered chosen family stand up to the compelling new network that may result from coupling? Does a chosen family have the power to confer status and resources on the individual, does it support the couple, or do other important associates overshadow chosen family influences on the couple relationship? I address these questions in the analysis of relationship quality in Chapter 6.

The Bigger Picture: Composition of Family and Close Friend Networks by Sex, Sexual Orientation, and Biolegal Status

We have looked at the particularities of each set of family and close friends. Zooming out from that level of detail and comparing these five network categories with each other, we see some clear patterns in composition. As noted earlier, the only dimension where the networks of women and men respondents consistently differed was sex composition. Figure 4.1 shows the proportion of male associates in each category by sex of respondent, arranged from most to least sex segregated. This ordering of the categories also reveals a corresponding continuum of choice. The most sex-segregated groupings are chosen family and close friends, those associates that respondents have recruited into their networks most voluntarily or designated in the most deliberate fashion. On the other end of this continuum is the family of origin, the unchosen, or in respondents’ words, most “unavoidable” or “mandatory” set of associates. In other words, the

further we move away from the predetermined family of the past and toward the respondents' free will and agency in shaping friends and family created in the more recent past and present, the more sex-segregated their associations become.

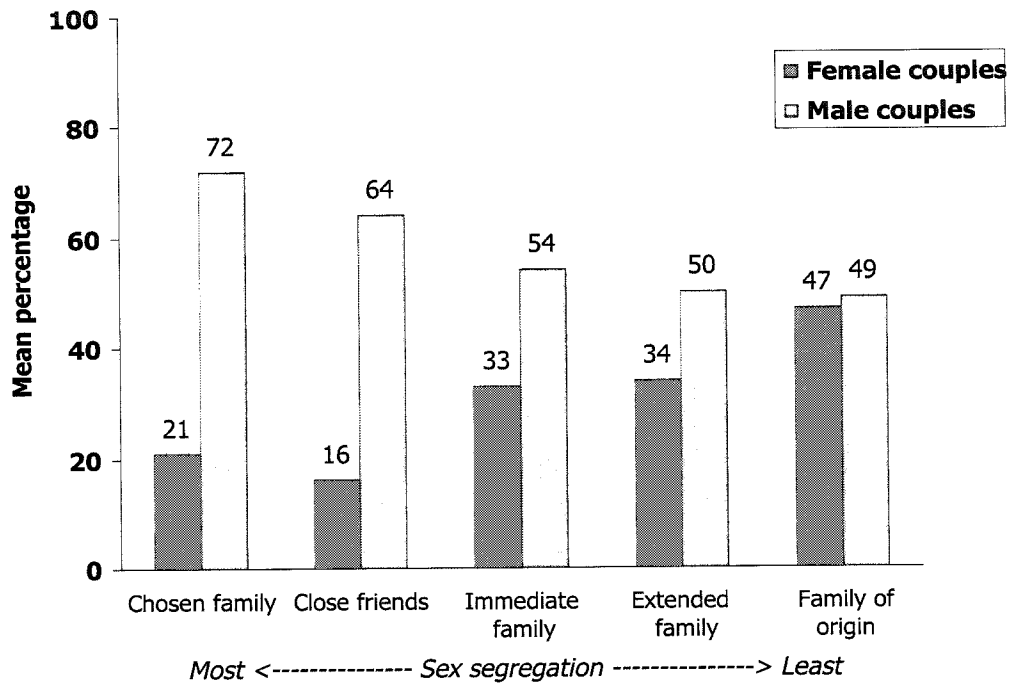


Figure 4.1. Male associates in family and friend lists

The distribution of lesbian, gay, and bisexual associates across the family and friend lists likewise reflects another dimension of this continuum of choice (see Figure 4.2).¹⁶ Chosen family and close friend networks had the greatest proportion of these associates, while families of origin were almost exclusively heterosexual. Immediate and extended families inhabited a middle ground between these two extremes. There was considerable variation between respondents in the sexual orientation composition of all family and friend networks except for family of origin.¹⁷

¹⁶ Because respondents tended to list their partners as immediate family, close friends, and chosen family, adding an associate of the same sex and orientation who was by definition excluded from the family of origin, I also examined these distributions without the partner. Although the patterns of segregation by sex and orientation across the family and friend lists were slightly attenuated, the basic pattern clearly remained.

¹⁷ Standard deviations for the percentage of lesbian, bisexual, and gay associates in the family and friend lists were as follows: immediate family, 21; extended family, 39; family of origin, 10; close friends, 29; chosen family, 29; all family and friends, 17.

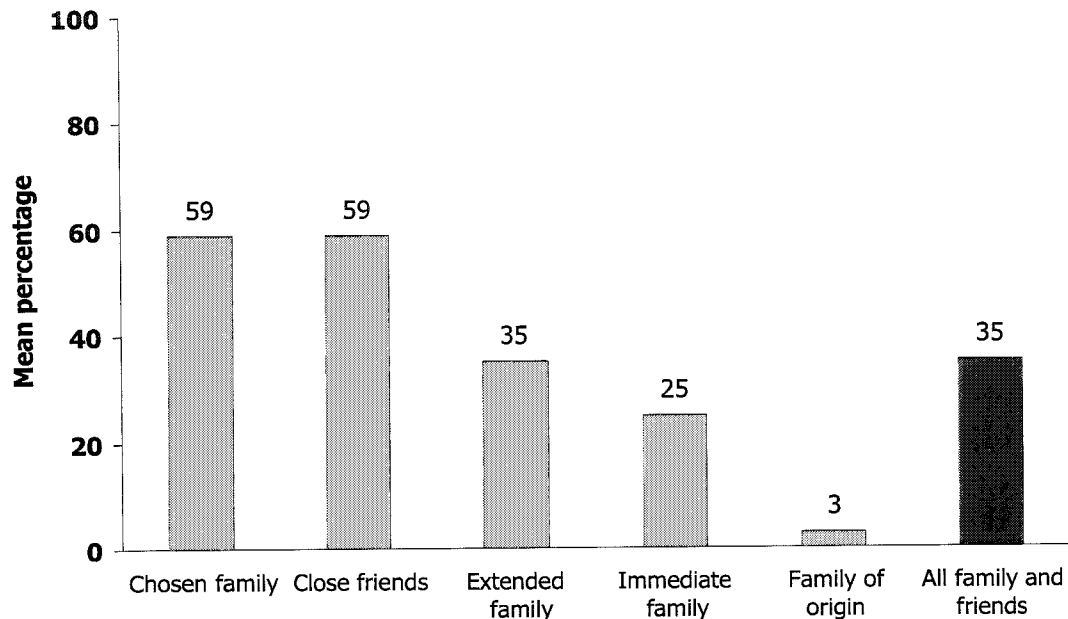


Figure 4.2. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual associates in family and friend lists

Figure 4.3 compares the family and friend networks in a third key way, the distribution of biolegal versus friend associates.¹⁸ When arranged according to the presence of friends, from most to least, the five categories not surprisingly fall into a pattern that is by now familiar. The close friend lists predictably had the fewest biolegal relatives and the most (non-biolegal) friends, while families of origin contained no friends. Chosen families resembled close friend networks, with the addition of more biolegally-related associates of one's own and one's partner. Immediate families resembled families of origin with the addition of a friend and a biolegal relative of one's partner. Extended families were the most heterogeneous category, with significant representation of one's own and one's partner's biolegal relatives as well as friends. This distribution reflects the miscellaneous interpretations of the extended family category, from the traditional kinship definition, to another name for chosen family, to a conveniently ambiguous receptacle where respondents could place a partner's biolegal relatives or others who might not rise to the level of immediate family.

¹⁸ Partners and those few associates in the "other" category are excluded.

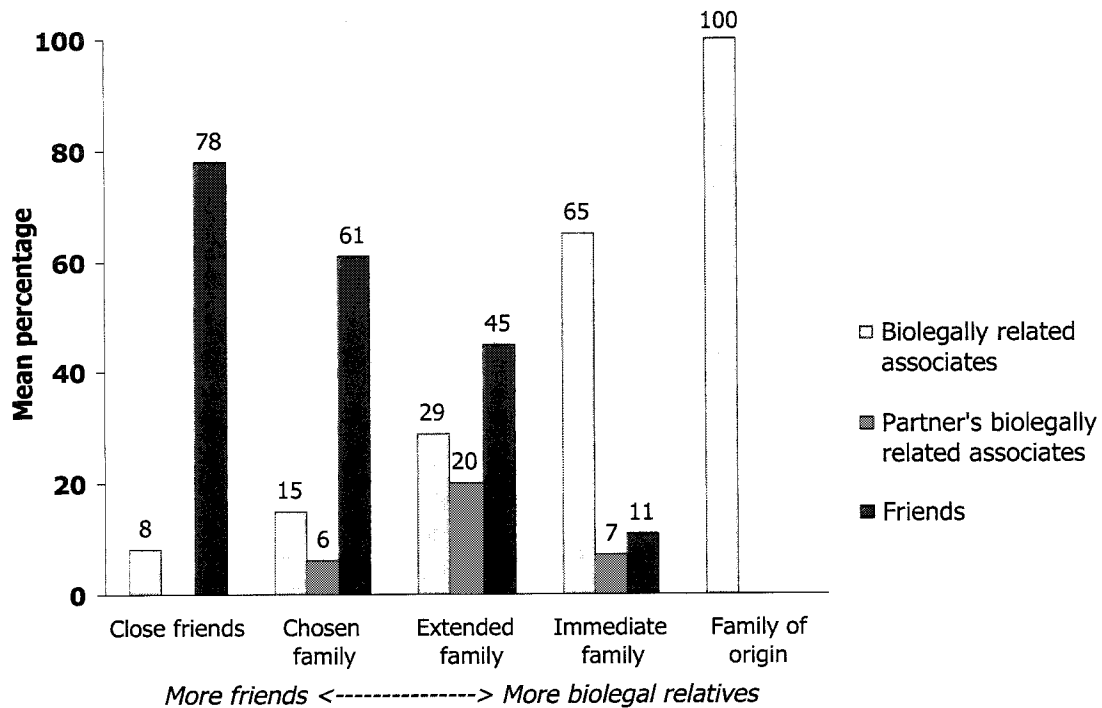


Figure 4.3. Biolegal and friend associates in family and friend lists

Overall, these three comparisons show that family versus friends was a meaningful divide when talking about family of origin and close friendship, but the distinctions are not so clear-cut when looking at other important categories of family. Furthermore, the chosen/unchosen family distinction, though a very real theoretical and ideological shift in thinking about family that had resonance for some respondents, was not necessarily an opposition of biolegal and non-biolegal associates.

Overlap between individuals' family and close friend lists

The relationships between each individual family and friend list and the four others reveal two contrasting patterns. Each of the five segments of the network captures somewhat distinct spheres of influence. At the same time, the overlap between segments shows how relationships with some associates are multi-purpose, consistent with the blurring of friends as family and family as friends, as shown in Table 4.20, which details overlap between the lists of family and friends:

Table 4.20. Percentage overlap between lists of family and close friends

List	Extended family	Family of origin	Close friends	Chosen family	Unique associates ^a
Immediate family	2 ^b	52	18	32 ^c	25
Extended family		3 ^b	18 ^b	22 ^d	52
Family of origin			5	11 ^c	14
Close friends				45 ^c	18
Chosen family					14

Note: Number of respondents = 83 except as noted.

^a The proportion of associates on a given list named uniquely on that list.

^b Number of respondents = 77.

^c Number of respondents = 58.

^d Number of respondents = 54.

Immediate family. Immediate family associates overlapped most with the family of origin (52%), but there was also substantial overlap with chosen family (32%). A quarter of immediate family members did not show up on any other family or friend list.

Extended family. Extended family was the most distinct list of all. This list overlapped slightly with close friends and chosen family lists (18% and 22% respectively). Extended family members were particularly unlikely to be counted as immediate family and family of origin, with only two to three percent overlap. About half of extended family associates were unique to this list.

Family of origin. Few family of origin associates, 14%, were unique to this list; most of them were also considered immediate family members, as noted above. Family of origin members did not cross over substantially onto any other list.

Close friends. Eighty-two percent of close friends were also listed on one of the four family lists; just 18% of close friends were unique to this list. Close friend lists overlapped most frequently with chosen family (45%) and to a much lesser extent with immediate and extended family (18% each). Family of origin members were particularly unlikely to be counted as close friends, overlapping only 5%.

Chosen family. Just 14% of chosen family associates were named uniquely on this list. Chosen families consisted largely of associates who were also designated close friends and immediate family. Overlap was least likely with family of origin at 11%.

Each of the five lists of family and friends exhibited unique patterns of overlap and exclusivity. Even families of origin, who were frequently included in the immediate family, were not subsumed wholly under the immediate family category. Furthermore, the statistics on overlap represent averages, masking to some extent considerable variation between individuals and couples in their configurations and conceptions of these five types of significant others. Each of the five lists thus tapped into somewhat different dimensions of people's family and friend networks while allowing respondents the flexibility to "have it both ways" or many ways when it came to any one associate.

To some extent, people's definitions of friends and family, and who belonged in what category, could be quite "messy." Some people mentioned the same associates in multiple categories of family and close friends—each time for the same reasons, or for different reasons in each category. Similarly, respondents might collect several different types of associates all within one category, but name each person for a different reason. Sometimes people called someone "family" at one point and "friend" the next. Sometimes people had a difficult time articulating what their friends and family meant to them.

Despite some ambiguity at the individual level in defining various types of family and close friends, the patterned regularities by sex and location were remarkable. Overall, women and men, in Seattle and elsewhere in Washington, named similar numbers of associates in each category with similar kinds of biolegal or non-biolegal connections and socio-sexual characteristics. The one clearly gendered pattern was that both men's and women's networks tended to be sex-segregated, the result of friendships and chosen family relationships with similar others. Having identified the family and close friends of people in same-sex couples, it remains to be seen how these and other associates provided support for the individual partner or support for the couple, and whether their gendered networks had differential impacts on male and female couples. The next chapter goes beyond this enumeration and description of emotionally significant associates to delve into aspects of social support and strain for individuals and couples.

Chapter 5

Supporters and Detractors

This chapter looks at network relationships in terms of positive and negative exchanges—the ways that others support and undermine individual partners and couples as a corporate entity. Fischer (1982) conceived of these as “behavioral” as opposed to “psychological” networks, including emotional support exchanges as well as practical, instrumental exchanges. The previous chapter began to look at these network exchanges, but the focus was primarily on describing the composition of families and friendships. Many of these associates played both practical (behavioral) and psychological roles in the lives of same-sex partners. Thus in reality, psychological and behavioral networks overlap significantly.

I begin by reviewing more generally the links between social support and couple relationship quality. I then review research and theory on the social and cultural contexts of lesbian and gay relationships. After this orientation to past work in this area, I use the data collected for this study to explore more explicitly what it is that the people in same-sex couples’ lives do and do not do for them.

SOCIAL SUPPORT AND RELATIONSHIP QUALITY

Social support and interference are complex phenomena without immediately obvious impacts on couples. Numerous studies of social support have shown that perceived approval and support are associated with and predictive of greater attachment, commitment, and expectations of staying together in the future (Eggert and Parks 1987; Lewis 1973; Parks, Stan, and Eggert 1983; Sprecher 1988; Sprecher and Felmlee 1992). Longitudinal analyses have also found that couples experiencing greater social support are more likely to stay together (Felmlee, Sprecher, and Bassin 1990; Johnson and Milardo 1984; Lewis 1973; Parks and Adelman 1983; Sprecher and Felmlee 1992).

Social contact and support may enhance relationship stability in several ways. Sprecher and Felmlee (1992) cite four possible explanations, any or all of which could account for the positive effects of social support. Briefly summarized, the propositions are that the relationship approval of others leads to cognitive balance and uncertainty reduction, reinforces a couple's identity, and exerts pressure against dissolution. Sprecher (1988) conceived of mutual friends as an investment in the couple's identity, finding that the effects of mutual friends largely washed out the effects of material or emotional investments in explaining commitment. In addition to the above perspectives, another beneficial aspect of social support may be that significant friends and family provide models, guidelines, and social accountability to partners in the relationship. External accountability discourages partners from "doing as they please" with each other, enhancing compatibility and commitment.

Support and interference are both likely to occur with close ties, especially kin, and therefore the relative balance of positive and negative interactions is important, since positive interactions with associates may do good, but negative interactions appear to have stronger and longer-term effects (Milardo 1992; Pagel, Erdly, and Becker 1987; Rook 1992).

Evidence from culturally "deviant" relationships such as interracial couples (Chan 1997; Greene and Boyd-Franklin 1996; Song, Bergen, and Schumm 1995) suggests that opposition, marginalization, or lack of social support may have negative effects on relationship quality. Interreligious marriages are also less stable than religiously homogenous marriages (Raschke 1987). On the other hand, a study of interreligious couples in Northern Ireland found that couples viewed their relationships as harmonious havens in an environment of hostility (Lee 1994), evidence of a "Romeo and Juliet effect" (Driscoll, Davis, and Lipetz 1972; Leslie, Huston, and Johnson 1986), where parental opposition, rather than approval, cements the pair bond in romantic love, as the two individuals look to each other for support and understanding in a hostile environment.

Thus the evidence on couple support and opposition is mixed, and which of these two countervailing tendencies operates likely depends on factors such as stage of relationship (dating, living together, etc.) and the aspect of the network association measured (e.g., hostility, approval, frequency of contact). Hostile network associates may drive partners together in the beginning, but interference over a long period of time eventually could have a taxing effect on couple cohesion.

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT, COUPLE SUPPORT

Though social support is thought to be a net positive, it may also destabilize some couple relationships. Heaton and Albrecht (1991) found that unhappy couples were more likely to terminate their marriages in the presence of greater outside social contacts. Thus contact with supportive network members helps happy couples remain committed while unhappy partners utilize the same support to help them break up. Alternative sources of social support may make partners less dependent on a marriage.

In other words, external social support may influence one's level of commitment to the couple relationship. Commitment to the relationship reflects the intent to maintain a consistent line of activity (Becker 1960), to remain in the relationship (Adams and Jones 1997). Those who can function more independently without the relationship are less committed to it, according to Waller's (1938) principle of least interest. Partners who are less committed, by virtue of having more options to secure their well-being outside the relationship, may wield more power within the relationship.

Moore, Blumstein, and Schwartz (1998) showed that children in lesbian couples conferred power on the biological mother, arguing that children constituted a resource as another valued primary relationship that non-biological mothers did not have. But Oliner (1989) suggested that, rather than a source of power, women's friendships in heterosexual marriage function more like a release valve for discontent than as a way to turn up the pressure in marital bargaining with husbands. These provocative hypotheses suggest that social networks may constitute structural resources that confer power on those with rich ties to associates, or alternatively, that they perform a compensatory function for the less powerful or less satisfied partner in a relationship. Thus crucial to determining the meaning of a network relationship, and a distinction that is often blurred, is whether an individual person or one's couple relationship is the target of support or rejection. Partners initiating a breakup are likely to find "transitional" associates to aid in the "uncoupling" process, often people who are not connected to the other partner (Vaughan 1986). Bryant and Conger (1999) found the distinction between support for the couple and support for the individual useful in predicting marital success: they found little effect of personal support, but couples' evaluations of support from network members for their relationship had a much greater positive effect on marital satisfaction. Smith and Brown's (1997) study of 156 gay male couples

found that social support for the couple predicted relationship quality, with weaker evidence suggesting that support for the individual may not.

Associates that both partners are connected to may be especially significant for same-sex couples and for relationship quality generally. Julien et al. (1999) found a mean network overlap (proportion of shared associates out of all associates of both partners) of .25 for both male and female couples, a small but significant difference from the figure of .19 for heterosexuals. It was not clear why same-sex couples had a higher degree of overlap, but it is possible that heterosexual couples had more gender-differentiated networks such that the associates of husbands and wives were less likely to mix. Having more associates of the same sex therefore may have been an advantage for same-sex couples. A study of married couples in Australia found that overlapping of kin and friend networks was associated with increased satisfaction (Cotton, Cunningham, and Antill 1993).

SUPPORT FOR SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS

Comparing family and friend support for gay, lesbian, and heterosexual couples (Kurdek and Schmitt 1987; Kurdek 1988a) shows that for all types of couples, friends appear to constitute the most important perceived source of external support, with family of origin second. Not surprisingly, gays and lesbians perceive less support from their families than do married couples. Bryant and Demian (1994) found that relatives were the third greatest challenge in gay and lesbian relationships, with couples reporting more support from co-workers. Sprecher (1988) also found that married and engaged couples received significantly more support for their relationships than dating or cohabiting heterosexual couples, showing that marriage is instrumental in joining families and social networks.

The fact that same-sex relationships are, with exceptions in certain jurisdictions, not institutionalized (that is, recognized as having a legitimate and normative status) may overshadow the importance of any gender differences in the effects of social support on same-sex couples, in line with the findings of Kurdek (1988a). Particularly for gays and lesbians, all sources of support are not the same, leading some to take a more active stance in constructing their families as a matter of choice (Weston 1991). The strains of secrecy in a heterosexual world are a must for some couples in this process, but on the other hand, sexual communities are not always supportive of couple relationships.

SUPPORT AND SECRECY

Although “coming out” can be nothing more than a strategic choice that carries no hidden meanings about an individual’s acceptance of a gay identity (Cain 1991), being out of or in the closet is for couples not just an individual decision. It is indeed a matter of couple identity, not to mention synchronization and resource mobilization. Women may be more prone to ambivalence about sexual identity than men, given that they tend to be less exclusively homosexual, and re-entry into a heterosexual identity is less stigmatized by heterosexual partners (Blumstein and Schwartz 1974; Bryant and Demian 1994; Kurdek 1988b; Rust 1993). The act itself of coming out as a couple becomes a device gays and lesbians use to claim the status, and increasingly the benefits, of couplehood by forcing social recognition of the significance of their relationships. Not taking this step can make a relationship easier to exit because the commitment has yet to be made public. Commitment can falter on the uncertainty this creates in either partner, and others who do not take same-sex couple bonds seriously can ignore or disrespect couple boundaries (Johnson and Keren 1996).

Maintaining a relationship in secret in order to protect the social status of one of the partners can also have profound effects on the balance of power in the relationship. Richardson (1988) found that when a married and a single person engaged in a secret romance, the need to protect one’s marital status translated into the ability to control multiple aspects of the relationship, including such basic conditions as where, when, and how the lovers could have contact. Richardson’s insights are especially relevant to same-sex couples where one partner is more closeted than the other, for example, to hide one’s sexual orientation from coworkers. The partner who is more “out” may be faced with the choice of going back into the closet or losing the relationship. This bargain can have further ramifications for relationship power, such as the withdrawal from relationships with other out lesbians and gays to prevent “guilt by association,” resulting in the loss of important social support.

Alternatively, a relationship kept private has its own simplicity, especially in the face of potential rejection from heterosexual family and friends (Slater and Mencher 1991; Zacks, Green, and Marrow 1988). Contact between one’s partner and family has the potential to create competition: power struggles, split loyalties, and conflicts involving the family of origin can make the couple relationship volatile (Berger 1990; Kurdek and Schmitt 1987). Same-sex partners are sometimes viewed as threats to the parent-child bond, spoiling parents’ dreams for their child’s future

(Muller 1987). The parents may even blame a son or daughter's partner for somehow "corrupting" their child's sexual orientation (Laird 1993).

Research that is now somewhat dated documented that families of origin disapproved or were unaware of the relationship for a substantial minority of gay male couples (Berger 1990). McWhirter and Mattison (1984) found twenty years ago that more than half had not revealed their gay identities to at least some family members. Some studies have reported that lesbians have faced more relationship challenges involving relatives than gay men (Bryant and Demian 1994; Muller 1987). Parental interference may be conditioned by gender expectations. Muller (1987) found that lesbian daughters had significantly poorer relationships with their parents than did gay sons. She argued that gay sons were able to please their parents by fulfilling an important requirement of male socialization—success in paid work. By contrast, lesbian daughters did not fulfill traditional female gender expectations of marriage and subservience. These differences meant that fathers could identify with both sons and their partners, but traditional mothers felt threatened by their daughters' violations of family-oriented gender norms and did not know how to relate to a lesbian daughter's partner.

Other studies have shown either no effect or positive effects of being out of the closet, regardless of parent reactions. In a sample of lesbians together an average of more than five years, Eldridge and Gilbert (1990) found that over half were not out to both parents but that disclosure of a gay identity to parents made no difference in relationship satisfaction. Green et al. (1996) reported similar findings. On the other hand, Murphy (1989), and more recently, Caron and Ulin (1997) both showed that openness with parents about the lesbian relationship was generally beneficial. A parent's good opinion increased the regard women had for their partners and the sense of having made a good choice. Even in the face of disapproval or lack of respect for a couple's boundaries, both of which could cause conflict and ambivalence about the relationship and lesbian identity, out couples in Murphy's study may have been advantaged, since parental rejection brought some partners closer. Isolation and the stress of maintaining two separate identities were often reduced through the acceptance of other family members. Even when lesbians did experience disapproval, they minimized it. Levy (1989) suggested that friends of lesbians help as well by stepping in to substitute for the loss of family support, pointing to the importance of supportive lesbian communities.

CREATING A BUZZ: SYMBOLIC SUPPORT

The quintessential expression of community support for couple relationships is the marriage ceremony. Although private understandings between partners can enhance commitment (Kelley 1983), they are likely to work best in combination with public pledges. Public ritual signals to network members the seriousness of the commitment, enlisting their participation in the relationship (Broderick 1993). Same-sex couples use being "out as a couple" in a variety of contexts as a device to enact a couple identity and gain support for their relationships (Haas and Stafford 1998; Johnson and Keren 1996).

Lawler and Yoon (1996) showed that the objectification of an exchange relationship as a third force on the dyad, as a valued social category larger than the two individuals, helped to account for stable exchanges, or commitment, in experimental research on dyads. The emotional "buzz" of acting jointly in a stable relation with another fosters a level of cohesion over and above what a rational cost-benefit analysis and weighing of alternatives would predict. Same-sex couples can achieve some of the "buzz" of marriage through other forms of public commitment that help make the relationship more of an objective social fact. Bryant and Demian (1994:104) found that 11% of male couples surveyed in 1988-89 had had a ceremony, whereas nearly twice as many female couples (20%) had done so. They also found that 60% percent of lesbians but only 39% of gay men had symbolized their commitment with a ritual, and more women (57%) than men (36%) wore a ring or other symbol of the relationship. These statistics suggest that explicit rituals and symbols have played a greater role in the lives of lesbian couples. They may also bring a greater level or different kind of network support and integration to couples enacting public rituals.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT: LESBIAN NETWORKS, GAY NETWORKS

"Much as we in the gay world pretend we're all one big happy community, there really is a difference between the single and the coupled, and it can create a subtle tension, especially between friends" (Signorile 1997:77). And, Signorile might have added, there is a difference between communities of women and men. As with the gendered aspects of gay male and lesbian life covered in Chapter 1, the jury is out on whether involvement in gay and lesbian communities is salutary or harmful to same-sex couples; probably it is a little of both.

Blumstein and Schwartz (1983) found that in the 1970s, living in a gay "ghetto" increased the likelihood of breakup for same-sex couples, concluding that gay institutions were not organized

around supporting coupling and family formation. More recently, other studies supply further evidence that gay male couples feel a lack of support from the singles-oriented gay community as well as the straight world (Bigner 1996; Meyer 1989). On the other hand, Haas and Stafford (1998) found that both male and female couples seek out gay and lesbian environments for support. Notwithstanding a recent rush of couples to the altar or the courts to solemnize their relationships, evidence perhaps of a nascent gay couple culture, extreme gay community embeddedness may to this day increase alternatives to one's current relationship while decreasing support for the belief in lifetime couplehood. Different communities and different aspects of gay and lesbian communities are likely to be supportive and unsupportive of couple relationships.

ASSESSING NETWORK INFLUENCES

The literature reviewed suggests a variety of network influences on the quality of same-sex couple relationships. The descriptive findings presented in this chapter rely on a comparable variety of methods to measure key dimensions of same-sex partners' interactions with their environments, including specific support behaviors of network associates, structural properties of same-sex partners' networks, the influence of gay associates and communities, the effects of friend and family reference groups, and associates who create strain in the couple relationship. I present the analytic methods before discussing the findings related to each of these topics.

Measuring Exchange Networks

Listing categories of family and friends as in the previous chapter gave an overall picture of who some of the significant others are in couples' lives. But that analysis only hinted at how network associates might behave, and through those behaviors, affect same-sex couples. What is also needed is a method to measure support behaviors, or lack of support.

Studies on networks and social support often use closeness as the criterion for delineating support networks. This method has a number of drawbacks. Closeness is interpreted differently by different respondents (Fischer 1982; Milardo 1988). The meaning of "close" varies widely and perhaps systematically across respondents, since men tend to know people less well than women, even those they consider close (Milardo 1988; Rubin 1985). Close associates are not necessarily those with whom one has regular interaction or who perform instrumental functions. Some define closeness in terms of kinship ("she is my sister; therefore, we are close") whether or not there is emotional intimacy (Fischer 1982), a phenomenon noted in Chapter 4 among some

of the respondents in this study. Asking only for close associates also presumes that one should have them and be able to name them, causing socially isolated persons to feel compelled to exaggerate (Fischer 1982; Milardo 1988). To some extent this bias is less likely in a study such as this where being coupled tends to prevent extreme isolation (though quite the opposite in abusive couple relationships where a controlling partner may attempt to restrict the other's social contacts [Michalski 2004]).

A preferred technique for measuring exchange networks, developed by Fischer (1982), asks about specific exchanges between respondents and their associates. This method is superior to simply asking for close associates because responses are more reliable and consistent. It distinguishes consistently between urban and rural respondents and thus may provide some insight into differences between networks of couples in Seattle and outside Seattle (Fischer 1982). Networks enumerated in this way also appear to be related to levels of adjustment in both heterosexual and homosexual couples (Julien et al. 1999). The method is efficient at characterizing the structure and content of network interactions quickly and reliably (Milardo 1988; Fischer 1982).

The procedure asks six name-eliciting questions: (1) who would take care of the home when away; (2) with whom the respondent socializes; (3) with whom the respondent discusses a hobby; (4) with whom the respondent discusses personal problems; (5) to whom the respondent turns for advice; and (6) from whom the respondent can borrow money. At this point in the interview, respondents answer a brief set of questions about a subset of the associates they have listed so far.¹ Then three additional name-eliciting questions—(7) who has helped with household tasks in the past three months, and for those who are employed, (8) with whom the respondent talks about work, and (9) if there is anyone important who was not mentioned in the first eight questions—round out the list.

¹ One unique associate was selected from the answers to each of the first six questions until a maximum of five associates was obtained, excluding members of the household. Given that some activities elicited no names or no unique names, Fischer (1982) was only able to obtain five unique names across the six questions from 39% of his sample; in the other cases, fewer names were used. The respondent completed a brief questionnaire about each of the selected associates asking how the two first met, how long they had known each other, frequency of encounters, and so on. In addition, the respondent stated whether each of the selected associates knew each of the others well. These data are available for the sample used in this study, but because they are based on such a small sample of each respondent's associates, it is not known how reliably they represent the characteristics of a respondent's total network. These data are probably more appropriate for describing population tendencies than for individual-level measurement.

All together, these nine questions ask about regular exchanges, rare but important exchanges (a large sum of money), recent sources of valued exchanges (those helping with tasks around the home recently), and exchanges in different domains of life (work, home). Respondents may provide up to eight names to each question except for leisure time associates (question 2), where ten names are allowed. Listing the maximum number of names in response to each question, if all names were unique, would yield 74 network associates—highly improbable but theoretically possible. Fischer also added household members to derive his overall measure of the exchange network, the basis for the network statistics reported in his late 1970s study of 1050 persons in fifty Northern California communities.

In that study, the first eight questions plus household members yielded an average of 12.8 network members with a range of 2 to 65. The last question (“is there anyone who is important to you who doesn’t show up on this list?”) minimizes potential bias in the choice of exchange questions. People named an average of 5.7 important persons not previously mentioned, usually kin with whom the respondent was less actively involved in exchanges and yet who were still considered important. These “important” persons were members of the psychological exchange network as opposed to the behavioral exchange network elicited by the first eight questions (Milardo 1988; Milardo 1992). The mean number of associates in the total exchange network elicited using this method was therefore 18.5.

Five of six studies that Milardo (1992) reviewed that used similar name-eliciting techniques yielded remarkably consistent numbers of exchange network members, averaging around 20 in samples that were diverse in terms of age, marital status and sexual orientation, though with considerable variation. Most exchange networks measured this way range from approximately 6 to 34 members. Participants in two studies of same-sex couples (Julien et al. 1999; Ulin and Milardo 1992), though naming networks of similar size as heterosexuals, included a far lower proportion of kin than found in the networks of heterosexuals.

After eliciting the names with these nine questions, the final step in the procedure is to compile the entire list of names, including any household members. Respondents on the list are then categorized according to whether or not they fit particular descriptions, such as those who live within a 5-minute drive, those who are from the same ethnic group, and so on. To Fischer’s categorizations I added questions about whether anyone on the list identified as a sexual minority; if so, how (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and so on); whether the respondent socialized with

those persons in a group; how important it was to live around other sexual minority persons; and who on the list knew of the respondent's sexual orientation. In a final set of questions using this categorization method and open-ended questions, I also asked specifically about interactions with network members that supported or interfered with the couple relationship.

I begin the analysis of support systems by reporting basic descriptive statistics on the exchange network derived from the procedure above. To place the exchange network in context, I then compare it with the family and friend network presented in the previous chapter. This analysis will complete the picture of the people in same-sex couples' lives and lay the groundwork for a more detailed analysis of who does what, and for whom—for individual partners, or for the couple as a unit.

Individual Partners' Support Exchange Networks

Table 5.1 breaks down individuals' total exchange networks elicited using Fischer's procedure into two main components: associates providing specific support exchanges, and "anyone important" not listed as providing any of those types of support. The mean size of the support exchange network was 17.1. This study's respondents named an average of 3.9 additional associates (compared to 5.7 in Fischer's study), for a total exchange network of 20.9 persons, slightly more than the 18.5 in Fischer (1982), but roughly comparable to most studies using this instrument (Milardo 1992). There were no statistically significant differences between types of couples in the sizes of their exchange networks.

Table 5.1. Individual partners' total exchange network by sex and location

Associates	<i>Men in Seattle N = 20</i>	<i>Women in Seattle N = 22</i>	<i>Men outside Seattle N = 20</i>	<i>Women outside Seattle N = 21</i>	<i>All couples N = 83</i>
Support exchange network	16.6	18.9	16.4	16.2	17.1
Anyone important not listed above	4.8	3.7	3.2	3.8	3.9
Total exchange network	21.4	22.6	19.6	20.0	20.9

The information collected about associates added as "anyone important" (not mentioned as a support provider) was limited, but sufficient to draw several distinctions with support providers. These additional important associates were three times as likely to be biolegal family members as

were support providers (36% v. 12%). Seventy percent of the added associates were heterosexual, compared to 53% of support providers. Fifty-four percent of added associates were friends, similar to the proportion of support providers who were friends. Most striking is the fact that while an average of 78% of support exchange associates lived within an hour from the respondent, a similar proportion, 72%, of the additional "important" associates lived more than an hour away from the respondent. These patterns are in line with Fischer's findings, suggesting that these additional "important" associates who did not provide any specific types of support were family and friends who were psychologically important to the respondent but too distant to be involved in routine or significant support exchanges.

Looking at the rest of the exchange network, only nine of the 83 couples reported other housemates besides the two partners, usually a relative, friend, or someone renting a room. Except as noted, the rest of this analysis focuses on what I call the support exchange network—that segment of the exchange network consisting only of those persons providing one or more of the eight specific types of support queried.

Most respondents listed at least one person for each type of support. Everyone listed someone they socialized with and discussed personal matters with. More than 90% of respondents named someone to take care of their homes while away, to discuss work with, or to rely on for their opinion on an important decision. About a fifth of respondents did not talk with anyone about hobbies or special interests or had anyone they would borrow money from in an emergency or if they needed a large sum of money. About a third of respondents had not received any help with home tasks in the past three months.

Table 5.2 reports numbers of associates providing various types of support, listed in order of frequency from highest to lowest and broken down by sex and location of respondent.² The greatest number of support providers fell into two broad categories: doing social activities together—over half of all support associates—and talking about issues of importance, including personal matters, spare time interests, and work. Respondents named the fewest associates for help in the home in the past three months and borrowing money. There were no statistically significant differences between men and women on any items, but the further couples lived from

² Means are based on all respondents, even those who named no one in that category (and thus given a value of zero). For example, if a respondent was unemployed and therefore had no one to discuss work with, the respondent was given a value of zero associates on that question (and zero percent for the proportion of the total support exchange network).

gay community, the fewer persons they listed for social activities, about one person fewer for men outside Seattle than men in Seattle.³

Table 5.2. Individual partners' support exchange associates

Associates	<i>Men in Seattle</i> N = 20	<i>Women in Seattle</i> N = 22	<i>Men outside Seattle</i> N = 20	<i>Women outside Seattle</i> N = 21	<i>All couples</i> N = 83
Do social activities	9.6 (60)	9.4 (53)	8.4 (54)	8.9 (58)	9.1 (56)
Discuss personal matters	4.3 (26)	4.4 (23)	4.2 (27)	4.6 (29)	4.4 (26)
Discuss hobbies/spare time interests	3.2 (19)	4.3 (22)	3.4 (20)	4.1 (26)	3.8 (22)
Discuss work	3.1 (18)	4.2 (22)	4.0 (24)	3.6 (21)	3.7 (21)
Consider opinion seriously in important decisions	2.8 (17)	2.7 (15)	3.7 (23)	2.8 (17)	3.0 (18)
Take care of home while away	2.2 (14)	3.0 (18)	3.0 (19)	2.9 (20)	2.8 (18)
Borrow money (large sum or emergency)	1.8 (11)	2.3 (12)	2.3 (14)	2.8 (17)	2.3 (13)
Help with home tasks past 3 months	.8 (5)	2.4 (12)	1.8 (10)	2.1 (12)	1.8 (10)
Other household members	1.0 (6)	1.2 (7)	1.2 (9)	1.2 (8)	1.2 (7)
Total support exchange associates	16.6 (100)	18.9 (100)	16.4 (100)	16.2 (100)	17.1 (100)

Note: Mean percentages of support exchange associates named within each couple type are given in parentheses. Because categories are not mutually exclusive, columns do not sum to 100.

Getting respondents to list their partners in response to the support questions, when appropriate, ended up posing a challenge. I instructed respondents at the beginning of the naming procedure that it was appropriate to list partners (or other housemates) in response to any question (except for taking care of the home while away, where it was assumed that both partners were away), but I did not remind them at any other time in order not to encourage bias toward naming partners. Respondents mostly named their partners as providers of advice or emotional support—discussing work, personal matters, and important decisions—but many clearly forgot about their

³ Partner 1: $r = -.19$, $p = .09$; Partner 2: $r = -.27$, $p = .01$.

partners when considering home tasks and socializing. A partner's involvement in these activities was often assumed without naming her or him explicitly, and for this reason, a bias is likely to have occurred in the other direction, undercounting partners providing these types of support. A related concern affected the naming of partners for borrowing money. Partners were mentioned infrequently, and in most cases only when couples did not pool their assets. Most respondents clearly interpreted this question to mean getting money outside of the couple's joint resources. Those whose assets were separate from their partners' and whose partners had more assets were more likely to name their partners as someone they would borrow money from.⁴ The tendency for some to forget their partners in some categories would seem to argue for more than one reminder to name partners when appropriate when using this instrument with couples.

Table 5.3 breaks associates down by sex and sexual orientation in terms of the types of support they provided according to the sex of the respondent. The differences between male and female respondents were almost entirely due to naming significantly more associates of one's own sex and own orientation. Lesbians and gay men named similar numbers of heterosexual men and women in almost every category. Men provided an average of 24% of all types of support for women respondents while providing 58% of men's support. Men were mostly like to call on women to take care of the home while away (50% of the time), while women were most likely to call on men to borrow money, but to a much lesser degree (31% of the time). In other words, the types of support that respondents obtained from opposite sex associates also showed somewhat of a gendered pattern, with women looking after men's homes and men providing women some economic support—though women still relied much more on other women for this support.

Associates were almost equally split overall between heterosexual and sexual minority persons. But looking at specific types of support, we see that lesbian, gay, and bisexual associates were the majority on all items except borrowing money and taking care of the home while away (and discussing work for male respondents only). Taking care of the home while couples were away and lending money were the only two types of support that do not necessarily require substantial social interaction. All other support types depend on spending time sharing activities, information,

⁴ Home ownership provided some insight into this pattern. Partners in 85% of couples owned a home, 31% individually and 54% jointly. Fewer than 25% of respondents in couples where neither partner owned a home or both partners jointly owned a home said they would turn to their partners to borrow money. In contrast, 50% of respondents whose partners owned a home separately listed those partners as someone they would turn to for money (Partner 1 sample: Pearson Chi-square = 8.00, $p < .05$) to 80% (Partner 2 sample: Chi-square = 17.61, $p < .01$).

thoughts, and feelings, and respondents clearly preferred doing so with others who shared their sexual orientation as well. Economic support showed the most striking pattern: 71% of the persons that respondents would borrow money from were heterosexual. Examining relationships to the respondent, in Table 5.4, reveals who these potential financial helpers were. Same-sex couples would turn more than half the time to biolegal family members of either or both partners for financial support. Friends were next in line, about a quarter of financial support associates. Financial support was the most common category where biolegal relatives were mentioned.

Financial assistance was the least common type of support from friends, yet in almost every other category, friends provided the greatest proportion of support. Partners beat friends in only one category: those whose opinions respondents considered in making important decisions (though it must be borne in mind that one's many friends greatly outnumbered the one partner). Friends constituted 57% of all support providers on average, compared to 12% for biolegal relatives. The fact that friends were not the first choice of most respondents for financial support is evidence that these same-sex couples by and large subscribed to norms in the larger society against borrowing money from friends. People tend to view financial issues as a private "family" matter and consider friendships too fragile to withstand potential complications or misunderstandings in lending and borrowing. On the other hand, it is clear that respondents wanted to share day-to-day activities and support with partners and friends more than biolegal family members.

Table 5.3. Individual partners' support exchanges by sex and sexual orientation of associates and sex of respondent

Type of associate	Sex of respondent	Do social activities	Discuss personal matters	Discuss hobbies/spare time interests	Discuss work	Consider opinion seriously in important decisions	Take care of home while away	Borrow money (large sum or emergency)	Help with home tasks past 3 months	All support exchanges
(1) Heterosexual women	Female	2.3 (26)	1.4 (30)	1.4 (35)	1.5 (34)	1.0 (27)	1.2 (48)	.9 (39)	.5 (24)	6.1 (35)
	Male	2.4 (28)	1.4 (31)	1.0 (23)	1.2 (35)	1.0 (23)	1.0 (37)	.6 (34)	.4 (24)	5.2 (32)
(2) Heterosexual men	Female	1.2 (13)	.3 (6)	.4 (9)	.6 (13)	.3 (8)	.5 (15)	.8 (28)	.5 (22)	3.0 (17)
	Male	1.6 (18)	.4 (8)	.6 (21)	1.0 (25)	.6 (15)	.5 (19)	.9 (42)	.3 (17)	3.7 (22)
(3) Lesbian or bisexual women	Female	4.7 (51)	2.4 (59)	2.2 (50)	1.7 (50)	1.4 (62)	1.0 (28)	.7 (30)	1.1 (49)	7.2 (41)
	Male	1.1 (12)	.3 (7)	.6 (13)	.2 (9)	.1 (3)	.3 (13)	.0 (2)	.0 (2)	1.7 (9)
(4) Gay or bisexual men	Female	.9 (9)	.3 (5)	.2 (6)	.1 (4)	.1 (3)	.2 (8)	.1 (3)	.1 (5)	1.3 (7)
	Male	3.9 (43)	2.2 (55)	1.2 (43)	1.1 (31)	1.5 (59)	.8 (31)	.4 (22)	.6 (57)	5.9 (37)

Table 5.3 (*continued*)

Type of associate	Sex of respondent	Do social activities	Discuss personal matters	Discuss hobbies/ spare time interests	Discuss work	Consider opinion seriously in important decisions	Take care of home while away	Borrow money (large sum or emergency)	Help with home tasks past 3 months	All support exchanges
All male associates	Female	2.1 (23)	.7 (12)	.6 (15)	.7 (17)	.4 (11)	.7 (24)	.9 (31)	.7 (26)	4.3 (24)
	Male	5.6 (60)	2.6 (63)	1.8 (64)	2.1 (56)	2.1 (73)	1.3 (50)	1.4 (64)	.9 (74)	9.6 (58)
All lesbian, bisexual, or gay associates	Female	5.6 (61)	2.7 (64)	2.4 (56)	1.8 (54)	1.5 (65)	1.2 (37)	.8 (33)	1.3 (54)	8.5 (48)
	Male	5.0 (55)	2.5 (61)	1.7 (56)	1.3 (40)	1.6 (62)	1.1 (44)	.5 (23)	.6 (59)	7.6 (47)
Total (rows 1-4) ^a	Female	9.1 (100)	4.5 (100)	4.2 (100)	3.9 (100)	2.8 (100)	3.0 (100)	2.5 (100)	2.3 (100)	17.6 (100)
	Male	9.0 (100)	4.3 (100)	3.3 (100)	3.6 (100)	3.3 (100)	2.6 (100)	2.0 (100)	1.2 (100)	16.5 (100)
Number of respondents	Female	43	43	37	41	42	41	38	28	43
	Male	40	40	28	36	39	37	35	26	40

Note: Absolute numbers of associates are averages across all respondents. Mean percentages of all associates named within each category of exchange, given within parentheses, are based only on those naming anyone in that category.

^a Column totals may not equal the exact sum of component values due to rounding.

Table 5.4. Individual partners' support exchanges by sex and sexual orientation of associates

Type of associate	Do social activities	Discuss personal matters	Discuss hobbies/ spare time interests	Discuss work	Consider opinion seriously in important decisions	Take care of home while away ^a	Borrow money (large sum or emergency)	Help with home tasks past 3 months	All support exchanges
Biologically related women	.4 (4)	.6 (13)	.2 (3)	.1 (3)	.5 (14)	.1 (3)	.5 (26)	.1 (8)	1.1 (7)
Biologically related men	.2 (2)	.2 (3)	.1 (1)	.1 (2)	.2 (6)	.0 (0)	.6 (25)	.1 (5)	.8 (5)
Total of biologically related associates	.5 (6)	.7 (16)	.2 (5)	.3 (5)	.8 (21)	.1 (3)	1.1 (51)	.2 (13)	2.0 (12)
Partner's biologically related women	.2 (2)	.0 (0)	.0 (0)	.0 (0)	.0 (0)	.1 (5)	.1 (5)	.1 (8)	.4 (2)
Partner's biologically related men	.2 (2)	.0 (0)	.0 (0)	.0 (1)	.0 (0)	.0 (2)	.2 (6)	.1 (5)	.3 (2)
Total of partner's biologically related associates	.4 (5)	.0 (0)	.0 (0)	.0 (1)	.0 (0)	.1 (7)	.3 (11)	.2 (13)	.7 (4)
Ex-partners	.1 (1)	.1 (1)	.0 (0)	.1 (2)	.0 (0)	.0 (1)	.0 (2)	.0 (1)	.1 (1)
Friends	6.2 (69)	2.5 (51)	2.6 (67)	1.6 (40)	1.2 (32)	1.9 (64)	.6 (25)	.8 (37)	9.6 (57)
Partners	.2 (3)	.9 (28)	.3 (12)	.7 (26)	.9 (46)	--	.2 (11)	.4 (29)	1.0 (6)
All others	1.6 (17)	.1 (3)	.7 (15)	1.0 (27)	.1 (1)	.7 (25)	.0 (1)	.2 (7)	3.7 (21)
Total	9.1 (100)	4.4 (100)	3.8 (100)	3.7 (100)	3.0 (100)	2.8 (100)	2.3 (100)	1.8 (100)	17.1 (100)

Note: Mean percentages of all associates named within each category of exchange are given in parentheses.

^a Partners were not allowed as a response to this question because both respondent and partner were assumed to be away from home.

Table 5.5 looks at support relationships in another way by showing the percentages of respondents listing associates at least once according to specific categories of relationship. Types of relationships mentioned by fewer than ten percent of respondents are not included (e.g., grandparent, cousin, aunt, uncle, partner's nephew, sister's boyfriend, or therapist). Top support providers were partners and friends, mentioned by all respondents, followed by parents, coworkers, and siblings. Nearly half of respondents listed at least one acquaintance—someone the respondent did not know well enough to call a friend. This person was often either someone connected to a friend or relative that the respondent encountered through a social activity or someone the respondent knew through the pursuit of a hobby. In every category, respondents listed more women than men, especially more mothers and sisters than fathers and brothers. At least one parent or sibling was mentioned by 79.5% of respondents, comparable to the 81% value obtained by Kurdek (1988a) using the 27-item Social Support Questionnaire (developed by Sarason et al. 1983) with a sample of 238 gays and lesbians in same-sex couples. But the support contributions of friends stand out much more clearly when we look at the variety of types of support they provided when compared to biolegal family members, as presented in the previous table (Table 5.4).

Table 5.5. Relationship of support exchange associates to respondent

Relationship to respondent	<i>Sex of associate</i>		Total
	Female	Male	
Partner	51.8	48.2	100.0
Friend	97.6	89.2	100.0
Parent	61.4	45.8	69.9
Coworker	41.0	31.3	51.8
Sibling	32.5	24.1	47.0
Acquaintance	30.1	26.5	44.6
Partner's parent	20.5	19.3	24.1
Neighbor	21.7	12.0	21.7
Member of organization	15.7	8.4	19.3
Partner's sibling	12.0	10.8	16.9
Ex-partner	6.0	4.8	10.8

Note: Biolegal categories such as "parent" or "sibling" also included stepfamily or half-sibling relationships.

The differences in support provided by friends and biolegal family members are also captured in the concept of multiplexity (also called multistrandedness), the number of ways someone is connected to the respondent. Multistranded relations are usually more intimate and functionally more consequential because they signify more social support by definition. The average number of strands per associate in Fischer's study (1982) was 1.6. Out of a long list of factors considered, he found that only age made an appreciable difference in multiplexity: younger people, who tended to know more people and do more activities, including work, tended to have more multistranded ties. Rural dwellers did not have more multistranded ties than urbanites (in fact, urban women tended to have slightly more stranded ties).

Fischer did not analyze couples in his sample, but multiplexity may have special significance for couple relationships. A high degree of multiplexity of ties between partners may indicate couple solidarity. Conversely, if greater multiplexity of ties with others comes at the expense of the primary relationship, this pattern could signify less intimacy, shared experience, and solidarity

between partners. This correlation is likely to be complicated by the size of the network, however: the larger the network, the lesser the degree of multiplexity, as support functions are distributed across a greater number of associates, a pattern found in this sample.⁵ A large network of associates could also drain a partner's energy from the primary relationship. Thus the analysis of the impact of multiplexity on couple quality in the next chapter will need to look for effects of network size as well.

Table 5.6 details the degree of multiplexity of the most common support relationships. Note that unlike in previous analyses, being a household member is counted as a support tie in this analysis of multiplexity, since sharing a home is an important part of the relationship for couples who cohabit (all couples in this sample). As expected, this sample of couples exhibited a greater mean degree of multiplexity in the support network compared to Fischer's community sample (1.9 v. 1.6).

There are two ways of looking at the richness of ties to specific types of associates. The first method takes an individual perspective: if and only if I list any parents as support providers, how many types of support exchanges do they typically provide me? The second method takes a population perspective: how many types of support exchanges do parents provide all respondents on average, even counting those respondents who listed no parents as support providers? The first approach acknowledges that those who do list parents may have rich ties to them, while the second approach acknowledges the possibility that many respondents may have no support ties from parents and adjusts the average numbers of ties accordingly, resulting in a lower average multiplexity score across the entire sample.

The table displays the percentage of respondents listing each type of associate and shows the multiplexity of these relationships using these two methods. The first method gives mean numbers of support ties by relationship only among those respondents listing that type of relationship in their support exchange network, while the second set shows mean support ties across the entire sample. For example, though all respondents listed partners and friends, just 16.9% of respondents listed a partner's sibling as a support provider. Of only the 16.9% of respondents who listed any siblings of partners as support providers, all partner's siblings provided the "typical" respondent 2.14 total support ties, or a mean of 1.21 support ties per partner's sibling. The second set of multiplexity analyses in the table shows mean support ties for

⁵ The larger the number of support persons listed, the lesser the degree of multiplexity of ties with those persons. In the Partner 1 sample, $r = -.29$, $p < .01$; for Partner 2, $r = -.40$, $p < .001$.

each relationship across the entire sample of respondents by assigning a value of zero support ties for those categories of associates that a respondent did not list in the support network. Thus the 83.1% of respondents who listed no siblings of a partner in the support exchange network received a value of zero support ties to the partner's siblings in the second set of analyses. Across the entire sample, we see a partner's siblings collectively provided .36 total support ties to the typical respondent, or a mean of .20 support ties per partner's sibling. Looking at the results from both methods together shows that those who named a partner's siblings as support providers tended to receive a couple of types of support from them, but since so few actually did name partners' siblings in the support exchange network, across the entire sample partners' siblings provided little support, less than one type of support per respondent.

Table 5.6. Support exchange associates: support ties and multiplexity by relationship to respondent

Relationship to respondent	N (%) of respondents listing	Only respondents listing specified type of associate		All respondents ^a	
		Mean total support ties	Mean multiplexity	Mean total support	Mean multiplexity
Partner	83 (100.0)	4.75	4.75	4.75	4.75
Friend	83 (100.0)	17.43	1.85	17.43	1.85
Parent	58 (69.9)	3.36	2.09	2.35	1.46
Coworker	43 (51.8)	2.60	1.22	1.35	.63
Sibling	39 (47.0)	3.00	2.00	1.41	.94
Acquaintance	37 (44.6)	2.54	1.08	1.13	.48
Partner's parent	20 (24.1)	3.20	1.80	.77	.44
Neighbor	18 (21.7)	3.28	1.19	.71	.26
Member of organization	16 (19.3)	3.19	1.08	.61	.21
Partner's sibling	14 (16.9)	2.14	1.21	.36	.20
Ex-partner	9 (10.8)	2.56	2.56	.28	.28
Total support ties	83 (100.0)	31.99	1.91	31.99	1.91

Note: Biologic categories such as "parent" or "sibling" also included stepfamily or half-sibling relationships.

^a Respondents who did not list a particular type of associate are given a value of zero ties.

Table 5.6 shows clearly the degree to which partners relied on each other as the single provider of the greatest number of different types of support, a mean of 4.75. A typical friend provided 1.85 types of support, but the total amount of support ties with friends was by far the largest, 17.43, because of the much larger number of friends, about nine or ten friends on average. The typical parent provided about two types of support, but again, only 69.9% of respondents listed any parents as support providers. Because every respondent listed friends, and friends outnumbered parents by about five to one, the support of friends appears to greatly overwhelm that of parents (and other biolegal relatives). The result is in line with all the literature on social support of lesbians, gays, and same-sex couples (Kurdek and Schmitt 1987; Kurdek 1988a; Smith and Brown 1997), yet it is also clear from earlier analyses that friends and biolegal relatives tended to provide different kinds of support. In particular, biolegal relatives were the main source of financial support, which could be a highly valued resource with far-reaching consequences for individuals and couples at critical times of need. This is not to downplay the importance of companionship and other types of support provided by friends. The point is that simple numerical tallies of support persons without regard to the nature of the support ties, the method that other studies have employed in various forms, may understate the contributions of biolegal relatives or other network associates. This analysis helps to show the ways in which every member of the support team can matter, and how some can have an influence disproportionate to their numbers.

The other statistic that stands out is the fact that for the 10.8% of respondents who listed an ex-partner,⁶ that relationship is the most multi-stranded of any, with a mean of 2.56 ties, except for the relationship with a partner. This pattern is confirmation of the intimacy and richness of ties to ex-partners, for the minority who listed them, with all the potential these relationships may have for complicating relations with the current partner.

In summary, friends provided a preponderance of the support to individual respondents by their sheer numbers. Ties to partners were especially rich, but so were ties to friends. Respondents also reported rich ties to ex-partners, and to a lesser extent, to parents and siblings, when they listed these types of associates as support providers. Specialization between friends and biolegal relatives was evident, with relatives providing the bulk of financial assistance when needed, while friends provided more frequent instrumental and emotional types of support. Some of this difference was related to distance: support providers tended to live close, and friends generally

⁶ In the Partner 2 sample, 19.3% listed ex-partners. Thus across the two samples, 15% of respondents listed ex-partners in their networks.

lived closer than biolegal relatives. Like family and friend networks, support exchange networks were also relatively sex-segregated overall, but among biolegal relatives, respondents relied more on female family members such as sisters and mothers, than male family members. Thus same-sex couples were connected to families of origin in which women did a disproportionate share of the kinkeeping. A key question to be answered in the next chapter is whether the support exchange networks enumerated by individuals translated into support for the couple relationship.

Comparing Exchange Networks with Family and Friend Networks

We are now ready to bring together the two main types of networks that this study is based on, the exchange network introduced in this chapter, and the family and friend network of Chapter 4. Comparing the two networks explicitly will reveal what each contributed to the total network of associates collected for the analyses of network impacts on relationship quality. Recall that while the exchange network was based largely on specific types of social support exchanges, the family and friend network consisted of associates in five categories of family and close friend relationships as each was defined by respondents. The total network—the complete list of unique persons named by each respondent across the two naming procedures—ranged from just under 25 to 29 persons across the four couple types, averaging about 26 per respondent. The two component networks overlapped somewhat, as shown in Table 5.7: on average, 11 associates, 42% of the total network, were named in both exchange and family and friend networks.

Table 5.7. Comparison of exchange networks with family and friend networks

Associates	<i>Men in Seattle N = 20</i>	<i>Women in Seattle N = 22</i>	<i>Men outside Seattle N = 20</i>	<i>Women outside Seattle N = 21</i>	<i>All couples N = 83</i>
Exchange network	21.4 (80)	22.6 (79)	19.6 (78)	20.0 (82)	20.9 (80)
Family and friend network	18.6 (62)	16.9 (59)	16.6 (64)	16.2 (65)	17.0 (63)
Overlap between exchange and family/friend network	11.6 (42)	10.6 (38)	10.3 (41)	11.4 (47)	11.0 (42)
Total network	28.4 (100)	28.9 (100)	25.9 (100)	24.7 (100)	27.0 (100)

Note: Mean percentages of all associates named within each couple type are given in parentheses.

Exchange networks contributed about ten unique associates to the total network, and family and friend networks yielded roughly six unique associates. Exchange networks had far more

coworkers, acquaintances, neighbors, and fellow members of organizations than family and friend networks. These kinds of associates may play a significant role in one's personal networks by serving very specific purposes, and they have the potential to become new sources of significant resources, including new close friends or even family members (as suggested by Granovetter's observations on the "strength of weak ties" [Granovetter 1973]).

There were a number of likely reasons that respondents listed someone in the family and close friend network but not in the exchange network: the respondent (1) did not think of the person when they had the opportunity to list anyone important left off the support exchange list, (2) ran out of space for listing additional important associates by reaching the limit of eight names, (3) thought of this person but did not consider the tie quite important enough to list in the "anyone important" question, or (4) chose not to list a neutral or unsupportive biolegal family member. Indeed, for ten of the 83 respondents, the exchange network and family/friend network overlapped 25% or less, and in many of these cases, the reason was that they listed no biolegal family members as support providers.

Table 5.8 looks at family and close friends arranged from highest to lowest amount of support. Note that the values for chosen family and extended family are based only on persons listing those categories, 58 respondents for chosen family and 77 respondents for extended family. We see that the total family and friend network provided about 21 support functions, two-thirds of all support ties that respondents reported. The table reveals a pattern that is by now quite familiar from the analyses of sexual orientation and biolegal status composition of family and friend categories presented in Chapter 4. Respondents' ties to their close friends and chosen family were characterized by largest numbers of support ties, and consequently, the greatest multiplexity. These were also the categories that had the largest proportion of associates of the respondent's own sex and sexual orientation and the smallest proportion of biolegal relatives. Likewise, the family of origin—with the most heterosexual and biolegal associates—was at the other end of the spectrum, providing 25% as much support in terms of total support ties, or 40% in terms of multiplexity of those ties. In other words, the friends and family that respondents had gathered into their lives provided more support than the families they were assigned by birth, bearing in mind that there was some overlap between these categories.

Table 5.8. Family and friend: total ties and multiplexity by relationship to respondent

Category	N (%) of respondents listing	Mean total support ties	Mean multiplexity
Close friends	83 (100.0)	14.73	2.17
Chosen family	58 (69.9)	14.36	2.38
Immediate family	83 (100.0)	10.65	1.61
Extended family	77 (92.8)	4.42	1.09
Family of origin	83 (100.0)	3.75	.85
Total family and friend network	83 (100.0)	20.73	1.34
Support exchange network	83 (100.0)	31.99	1.90

There were no significant differences between respondents in patterns of support provided by family and close friends with one exception: the more distant respondents were from the gay communities of Seattle or Portland, the larger the proportion of family of origin relatives named as support providers (the same was true for all biolegal relatives listed, whether or not they were part of the family of origin).⁷ This correlation was modest, but the difference was potentially meaningful. While Seattle men listed 35% of their family of origin members as support providers, men outside Seattle listed 50%. Though those outside Seattle had lower incomes, and thus were more likely to list persons they would borrow money from in their support networks (persons who were likely to be biolegal relatives), controlling for income had little impact on the connection between living away from gay community and receiving more support from biolegal family members. Controlling for factors such as physical proximity to family of origin, traditional beliefs about maintaining family ties, and emotional closeness to relatives also did not alter the pattern. As we will see, however, non-Seattle respondents also enjoyed more positive reactions to their sexual orientation from their parents, and controlling for these reactions attenuated the correlation somewhat, especially in the Partner 2 sample.⁸ Not surprisingly, it appears that

⁷ The correlation between (natural log of) distance from Seattle (or Portland) and proportion of associates in the family of origin who were support providers was as follows: Partner 1, $r = .23$, $p < .05$; Partner 2, $r = .18$, $p = .10$. Fourteen percent of support exchange associates for those outside Seattle were biolegal relatives, compared to nine percent for those in Seattle (Partner 1 $t = -2.75$, $p < .01$; Partner 2 proportions were 14% v. 11%, $t = -1.69$, $p < .10$).

⁸ Controlling for mother's (father's) reaction to gayness, the correlation is as follows: Partner 1,

seeking or receiving specific types of support from the family of origin depends partly on their acceptance of one's gayness.

This comparison of the family and friend network with the support exchange network shows that asking explicitly about family and friends (beyond the exploration of what these categories meant for same-sex partners in Chapter 4), broadened the total network by allowing room for the inclusion of additional important supportive family and friends (some of whom may have been of second-tier importance) and biologically-related associates who were indifferent, controversial, or unsupportive. Family and friend groupings including a larger number of friends—such as chosen families and close friends—provided more support to respondents, but again, it remains to be seen whether this support served the individual or the couple relationship, or both. Later analyses will attempt to tease out some of the considerable differences between these two types of networks in terms of their social contours and their consequences, if any, for couple relationship quality.

THE COUPLE NETWORK

Thus far we have focused exclusively on one partner in the couple, but the combined network of both partners' associates as a group has its own properties that can influence the couple relationship. I call this the couple network, meaning all unique associates connected to both partners separately and jointly. Thus, for example, in a couple where each partner named 20 associates (excluding each other), with 10 of these associates named by both partners, the couple network would consist of 30 unique associates (the 10 associates unique to each partner's list, summing to 20, plus the 10 shared associates, for a total of 30). In some analyses, adding a qualifying term limits the discussion to that subset of the total couple network. For example, the "couple family and friend network" refers to all associates that the two partners listed as family and friends, including associates they share in common and those connected only to one or the other partner. Similarly, the couple support network is all support providers to either or both partners combined.

Since the couple network is an amalgam of two perspectives—those of Partner 1 and Partner 2—the same set of associates may look different to each partner. Thus as elsewhere, two sets of couple network analyses had to be conducted, one based on Partner 1's classification of shared associates, and a replication based on data from Partner 2. For example, if Partner 1 named

$r = .21 (.24), p = .07 (.05)$; Partner 2, $r = .16 (.10), p = .17 (.42)$.

someone as a support provider, while Partner 2 named that same person as a friend but not as a provider of any specific type of support, the associate is categorized as a support provider in the Partner 1 analysis but as a friend in the Partner 2 analysis. In reality, though there were some small differences, aggregate patterns of relationships in couple networks looked quite similar in the two partner samples, and Partner 1 results are presented here.

Structural Properties of Couple Networks

In addition to the size and composition of the couple network, overlap is a key property of interest. We just examined overlap between segments within an individual partner's network—the support exchange network versus the family and friend network. In the couple network, we are concerned with the associates that two partners share in contrast with those associates that each partner maintains a mostly exclusive relationship with. Overlap is a relevant feature of couple networks to study because it is inherently a property of the couple, as opposed to other measures that are properties of the individual partners (Surra 1988). A lack of overlap between partners' associates may indicate a lack of couple integration, external competition for loyalties, and alternate interests.

Overlap in the context of two partners' entire network is typically measured as the proportion of shared network members relative to the total couple network (Julien et al. 1999; Kim and Stiff 1991; Surra 1988). Using the hypothetical couple above with 10 shared associates out of 30 associates in the couple network, the degree of overlap is .33, or 33%. This measure of overlap implicitly suggests that merely naming someone in common indicates that the person has a significant connection to both partners. But of course it is possible, for example, that Partner 1 could invite a work friend to a party in the couple's home, leading both partners to list that person as an associate with whom one has socialized. Yet even though Partner 2 has just met this person, she will be counted as a shared associate. This example leads us to wonder, "How shared is shared?" For this reason, I designed an additional means of assessing overlap, fundamentally a measure of connectedness, by asking each respondent which associates she (he) clearly considered to be more connected to her (him), which ones were more connected to the partner, and which were connected equally to both partners. My hope was that this additional information would refine the categorization of associates as individual or joint ties, and in which partner's favor the unshared associates leaned.

The written questionnaire also contained a set of items that measured aspects of couple integration with each other's networks. These items included the extent to which partners liked each other's friends, the relative amounts of contact with one's own and the partner's original friends, and contact with one's own relatives and the partner's relatives. The items provide a general assessment, and thus I use them here descriptively, relying on the analysis of the detailed lists of network associates to tell the fuller story of how partners interacted with the couple network.

Table 5.9 displays aspects of couples' family and friend networks, support networks, and total networks in terms of the structural network properties of overlap, multiplexity, and geographic dispersion. I discuss these analysis categories and results in combination with other quantitative and qualitative data where appropriate in the rest of the chapter.

Table 5.9. Couple network structural properties (couple N = 83)

Characteristic	Couple family and friend network	Couple support network	Total couple network
All associates	27.7 (100)	25.6 (100)	42.1 (100)
Shared associates within network category (overlap)	6.3 (23)	7.9 (33)	11.9 (30)
Number of support ties (multiplexity) ^a	25.0 (1.0)	41.1 (1.6)	38.8 (1.0)
Associates living less than 5 minutes away	3.1 (11)	6.3 (25)	6.9 (17)
Associates living 5 minutes to 1 hour away	7.6 (28)	12.7 (49)	15.8 (38)
Associates living more than 1 hour away	17.0 (61)	6.6 (26)	19.4 (46)

Note: Mean percentages of all couple associates within each network category are given in parentheses except as noted.

^a Values in parentheses represent mean multiplexity, the average number of support ties per associate.

Network size. The mean total couple network size was 42.1 associates, but the range was considerable, from a low of 14 to a high of 78. Women in Seattle had significantly larger support networks than all other types of couples,⁹ which translated into a total couple network of 46 associates, compared with just 36 associates for women outside Seattle (although the total couple network difference was not statistically significant).

⁹ Based on an analysis of variance (N = 83; F = 3.83; p < .05). Mean numbers of support exchange associates by type of couple were as follows: MS = 24.2; WS = 28.4; MO = 24.0; WO = 20.9.

The proportion of the total couple network represented by family and friend associates varied considerably from couple to couple, ranging from 31% to 94%. Similarly, support associates ranged from 31% to 92% of the total couple network. Thus for some couples (as with individual partners), there was relatively little overlap between these two types of networks, while for others, the correspondence was nearly absolute.

Couple network size is a particularly important property to bear in mind when analyzing specific types of associates because in general, the larger the network, the greater the number of most types of associate. For this reason, proportions are often a better guide to understanding the representation of various types of associates in a network. For example, even though Seattle women have a significantly greater number of support providers (28 in the total couple network, compared to just 21 for women outside Seattle), all four couple types show similar proportions of the total networks populated by support providers, ranging from 56% to 61%. In fact, while women in Seattle had 33% more support providers than women outside Seattle in absolute terms, when viewed as proportions of their total networks, the difference narrows to less than two percent.

This is not to say that proportions tell the whole story, or that absolute numbers of associates are never important. The number of biolegal relatives one has is typically more constrained than the numbers of other types of associates: one acquires friends or other network members more readily than new biolegal associates. Thus a larger network is bound to contain a smaller proportion of biolegal relatives, which is exactly what we see in the couple support network: the larger the network, the smaller the proportion of biolegal relatives that make up that network. There may also be important thresholds that matter for social support or other aspects of couples' relationships with their network associates. All male couples identified at least 13 support providers in their networks compared to just nine for female couples in Seattle and seven for female couples outside Seattle. These minimums may be meaningfully low in terms of the level of support that these couples received, but the low numbers would be masked by looking only at proportions if the entire couple network is also small. The same can be said for high numbers of associates generally: at what point are there too many relationships, too many outside obligations that, even if they provide support, also drain energies away from the couple? In the mid-range of network size, proportions are probably useful for describing the representation of specific types of associates in networks. When the number of associates are very few or very large, however, the absolute number may be important information.

Couple network overlap. Overlap statistics (the ratio of shared to all couple associates) are calculated within each network category. On average, each respondent named in his or her individual network 63% of all associates in the total couple network, with the other 37% representing associates named only by the partner. Partners thus shared 30% of the total couple network. The comparable overlap value for the couple family and friend network was 23% and 33% for the couple support network. The value of 33% is higher than the 25% support network overlap for same-sex couples in the study by Julien et al. (1999). Greater overlap between partners' support exchange networks than between their family and friend networks was likely the result of individuals' naming more psychologically important but distant associates in the family and friend network that they shared less with their partners in daily interactions. There were no significant differences between couples by sex and location in overlap for any of these three types of couple networks.

Using partners' sense of connectedness to either or both partners yields a slightly different picture of network overlap. This measure looks at how shared and unshared associates are represented within each respondents' individual network. About half of all associates in individual networks (13 associates or 49%) were more connected to the respondent. Just over nine associates (9.4 or 36%) were judged to be about equally connected to both partners. Another 3.5 associates, or 15% were judged to be more connected to the partner than the respondent. By this method, there were 2.5 fewer shared associates—in the sense of connectedness to both partners—than the 11.9 associates named by both partners in the total couple network. In the next chapter I will examine whether either of these methods is a more useful way of looking at network overlap's associations with aspects of couple relationship quality.

Multiplexity. Other than the larger size of Seattle women's support networks, there were no significant differences in multiplexity of ties with support associates. The number of support ties was largest (by definition) in the couple support network, but even in the family and friend network and the total couple network, associates averaged about one support tie each.

Geographic dispersion. The geographic differences between family and friend versus support networks are readily apparent in Table 5.9 (above). The majority of family and friends lived more than an hour from the couple (61%), while three quarters of support providers lived no more than an hour away. Just slightly more than half of all associates lived within an hour.

The greater dispersion of the family and friend network helps to explain why this segment of partners' combined networks overlapped less than their support exchange networks, as noted above. There were no significant differences by sex or location in the geographic distribution of associates. The finding that couples were roughly equally distant from their families and friends suggests that there were few differences in geographic mobility whether they lived in or outside of Seattle.

The closer the couple's support network was geographically, the more support these associates provided,¹⁰ and the greater the proportion of them one's partner also named as support providers.¹¹ I tested whether differences between couples in the time they had been together accounted for this correlation, reasoning that a longer time together also gave partners more time to develop a shared network. There was some evidence that the number of shared associates increased over the earliest years of the relationship, plateauing after a few years, but across the full sample, time in relationship was completely unrelated to having shared support associates.¹²

Relationship Supports and Strains

Thus far we have examined general structural properties of individual and couple networks and specific types of support exchanges, but a number of network features that relate specifically to coupling between same-sex partners remain to be explored. We now turn to characteristics of couples' networks that may have special significance for the integrity of same-sex couple boundaries. To what extent did partners carry on relationships with past partners, seek intimacy with others besides their current partners, or surround themselves with potential alternative partners—either through extensive ties to other gay and lesbian associates or through ties to gay communities? Did couples favor other coupled associates (rather than singles) who were in theory romantically unavailable, nonthreatening to their relationships, and potential sources of positive couple role models, peer pressure, and accountability? How did partners relate to their families of origin and their "in-laws" as compared to their relations with friends? The remainder of

¹⁰ Ties to support providers in the couple network were less multi-stranded the greater the proportion of the support exchange network that lived more than an hour away (for Partner 1, $r = -.31$, $p < .01$; for Partner 2, $r = -.23$, $p < .05$).

¹¹ The greater the proportion of the couple network living within five minutes away, the greater the proportion of support ties shared in the couple network ($r = .28$, $p < .01$). Controlling for time in relationship, the partial correlation was virtually unchanged ($r = .29$ ($p < .01$)).

¹² Graphical inspection of scatterplots revealed that shared support associates showed an increasing trend up to about six years into the relationship, after which time their numbers held constant.

this chapter describes these aspects of couples' networks to set up the next chapter's analysis of the roles they played in couple quality.

Table 5.10 displays the representation of associates in couples' family and friend networks, support networks, and total networks in terms of intimate ties, relationship status, sex and orientation, biolegal status, and disputed associates (those causing friction, disagreement, or disputes between partners). I discuss each of these analysis categories using both quantitative and qualitative data.

Table 5.10. Characteristics of couple network associates (couple N = 83)

Characteristic	Couple family and friend network	Couple support network	Total couple network
Past or present intimates other than partner	1.5 (5)	1.0 (4)	1.7 (4)
Coupled associates	19.2 (68)	17.4 (67)	28.5 (67)
All male associates	11.6 (42)	10.1 (40)	17.3 (41)
All lesbian, gay, or bisexual associates	8.8 (31)	10.5 (40)	14.1 (33)
Heterosexual women	11.3 (41)	9.5 (37)	16.8 (40)
Heterosexual men	7.7 (28)	5.7 (22)	11.2 (27)
Lesbian or bisexual women	4.9 (17)	6 (34)	8.0 (27)
Gay or bisexual men	3.9 (14)	4.4 (18)	6.1 (15)
Biolegal relatives	11.7 (42)	3.4 (14)	11.7 (28)
Disputed associates	3.2 (13)	2.5 (10)	3.8 (10)
All associates	27.7 (100)	25.6 (100)	42.1 (100)

Note: Mean percentages of all couple associates within each network category are given in parentheses except as noted.

Past and present intimates. One or two associates in each couple's network on average were persons (other than one's partner) with whom one or both partners had had some sort of intimate involvement, ranging from uncommitted sexual or dating relationships to committed partnerships. Most often, the involvement had occurred in the past and the relationship had evolved into a non-sexual or non-romantic friend or family relationship. In a few cases, this involvement was going on at the time of the interview. The more of these "outside intimates" in

the couple network, the fewer associates of any kind shared by both partners.¹³ The moderately low magnitude of this correlation could be entirely due to separate ties with those associates in particular, but it could also indicate a more general independence in one or both partners or difficulty integrating the two partners' networks. The number of outside intimates was not at all correlated with the number of associates that had caused friction or disagreement between partners, suggesting that if there were any deleterious effects of maintaining relationships with outside intimates, these effects operated in a more indirect way.

Male couples were significantly more likely than female couples, both in absolute numbers and proportions, to include intimates other than their partners in their support and total couple networks.¹⁴ Both gender and location mattered: Seattle male couples had the largest number of these associates, just over two associates on average (the maximum number named was eight), while female couples outside Seattle ranked lowest, with just under one associate. These findings are somewhat consistent with research by Nardi (1992) showing that men were much more likely than lesbians to have had sex with casual and close friends but not best friends. Casual and close friends are more abundant in people's networks than best friends. Only 20% of gay men in Nardi's study, compared to 45% of lesbians, said their best friends were ex-lovers. A pattern of intimacy between women before sex provides a context for continued intimacy when there is no longer sex, whereas sexual relationships between men before emotional intimacy more frequently fade away. Gay men have also shown a greater capacity to sustain a primary relationship that is non-monogamous (Blumstein and Schwartz 1983), and it is likely due to the lesser potency of their emotional ties in general with past sexual intimates as compared to women's ties to past intimates.

Monogamy, Non-monogamy, and Infidelity

The classification of associates according to whether they were past or present intimates did not explicitly deal with the issue of monogamy, but I inquired directly about couples' understandings about monogamy, non-monogamy, and infidelity, and whether they had ever created any concerns in the relationship, in both the written questionnaire and interview. These questions did not presuppose that either monogamy or non-monogamy was necessarily problematic; they

¹³ The correlation between number of outside intimates and proportion of shared couple network ties was as follows: Partner 1, $r = -.28$, $p < .05$; for Partner 2, $r = -.24$, $p < .05$.

¹⁴ Partner 1 men had an average of 1.25 outside intimates compared to women's .67 ($t = -2.28$, $p < .05$). Comparable values for Partner 2 were 1.25 for men and .72 for women ($t = -2.12$, $p < .05$). Means by couple type were as follows for Partner 1: MS = 2.70; WS = 1.41; MO = 1.65; WO = .90 (Partner 1). For Partner 2: MS = 2.95; WS = 1.59; MO = 1.50; WO = .95.

merely attempted to take account of the sexual organization of gay and lesbian coupling and community as well as the potential for conflict no matter how the partners handled real or potential outside involvements.

Nearly all couples had come to some agreement, stated or implicit, about the permissibility of outside sex. Partners in all but 11% of couples had discussed the issue explicitly. Those who had not discussed the issue were mostly women who felt that outside sex would not be acceptable and perceived that both partners were in patently obvious agreement. Both partners in these couples usually assumed monogamy as a matter of course. When partners had discussed the issue and did not agree in principle, they either arrived at some accommodation or lived with some level of discomfort over their acknowledged disagreement.

Sixty percent of men had had sex with someone other than their primary partner since moving in together, compared to just 12% of women (even fewer in the Partner 2 sample). Men were equally likely to say they had outside sex whether they lived in or outside Seattle. Twelve percent of gay men had had a meaningful love affair with someone else, compared to ten percent of women. Thus women's outside sex was almost entirely due to love affairs, whereas men's liaisons were mostly recreational in nature. Even when men's outside sex involved emotional bonds, these were usually more akin to friendship or buddy relationships than romance.

In this analysis, I use the terms monogamy or non-monogamy in a very specific way, to refer to the *agreement* between partners, the *intention* to live in a sexually open or closed relationship, whether or not the behavior had been practiced. Thus even if one or both partners had violated an agreement to be monogamous, I classified these couples as monogamous as a reflection of their continuing intention. Likewise, I classified partners in an open relationship as non-monogamous even when neither partner had ever been involved in relations with anyone else.¹⁵ I use the terms sexual or emotional infidelity to refer to behavior as opposed to intention. Infidelity or unfaithfulness means breaking a rule against becoming emotionally or sexually involved with others. Partners whose relationships had always been sexually open thus could not be sexually unfaithful (except by violating a rule of their open agreement, such as having sex with someone else without the partner present; however, I do not explore these nuances here), but they could be emotionally unfaithful if they became emotionally involved in a way that violated the couple's agreement. To qualify as infidelity, this emotional involvement had to be a relationship that a

¹⁵ I classified the small number of cases where partners disagreed according to the current "terms of disagreement" or how they had behaved in practice.

person engaged in with someone other than the partner; it did not include mere crushes or falling in love if these feelings were not acted on. These definitions did not fit every couple's experience, but they covered the understandings of all but a few.

Table 5.11 classifies couples by their histories of monogamy, non-monogamy, and infidelity. Counts of infidelity are based on infidelity by either partner in a couple, that is, infidelity as a couple experience. Seven percent of all couples, equal numbers of men and women, were not currently in agreement about monogamy or non-monogamy. Ninety-three percent of female couples were currently monogamous, compared to just forty percent of male couples. All but three couples who were currently monogamous had always considered themselves monogamous since the beginning of their relationships. Two female and one male couple had switched from non-monogamy to monogamy.

Table 5.11. Monogamy, non-monogamy, and infidelity

Category	Women	Men	Total
<i>Currently monogamous couples</i>			
Always monogamous, no infidelity	32 (74)	12 (30)	44 (53)
Always monogamous, with infidelity	6 (15)	3 (8)	9 (11)
Formerly non-monogamous	2 (5)	1 (2)	3 (4)
<i>Currently non-monogamous couples</i>			
Always non-monogamous	3 (7)	14 (35)	17 (20)
Formerly monogamous, no infidelity		3 (8)	3 (4)
Formerly monogamous, with infidelity		7 (18)	7 (8)
Total	43 (100)	40 (100)	83 (100)

Note: Mean percentages in each category are given in parentheses except as noted. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

All three of the female non-monogamous couples were practicing theoretical non-monogamy: none of them had actually had any outside relationships. This woman's observation illustrates the feminist underpinnings of women's theoretical non-monogamy, an assertion of control over one's own body, that did not necessarily lead to practice of outside sex:

Neither of us feels we have the right to control the other. We're not willing to tell each other "you can only sleep with me." If we do feel we're attracted to

someone else where we want to act on it, we'll tell each other. But when I'm in a relationship, I never feel like doing it, and neither does she [her partner]."

In contrast, the theory underlying men's non-monogamy had more to do with male desire or perceived need for sexual variety. Some went so far as to suggest that non-monogamy resulted either from men's difficulty or unwillingness to control their bodies:

In gay male couples, there's a certain degree of inevitability [of non-monogamy]." (Seattle man)

Monogamy is for the birds because it encourages people to lie. We don't have any rules, so we don't have any lies." (man outside Seattle)

At least one partner in all but one of the male couples had exercised his agreed-upon right to sex outside the relationship; usually both partners had. The 35% of male couples who had always been open were joined by another 25% of male couples who switched from monogamy to an open relationship.

Among only those respondents having any outside partners, regardless of their current arrangement, women counted an average of one or two outside partners since living with their primary partner, compared to men's six to ten outside partners. In the past year, these men's frequency of outside sex was in the range of once to every few months, while women's frequency was less than once. Opportunity for external liaisons seemed to be equally available to couples outside Seattle as in Seattle because there were no significant differences in number or frequency of outside partners.

Infidelity also showed strongly gendered patterns. Asking about rule violations, particularly involving sexual behavior, always entails the possibility of dishonesty on the part of respondents. However, with only a few exceptions, respondents seemed to be genuinely forthcoming about their perceived failings to live up to agreed monogamy. In a few cases, the honesty of one partner (usually the one who felt betrayed) compensated for the lack of forthrightness by the other partner (the transgressor) in revealing infidelity. One quarter of all male couples

experienced infidelity by at least one partner.¹⁶ Most of these couples eventually became non-monogamous. In contrast, just 15% of female couples had experienced infidelity. In most cases, partners knew about these instances of infidelity, though some respondents admitted to past or continuing liaisons that they had not shared with their partners.

Even a numerical account of couple histories of monogamy, non-monogamy, and infidelity as detailed as this one hides an immense amount of complexity in the histories of individual couples and diversity of experience across couples. Non-monogamous arrangements were clearly a male phenomenon, as this Seattle woman lamented with envy:

It pisses me off that we [women] can't go out like men and have sex!

But the door to non-monogamy did not always open only one way: some couples revisited the issue repeatedly and transitioned back and forth between monogamy and non-monogamy, as this Seattle man recounted:

We have our "feisty cycles" and then there are other times when it's just us. There are different periods [of monogamy and non-monogamy], lasting three weeks to five or six months. It's based on being present with the other person. When we're not in sync, we talk it out. The one who doesn't want openness usually has priority.

But for most men, once they decided to open their relationship, they did not turn back. Remarkably, the 60% rate of nonmonogamy nearly matches the pre-AIDS rate of 65% for gay couples in the large sample of Blumstein and Schwartz (1983:585). Perhaps even more remarkably, the only mention of AIDS in any part of the interviews had to do with practicing safe outside sex. This was the only way that couples' reported any impact of AIDS on their relationships.¹⁷

¹⁶ This number includes one monogamous couple where one partner refused to answer questions about non-monogamy (despite answering every other question). This respondent's evasiveness about only those questions appeared to be a strategy to avoid admitting a violation of the couple's agreement without having to lie to me about it and reluctance to share information with me that could be damaging to his relationship with his partner if disclosed.

¹⁷ I did not explicitly ask about HIV or AIDS because of the lengthy line of questioning this might have added to an already-long interview. I expected, however, that some questions would elicit information about ways in which HIV/AIDS had affected couples, if in fact it had. Instead, I only heard about other types of health problems, and there were no respondents whose physical appearance suggested HIV disease. Thus

Besides practicing safer sex, non-monogamy often involved other rules that couples configured according to their needs and levels of comfort: “don’t ask, don’t tell”; no activity in the couple’s home; only when both partners were present; only when on vacation; no activity with certain persons; no repeat performances with the same person; and so on. Several men who engaged in sexual non-monogamy described themselves as monogamous anyway by modifying the definition of monogamy to mean emotional exclusivity or only allowing sex with others when both partners shared the experience. The contradictory words of one Seattle man typify both this special definition of monogamy and the couple’s regulation of their non-monogamy: “We’re monogamous, but we don’t limit each other. It doesn’t mean that we don’t have affairs, but no second relationships.”

Non-monogamy was rarely practiced without at least occasional conflict between partners. Indeed, though conflict over sex outside the relationship was fairly infrequent overall, men reported having open disagreements or fights about this issue significantly more often than women.¹⁸ Several had arrived at non-monogamy by working through the pain of betrayal and infidelity, almost losing their relationships.

But monogamy was not without its own conflicts, for both men and women, even when there had been no instances of infidelity. Monogamy did not prevent jealous pangs or insecurities about ex-partners or friendships, the most common types of issues in faithfully monogamous couples:

We are totally monogamous. It’s going to stay that way. We kid each other about attractions—that happens. We tend not to be jealous. He has a problem with my ex-partner—he is jealous about our [emotional] intimacy, not sex. That’s the only one he’d be threatened by. (Seattle man)

the prevalence of HIV among this sample is unknown, but given the candidness of most respondents about every other aspect of their lives, HIV appeared to have had little impact on the social lives of couples in this sample. The lack of open participation of persons with HIV disease may suggest continuing stigma and reluctance to share this aspect of one’s experience with anyone but the most trusted associates. Without asking directly, I could not draw any conclusions about HIV, couple networks, and relationship quality.

¹⁸ On a scale from 1 (Never) to 9 (Daily or almost every day), men’s mean score on this measure of frequency of conflict about outside sex was 1.95, meaning less than once a year, compared to women’s mean of 1.06, virtually never ($t = -4.11, p < .001$).

Sometimes she is jealous of my "ex." It just happens sometimes. I think it depends on the time of the month. More often it happens in a social setting—one of us feels the other is flirting, sometimes alcohol is involved. Only one time has it caused upheaval—it disrupted one day. But our philosophy is if we mess around, it's over—physically and emotionally. (woman outside Seattle)

A substantial minority of couples found monogamy to be both comparatively easy and satisfying:

We've always been monogamous and we wouldn't cheat. If one of us felt we were going to, hopefully we'd discuss it. It's never happened, though. There has never been anyone we've been jealous over, either one of us. (man outside Seattle)

Neither one of us has had any attraction to anyone else, but we would sit down and talk about it if it happened. We have an incredible connection. They tell stories about how cute we are in church. This has never been an issue to us—we are monogamous. (woman outside Seattle)

Relationship status. While outside attractions, romances, or sex partners could rival the couple relationship, coupled associates could be beneficial for couples. Other couples may be a greater source of relationship norms, models, and support than a network dominated by singles.

The written questionnaire asked for proportions of partnered gay male, lesbian, heterosexual male, and heterosexual female friends who had been living with their current partner for at least five years, using a nine-point scale from none to all. Respondents perceived that a greater proportion of heterosexual close friends had been together at least five years, followed by lesbians, and then gay men.¹⁹ Lesbians outside Seattle were especially likely to report that they had no close gay male friends who had been living with a current partner for at least five years. Respondents also perceived that at least three quarters of their close lesbian or gay male friends (same sex as the respondent) believed that lesbian or gay couple relationships could last more

¹⁹ Mean scores for each group of partnered close friends were as follows for Partner 1 (Partner 2): gay men, 5.03 (5.25); lesbians, 5.66 (5.97); heterosexual men, 6.10 (5.73); heterosexual women, 6.27 (5.80). Only nine of the 21 Partner 1 lesbians outside Seattle reported having close gay male friends living with a partner for five or more years, compared to 16 or more respondents in the other three couple types (for Partner 2, 11 lesbians outside Seattle reported having this category of friends, compared to 17 or more for the other three couple types).

than ten years.²⁰ Because these questions were not applicable for 11% to 24% of respondents (those who did not have any close coupled friends in a given category), these items did not lend themselves to further analysis.

Coupled associates made up two-thirds of couple networks, but as with other characteristics, the range was considerable, from a low of 29% to a high of 94%. The more coupled associates, the fewer outside intimates in a couple's network.²¹ This was true for the total couple network and its subsets of support providers and family and friends. The sex and orientation composition of one's network also figured into this pattern. The more gay men in the network, the more outside intimates and the fewer coupled associates, and at the same time, the more lesbian women in the network, the more coupled associates.²² These patterns are due partly to the fact that 72% of lesbian associates were coupled compared to just 56% of gay male associates. Nevertheless, female and male couples reported virtually identical absolute numbers of coupled associates in their networks overall (28.6 v. 28.4).

Those couples who were more connected with other couples also exhibited more overlap between partners' support networks. One reason for this pattern might derive from the tendency for coupled associates to interact as a "package deal." For example, it is common in social situations for each partner in two couples to pair off with one partner in the other couple because of a greater affinity between those pairs. A number of couples I interviewed mentioned this kind of specialization in cross-couple friendships within the larger context of four-way (in the case of two couples) or six-way (in the case of three couples) relationships. Socializing with other couples thus may offer an efficient way for both partners to find associates they can both share who fulfill specific support needs for each partner individually and the couple as a couple. A number of respondents commented without prompting on a tendency to favor couple socializing:

In the beginning, we were immersed in gay community, but with time, we just do things with a few gay couples and family. (man outside Seattle)

²⁰ The mean was 7.24 on the nine-point scale from 1 (None) to 9 (All).

²¹ In the total couple network, $r = -.29$, $p < .01$ (Partner 1 and 2 samples). In the couple family and friend network, $r = -.31$, $p < .01$ (Partner 1); $r = -.37$, $p < .01$ (Partner 2). In the couple support exchange network, $r = -.38$, $p < .001$ (Partner 1); $r = -.40$, $p < .001$ (Partner 2).

²² Controlling for sex of the couple, the partial correlation between the proportions of gay male associates and outside intimates was $.47$, $p < .001$ (Partners 1 and 2). The partial correlation between the proportions of gay male associates and coupled associates was $-.27$, $p < .05$ (Partner 1); $r = -.22$, $p < .05$ (Partner 2). For proportion lesbian with coupled associates, $r = .27$, $p < .05$ (Partner 1); $r = .25$, $p < .05$ (Partner 2).

The people we've stayed in contact with are gay and lesbian couples. We choose to surround ourselves with supportive people. It makes me understand why similar people hang out together. (woman in Seattle)

When we had our commitment ceremony, we picked some good examples of couples to help us through. (woman outside Seattle)

Single associates, if they had relationship experience and an orientation toward coupling, were viewed in a similar fashion:

We are often paired off with other couples—that's the majority of our socializing. Most single friends are the kids of friends or they've been in relationships before. (woman outside Seattle)

This man outside Seattle described a perceived opposition between the gay world—representing nonmonogamy, flamboyance, and complicated relationships—and the straight world, representing coupled monogamy, stability, and simplicity. He preferred heterosexual couples to both single and coupled gay men (and made no mention of lesbians). His experience is also consistent with the correlation reported earlier showing an inverse relationship between the number of past or present intimates and the number of coupled associates in one's networks:

The majority of our friends are straight and coupled. We talk about this—it seems weird, but it's easier. It's complicated with gay friends—they want desperately to have what we have. We're very sensitive about flamboyant men. They're hard for me to be around. It seems like there's always a flamboyant man in a couple. We live a very "straight" life—we don't need a "gay" life. We haven't had an opportunity to meet other gay couples we have a lot in common with—our interests—plus masculinity. We want our relationships with other people to be easy, and with straight couples, it's easier. Gay couples more often are not monogamous, and we want to be.

In contrast, for this woman outside Seattle, sexual orientation had nothing to do with the suitability of coupled associates. Her comments were the clearest endorsement of couples as role

models for each other, particularly pointing to the positive effect of having stably-married parents:

There is a role model issue: all the couples we know are *stable*, in it for the long haul. They're not all as happy as we are, but they're going to make it work. My parents have spent 49 years together. They're *the model*. I've surrounded myself with positive models that are the way I want us to be—straight or gay, it doesn't matter. We all need to see our reflections in each other. We've performed each other's wedding ceremonies—it motivates all of us. It reminds me to be grateful, seeing our friends. It's all mutually supportive.

These and other respondents made a clear link between coupled associates and the stability of their own couple relationships. But socializing with other coupled persons also had its own complications, which I explore in depth in a later section devoted to problematic associates.

Sex and orientation. As documented in all prior discussions of individual networks, couples differed in predictable ways in the sex and sexual orientation composition of their networks. Women's networks were the most segregated by sex. While men's networks had roughly equal numbers of men and women, about 70% of women's associates were other women. All four types of couples had similar proportions of heterosexuals in their total networks, about two-thirds. Heterosexual women were the most commonly mentioned type of associate, making up about 40% of the family and friend, support, and total couple networks. This proportion was fairly constant by type of couple as well. Heterosexual men were about one quarter of associates.

Levels of support in the couple network varied by sex and sexual orientation composition of the couple network. In general, higher numbers of all types of associates were associated with higher levels of support both in terms of numbers of persons providing support and the number of types of support provided. Gay male associates were the exception; increasing their numbers did not increase support. In contrast, the presence of lesbians was especially beneficial. This correlation held for both male and female couples. In fact, the connection between lesbian women in one's network and receipt of support was stronger when controlling for sex of the couple ($r = .52$, $p < .001$), while gay men gave both male and female couples the least amount of support.

Gay community involvement. If we were to measure gay community involvement only by looking at the sexual orientation composition of couples' networks, we would conclude that women and men, in Seattle and around Washington State, exhibited similar average levels of involvement. But what does "gay community involvement" really mean? All three words in this term are loaded with meanings that cannot be fully explored here. I purposely constructed this sample to include couples that might be highly involved, living in the urban core of Seattle, and those living far from the physical trappings of gay community. This sampling strategy presumed that residence should make a difference in gay community involvement. What does it mean to be involved in gay community when one lives on Washington's peninsula, or on the east side of the state, where gay neighborhoods and establishments, if they exist, are rare? What factors besides residence might be associated with gay community involvement?

I look at these questions by taking a broad view of involvement and community. The measures of these concepts I used encompass a continuum of involvement including living or working among other gays, frequenting of gay bars and other places, attending organized activities, and social activism. The data for most of these measures came from scale items on the written questionnaire. My purpose is primarily descriptive, a search for patterns characteristic of men and women, residents in Seattle and outside of Seattle, in these varied aspects of gay community. A later concern will be to investigate whether any patterns of gay community involvement relate systematically to the quality of couple life, given now-dated research suggesting that immersion in gay community could be destabilizing (Blumstein and Schwartz 1983). I make the assumption that these items measure degrees of connectedness to gay ideas, gay others, gay behaviors. These ways of thinking, being, and doing reflect a sense of belonging and identity in common—that is, community—with others, be they gay men, lesbians, or a greater community of sexual minorities.

Table 5.12 presents basic descriptives for the gay community involvement measures. The level of involvement varied depending on the aspect of gay life measured, and I report group differences by sex and location where they are significant and of substantive interest.²³

²³ As elsewhere, I report statistically significant findings when patterns are similar and significant at $p < .05$ in both Partner 1 and 2 samples. Occasionally I report findings that are significant at $p < .05$ in one sample and approaching significance in the other sample ($p < .10$).

Table 5.12. Gay community involvement: Means and standard deviations

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Living near other gay/lesbian people (1 = None, 5 = Half, 9 = All)	83	2.43	1.70
Working with other gay/lesbian people ^a (1 = None, 5 = Half, 9 = All)	81	2.59	1.61
Working primarily with lesbians or primarily with gay men (1 = All men, 5 = Women and men equally, 9 = All women)	66	5.33	2.43
Any gay/lesbian bar attendance (1 = Never, 9 = Daily or almost every day)	83	3.20	1.54
Lesbian bar attendance (1 = Never, 9 = Daily or almost every day)	83	2.08	1.18
Gay male bar attendance (1 = Never, 9 = Daily or almost every day)	83	2.70	1.60
Mixed straight/gay bar attendance (1 = Never, 9 = Daily or almost every day)	83	2.53	1.35
Bar attendance alone (1 = Never, 9 = Always)	74	2.03	1.94
Bar attendance with friends only (1 = Never, 9 = Always)	74	2.68	1.95
Bar attendance with partner and friends (1 = Never, 9 = Always)	74	7.57	2.09
Attendance at non-bar gay/lesbian public places (1 = Never, 9 = Daily or almost every day)	83	4.14	1.78
Involvement in organized mixed gay/lesbian activities (1 = Not at all involved, 9 = Extremely involved)	83	3.28	2.43
Involvement in organized same-sex gay/lesbian activities (1 = Not at all involved, 9 = Extremely involved)	83	3.10	2.45
Level of activism in gay/lesbian rights movement (1 = Not at all active, 9 = Extremely active)	83	4.28	2.36

^a Includes the responses of two recently unemployed.

About two-thirds of all respondents felt that it was very important to live in a place where they could be around other sexual minorities,²⁴ but they reported living or working in places where on average less than a quarter of others were gay or lesbian. Predictably, however, Seattle respondents reported living in gayer neighborhoods (more than a quarter of their neighbors)

²⁴ Seventy-one percent of Partner 1 and 64% of Partner 2 respondents said it was "very important," as opposed to "somewhat important" (24%/23%) or "not too important" (5%/13%).

than those outside Seattle.²⁵ Men in Seattle lived in the gayest places, followed by the women. This pattern is consistent with the concentration of male couples closer to the gay area of Capitol Hill than the Seattle women in this sample, paralleling U.S. Census data on the geographic distribution of Seattle same-sex couples by gender (Brown 2000; Gates and Ost 2004). Male couples outside Seattle lived on the other end of the spectrum, in the least gay areas. Almost none of their neighbors were gay or lesbian. This pattern parallels the fact that, as a group, men lived farther outside Seattle than women in terms of travel distance to urban gay communities.

Despite varying concentrations of other gays and lesbians in their neighborhoods, respondents did not differ by sex or location in the proportion of their coworkers they perceived to be gay and lesbian. Among those with any lesbian or gay coworkers, sex segregation was evident. Men worked more often with other gay men, women with other lesbians, but this pattern was especially pronounced outside Seattle.²⁶ This difference may simply reflect continuing occupational sex segregation for reasons that have less to do with sexual orientation and more to do with gender stratification. Yet the overall pattern that men and women regardless of location reported similar proportions of other gays at work is intriguing, because it runs counter to the known residential distribution of the (coupled) lesbian and gay population according to Census data. Together these residence and work patterns suggest larger social processes of occupational segregation by sexual orientation, self selection into work environments where there are other lesbians and gays, or some combination of processes.

Looking beyond home and work to leisure and community social engagement, we find that gay or lesbian bar attendance was fairly infrequent, averaging just over once a year. There were significant differences by gender, however. Men, regardless of whether they lived in Seattle or outside Seattle, were more likely to go to clubs than women.²⁷ In addition, having more gay male close friends or family members was strongly correlated with frequenting gay bars.²⁸ Women overall tended to go out slightly less than once a year, whereas men went out just under once

²⁵ Based on an analysis of variance ($N = 83$; $F = 4.20$; $p < .01$). Mean responses for individual partners in each type of couple were as follows: MS = 3.20; WS = 2.77; MO = 1.50; WO = 2.24.

²⁶ Means by couple type were as follows: MS = 4.76; WS = 6.35; MO = 3.27; WO = 6.79 ($N = 66$; $F = 9.42$; $p < .001$).

²⁷ Means by couple type were as follows: MS = 3.70; WS = 2.95; MO = 3.75; WO = 2.48 ($N = 83$; $F = 3.62$; $p < .05$).

²⁸ The Pearson correlation coefficient for attendance at gay bars and the proportion of family and friends who were gay men was .56, $p < .001$.

every few months. Women in Seattle, however, were more likely than anyone else to frequent lesbian bars.²⁹

Those who did go to bars most often went with partners and friends, infrequently with friends but without partners. Men in Seattle were significantly more likely to leave their partners at home when going out with friends—almost half the time—compared to all other groups.³⁰ Perhaps this geographic difference is not surprising, given that bars are easy to access in Seattle. Men in other parts of the state must travel greater distances to reach a gay bar. For some, this only happens when on vacation, a time partners are apt to be doing things together. It is not clear why women are less likely to go out without their partners than men, but given the rarity of lesbian bar attendance, leaving out one's partner on those occasions might send her a disturbing message. Going out completely alone was even rarer, a prohibition that cut across all types of respondents.

Other gay activity measures showed no significant differences by sex and location. More frequent than going to bars, more than every few months, was going to public places where other lesbians and gays socialized, such as coffeehouses, community centers, or events. Thus bars and clubs, catering more to singles, predictably ranked lower among the public gay social spaces that these attached gays and lesbians frequented. Respondents indicated a fairly low to moderate level of involvement in organized activities, whether mixed gay and lesbian activities or confined to gay people of the same sex. The more lesbian and gay family members and close friends one had (as detailed in Chapter 4), the more one also frequented places where lesbians and gays socialized publicly, and the more one was involved in mixed lesbian and gay activities.³¹ But women, not men, were more likely to be involved in same-sex only organized (lesbian) activities if they had more similar others in their friends and family.³²

Respondents were somewhat active in the gay and lesbian rights movement, with the mean of 4.28 near the middle of the nine-point scale. I did not explore further the nature of their activism, and we do not know how these levels of activism compared to gay and lesbian singles or couples

²⁹ Means by couple type were as follows: MS = 1.75; WS = 2.82; MO = 1.65; WO = 2.05 (N = 83; F = 4.88; $p < .01$).

³⁰ Means by couple type were as follows: MS = 4.28; WS = 2.37; MO = 2.35; WO = 1.71 (N = 74, F = 7.27, $p < .01$).

³¹ Pearson correlation coefficients were as follows: proportion of gay, lesbian, bisexual family and friends with socializing at gay places, $r = .36$, $p < .01$; with involvement in organized mixed lesbian and gay activities, $r = .25$, $p < .05$.

³² The more lesbian or bisexual women in one's family and friend groupings, the more involvement in organized same-sex, same-orientation activities: $r = .34$, $p < .01$. The same relationship did not hold for men.

more generally. But this number is in the same range as the means of 4.67 for coupled lesbians and 4.60 for coupled gay men, in a younger sample than this one, answering the same question in the late 1970s (Howard and Patterson [1995], using data from Blumstein and Schwartz [1983]). What constitutes activism is its own subject, addressed in depth by others (e.g., Linneman 2003), but I argue here that involvement in “movement” activism (the term used in the question) also implies a significant level of exposure to gay ideas and participation in community.

The fact that there were no significant differences in activism by sex or location indicates that opportunities for movement involvement extended well beyond the urban core of Seattle’s gay and lesbian communities. In fact, the level of activism was uncorrelated with the sexual orientation composition of one’s neighborhood (which also did not differ by location of respondent). But it did have a moderate positive association with working with other gays and lesbians, which was just as common for those living in and outside Seattle, as noted above.³³ In addition, the higher the proportion of family and friend networks that was gay, lesbian, or bisexual, the more likely one engaged in lesbian and gay rights activism.³⁴ Thus activism seemed to be an indicator of close involvement with other lesbians and gays—through work or significant personal relationships—and vice versa. These close family, friend, and work ties were more connected respondents more to activism than did merely residing near other gays and lesbians, with whom one may or may not have had significant ties.

In summary, there were similarities and some differences in gay community involvement by both gender and location. Seattle respondents predictably lived in more concentrated gay neighborhoods, especially men. Yet respondents in all four subsamples reported similar proportions of other gay people at work, with some segregation by sex. Men spent more time at bars, and Seattle men went more often without their partners. But other public places and events were preferred to bars overall for socializing with other gays and lesbians. Respondents reported being somewhat involved in organized gay activities, and were fairly active in the gay rights movement, with women more likely to do so in the context of women’s communities.

³³ Pearson’s r for activism and residing near other gays and lesbians was just .08 ($p = .49$), compared to the correlation between activism and having gay coworkers ($r = .21$, $p = .06$ in the Partner 1 sample; $r = .33$, $p < .01$ in the Partner 2 sample).

³⁴ In the Partner 1 sample, $r = .19$, $p < .10$; in the Partner 2 sample, $r = .37$, $p < .01$.

There are probably at least three broad categories of gay community involvement based on relationship status and parenting status: singles, couples without children, and couples with children. The couples in this study were little involved with one aspect of gay community that caters more to singles—the bars. Instead, they were more involved in other elements of gay community—non-bar places and activities,³⁵ including movement activism, which in recent years has focused increasingly on issues relevant to couples, such as corporate and governmental recognition of couple relationships. Also recall that couples in this sample had few children in their lives. Census data show that same-sex couples with children tend not to live near other same-sex couples (Gates and Ost, 2004) but rather favor areas where heterosexuals with children are, which may also be places with more amenities for raising children.

These three sets of gays and lesbians, grouped according to relationship and parenting status, are segmented further by sex: Census data show that couples tend to concentrate near other couples of the same sex (Gates and Ost 2004). These same data also show that lesbian couples tend to live in less urban areas than gay male couples. Data on this sample of couples presented in this and the previous chapter indicated relatively little inclusion of persons of the same orientation but opposite sex among couple networks. Though neither the Census nor the data presented here address single gays and lesbians, similar patterns of sex segregation are likely among them as well.

It remains to be seen whether men's greater exposure to gay bar culture and available men, and Seattle men's going out without their partners, created any difficulties for their couple relationships. The same can be said about women's participation in organized lesbian activities and communities outside of bars. Alternatively, these activities may have constituted salutary social outlets for one or both partners in a couple.

Of course, there were exceptions to the general pattern of involvement with gay people and places characteristic of these childless couples. Examples include the gay male couple living on Capitol Hill in Seattle with many gay friends as well as rich ties to a large biolegal family that included weekly correspondence with young nieces and nephews, or the rural lesbian couple with

³⁵ There was a non-significant trend in both samples for those closer to the gay neighborhoods of Seattle (or Portland) to frequent non-bar places and activities. The correlation between distance to gay community and this variable was $-.18$ in the Partner 1 sample ($p = .10$) and $-.19$ in the Partner 2 sample ($p = .08$). Movement activism, however, did not correlate at all with location.

mostly gay male friends and family. These couples remind us that, as with all generalities, one must bear in mind variability from couple to couple and from partner to partner.

A more ethnically diverse sample might have revealed still other patterns, given the sense of exclusion some ethnic minority persons feel from what they consider a very “white” gay culture and the desire to hold onto their cultures. Ethnic minority lesbian and gay affinity groups and activities are available in Washington, primarily in Seattle, but the closer-knit nature of these communities may create a different set of opportunities and constraints compared to the larger gay culture—less anonymity and freedom for dissatisfied partners to encounter alternatives, but also more opportunity to become acquainted in depth and develop attractions to potential alternatives. Of course, people of ethnic minority backgrounds are at least as diverse as majority lesbians and gays, if not more, in their desires for involvement in gay community versus connection to family and cultural heritage. They are likely to exhibit numerous patterns of engagement with gay community, but this sample does not permit exploration of these issues.

Family and friend relations. Gay community embeddedness and openness about one’s sexual orientation in some respects look at opposite sides of how being gay affects one’s networks—through the influence of gay and lesbian others in sexual communities, and through the influence one has on one’s networks through self-presentation as a gay person to associates who may not be gay. That is, one side of this equation is how much is one exposed to gay others; the other side is how much does one expose straight associates to her or his own gayness? This section looks at the patterns and impacts of involvement between same-sex partners and each others’ friends and family, and what kinds of kinship and relationship ideologies might shape relations with these reference groups.

In addition to information collected during the interview about family and friend relations, the written questionnaire also contained items regarding relations with one’s own and the partner’s friends versus relatives,³⁶ including emotional closeness to friends and family, beliefs about obligations to parents, openness about sexual orientation to significant others and their reactions to knowing. I also asked respondents about each associate’s support for the couple relationship. To assess potential negative impacts of couple associates, the written questionnaire asked how

³⁶ Because the written questionnaire preceded the interview, there was no easy way to design written items that allowed respondents to escape the commonly understood—but sometimes irrelevant or inaccurate—distinctions between “friends” and “family” as explored in the previous chapter. The written instrument therefore assumed uncritically the traditional kinship vernacular, employing dichotomous distinctions between “friends” vs. “family [of origin],” or “friend” vs. “[blood/legal] relative.”

often partners had had open disagreements or fights about relations with both sets of relatives and both partners' friends, and the interview collected detailed information about family and friend relations and conflicts involving specific associates.

Biological Ties in the Couple Network

Biological relatives represented 28% of the couple network, and a minority were reported to provide specific types of support, an average of 3.7 out of the 11.7 biological relatives listed. Couples mentioned the other eight biological relatives exclusively on the family and friend lists. A proportionally larger number of biological relatives was associated with fewer supportive associates in the couple family and friend network and in the total couple network generally, whether looking at absolute numbers or proportions of support providers.³⁷ In other words, when biological relatives predominated in couples' networks, couples got less support (in terms of specific types of support functions) than those with more friends in their networks. A larger proportion of biological relatives in couples' networks was also associated with reduced overlap between partners' networks, particularly in the family and friend network.³⁸ Same-sex couples were more likely to share friends, not biological relatives, and got more specific types of practical and emotional support in doing so. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that the measure of support targeted the individual partner, not necessarily the couple. This distinction will be important when we look at the impacts of support exchange associates on various aspects of relationship quality in the next chapter.

Partner versus Partner, Friends versus Family

Table 5.13 presents descriptives for items from the written questionnaire that assessed how partners interacted with each others' friends and family. There were no statistically significant differences by sex or location on any of these items. These statistics provide a general overview; I will explore some of the relationships between these and other aspects of family and friend relations in the sections that follow, as well as their associations with couple relationship quality in the next chapter.

³⁷ The correlation between the proportion of biological relatives and proportion of support providers were as follows for Partner 1: in the total couple network, $r = -.51$, $p < .001$; in the couple family and friend network (for the sum of biological relatives and proportion of support providers) $r = -.53$, $p < .001$. For Partner 2, corresponding values were as follows: in the total couple network, $r = -.40$, $p < .001$; in the couple family and friend network, $r = -.51$, $p < .001$.

³⁸ The correlation between the proportion of biological relatives and number of shared associates were as follows for Partner 1: in the total couple network, $r = -.21$, $p = .06$; in the couple family and friend network, $r = -.46$, $p < .001$. For Partner 2, corresponding values were as follows: in the total couple network, $r = -.28$, $p < .05$; in the couple family and friend network, $r = -.46$, $p < .001$.

Table 5.13. Relations with friends and relatives: Means and standard deviations (N = 83)

Variable	Mean	SD
Proportion of close friends shared with partner (1 = None, 5 = Half, 9 = All)	6.63	1.93
Proportion of time partner along when with friends (1 = Never, 5 = Half the time, 9 = Always)	7.02	1.53
Partner's liking of respondent's close friends (1 = Dislikes all, 2 = Dislikes most, 3 = Dislikes one/a few, 4 = Likes all)	3.47	.59
Respondent's liking of partner's close friends ^a (1 = Dislikes all, 2 = Dislikes most, 3 = Dislikes one/a few, 4 = Likes all)	3.57	.52
More contact with relatives or friends (1 = More with relatives, 5 = Equal with both, 9 = More with friends)	7.07	1.80
More contact with own or partner's original friends (1 = More with "my" friends, 5 = Equal with both, 9 = More with "his/her" friends)	4.88	2.30
More contact with own or partner's relatives (1 = More with my relatives, 5 = Equal with both, 9 = More with partner's relatives)	4.13	2.70
Who has more close friends (1 = I have many more, 5 = About the same, 9 = Partner has many more)	4.98	2.17
Emotional closeness to own family (1 = Not at all close, 9 = Extremely close)	6.35	2.21
Emotional closeness to partner's family (1 = Not at all close, 9 = Extremely close)	4.41	2.10
Important to live close and see a lot of relatives (1 = Strongly disagree, 9 = Strongly agree)	6.64	2.22

^a Excludes one response: "I do not know my partner's close friends"

Respondents were friends with over half of their partners' close friends, and they included their partners about three-quarters of the time when spending time with friends. Partners also reported a high degree of liking toward each others' friends. They had more contact with friends than relatives. Almost half reported having the same number of close friends as their partners, while very few reported having many more or many fewer close friends than their partners did. Respondents reported on average roughly the same amount of contact with friends that were originally their own as with friends that originally belonged to their partners when socializing together as a couple. About 45% were in the middle range (equal contact) on this item, indicating that many couples had integrated their friendship networks by giving equal time to each partner's pre-existing friends. A sizeable minority, however, 30% to 35% of respondents, fell into the extremes, indicating that one partner's network dominated couple socializing.

Respondents in both Partner 1 and 2 samples perceived on average that they had slightly more contact with their own relatives than their partners' relatives, but there was greater polarization on this measure, with more couples showing a clear preference for one family or the other, and not necessarily one's own (just over half the respondents at the extremes, compared to fewer than 30% reporting equal contact). This pattern suggests stronger reactions to biolegal relatives than to friends. Respondents were somewhat emotionally close to their families. The level of closeness with respondents' own families was greater than the closeness they felt to partner's families by about two points on the nine-point scale. It was also fairly important to live close to one's own relatives and see a lot of them.

The differences between interaction with pre-existing friends versus family probably point to greater discrepancies between partners in their families' acceptance of the same-sex relationship. As we will hear from couples' descriptions of their relations with family and friends, friends remain the more voluntary relationship, which means that couples are more likely to let go of friends that interfere or otherwise do not support the relationship in favor of friends acceptable to both partners. Culling friends in this way facilitates partners' joint interaction with each other's pre-existing friends. Ties to families of origin, even when they are less than congenial, are less easily undone. The responsibility for maintaining ties to both friendly and unfriendly families clearly falls more heavily on the biolegally-related partner, which helps to account for the overall greater level of contact reported with one's own family. At the same time, when one family is clearly more supportive than the other, both partners are likely to favor interaction with that family, which accounts for the greater variability in the distribution of relative contact with the two sets of relatives.

Outness

Openness about sexual orientation, or "outness," is likely to account for some of the patterns of couple socializing, especially with biolegal relatives. For example, when only one partner is out to the family of origin, the couple will probably spend much more time with that family. Being out exposes same-sex couples to possible rejection, but it also holds the promise of acceptance, support, and establishment of a couple identity. Table 5.14 displays the mean level of respondents' outness with different segments of individuals' networks. This sample of respondents was by and large completely open, to the point of having talked about their sexual orientation, with the vast majority of associates in their networks. The differences between groups of associates were very slight. The means for each group of associates ranged from a low

of 3.81 for family of origin to a high of 3.99 for close friends, on a four-point scale, where four meant that the respondent had discussed their orientation with that person. Women reported slightly more conflict with their partners than did men about being open about their sexual orientation.³⁹

Table 5.14. Openness about sexual orientation (N = 83)

Category	Mean ^a
Immediate family ^b	3.88
Extended family ^c	3.83
Family of origin	3.81
Close friends	3.99
Chosen Family ^d	3.96
Total family and friend network	3.88
Support exchange network	3.91
Total network	3.87

^a 1 = Does not know or suspect, 2 = Probably knows or suspects, 3 = Definitely knows but have never talked about it, 4 = Definitely knows and have talked about it

^b One respondent only listed the partner as immediate family; therefore, N = 82 in this category.

^c Four respondents did not list extended family; therefore, N = 77.

^d Two respondents of the 58 with chosen families listed only partners as chosen family members; therefore, N = 56 in this category.

Given that this sample was out to nearly all associates, most respondents were able to rate the reactions of parents, friends, and work superiors, where applicable, to their sexual orientations. It is helpful to remember the findings of Weston (1991) about familial rejection. Twenty-seven of her 80 interviewees talked about rejection incidents as a focal point of their coming out narratives, but the fear and expectations of rejection usually turned out to be greater than the reality. Most often, people were able to express relief at not being rejected. This study's sample seems to show relatively little rejection based on sexual orientation, as Table 5.15 shows.

³⁹ On a scale from 1 (Never) to 9 (Daily or almost every day) measuring frequency of conflict about being out, the Partner 1 mean for women was 2.00; for men, it was 1.46 ($t = 2.20$, $p < .05$). Partner 2 means (women = 1.95, men = 1.58) were almost significant at $t = 1.69$, $p < .10$.

Table 5.15. Reaction to knowledge of one's sexual orientation

Person	N	Mean	SD
Mother	77	3.62	.78
Father	67	3.49	.89
Best heterosexual female friend	80	3.99	.11
Best heterosexual male friend	73	3.92	.49
Superior at work	67	3.93	.32

Note: Responses are missing when the person did not exist or the person did not know the respondent's orientation. The scale was as follows: 1 = Rejecting, 2 = Intolerant but not rejecting, 3 = Tolerant but not accepting, 4 = Accepting.

Best heterosexual friends and superiors at work tended to be accepting, more so than parents, whose means were in the middle between "tolerant" and "accepting." People may be more likely to keep their orientation private from employers if they suspect negative attitudes, and this selectivity may account for some of supervisors' more positive reactions. There were significant differences by location in parents' reaction to one's sexual orientation. Respondents in Seattle reported less acceptance from both mothers and fathers than did respondents outside of Seattle. The means for both mothers and fathers of Seattle respondents were closer to "tolerant but not accepting," while the corresponding means for those outside Seattle were close to "accepting."⁴⁰ At first consideration, this pattern seems to be the opposite of what one might expect, given the more liberal climate of Seattle (Linneman 2003). Yet it may be precisely the liberal climate of Seattle that draws those who experience the greatest amount of rejection, or perceived rejection, from their families and home communities. The data do not permit a test of this hypothesis. As noted earlier, the greater acceptance of parents of those outside Seattle could also account for the finding that couples outside Seattle listed more biolegal associates in their support networks.

A mother's greater acceptance of one's sexual orientation was clearly associated with greater emotional closeness and desire to live near relatives and see them frequently, but the link with father's reactions was not consistent across the two partner samples.⁴¹ Parental reactions to sexual orientation were also not consistently related to respondents' sense of obligation to

⁴⁰ Means for in Seattle/outside Seattle respondents were as follows: means for mothers = 3.39/3.85, $t = -2.62$, $p < .05$; means for fathers = 3.27/3.71, $t = -2.02$, $p < .05$.

⁴¹ The Pearson correlation between mother's reaction to sexual orientation and emotional closeness was .51 ($p < .001$); with desire to live near relatives and see them frequently, it was .34 ($p < .01$). Correlations with father's reactions differed in the two samples. The corresponding Partner 1 correlations of .39 and .30 on these items were statistically significant, but Partner 2 correlations of .11 and .06 were not.

parents. I measured these beliefs using a seven-item scale regarding responsibilities that adult children in general, heterosexual married partners, and same-sex partners should have toward their parents and their partners' parents.⁴² The items were highly intercorrelated, suggesting a general ideology underlying obligation to parents regardless of relationship status or gayness. The scale mean was 5.25, indicating neither strong agreement nor strong disagreement with the items, but scale means ranged from 1.00 to 8.71, indicating substantial variation between respondents. There were no significant differences between respondents on this scale by sex and location. Once again, a father's reaction to one's orientation did not correlate significantly with a sense of obligation toward parents. Even mothers' reactions did not show a consistent association across the two partner samples, though the correlation between mothers' acceptance and a sense of obligation to parents was stronger and closer to being significant in both samples.⁴³ It is not surprising that mothers' reactions appeared to be more consequential than fathers' reactions for closeness to the family of origin, given the body of research showing that mothers and women more generally tend to be the family kin-keepers (Fischer 1982; Fischer et al. 1989; Irving 1972; Komarovsky 1962; Moore 1990; Pugliesi and Shook 1998; Rosenthal 1985).

The small amount of variation in outness will not permit a thorough exploration of the dynamics of secrecy in same-sex couples, but it is probably substantively meaningful that the level of outness to family of origin was the lowest. Family attitudes to one's coming out can be the most unpredictable, and that unpredictability can make their acceptance or rejection all the more poignant. Admittedly, those who have the most grounds to fear rejection may be the most closeted, but an advantage of a sample of couples who are open about their orientation is that it allows us to observe the effects of overt rejection or support on their relationships.

⁴² Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .83. Scale items were rated from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 9 (Strongly agree), and negative items were reversed coded so that a higher number signified a more positive response. The items were as follows: "Adult children have an obligation to keep in contact with their parents"; "Partners in a heterosexual marriage have just as much responsibility to keep in contact with their partner's parents as with their own"; "Partners in a heterosexual marriage should *not* be expected to visit their partner's relatives if they do not want to"; "It is the responsibility of adult children to be with their parents in times of serious illness even if the children have moved some distance from the parents"; "If a person's parent has a medical bill and cannot pay, the person is morally obligated to pay the debt"; "Men in a living-together same-sex couple have just as much responsibility to keep in contact with their partner's parents as with their own"; and "Men in a living together same-sex couple should *not* be expected to visit their partner's relatives if they do not want to."

⁴³ The Partner 1 correlation of .18 was not statistically significant ($p = .11$), while the Partner 2 correlation was .33 and significant at $p < .01$.

Couple Support and Interference

Thus far we have looked at a variety of direct measures of support to individual partners but only indirect or structural measures of support to the couple. I also asked directly about the relationship support provided by all network associates, adapting items by Adams and Jones (1997) and Oliner (1989): how supportive others were of the relationship, how others would react if the relationship ended, and which ones thought of the respondent and partner as a couple (see Table 5.16).

Table 5.16. Network support for the couple relationship (N = 83)

Category	Supportive of relationship ^a	Reaction to breakup ^b	Think of you as a couple ^c
Immediate family ^d	4.45	4.28	4.78
Extended family ^e	4.47	4.26	4.81
Family of origin	4.17	4.04	4.67
Close friends	4.85	4.60	5.00
Chosen Family ^f	4.88	4.59	4.99
Total family and friend network	4.50	4.29	4.84
Support network	4.60	4.30	4.89
Total network	4.49	4.23	4.83

^a 1 = Strongly unsupportive, 3 = Neither supportive nor unsupportive, 5 = Strongly supportive

^b 1 = Strongly disapprove/extremely upset, 3 = Neither approve nor disapprove/neutral, 5 = Strongly approve/pleased

^c 1 = Certain this person does not, 3 = Not sure, 5 = Certain this person does

^d One respondent only listed the partner as immediate family; therefore, N = 82 in this category.

^e Four respondents did not list extended family; therefore, N = 77.

^f Two respondents of the 58 with chosen families listed only partners; therefore, N = 56 in this category.

Nearly everyone in people's networks knew about the couple relationship and thought of the partners as a couple. Respondents were slightly less emphatic about the supportiveness of associates toward the couple, but the total network mean on this item still fell between "somewhat" and "strongly" supportive. Respondents imagined that the couple's hypothetical breakup would cause their associates to be upset or disapprove somewhat. The high means on all three items, while they may show strong support of couples overall, also suggest that the material significance of the gap between being only "somewhat" supportive and "strongly"

supportive may be larger than the numerical scores would indicate. Once again, families of origin were clearly the weakest link in support of the couple out of all subsets of family and friends, tending to be only "somewhat" supportive, compared to chosen family and close friends, whose perceived support was much closer to the "strongly supportive" rating of five. Interestingly, the mean support network rating, though higher than the total network average, was lower than the means for close friends and chosen family. The analyses in the next chapter will explore whether or not this difference is meaningful for relationship quality, but it does suggest that support exchanges directed at individual partners do not always translate into support for the couple.

Ceremonies and rituals. For some couples, the maximum expression of network support is through the celebration of the relationship with public rituals and commitment ceremonies. Thirty-four percent of couples had had a commitment ceremony, but there was a significant gender difference: nearly half of women, 47%, compared to just 20% of men had done so.⁴⁴ Fifty-seven percent of these celebrations involved clergy, either in or outside of a church, while others held a variety of events with friends and family. It was not just the public celebration of the relationship that women were more likely to enact; more women than men had also exchanged rings or other symbols of their relationships, 86% versus 62%.⁴⁵

Some of the events were more properly described as anniversary parties for the purpose of celebrating existing commitments of long-established couples, rather than weddings designed to reinforce and solidify a growing commitment with public support. But a number of the couples who had had more formal ceremonies felt that community support for their relationships was palpable and that it helped solidify the partners' commitment:

It made the commitment seem more real. Having all the people there recognize and acknowledge it made a difference. It makes me more committed to the relationship, doing it in front of everyone else. (Seattle man)

Just as frequently, respondents described celebrations that were as creative as they were unconventional. The implications of these kinds of events for social support were much less clear:

⁴⁴ Pearson Chi-square = 6.52, $p < .05$.

⁴⁵ Pearson Chi-square = 6.08, $p < .05$.

We had a ceremony when our cars “got married.” We put the cars in both of our names and a friend married the cars. We wrote songs, had a “shower,” washed the cars. We invited friends and someone made a cake. (woman outside Seattle)

We registered as domestic partners with the City of Seattle with another lesbian couple. My partner wore a *hysterical* wedding dress from Goodwill, and then we met up with friends later at a Thai restaurant. (Seattle woman)

Even the latter celebration, which included official registration of the couple with the city, had a “tongue-in-cheek” element to it. These ceremonies and others like them differ from media images of serious, determined couples getting legally married in 2004 in San Francisco and other places, before courts brought the nuptials to a halt. This contrast suggests that for some couples, “marrying” outside of a legal context, while encouraging creativity, means losing some of the formality that may give the ritual some of its social power. The sheer variety of celebrations suggest that their meanings may be less clear to family and friends than traditional weddings that follow familiar cultural scripts. Considering these ambiguities, the diverse rituals that couples employed are likely to have had equally variable consequences for their social status as couples and uncertain impacts on relationship quality.

The quality of couple relations with families of origin versus friends. Given the perception that families of origin were less supportive of the couple than were friends overall, what were the dynamics of family and friend support or interference in couple life? I asked respondents two sets of questions to understand how satisfied couples were in their relations with each others’ families and friends, gauge partners’ levels of conflict over these relations, and to find out the extent to which each partner had been incorporated and what issues had arisen in the process of engaging with each other’s networks. The first set of questions was a series of scale items in the written questionnaire; the second was a series of open-ended questions during the interview about these dynamics.

Table 5.17 looks at global levels of satisfaction with each partner’s family and friends and conflict between partners over these relations. There were no significant differences between types of couples on these items. Overall, respondents were somewhat satisfied with both sets of relatives, slightly more so with the partner’s relatives than with their own. Respondents were more satisfied with their friends than their relatives by less than one point on the nine-point scale.

They were equally satisfied with the relationships they had with their own and their partner's friends. Conflict over all of these sets of relations was quite infrequent, less than once a year on average.

Table 5.17. Relations with friends and relatives: Satisfaction and couple conflict
(N = 83)

Item	Satisfaction ^a	Couple conflict ^b
Relations with my relatives	6.50	2.23
Relations with my partner's relatives	6.71	2.10
Relations with my friends	7.25	2.23
Relations with my partner's friends	7.22	2.10

^a 1 = Not at all satisfied, 9 = Extremely satisfied

^b 1 = Never, 2 = Less than once a year, 3 = About once a year, 4 = Once every few months, 5 = Once a month, 6 = Two or three times a month, 7 = Once or twice a week, 8 = Three or four times a week, 9 = Daily or almost every day

During the interview I allowed respondents to talk freely about how they saw themselves getting along with their partners' family and friends and vice versa, following up with additional questions for clarification. I then coded their responses on a number of dimensions, including the character of relations (positive, neutral or indifferent, negative), problems or stresses, and conflict between partners over family and friend relations. In these analyses I looked at both families of origin and both sets of friends; hence the numbers reported are based on 166 partners.

When considering whether connections to family and friends were positive, neutral or indifferent, or negative relations, I did not count these as mutually exclusive conditions or make one global assessment about relations with one entire family or set of friends. For example, looking at families of origin, partners could have both positive and negative relations with one person or different family members. Therefore, the numbers I report represent *any instance* of positive connections to family members. The partner is the unit of analysis; theoretically there could be as many as 166 positive family relations, as well as 166 negative relations, and so on.

Though most respondents were in contact with their families of origin, 14 or eight percent described estrangement from some or all of these family members. In most cases, the estrangement was only partial, and 96% of partners (all but six) had met at least some members of their partners' families of origin. Positive connections with families outnumbered negative

connections by almost two to one. Eighty-seven percent of respondents mentioned positive relationships with some or all of their family members, compared to 46% who mentioned negative relations. Just 13% of respondents felt neutral or indifferent toward their families of origin, and typically this indifference only characterized relations with certain family members, not everyone.

Comments like these illustrate the high degree to which some same-sex partners had become part of each others' families of origin:

My parents would be devastated if we broke up. She's a *daughter* on my side of the family—my parents' "oldest child," my brother's "big sister." My sister gets along better with *her* than with *me*. (woman outside Seattle)

He's very incorporated in my family. Grandpa sold him his old car to "keep it in the family." He wasn't used to my big family, though—we have family events every weekend. He had a hard time with that. So now we miss things sometimes. I had to tell my family we need time for ourselves. I felt obligated, and torn, but it doesn't bother them. It's actually OK with them, especially my mother. And now that his family lives here, I'll be able to do more with them. Now they see how he and I live, and so we understand each other. (man outside Seattle)

With both partners' families together in their town, these men were completely incorporated on both sides and in the process of integrating their families with each other. For most respondents, incorporation of partners into families of origin was not completely seamless. I categorized problematic family relations into two main categories, those involving sexual orientation issues versus all others. I was interested in discerning to what extent same-sex couples felt that their sexual orientation affected family dynamics compared to what might be thought of as all the usual family or "in-law" issues that had nothing to do with sexual orientation—family culture clashes, dislike of particular "in-laws," intrusion of the family into the couple relationship, competing obligations between the two partners' families, and so on. Sexual orientation issues included being closeted about one's orientation or about the couple relationship, family hostility, or any discomfort that partners felt in family interactions due to their sexual orientation, for example, difficulty expressing same-sex affection, lack of open or consistent acknowledgement of

the couple by family members, and so on. Forty-three percent of respondents mentioned that sexual orientation was a source of conflict or discomfort with at least one family member, while just 23% mentioned other types of issues. Some of the problems had occurred in the past and since been resolved, and 16% of respondents reported that relations that had once been problematic had improved over time.

Conflict with biolegal families was often related to conservative religious ideologies, but in several cases, sexual orientation was merely a convenient target that stood in for other problems:

My mother is hardcore Pentecostal—she’s told me I’ll burn in hell, and I continue to allow her to hurt me. He [respondent’s partner] would like to see me confront her more than I do. She hurts people unintentionally, she does it to all my brothers and sisters too—they’ve all done something she disapproves of. If it’s not those things we’ve done, it would be something else. (Seattle man)

There are definitely religious issues with my family. The lesbian issue showcases our family issues—it’s not the real issue. It’s the focal point for their support of me, or their lack of support for me. (Seattle woman)

Most of the 43% respondents who cited difficulties related to sexual orientation were more certain that homophobia was truly the crux of the issue, but even then, homophobia frequently coexisted with the family’s embrace of the same-sex partner:

My parents are not fully supportive of the same-sex aspect of our relationship, but they always include her and would be very upset if we broke up. (Seattle woman)

Less common than these mixed messages was active opposition and disrespect for the relationship:

Her mother won’t come here unless I’m not here. When we do overlap, she’s perfectly nice to me, but the struggle is that she says things to her, like when their family friends visit Seattle, telling her not to expose them to our relationship. (Seattle woman)

Despite the fact that a substantial minority of respondents cited problems with one partner's family or the other, just ten percent of respondents mentioned any conflict between partners over family relations or stress on the couple relationship. Yet contrary to research finding that conflict with the family can enhance couple solidarity (Driscoll et al. 1972; Leslie et al. 1986), only two respondents mentioned that the relationship with their partners had improved as a result of dealing with family hostilities.

Relations between partners and each others' friends were more congenial than between partners' and families of origin. The overwhelming majority of respondents, 93%, reported at least some incorporation of partners into each others' circles of friends, while just 16% reported hostile or negative relations between his or her partner and any friend. Two-thirds of respondents thought that having separate friends was important for both partners and healthy for the couple relationship:

We may not like all of each other's friends, but we're both very respectful. We all have different parts of ourselves and needs that different people meet that help us be who we are. (woman outside Seattle)

Occasionally separate friends, or friends more attached to one partner than the other, were a source of jealousy or conflict between partners, reported by 16% of respondents:

Sometimes we're jealous of time spent with each other's close friends. I feel jealous of her excitement about seeing them sometimes—her putting them first. I'm more interested in her friends than she is in mine. (Seattle woman)

The threat of separate emotional ties and experiences with friends was of concern to both male and female couples. This man outside Seattle in a sexually open couple perceived that friends, not other sex partners, were a source of jealousy (sex partners presumably were considered distinct from ordinary friends):

I've never felt any jealousy—it [nonmonogamy] doesn't bother me—but he has seemed more jealous of my *friends*. So it's not a romantic or sexual issue.

Just six respondents, or four percent, reported any specific behaviors of friends in supporting the couple relationship, but their accounts suggest that friends could play a significant role at crucial moments:

A friend helped us a great deal at the recent lowest point in our relationship. She was able to help us find common ground to help us deal with it. She was willing to put herself out there. She was an incredible catalyst for the changes we needed to talk about and make. (man outside Seattle)

The only other thing that comes to mind—I can't emphasize it enough—particularly the friends on my list have been critical in keeping us together because they care about us both. I don't think we'd be together without them. And they have an investment in us being together, to avoid awkwardness, since they are friends of us both...Our cadre of friends is really tight. (man outside Seattle)

Thus friends have a vested interest in couple stability, because even beyond their caring for the partners, friends also wish to avoid the messy network disruption that a breakup entails. Friends may be especially likely to spring into action when they perceive that partners are at risk of uncoupling, though the findings of Vaughan (1986) suggest that by then, they are usually too late. Like families of origin, however, friends are not always supportive. Those who are loyal to one partner may attempt to interfere with the status quo, as eight percent of respondents mentioned:

He thinks this friend is more of a bitch than I do. We don't fight over her though. It's more a conceptual disagreement. She's less supportive of the relationship—she'd be most willing to see us break up and be supportive of me. He is the "bad husband" to her. (Seattle man)

Disputed associates. The interview included a question asking if the partners had had friction, disagreements, or conflict over anyone on their entire list of associates, and how so. An important counterpoint to the focus on positive social support, prevalent in most research in this area, is the consideration of problematic relationships—associates who had been the subject of disputes between the partners. I have touched on negative interactions with family and friends,

but here my emphasis is on what happens between the same-sex partners themselves, to quantify in detail who the most common sources of couple disputes were and explore the nature of those disputes.

Couple networks contained an average of 4.6 associates who were a source of conflict between partners, but some couples had had disputes over as many as 17 associates. Nine couples reported no conflicts or disagreements over any associate in their networks.⁴⁶ Roughly similar proportions of the family and friend network, support network, and the total couple network fell into this category, from 10 to 13%. Increased overlap between partners' support associates was also associated with increased conflict over support associates.⁴⁷ Simply stated, partners who shared more of their support providers also shared more conflict over them, suggesting relationships that were both rich and complicated.

Table 5.18 displays disputed associates by sex and orientation and counts all unique disputed associates named by both partners in each couple.⁴⁸ As with all other segments of individual and couple networks, respondents tended to name more associates of the same sex. In fact, the breakdown of associates by sex and orientation roughly parallels their distribution in the total couple network presented earlier.

⁴⁶ I assigned a value of zero to these nine couples to compute mean numbers of associates in each category in Tables 5.19 and 5.20. These nine couples are excluded from calculation of mean percentages of disputed associates in each category (since the proportion of zero associates is undefined).

⁴⁷ The correlation between the proportion of one's support network shared with one's partner (overlap) and the proportion of one's own support network associates who had been the source of disputes between partners was .25 ($p < .05$) for Partner 1, .26 ($p < .05$) for Partner 2.

⁴⁸ The value for disputed associates in this analysis is based on total unique associates listed by both partners, which accounts for the larger number here, 4.6, compared to 3.8 as reported in Table 5.11, which is based only on associates listed by one partner.

Table 5.18. Couples' disputed associates by sex and sexual orientation

Type of associate	<i>Men in Seattle</i> N = 20	<i>Women in Seattle</i> N = 22	<i>Men outside Seattle</i> N = 20	<i>Women outside Seattle</i> N = 21	<i>All couples</i> N = 83
(1) Heterosexual women	1.7 (44)	2.2 (41)	1.6 (32)	1.9 (40)	1.8 (39)
(2) Heterosexual men	.9 (18)	1.4 (30)	1.1 (23)	1.2 (26)	1.2 (24)
(3) Lesbian or bisexual women	.3 (5)	1.6 (27)	.3 (7)	1.3 (31)	.9 (17)
(4) Gay or bisexual men	1.4 (32)	.3 (3)	1.3 (38)	.1 (3)	.7 (19)
All male associates	2.3 (52)	1.7 (33)	2.4 (61)	1.3 (29)	1.9 (44)
All lesbian, bisexual, or gay associates	1.6 (38)	1.8 (29)	1.6 (45)	1.4 (34)	1.6 (37)
Total (rows 1-4) ^a	4.2 (100)	5.4 (100)	4.2 (100)	4.5 (100)	4.6 (100)

Note: Mean percentages of all associates named within each couple type are given in parentheses. Nine couples who did not name any disputed associates are not included in mean percentages.

^a Column totals may not equal the exact sum of component values due to rounding.

Table 5.19 displays these associates by their relationships to the respondent (again counting all unique disputed associates named by both partners in each couple). Here we see that the sex difference in disputed associates was due to the fact that men had more disputes over male friends, women over female friends. This was also the principal difference in the distribution of associates in men's and women's total networks.

What distinguished disputed associates, however, was the overrepresentation of biolegal relatives. Biolegal relatives made up 28% of the total couple network, but they were 46% of disputed associates. There were slight variations by couple type, but this general pattern was common to both female and male couples regardless of location. The tendency for same-sex couples to report a disproportionate amount of conflict over biolegal relatives is consistent with their overall descriptions of family and friend relations discussed above, where they reported a larger number of problematic relations with family of origin members than with friends.

Table 5.19. Disputed associates by relationship to respondent

Type of associate	<i>Men in Seattle</i> N = 20	<i>Women in Seattle</i> N = 22	<i>Men outside Seattle</i> N = 20	<i>Women outside Seattle</i> N = 21	<i>All couples</i> N = 83
Biolegally related women	1.2 (25)	1.6 (30)	1.2 (28)	1.4 (26)	1.3 (27)
Biolegally related men	.7 (15)	1.2 (21)	.8 (16)	1.0 (22)	.9 (19)
All biolegally related associates	1.8 (40)	2.8 (51)	2.0 (44)	2.3 (48)	2.2 (46)
Female friends	.8 (23)	1.6 (29)	.5 (9)	1.6 (41)	1.2 (25)
Male friends	1.3 (29)	.3 (9)	1.3 (35)	.3 (5)	.8 (20)
All friends	2.1 (53)	2.0 (38)	1.8 (44)	2.0 (46)	2.0 (45)
All ex-partners	.2 (4)	.2 (3)	.2 (3)	.1 (4)	.2 (3)
All others	.1 (3)	.5 (8)	.3 (9)	.2 (3)	.2 (6)
Total ^a	4.2 (100)	5.4 (100)	4.2 (100)	4.5 (100)	4.6 (100)

Note: Mean percentages of all associates named within each couple type are given in parentheses. Nine couples who did not name any disputed associates are not included in mean percentages.

^a Column totals may not equal the exact sum of component values due to rounding.

A consideration of the conflict issues that couples described yields further insight into this pattern. The least common issues had to do with romantic jealousies over associates (10%), non-romantic jealousies (e.g., feeling left out, mentioned by 10%), an associate's dislike for or poor treatment of one's partner (7%), and a partner's receiving poor treatment from one of her or his own associates (6%).⁴⁹ But by far the most common type of conflict, characteristic of 67% of the issues mentioned, involved discrepancies between the two partners in terms of appropriate ways of dealing with particular associates, comfort spending time with them, feelings of affection, levels of desire for contact, and so on. Most often the associates who were the subject of conflict were families of origin. A subset of 15% of these issues specifically concerned discrepancies in partners' level of outness or behaviors related to sexual orientation, and in most cases, these conflicts over sexual orientation issues related to biolegal family. But more than homophobia, the

⁴⁹ I made a distinction in the last two conflict issues depending on which partner was more connected to the associate, who the associate "belonged to." Some couples had disputes over the fact that the friend or relative of one partner did not like the other partner (7% of issues). Other couples argued about the fact that one partner's original friend or relative treated that same partner poorly, demanded too much attention, and so on (6% of issues). In that case, the second partner was not directly involved, but rather distressed about the way the associate treated the first partner.

key to understanding why families of origin were a source of conflict out of proportion to their numbers had much more to do with the distinct norms governing interaction with family versus friends.

The notion that (bio)legal family is mandatory while friends are voluntary is a powerful cultural norm. Following the logic that one cannot rid oneself of family, most partners tended to tolerate each other's problematic family ties. People more often discarded their problematic friends or left their partners out of socializing with them. The contrast was evident in this man's description of problems with his best friend and his mother:

She's a friend who can be very tactless in her opinions. He prefers not to be around her, and she's my best friend after him. How do I keep them both in my life? I keep them apart now. We do stuff with his friends as a couple. We've found a way of dealing with it. As for my mother, she is a psycho bitch from hell. It mostly drives us closer together, for survival. We try to minimize our contact with her. He and I don't argue about it—we mostly agree. He cooperates when he needs to be there. It's not a force between us, it's actually made us stronger. He understands and validates my point of view. (man outside Seattle)

The couple engaged together with the friends that both could tolerate, but they dealt with the problematic best friend by keeping her separate from one partner. In contrast, despite the highly volatile mother-son relationship, both agreed that some contact was necessary and the partner was more willing to cooperate in engaging with her when necessary.

Some respondents encouraged their partners (or both of them) to increase contact with the partners' difficult bio)legal family members, again because of the underlying expectation that children and parents must keep in touch:

My mother's paranoid schizophrenic. She lives in a hospital in New York. She's also amazingly sweet, and I love her, but she's a handful. He feels the same way too. I feel guilt about not seeing her enough. Emotionally it's hard for us—we don't always agree about it. He's more likely to want to visit her, because he's not had the history. We've had some big yelling matches, then he gets a new understanding and backs off. (man outside Seattle)

I've been out to my mother for five years, and she hasn't accepted me as gay. He couldn't deal with her calling him my "friend." He wanted to go back to Seattle—I had to choose him or my family. Part of me felt my family would always be there—they are my blood—but they let me down. I wasn't going to talk to them, but he encourages me and pushes me to make up. I'm putting it off. He wants the issue to be resolved. (Seattle man)

Despite the partner's indignation over the slight to the couple, he ended up encouraging the respondent to mend the relationship with his mother. Biolegal family relationships are considered so important that some even stepped in to encourage or maintain ties when the biolegally-related partner would not do it:

He doesn't really speak to his family. His mother and stepfather were involved in the business we had, but since that time, he's cut them off. I've been more of a go-between. They searched for us and found me at my work. I've talked with his mother—she's called me, but she hasn't talked with him. His mother has accepted us, but the rest of the family hasn't. He wants them to accept me more—that's the biggest issue. I believe he's going to make amends this year. I'm encouraging him to do so. (Seattle man)

I was estranged from my family *before* I got together with my partner. She arranged for my parents to come back into my life. They really like her. I've enjoyed them much more—it's much better than it was before. (woman outside Seattle)

I am totally welcomed into her family—I "walk on water" even though she's estranged. I'm credited with bringing her back into the family. (Seattle woman)

When one partner does not make allowances for the shortcomings of the other's relationship with a parent, it tends to drive a wedge between the partners:

She thinks I'm so concerned about my dad's opinion, it drives her up the wall. I feel it's alienated me from her *and* him...He's an asshole, but I want to like him, I need to deal with him. I've shut down a little on both sides. (Seattle woman)

The stories of family strife contrasted sharply with the way couples usually dealt with friends:

If you like one of us, you'd better like the other, or our friendship won't last. With family, it's different. (man outside Seattle)

She and I are number one in each other's lives, so problems with friends don't come up. (Seattle woman)

I left my friends behind in the beginning of the relationship, and then established new friends and family from there. (woman outside Seattle)

No one spoke with any degree of nonchalance about leaving family behind. By and large, biolegal family relationships endured even when they created trouble for the couple. Again and again, respondents tended to emphasize the partner's acceptance of the friends more than friends' acceptance of the partner. Most wanted their friends to like their partners because they did not want to have to eliminate their friends, but would do so if necessary. With families of origin, the pattern was reversed—it was family acceptance of the partner, and presumably the relationship, that couples more often sought. Few respondents communicated any sense of having to make a choice between one's partner and one's biolegal relatives. Adult children withstood more conflict with their families of origin, and partners tolerated more conflict with each other over those same associates to avoid forcing the choice if at all possible.

Another intriguing pattern in the data on disputed associates concerns conflict between partners over coupled persons in their networks. Earlier in this chapter we heard couples describe the supportive functions of socializing with couples, but the data on disagreements between partners reveal that coupled associates could be at least as problematic as singles. The proportion of all disputed associates who were coupled was nearly equal to their representation in the total couple network (62% of disputed associates compared to 67% of the total couple network). Respondents described a variety of conflicts related to their coupled associates, but here I focus on socializing between couples.

Coupled friends were as capable of being unsupportive as other associates. Some coupled friends more connected to one partner may attempt to discourage a developing relationship:

We felt they were trying to break us up for awhile. It was odd, because one of them introduced us. They would tell her they thought I did bad or unhealthy things—projecting their stuff on us. They were jealous of her spending more time with me. The four of us sat down to talk it over. It was very intense. They backed off. We grew apart and then started coming back together, but we saw her do it to other people too. We both decided we didn't want to be around her—it was an awful dynamic. We haven't seen them since Christmas. (Seattle woman)

The wife of a close friend didn't like my partner—she liked my previous partner better. It's not resolved, and we don't get together with them as a couple. It also affected my relationship with my friend's wife—I have more distance with her now. (Seattle woman)

Couple friends need not intentionally interfere. Frequently the ties between couples are stronger between one pair of partners than the other, sometimes leading to jealousies or making couple socializing difficult:

She and I became so close so quickly. Both my partner and her husband felt left out—they were jealous of our connection. So *they* tried to form a bond. People at work thought she and I were having an affair. (man outside Seattle)

She's a friend who has personality differences with my partner sometimes that made it hard for us to do things as a foursome. (Seattle woman)

Differences in the degree of connection to coupled friends can lead to disagreements about appropriate ways of dealing with them:

We traveled with this friend, and he made our trip uncomfortable because of a problem he was having with his partner. My partner and I disagreed about how

to handle it—he wanted to cut the relationship, but I wanted connection.
(Seattle man)

We had a disagreement about how to interact with the neighbors, about our boundaries. It's been a recurring issue between her and me. (woman outside Seattle)

Being part of a couple-oriented group of friends can also have its pitfalls, as conflicts in one part of the network spill over, complicating everyone's friendships and couple relationships:

A friend started going out with another friend's girlfriend. They were our two best friends from college. This friend ended up marrying the other friend's girlfriend. It caused lots of conflict for all of us. The friend who had the girlfriend first blamed me for being friends with the other friend, the one who had moved in on her girlfriend. It all ended badly...My partner told this friend, who is also my best friend, that she wasn't welcome here with her girlfriend. Now I don't like to stay at *her* friend's—my partner's best friend, who was jilted. It's an ongoing issue. It's been a huge conflict for us, and it's taken a lot of effort not to have it split us up. Now it's more the discomfort that each of us feels with the other's friend. (woman outside Seattle)

This type of confusing situation is an example of what some call "lesbian stew," the notion that lesbians in tight-knit circles tend to become enmeshed in each other's lives. Three quarters of the associates women had disputes over were coupled, compared to half of men's disputed associates,⁵⁰ but men were not immune to these kinds of complications with other couples. Gay men could end up in a "stew" of their own, as this man outside Seattle recounted about the relationship with another couple:

I felt some jealousy about their relationship—things they had that I wanted. Then my attraction to one of them developed in the past year. And I consider his partner one of my closest friends too, both of them, actually. It's amazing we're still friends. We've all talked about it, and I've seen a therapist for nine months. We talked individually and together as a group. It's not totally resolved, but

⁵⁰ Women had disputes over 3.7 coupled associates v. 2.3 for men ($t = 2.60, p < .05$); 74% of women's disputed associates were coupled, compared to 51% for men ($t = 3.68, p < .001$).

things have gotten much better. That's probably the closest to splitting up that we've ever been.

These stories of conflict over couple socializing show that some of the possible advantages, such as reducing the relationship threat of being surrounded by available singles, can be overwhelmed by other threats. People who have coupled successfully are attractive to others precisely because of the things that make them good partners; dissatisfaction with one's own relationship can make them seem especially irresistible. And unlike heterosexual couples, where there are two possible new pairings (e.g., wife A with husband B and wife B with husband A), a gay couple who socializes with another gay couple faces double the number of threats (either partner in one couple potentially attracted to either partner of the other couple). Close coupled friends can be just as hostile to a new partner as homophobic family members, former partners, or single friends. The very process of engaging in four-way friendships (or more) may increase exponentially the complexities of coordinating tastes, desired frequency of contact, styles of communication, and other variables. In light of these possibilities, the net impact of courting other couples on the quality of same-sex relationships is clearly an open question, one that we return to in the next chapter.

To put this discussion of disputes between partners over network associates in context, it is important to remember that for most couples, the problems posed by difficult relations with friends or family did not appear to threaten their relationships. Most partners got along reasonably well with most associates in each others' networks. At the same time, it is apparent that conflict over just one or a small number of associates has the potential to create more trouble for the couple than a whole raft of positive, supportive persons can remedy.

SAME-SEX COUPLE ALLIES AND ADVERSARIES

This chapter further charted the social contours of same-sex couple networks by exploring who allies and adversaries were and what positive and negative interactions couples and their associates engaged in that might affect couple relationship quality. I also looked beyond the micro-communities of couple networks to the larger context of couple involvement in gay culture and gay communities, places where couples may encounter alternative partners and norms less favorable to long-term coupling.

Men in Seattle lived in the gayest neighborhoods, while men outside of Seattle lived in the least gay places, and women's neighborhoods were in between. Regardless of where men lived, however, they visited gay bars more than women did, even if infrequently. All types of couples were more likely to frequent other gay places, such as community centers or specific events. No matter how distant couples lived from gay community, they were equally likely to encounter other lesbians and gays at work, and the more there were, the more likely respondents were to engage in gay rights activism. Overall, though there was some variation in the sample, involvement in the organized aspects of gay community was fairly limited, and this involvement did not have a strong connection to where they lived, whether near or far from the major gay enclaves of Seattle and Portland.

Because of the limited degree of gay community participation, it seems especially likely that the immediate context of regular social interactions might yield more useful information for understanding the influence of couples' communities on their relationships. Using an inventory of support functions and comparing the support network thus generated with the family and friend network (of the previous chapter) revealed that respondents were embedded in discrete but overlapping kinds of networks with potentially distinct consequences for couple quality. The support network inventory focused on functions targeted at the individual. Individual support ties might translate into couple support that enhances the relationship, or they might function principally as resources that bolster the power of the individual partner. The "psychological" network of family and friends was more physically distant but psychologically significant, in spite of—or perhaps because of—the fact that biolegal family members may not always have played a supportive role. Through the logic of this alternative organizing principle, and encompassing a more varied mix of associates important to both partners, the family and friend network might have its own set of implications for couple solidarity and functioning. Alternatively, networks of any kind may not be as significant as other influences on couple relationships, but the literature reviewed suggests that to the contrary, networks should have an impact.

The mean size of the support network was comparable to that obtained in other studies using the same instrument. This "behavioral" network of routine support exchanges consisted of geographically close associates with friends and biolegal relatives providing different sorts of support. Friends more often performed support functions involving substantial or frequent social interaction with the respondent (e.g., social activities, discussing personal matters), while biolegal

families tended to provide specific instrumental types of support (e.g., lending money) requiring less interaction.

As a group, friends provided more kinds and more total support ties than any other type of associate because of their greater numbers. Friends also made the difference in the sex composition of men's and women's networks, given the tendency to recruit others of the same sex (and orientation). On a per capita basis, however, partners provided the most support ties, followed by friends and parents, except for the one in ten respondents who named ex-partners, ranked second after partners.

Among biolegal relatives, women provided more support than men. Seattle women had larger support networks than all other types of couples, suggesting an effect of both gender and urban location, where similar others are more readily available. In addition, listing more lesbians was associated with greater network support overall for both men and women. None of the male-female differences were large, but all together, these results confirm a gendered pattern of social support and kinkeeping documented in past research reviewed earlier (e.g., Moore 1990).

The support network inventory missed about two-thirds of the biolegal relatives that couples listed in their family and friend network, and the proportion of the total network captured in the support network varied widely from person to person. The support network instrument may not perform equally well in identifying all important associates for all types of people. Being less connected to biolegal family members, as some gays and lesbians are, did not necessarily mean that those ties were not significant in their lives. Asking specifically about biolegal relatives through questions about family and friends yielded information, even if the tie was weak or the relationship was not positive, that respondents would not have revealed otherwise. As we will see in the next chapter, this additional information proved important to understanding relationship quality.

Social support for the couple is contingent on the partners' identifying themselves as a couple to others. For same-sex couples, this means being out of the closet. Respondents were out to the overwhelming majority of their networks, regardless of where they lived. This level of outness prevents a thorough exploration of the dynamics of couples in secret relationships who may be cut off from social support, relationship models, and couple norms, though there was some variation in outness to families of origin. Respondents away from Seattle had more support ties

to biolegal relatives, partly a function of greater family acceptance of their orientations. Respondents tended to rate all segments of their networks as supportive of the same-sex couple relationship, but families of origin were the least supportive group. While relations with families were positive overall, usually incorporating partners into at least one if not both families, nearly half of respondents mentioned elements of homophobia that affected these relations.

The sharing of family and friends between partners—overlap in their networks—has been proposed as a key indicator of couple social support and solidarity through the integration of their networks and their lives (Julien et al. 1999; Surra 1988). Average overlap in the total couple network was 30%, with slightly more overlap between partners' support networks—those who lived closer—than between family and friends networks—those living farther away.

One very public way that couples may choose to join their networks is through a union ceremony or celebration. Women ritualized and broadcast their relationships more frequently in this way than men. Ceremonies that sometimes poked fun at heterosexual marriage or were otherwise unconventional may have diminished the external social significance of these events, regardless of how important they were to the couples themselves.

The antithesis of support is couple strain, and there were many ways network associates could strain the relationship. Partners had friction or conflict over one in ten members of their network on average. These disputed associates' demographic characteristics and relationships to the partners paralleled those of the couple network, except that there were proportionally more disputes over biolegal relatives. Partners' other sexual or romantic intimates, past or present, did not sow an inordinate amount of couple distress. This was somewhat surprising given that the majority of male couples were not sexually monogamous, but as others have documented, a fair number of male couples seem to be able to compartmentalize recreational sex and reduce its impact on their relationships (Blumstein and Schwartz 1983).

Perhaps more surprising was the extent of conflict over coupled associates, which made up two-thirds of networks on average. Some couples mentioned the importance of surrounding themselves with other couples as a protective strategy, citing the advantages of common interests, role modeling, and mutual support. But couple socializing could be complicated, problematic, and conflict-provoking, and women had more disputes over coupled associates than did men.

Looking at family and friends more generally, couples frequently had different expectations for these two sets of relations, most evident in the qualitative data: problematic friends were usually eliminated, while difficult family members were mostly tolerated. This double standard for family and friends also helps explain why reported levels of satisfaction with the two sets of relations were quite similar, despite more problematic ties with family and more positive, supportive relationships with friends. This analysis of the distinct norms and patterns of interaction with family and friends brings us closer to understanding how significant others affect couples. I take up the task of sorting out how these patterns are connected to relationship quality in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

Kin, Kith, and Couple Quality

We are now ready to examine how network patterns map onto relationship quality. Relationship quality is an umbrella term that covers multiple aspects of relationship experience. The dramatic rise in heterosexual divorce over the past 40 plus years has long fueled concerns about longevity among relationship researchers and couples alike. Though keeping (heterosexual) couples together has been a persistent cultural preoccupation throughout this period, feminist critiques of marriage increasingly drew attention away from stability at any cost to a focus on examining the guts of marriage—the processes of power, conflict, and the negotiation of rewards and costs on a day-to-day basis. Whether or not relationships lasted became just one of many questions that mattered. Understanding the quality of marriage as an experience rather than an end in itself has become just as important, some might say more important. The good relationship no longer has to be one that lasts. The good relationship is now one that the participants engage in to the best of their abilities, whatever their human frailties might be, for as long as it “works” for both parties, and that, if necessary, is followed by a good breakup.

This newer vision of relationships is by no means universally accepted; indeed, it remains highly contested and a source of deep anguish for many. But the study of same-sex couples emerged against this cultural backdrop, and it is this history which informs the organization of the analysis that follows. I present components of relationship quality in three conceptual sets that track the historical waves of scholarly interest. In historical order (which is the reverse of the order of my analysis), they are relationship durability; adjustment, satisfaction, and conflict; and more recently, the relative balance of commitment, autonomy, and power of partners.

These facets of relationship quality are conceptually and causally interrelated, and reciprocal influences make it difficult to determine priority and direction of influence. Of course, with cross-sectional data, I cannot establish causality, but causal order cannot be completely ignored. We can think of these three conceptual sets in a very rough sense as relationship processes or

dynamics (commitment, autonomy, and power), relationship affects and states (conflict, satisfaction, adjustment), and relationship outcomes (stability). This is admittedly a highly imperfect scheme, because virtually all of these concepts describe unfolding relationship processes as much as they do states or outcomes; even dissolution, or staying together for that matter, is a process.

But there are also sound reasons, other than historical, for imposing this order on the analysis, and this framework well serves its purpose of organizing the discussion. I present commitment, autonomy, and power together in the first section of this chapter because they are a closely interconnected set of relationship quality processes. In the second section I assess conflict, adjustment, and satisfaction as the feeling barometers for the state of the relationship. I incorporate the first set of processes into the second group of analyses, because it is much more likely that, for example, the balance of power affects satisfaction with the relationship than vice versa. The third section of the chapter looks at stability as an outcome of all the other aspects of relationship quality. And of course, at the heart of all analyses of relationship quality within this three-stage framework is the critical question of whether networks matter. I end the chapter by scanning for common and domain-specific predictors in all of these areas of relationship quality.

METHODS AND VARIABLE DESCRIPTIVES

To analyze the correlations of network properties with relationship quality, I performed multiple linear regression analyses of ten separate quality indicators using the following conceptual groups of predictor variables: (1) sociodemographics and relationship background, (2) gay community involvement, (3) total individual and couple networks, (4) the total family and friend network, (5) immediate family, (6) family of origin, (7) close friends, (8) chosen family, (9) the total support exchange network, that is, social network support for the individual, (10) social network support for the couple relationship, and (11) social network enmeshment or strain. These groups are derived from the entire list of associates that study participants provided in response to all name-eliciting questions and its many subsets—the family, friend, and support networks analyzed in Chapters 3, 4, and 5—supplemented by some of the numerical items from the written questionnaire. This multi-pronged approach will evaluate what relations with various types of associates have to do with relationship quality. This method is in line with Burger and Milardo's (1995) recommendation to test the effects of distinct clusters of associates on couples, since the effects of all associates are not likely to be the same. The strategy of separate conceptual blocks

is also convenient because the sample size of 83 does not permit a large number of predictors in a single regression equation. I therefore begin by testing the effects of these separate blocks of variables and later collect significant independent variables from the preliminary analyses to construct a single model predicting each dependent variable.

One list of associates presented in Chapter 4 that I will not analyze in a block of its own is the extended family. Recall that unlike other family and friend groups, this list was artificially limited to just five associates, and respondents varied greatly in their interpretations of the category. As a hodgepodge of types of associates, this category had the least coherence across respondents and often the least emotional significance. Because these associates are included in the analysis as part of the total family and friend network (and total individual and couple networks), and their influences are likely to be picked up through several relevant variables,¹ I do not expect to lose much information by omitting the analysis of extended family as a separate group.

Independent Variables

Most of the independent variables used in this analysis have been discussed in some form in prior chapters, and they are briefly reviewed here, along with new ones. Table 6.1 presents variable means and standard deviations for Partner 1 respondents only, since the values for Partner 2 were rarely significantly different. Only variables that have not been introduced in prior chapters are described in detail here. Except as noted, all variable descriptions are worded so that a higher score means a greater value or higher quantity of the variable in question. Many variables were skewed, and violation of the assumption of normality can be particularly problematic with smaller samples. When the skewness statistic (dividing the value for skewness by its standard error) fell outside the range of -2 to +2, I performed several types of transformations prior to further analysis in order to normalize variable distributions, as recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2001). These transformations, and the resulting means and standard deviations, are also noted in the table, and they included power transformations (two-thirds and square root), natural logarithm, inverse, and in a few instances dichotomizing the variables.² I was able to eliminate or

¹ For example, the proportion of associates who were biolegal relatives of one's partner was highest in the extended family compared to all other family and friend groups. The impact of a partner's biolegal relatives is likely to show up in a variable measuring support exchanges with a partner's parents, who were the most commonly named biolegal relatives of one's partner.

² Negatively skewed variables were reverse coded, transformed, and then reflected back in order to preserve the original scale direction. A value of .001 was added to all variables containing values of zero when it was necessary to perform a log transformation.

reduce to acceptable levels the skewness of all variables with four exceptions, which are noted in the following discussion of the variables.

Table 6.1. Variable means, standard deviations, and transformations

Variable	Original		Transform	Transformed	
	Mean	SD		Mean	SD
Sociodemographics and relationship background					
Sex	.48	.50			
Age	41.45	5.95			
Education	15.80	1.64			
Religiosity	5.94	2.34	$\sqrt{x}$	2.07	.59
Religious/belief community	.58	.50			
Own income	5.48	2.23			
Partner's income	4.60	2.12			
Past relationships	3.81	1.73			
Length of relationship	9.93	6.55	$\sqrt{x}$	2.98	1.03
Gay community involvement					
Distance to gay community	.87	1.20	$\ln x$	-.95	1.31
Gays neighbors	2.43	1.70	$\ln x$	.70	.59
Gays at work ^a	2.59	1.61	$\ln x$	.81	.53
Gay bar frequency	3.20	1.54	$\sqrt{x}$	1.74	.42
Gay bar with partner ^b	7.57	2.09	1/x	.66	.34
Other gay social places	4.14	1.78			
Mixed gay/lesbian activities	3.28	2.43	$\ln x$	.90	.78
Gay same-sex only activities	3.10	2.45	$\ln x$	.82	.79
Gay activism	4.28	2.36			
Total individual and couple networks					
Own associates	26.99	8.74	$\sqrt{x}$	3.25	.30
Partner's associates	29.07	9.11	$\sqrt{x}$	3.32	.31
Couple network associates	42.12	12.09			
Own associates in couple network (%)	.63	.14			
Associates shared with partner	11.94	4.45			
Overlap in couple network (%)	.30	.13	$\sqrt{x}$	.54	.12
Own network more connected to self (%)	.49	.21			
Own network connected to both partners (%)	.36	.23	$\sqrt{x}$	.56	.21
Own biolegal relatives/own network (%)	.25	.10	$\sqrt{x}$	.49	.10
Partner's biolegal relatives/partner's network (%)	.24	.10	$\sqrt{x}$	.48	.10
Men in own network	11.14	6.24	$\ln x$	2.26	.56
Men/own network (%)	.41	.18			
Sexual minorities in own network	10.10	4.66	$\sqrt{x}$	3.09	.73
Sexual minorities/own network (%)	.39	.17			
Gay or bisexual men/own network (%)	.17	.17	$\sqrt{x}$	.35	.24
Lesbian or bisexual women/own network (%)	.21	.17	$\sqrt{x}$	.41	.22
Heterosexual men/own network (%)	.24	.09	$\sqrt{x}$	.48	.09
Heterosexual women/own network (%)	.37	.13			

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Table 6.1 (*continued*)

Table 6.12 (continued)

Variable	Original		Transform	Transformed	
	Mean	SD		Mean	SD
Family and friend network					
Own associates	17.02	8.08	$\ln x$	2.75	.42
Partner's associates	18.90	8.02	$\ln x$	2.86	.40
Contact with friends v. relatives	7.07	1.80	$\sqrt{x}$	2.36	.51
Own biolegal relatives/own network (%)	.39	.14			
Men in own network	7.24	5.01	$\ln x$	1.80	.59
Men/own network (%)	.43	.18			
Sexual minorities in own network	5.75	3.29	$\ln x$	1.59	.60
Sexual minorities/own network (%)	.35	.17	$x^{2/3}$	.49	.16
Gay or bisexual men/own network (%)	.17	.18	$\sqrt{x}$	.16	.17
Lesbian or bisexual women/own network (%)	.19	.17	$\sqrt{x}$	.37	.23
Heterosexual men/own network (%)	.26	.11			
Heterosexual women/own network (%)	.38	.14			
Immediate family					
Own associates	7.70	6.22	$\ln x$	1.83	.65
Immediate family/own network (%)	.27	.14	$\sqrt{x}$	.51	.13
Support ties to immediate family associates	10.65	7.43	$\sqrt{x}$	3.00	1.29
Family of origin					
Own associates	4.49	2.04	$\ln x$	1.41	.44
Family of origin/own network (%)	.18	.08	$\sqrt{x}$	.42	.09
Outness to family of origin	3.81	.38	dichotomy	.87	.34
Partner's outness to partner's family of origin ^c	3.79	.48	dichotomy	.88	.33
Family of origin more than an hour away (%)	.85	.30	$x^{2/3}$	2.30	.99
Support ties to family of origin	3.75	3.83	$\sqrt{x}$	1.61	1.09
Own emotional closeness to own family	6.35	2.21	$\sqrt{x}$	2.18	.58
Partner's emotional closeness to partner's family	6.25	2.40	$\sqrt{x}$	2.16	.61
Own emotional closeness to partner's family	4.41	2.10			
Partner's emotional closeness to own family	4.81	2.38			
Contact with partner's v. own relatives	4.13	2.70			
Close friends					
Own associates	7.55	3.91	$\sqrt{x}$	2.66	.70
Close friends/own network (%)	.29	.12			
Support ties to close friends	14.73	7.92			
Partner along when socializing with friends	7.02	1.53	$\ln x$	2.11	.49
Contact with partner's v. own friends	4.88	2.30			

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Table 6.1 (*continued*)

Variable	Original		Transform	Transformed	
	Mean	SD		Mean	SD
Chosen family					
Have a chosen family	.70	.46			
Own associates	5.10	5.04	$\sqrt{x}$	1.80	1.37
Chosen family/own network (%)	.20	.18	$\sqrt{x}$	.36	.27
Support ties to chosen family associates	10.04	9.39	$\sqrt{x}$	2.54	1.91
Social network support for individual					
Own associates	20.94	5.64	$\sqrt{x}$	4.54	.61
Partner's associates	22.80	6.81	$\sqrt{x}$	4.72	.70
Own support ties	31.99	9.35			
Partner's support ties	33.88	9.49			
Biological relatives/own network (%)	.12	.09	$x^{2/3}$	.22	.13
Men in own network	6.88	4.18	$x^{2/3}$	3.46	1.49
Men/own network (%)	.41	.23	$x^{2/3}$	.53	.21
Sexual minorities in own network	8.06	4.08	$\sqrt{x}$	2.75	.72
Sexual minorities/own network (%)	.47	.20			
Gay or bisexual men/own network (%)	.21	.22	$\sqrt{x}$	.37	.28
Lesbian or bisexual women/own network (%)	.26	.22	$x^{2/3}$	.37	.24
Heterosexual men/own network (%)	.19	.11	$x^{2/3}$	.32	.13
Heterosexual women (%)	.33	.15			
Support ties to partner	4.75	1.34			
Support ties to parents	2.35	2.60	$\sqrt{x}$	1.21	.95
Support ties to siblings	1.41	2.18	$\ln x$	-3.27	3.92
Support ties to friends	17.43	7.35	$\sqrt{x}$	4.09	.87
Support ties to ex-partners	.28	1.02	dichotomy	.11	.31
Support ties to other sexual/romantic intimates	1.22	2.41	dichotomy	.36	.48
Support ties to coworkers	1.35	1.82	$\ln x$	-2.94	3.88
Social network support for couple relationship					
Family of origin couple support	4.10	.80	$\ln x$	2.05	.41
Non-family of origin couple support	4.42	.39	$\ln x$	1.67	.23
Associates living in couples/own network (%)	.67	.13			
Coupled same-sex gays	4.47	3.32			
Coupled same-sex gays/own network (%) ^d	.57	.30	$\sqrt{x}$	1.22	.12
Same-sex gay friends' relationship beliefs ^e	7.24	1.84	$\ln x$	2.38	.63
Support ties to partner's parents	.77	1.69	dichotomy	.24	.43
Commitment ceremony	.34	.48			

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Table 6.1 (*continued*)

Variable	Original		Transform	Transformed	
	Mean	SD		Mean	SD
Social network enmeshment / strain					
Sexual monogamy	.64	.48			
Associates ever intimately involved with	.99	1.34	$\ln x$	-3.30	3.78
Associates causing friction/disputes	4.64	3.36	$x^{2/3}$	2.58	1.41
Biolegal relatives causing friction/disputes	2.25	2.22	$x^{2/3}$	1.47	1.20
Friends causing friction/disputes	1.94	1.86	$\sqrt{x}$	1.14	.80
Ex-partners causing friction/disputes	.14	.35			
Intimates causing friction/disputes	.30	.46			
Relationship quality					
Commitment	.18	.68			
Autonomy	5.93	1.59			
Life disrupted if relationship ended	.31	1.86			
Say in important decisions	-.11	.98	$x^{2/3}$	2.45	.41
Altered habits to please partner	-.34	1.34			
Influence over daily decisions	-.18	.68			
Conflict	2.60	.92	$\sqrt{x}$	1.59	.28
Dyadic Adjustment	115.22	12.76	$x^{2/3}$	9.68	2.83
Satisfaction	6.68	1.11	$x^{2/3}$	2.31	.50
Together in 20 years	7.87	1.92			

^a N = 81^b N = 74^c N = 81^d N = 82^e N = 80

Sociodemographics and relationship background. Sociodemographic and relationship background variables included sex (0 = female, 1 = male), age in years, education (17-point scale), religiosity (nine-point scale), membership in a belief community (0 = no, 1 = yes), respondent's own income and partner's income (nine-point scale), past relationships (seven-point scale indicating number of times involved in an intimate romantic same-sex relationship for over a month), and length of relationship (time in years since first considering yourselves a couple). Level of education was highly skewed, since few people in the sample had less than a high school and college education, and I was unable to transform it satisfactorily, so I left it as is.

Most of these variables were not of prime interest to this study but I included them as controls. I considered other potential control variables in addition to or in place of the ones I chose, but in the end I excluded employment status, past living-together same-sex relationships (one month or more), perceived community size, and residential population. Since very few respondents were

unemployed, unemployment was usually temporary, and most were employed full time, the sample did not offer enough variation for meaningful comparisons based on employment status. Aspects of job networks are incorporated in other ways into the analysis. The measure of past living-together same-sex relationships was discarded because of extreme skewness. Perceived community size and actual population are both highly correlated with distance to Seattle or Portland's gay community, a variable that was included instead (discussed in the next variable block). These variables were both highly skewed, and attempts to transform them did not yield satisfactory distributions.

Gay community involvement. Gay community involvement measures included distance to the gay communities of Seattle or Portland (whichever was nearer, measured in terms of travel time from home, with a natural log transformation); proportion of people in one's immediate residential area and one's coworkers who were gay or lesbian (nine-point scale from none to all); frequency of attendance at any gay or lesbian bar or club (nine-point scale from never to daily or almost every day), attendance at gay bars with one's partner and possibly other friends, and at other public places where gay men or lesbians socialize; level of involvement in organized mixed gay and lesbian activities and same-sex only gay (or lesbian) activities (nine-point scale from not at all to extremely involved), and level of gay and lesbian rights movement activism (nine-point scale from not at all to extremely active).

Total individual and couple networks. I derived the following variables from the complete list of unique associates given in response to all name-eliciting questions. Briefly reviewed these name-eliciting questions were as follows: household members including one's partner, all support exchange associates (including "anyone important" not listed in response to that set of questions), and the five lists of family and friends. I calculated measures either for the individual partner's network or for the combined network of both partners (the couple network), as specified. In many cases, I included both absolute numbers and proportions of associates in this and other variable blocks because of the somewhat exploratory nature of this analysis; there is insufficient past research to dictate whether proportions or absolute numbers might matter for most of these variables.

Measures included each partner's total individual network, the couple network, the proportion of the couple network made up of one's own associates, the number of associates shared (listed in common) with one's partner, overlap in the couple network (the proportion of the couple network

consisting of associates shared by both partners), the proportion of one's own network that is more connected to oneself, the proportion of one's own network connected equally to both partners, the proportion of one's network (and the partner's) made up of one's own (and the partner's) biolegal relatives, the number (and proportion) of men in one's network, the number (and proportion) of sexual minorities as a group (lesbians, gays, bisexual, and others) in one's network, and proportions broken out for gay or bisexual men, lesbian or bisexual women, heterosexual men, and heterosexual women in one's network. Note that variable transformations allowed the simultaneous inclusion of these four sex and orientation groups in regression models because they do not sum to one (the same is true where these groups occur in other variable blocks).

Total family and friend network. This block represents all associates listed as one of the five types of family and close friend associates. Variables included one's own family and friend associates (total), the partner's family and friend associates, whether the respondent had more contact with friends or relatives (nine-point scale with the highest score assigned to "more with friends"), the proportion of one's network made up of one's own biolegal relatives, the number (and proportion) of men in one's network, the number (and proportion) of sexual minorities as a group (lesbians, gays, bisexual, and others) in one's network, and the separate proportions of gay or bisexual men, lesbian or bisexual women, heterosexual men, and heterosexual women in one's network. The following four blocks represent all subsets of the total family and friend network except for extended family, as noted above.

Immediate family. Immediate family variables included the number of immediate family associates, the proportion of one's total individual network consisting of immediate family members, and the number of support ties (total numbers of functions as measured by the support exchange inventory, such as taking care of the home while away, discussing work, borrowing money, etc.) to immediate family members, otherwise known as multiplexity or multistrandedness—the richness of the ties.

Family of origin. Family of origin variables included the number of family of origin associates, the proportion of one's total individual network consisting of family of origin members, the level of "outness" or openness to the family origin about one's sexual orientation (the mean rating across family of origin members on a four-point scale, with higher scores indicating greater outness), partner's outness to her or his family of origin, the proportion of

family of origin members living more than an hour away, the number of support ties to one's own family of origin, emotional closeness to one's family, the partner's emotional closeness to his or her family, emotional closeness to the partner's family, and the partner's emotional closeness to one's own family (these nine-point scale items simply used the word "family" instead of "family of origin"), and contact with the partner's relatives compared to one's own relatives (nine-point scale with higher scores indicating more contact with one's own relatives).

One variable that I excluded was the parent's reaction to one's gayness because its use would have meant losing a number of cases where this item was not applicable (those whose parents had died before knowing or otherwise did not know). The effects of family reactions to one's gayness are captured in a later variable block that measures explicitly family of origin support for the relationship as opposed to support for the individual. As noted in the previous chapter, the respondents in this sample were very open to nearly everyone in their networks about being lesbian or gay, but were most closeted with their families of origin. For this reason I only examined outness in relation to families of origin. Because this four-point scale was still highly skewed toward being out, I used a dichotomy to indicate whether everyone in the family of origin "definitely knew" (whether or not the respondent had talked with everyone about it) versus "probably knew or suspected" or "did not know or suspect" (combined). Even so, this transformation produced a barely acceptable 87%-13% split between the two groups (88%-12% for Partner 2).

Close friends. Close friend variables included the number of close friend associates, the proportion of one's total individual network consisting of close friends, the number of support ties to one's close friends, the frequency with which one's partner goes along to socialize with one's own friends (nine-point scale from never to always), and contact with the partner's original friends compared to one's own when socializing together as a couple (nine-point scale with higher scores indicating more contact with one's own close friends). Note that these last two items did not specify "close" friends but rather friends in general.

Chosen family. Chosen family variables included a dichotomy indicating whether the respondent reported a chosen family or not, the number of chosen family associates (zero if no chosen family was reported), the proportion of one's total network made up of chosen family, and support exchange ties to chosen family associates.

Social network support for the individual partner. This variable block and the one that follows attempt to distinguish between support for the individual versus support for the couple. Support for one partner can also translate directly and indirectly into support for the couple, and this possibility needs to be borne in mind in the interpretation of results involving variables from these two variable blocks. All variables in this block derive directly from the support exchange inventory (Fischer 1982), as do a few variables in other blocks. Individual support variables included the total number of one's own (and the partner's) associates in the support exchange network, total number of support ties (i.e., number of all functions listed for all associates), the proportion of one's support exchange network made up of one's own biological relatives, the number (and proportion) of men, the number (and proportion) of sexual minorities as a group (lesbians, gays, bisexual, and others), the proportions of gay or bisexual men, lesbian or bisexual women, heterosexual men, and heterosexual women, and the number of support ties to each of the following types of associates: one's partner, parents, siblings, friends, ex-partners (any ties—11% of the sample—or none—89%), associates with whom one had been sexually or romantically intimate in the past or presently (any ties—36% of the sample—or none—64%), and coworkers (coded zero for the small number of unemployed respondents). Note that support ties included sharing a home, which in most cases applied only to partners, automatically accounting for one tie out of the mean of 4.75 ties to partners.

Social network support for the couple relationship. I measured network support for the couple relationship in a variety of ways. Respondents indicated how supportive each associate on their lists was of the couple relationship using a five-point scale from strongly unsupportive to strongly supportive, as well as how disapproving or distressed associates would be if the relationship ended (five-point scale from strongly approving/not at all distressed to strongly disapproving/distressed). These two items were averaged for each associate and then aggregated into two variables reflecting the couple support of two groups: the family of origin versus all other associates. These two groups were of theoretical interest, and once again, the family of origin was the most distinct group compared to all others in that it showed a lower mean level of support. Other variables included the proportion of one's total network consisting of associates in living-together couple relationships, the number and proportion of coupled same-sex gay or lesbian associates in one's total network, the proportion of one's same-sex gay or lesbian close friends who believed couples of the same sex could stay together more than ten years (nine-point scale from none to all), the number of support ties to one's partner's parents, and whether or not the couple had had a commitment ceremony (0 = no, 1 = yes).

Social network enmeshment/strain. The block of variables measuring social network enmeshment or strain include sexual monogamy (0 = sexual nonmonogamy, 1 = agreed sexual monogamy, regardless of whether or not either partner had violated the agreement), number of associates in one's network other than the partner with whom one has had intimate or sexual involvement with, and the number of each of the following types of associates that had ever been a source of friction, disagreement, or disputes between the two partners³: all associates, biolegal relatives, and friends. I also included variables for ex-partners and sexual or romantic intimates of any kind other than the partner who were a source of disagreement or disputes between partners, but because these variables were highly skewed, I dichotomized them to indicate any or none of each of these types of associates. Note that to capture the potentially strong impacts of negative interactions involving one's associates, I included all biolegal relatives that had created friction, not just the family of origin, which has generally been the biolegal family reference group in other variable blocks. Some of these variables measure directly the strain of outside relationships that create friction or disputes between partners. In the case of sexual monogamy or nonmonogamy, either arrangement is not necessarily problematic, nor is the number of associates still in one's network with whom one has had intimate or romantic involvement. In fact, this latter variable could be evidence of excellent relationship skills, indicating that one can successfully maintain ties with ex-intimates (the "good" breakup). But these variables are included in this block to represent ways in which associates could interfere with the couple relationship. The direction of the effects, as with all other variables in the analysis, is not a given.

Dependent Variables: Relationship Quality

Table 6.1 (above) also displays means, standard deviations, and transformations for the ten dependent variables in this analysis. There were no statistically significant differences that were consistent across the two partner samples between respondents by sex and location in any of the relationship quality measures (see Appendix B for variable descriptives by sex and location).

Table 6.2 (below) displays their intra-couple correlations, which I discuss in the description of each variable that follows.

³ The value for disputed associates in this analysis is based on total unique associates listed by both partners, which accounts for the larger number here, 4.64, compared to 3.8 as reported in Chapter 5, Table 5.11, which is based only on associates listed by one partner.

Table 6.2. Dependent variable intra-couple correlations
(N = 83)

Variable	Pearson's r
Commitment	-.33**
Autonomy	.12
Life disrupted if relationship ended	-.38***
Say in important decisions	-.19
Altered habits to please partner	-.29**
Influence over daily decisions	-.48***
Conflict	.50***
Dyadic Adjustment	.43***
Satisfaction	.43***
Together in 20 years	.30***

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Commitment, autonomy, and power. The six variables that measure aspects of commitment, autonomy, and power are coded so that a higher score indicates that the respondent is less dependent on the relationship and has more relationship power relative to the partner.

Commitment

Commitment is measured by a nine-point scale item that asked, "Who is more committed to the relationship, you or your partner?" (recoded so that -4 = I much more, +4 = He/She much more). The mean value of .33 indicated a slight bias overall toward believing one's partner was more committed than oneself. Because this is a relative measure of commitment based on the difference between partners, the significant negative intra-couple correlation ($r = -.33$) is as we would expect if both partners in a couple assess each other's levels of commitment accurately. This variable is skewed with more extreme values reflecting the belief that one's partner is more committed than oneself, but attempts to normalize it through transformations were unsuccessful, so it was left as is.

Autonomy

The level of autonomy from the couple relationship was measured using an average of responses to seven items on a nine-point scale from "Extremely difficult" to "Not at all difficult" in response

to the question, "If something were to happen to your partner and you were forced to live without her/him, how difficult would it be for you to do each of the following?" Areas queried included household tasks, finding another partner, cooking appetizing meals, maintaining the present standard of living, getting household repairs done, finding or continuing employment, and avoiding loneliness. Cronbach's alphas of .75 for Partner 1 and .79 for Partner 2 indicated a reasonable level of reliability for the scale. This was the only variable measuring relationship autonomy and power that was not measured in relation to one's partner's level of autonomy or power; it was assessed as a property of the individual in the context of the couple relationship. The mean value of 5.93 indicated a slightly greater tendency to say that it would not be "not at all difficult" to live without one's partner. The correlation of .12 between partners' scores was not statistically significant: one's own perceived level of autonomy was unrelated to that of the partner.

Life Disruption If the Relationship Ended

One's own autonomy was also examined relative to that of one's partner with the following question: "If you and your partner did decide to end your relationship, whose life would this disrupt more, yours or your partner's?" This item was recoded to create a scale similar to that for commitment, where +4 indicated greater autonomy (i.e., the partner's life would be more disrupted) and -4 indicated lesser autonomy (the respondent's life would be more disrupted). The mean value of .31 indicated that respondents were slightly biased toward believing that they had greater autonomy than their partners, but this variable was well distributed overall. The intra-couple correlation of -.38 indicated that partners tended to have similar perceptions about who would have an easier time after a breakup.

Say in Important Decisions

Relationship power was measured with a global item asking, "In general, who has more say about important decisions affecting your relationship, you or your partner?" Responses were recoded to range from -4 to +4, with a higher score indicating that the respondent had more say. The mean of -.11 indicated a fairly equal balance of power across couples overall. The intra-couple correlation of -.19 was not quite significant with a p-value of .09.

Altered Habits to Please Partner

Power was also measured as the extent of change for the relationship relative to how much one's partner had changed, using the same -4 to +4 scale as previously: "Who has altered his/her habits and ways of doing things more to please the other, you or your partner?" The mean of -.34 indicated a slight tendency to believe that one had changed more than one's partner, and a statistically significant intra-couple correlation of -.29 indicated concordance between partner's perceptions of each other.

Influence over Daily Decisions

A third measure of relationship power, which contrasted with the other more general measures of power, was based on the relative influence of each partner over specific daily decisions. Respondents were asked "Who usually has the most influence?" in deciding where to go on a vacation, when to go out to eat, where to go out for an evening, whom to invite to the home, and how much money to spend on entertainment. The same nine-point scale from -4 to +4 was used, with a higher score indicating that the respondent reported greater power. The mean of -.18 indicated a fairly even perceived balance of power across couples in the sample overall. Additional items were part of the original scale, but their inclusion led to unacceptably low reliability, with Cronbach's alphas less than .6, and for this reason they were excluded to improve reliability. This abbreviated scale was acceptable for Partner 1, with an alpha of .75, though not ideal for Partner 2, with an alpha of .61. The scale was also negatively skewed but left intact because attempts at transformation proved unsatisfactory. Partners' responses were fairly strongly correlated at $r = -.48$.

Conflict, Adjustment, and Satisfaction

Conflict, adjustment, and satisfaction measures were intended to gauge more general relationship states, and all three were measured with multiple-item scales.

Conflict

A set of questions asked respondents how often they and their partners had had "open disagreements or fights" in 14 areas, with frequencies on a nine-point scale ranging from "never" to "daily or almost every day." Higher scores indicated more conflict. The 14 conflict issues included how the house was kept, how the respondent's and partner's job affected the relationship, the couple's social life, moral and religious beliefs and practices, couple communication, the amount of money coming in, management of finances, expressions of

affection, whether both should work, their sex life, sex outside the relationship, openness about being gay, and the relationship in general. A few respondents reported that certain issues were not applicable to their relationships (e.g., conflict over how the respondent's job affects the relationship when the person was unemployed). I adjusted each scale denominator to take account of any items that were not applicable on a case-by-case basis. The scale was highly reliable for both partner samples (Partner 1 alpha = .84; Partner 2 alpha = .88). A mean of 2.60 indicated that couples had conflict just under once a year on average across the 14 issue areas, which translates roughly into about once a month.⁴ Partners' responses to these items were significantly correlated, $r = .50$.

Adjustment

Spanier's Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier 1976) is an index of 32 items measuring dyadic consensus, satisfaction, affectional expression, and cohesion (items 23 through 54 on pp. 2-3 of the written survey questionnaire in Appendix A). Following Stearns and Sabini (1997), the word "mate" was replaced with "partner." This scale has multiple advantages. It is one of the most commonly used measures of relationship adjustment, has been extensively validated, with both internal reliability and test-retest reliability, and has been used with same-sex couples as well as married and cohabiting couples (Stearns and Sabini 1997). Though satisfaction is one component of the scale, the concept of adjustment differs from satisfaction in that it captures the degree to which partners engage in activities together and make efforts to accommodate various aspects of the relationship, and the resulting degree of consensus and cohesion or disunity between partners. The scale is frequently used to discriminate between distressed and non-distressed couples and to evaluate therapeutic interventions with distressed couples. The mean score of 115.22 for this sample is perfectly in line with scores obtained from both same-sex and married heterosexual intact couples, which range from 108 to 122 in a number of studies (Miller 1991:486). The higher the score, the higher the level of relationship adjustment. The intra-couple correlation for the scale was statistically significant at $r = .43$.

Satisfaction

An index of 16 items more fully assessed satisfaction with the relationship. The index consisted of responses to the question "How satisfied are you with these parts of your relationship?" regarding the following items, which mostly repeat the conflict scale issues: how the house was

⁴ Fourteen issue areas X just under once a year per issue area = approximately once a month.

kept, how the respondent's and partner's job affected the relationship, the couple's social life, relations with both sets of relatives and friends, moral and religious beliefs and practices, couple communication, the amount of money coming in, management of finances, influence over decisions the couple makes, expressions of affection, their sex life, and the relationship in general. Cronbach's alphas for the scale indicated high reliability, .86 for Partner 1 and .89 for Partner 2. On a scale from one (not at all satisfied) to nine (extremely satisfied), the mean level of satisfaction was 6.68, or fairly satisfied. The intra-couple correlation for the scale was also statistically significant at $r = .43$.

Stability

Because this was a cross-sectional study, I could not follow couples longitudinally to see who stayed together or broke up; respondents had to predict for themselves.

Together in 20 Years

I assessed couple stability with an item asking "How likely is it that you and your partner will still be together 20 years from now?" I excluded from the analysis three similar items asking about shorter time periods (six months, one year, and five years), intended for use in an index, because those variables were highly skewed. Staying together for twenty years was better distributed and better captured the sense of longevity, though it was still skewed and did not improve with transformations. The mean of 7.87 on the scale from one (extremely unlikely) to nine (extremely likely) indicated that the majority of respondents believed their relationship would last another 20 years. Partner's responses were significantly correlated at $r = .30$.

Analytic Procedures for Regression Analyses

As with all previous analyses, I conducted regressions separately for the two partner samples, including the analysis of variable distributions, bivariate correlations, and multiple regression coefficients. Most of the variables were individual-level measures based on each partner's response, except for a few couple-level variables such as total couple network size, overlap, or geographic location. This procedure had the distinct advantage of offering an instant replication of results on a different (though related) sample of respondents. The strategy provided a valuable correction to the potential bias introduced by the large number of candidate independent variables in the analysis, which increases the chance of type-I error by performing many statistical tests for significant correlations. I generally chose to give credence only to statistically significant findings occurring in both samples. This was a highly conservative

strategy, especially in light of the fact that that the small sample size was likely to cause effects that truly exist in the population not to be detected.

Inspection of bivariate relationships. Very few bivariate relationships between the independent and dependent variables (see Table 6.3) were statistically significant (at $p < .05$) across both partner samples. In numerous instances, an independent variable correlated significantly with the dependent variable in one sample but not the other; at other times correlations between the same two variables in each sample were significant, but had opposite signs.

Table 6.3. Independent and dependent variable correlations (N = 83)

Variable	Commitment		Autonomy		Life disrupted if relationship ended		Say in important decisions		Altered habits to please partner		Influence over daily decisions	
	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2
Sociodemographics and relationship background												
Sex	.10	-.10	.22*	-.16	.14	-.15	-.02	.10	-.19	-.02	-.10	.13
Age	-.23*	.00	.09	-.08	.17	.10	.00	-.18	-.11	-.19	.07	-.10
Education	-.26*	-.09	.07	.02	.01	-.12	.18	-.04	.04	.07	.32	.07
Religiosity	-.13	.03	-.01	-.11	-.06	-.03	.04	.07	-.06	.09	.17	.09
Religious/belief community	-.13	.05	-.03	-.06	-.09	-.00	-.07	.08	.04	.08	.09	.03
Own income	-.02	-.12	.26*	.03	.32**	.00	.25	.17	-.09	.13	.12	.18
Partner's income	.00	.04	-.02	-.28**	.03	-.38**	-.05	.03	-.12	.16	-.04	.22
Past relationships	.01	.03	.36**	-.00	-.07	.08	-.06	-.07	-.03	.04	.01	.03
Length of relationship	-.20	-.07	-.19	-.23*	.11	-.04	.01	-.20	-.14	-.06	.04	.03
Gay community involvement												
Distance to gay community	.16	-.08	-.14	-.04	.06	.24*	-.12	.03	-.06	-.16	-.08	-.23*
Gay neighbors	-.05	-.11	.07	.01	-.01	-.09	.19	-.19	.12	-.09	.10	.12
Gays at work ^a	-.14	-.14	-.02	-.03	-.14	.02	-.16	.13	-.18	.11	-.20	.22
Gay bar frequency	.12	.01	.13	-.04	-.18	.03	.03	.08	.09	.11	-.01	-.11
Gay bar with partner ^b	-.00	-.00	-.14	-.06	-.07	.09	-.11	.01	.14	-.05	.09	-.04
Other gay social places	-.01	-.14	-.03	.16	-.13	-.00	.07	.03	-.03	-.11	.05	-.05
Gay mixed-sex activities	.08	-.01	.02	-.02	.09	.28*	.05	.01	-.06	-.18	-.03	-.15
Gay same-sex only activities	.03	.06	.07	.05	.18	.05	.04	.11	.00	-.17	-.03	-.01
Gay activism	-.10	-.10	.12	.09	.02	.14	-.10	-.10	-.20	-.12	-.06	.01
	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

Table 6.3. (continued)

Variable	Commitment		Autonomy		Life disrupted if relationship ended		Say in important decisions		Altered habits to please partner		Influence over daily decisions	
	Partner		Partner		Partner		Partner		Partner		Partner	
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Total individual and couple networks												
Own associates	-.26*	-.07	.21	.12	.05	.03	.16	-.07	.01	-.19	.25*	.00
Partner's associates	-.01	-.01	.13	.21	-.11	-.15	.25*	-.09	.06	.02	.16	-.10
Couple network associates	-.16	-.04	.26*	.14	-.10	-.04	.18	-.09	.01	-.09	.20	-.05
Own associates in couple network (%)	-.16	-.09	-.07	-.01	.14	.12	-.06	.01	-.09	-.19	.07	.05
Associates shared with partner	-.12	-.11	-.02	.20	.03	-.04	.22*	-.13	-.06	-.12	.14	-.09
Overlap in couple network (%)	-.00	-.11	-.22*	.10	.10	-.06	.07	-.00	-.09	-.03	.01	-.05
Own network more connected to self (%)	.11	.11	.17	.10	.01	.01	.06	.04	.12	.20	.10	.18
Own network connected to both partners (%)	-.18	-.04	-.10	-.03	.05	.09	-.01	.04	.02	-.17	.05	-.10
Own biological relatives/own network (%)	.00	-.05	.18	.09	.21	-.06	.02	-.06	.17	.14	.13	-.09
Partner's biological relatives/partner's network (%)	.14	-.35**	-.03	-.04	.06	-.09	.15	-.13	.07	-.04	.05	-.27*
Men in own network	-.07	-.03	.36**	-.06	.11	-.08	.03	.08	-.14	-.04	-.01	.05
Men/own network (%)	.08	-.03	.33**	-.20	.14	-.15	-.08	.14	-.18	.04	-.22*	.09
Sexual minorities in own network	-.03	-.09	.09	.12	-.07	.09	.16	-.10	.02	-.07	.03	.01
Sexual minorities/own network (%)	.12	-.09	.01	.08	-.06	.12	.07	-.05	.00	-.01	-.13	.04
Gay or bisexual men/own network (%)	.05	.02	.21	-.15	.04	-.08	-.03	.13	-.17	.14	-.23	.12
Lesbian or bisexual women/own network (%)	.00	-.02	-.24*	.24*	-.15	.23*	.16	-.17	.17	-.07	.16	-.09
Heterosexual men/own network (%)	-.05	.04	.21	.02	.06	-.01	-.05	.14	-.06	-.09	.05	-.10
Heterosexual women/own network (%)	-.11	.11	-.17	-.08	.02	-.15	-.06	-.06	.04	.09	.14	.02
	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

Table 6.3. (continued)

Variable	Commitment		Autonomy		Life disrupted if relationship ended		Say in important decisions		Altered habits to please partner		Influence over daily decisions	
	Partner		Partner		Partner		Partner		Partner		Partner	
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Family and friend network												
Own associates	-.19	-.07	.28**	.20	.06	.00	.10	-.12	-.09	-.16	.16	-.08
Partner's associates	-.01	-.10	.08	.16	-.00	-.17	.42**	-.08	.15	-.01	.24*	-.16
Contact with friends v. relatives	.11	-.09	-.16	.03	-.16	-.02	.12	.01	.14	.00	.07	.08
Own biological relatives/own network (%)	.09	.01	.11	.04	.21	-.08	.03	-.01	.29**	.18	.18	-.03
Men in own network	-.11	-.07	.40**	-.02	.12	-.06	.03	.00	-.22*	-.04	-.05	.02
Men/own network (%)	.05	-.08	.29**	-.23*	.10	-.16	-.08	.12	-.21	.04	-.29**	.09
Sexual minorities in own network	-.05	-.04	.19	.04	.05	.20	.07	-.06	-.15	.04	.04	.03
Sexual minorities/own network (%)	.08	-.06	.03	.04	-.01	.10	-.02	-.05	-.12	.05	-.14	.02
Gay or bisexual men/own network (%)	.06	-.04	.25*	-.16	.10	-.14	-.05	.10	-.23*	.13	-.21	.10
Lesbian or bisexual women/own network (%)	.00	.01	-.22*	.16	-.12	.28*	.10	-.18	.12	-.03	.17	-.07
Heterosexual men/own network (%)	-.07	.00	.12	-.03	.00	.04	.04	.09	.04	-.11	-.03	-.03
Heterosexual women/own network (%)	-.03	.09	-.16	-.04	.02	-.15	.02	-.00	.12	.05	.22*	.01
Immediate family												
Own associates	-.17	-.03	.20	.11	-.07	-.01	-.06	.06	.06	-.04	.08	.05
Immediate family/own network (%)	-.12	-.02	.10	.05	-.08	.01	-.16	.11	.04	.05	-.03	.06
Support ties to immediate family associates	-.19	-.00	-.03	-.05	.07	.04	-.08	.15	.11	-.01	.12	.19
	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

Table 6.3. (*continued*)

Variable	Conflict		Dyadic Adjustment		Satisfaction		Together in 20 years	
	Partner		Partner		Partner		Partner	
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Family and friend network								
Own associates	.07	-.09	.07	.01	.21	.18	.09	.17
Partner's associates	-.04	.03	.18	-.17	.16	-.00	.10	-.12
Contact with friends v. relatives	-.07	-.10	-.00	.17	.04	.15	-.02	.10
Own biological relatives/own network (%)	-.04	.02	.06	.11	.10	-.10	-.07	-.02
Men in own network	.08	-.05	-.02	-.02	.17	.10	.00	.10
Men/own network (%)	.05	-.04	-.15	.02	-.04	.05	-.15	.03
Sexual minorities in own network	.08	-.04	-.07	-.14	.02	.03	-.04	.02
Sexual minorities/own network (%)	.01	-.01	-.11	-.10	-.10	.04	-.10	.01
Gay or bisexual men/own network (%)	.09	-.03	-.20	-.06	-.10	-.02	-.16	-.02
Lesbian or bisexual women/own network (%)	-.06	-.02	.16	-.07	.08	-.02	.12	.05
Heterosexual men/own network (%)	-.04	-.16	.15	.09	.18	.07	.10	.03
Heterosexual women (%)	.04	.16	.00	.04	-.04	-.12	.04	-.06
Immediate family								
Own associates	.02	-.14	.08	.12	.27*	.24*	.16	.18
Immediate family/own network (%)	.03	-.20	.05	.21	.21	.21**	.11	.16
Support ties to immediate family associates	-.13	-.02	.14	.00	.23*	.16	.33**	.08
	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

Table 6.3. (*continued*)

Variable	Commitment		Autonomy		Life disrupted if relationship ended		Say in important decisions		Altered habits to please partner		Influence over daily decisions	
	Partner		Partner		Partner		Partner		Partner		Partner	
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Family of origin												
Own associates	.02	-.02	.24*	.06	.23*	-.02	.08	.01	.15	-.04	.22*	.04
Family of origin/own network (%)	.23*	-.07	.10	.03	.20	-.09	-.04	.04	.16	-.01	.05	.04
Outness to family of origin ^c	-.21	.16	-.01	-.09	-.09	.16	-.04	-.18	.01	-.12	-.07	-.02
Partner's outness to partner's family of origin ^d	-.12	.21	.04	-.02	.10	.12	-.13	-.03	.08	-.12	.06	-.02
Family of origin more than an hour away (%) ^c	.10	-.29**	.04	.02	.18	-.12	.03	-.03	.06	-.24*	.18	-.00
Support ties to family of origin	-.03	.12	.07	.06	.08	.24*	-.03	.11	.09	.11	.01	.19
Own emotional closeness to own family	-.04	.19	.16	.08	.13	.17	.11	-.12	.08	-.14	.17	-.00
Partner's emotional closeness to partner's family	-.05	.03	.13	-.09	-.12	.10	.05	-.18	-.08	-.13	.03	-.21
Own emotional closeness to partner's family	-.02	-.06	-.09	-.04	.02	.00	.07	-.20	-.16	-.18	.12	.01
Partner's emotional closeness to own family	-.05	.10	.06	.18	.21	-.03	.15	.18	.07	.07	.12	.16
Contact with partner's v. own relatives	.05	-.34**	-.14	.03	-.09	-.11	-.02	-.05	-.04	-.20	.02	-.10
Close friends												
Own associates	-.24*	-.03	.19	.13	.17	.13	.03	-.15	-.13	-.20	.23*	.04
Close friends/own network (%)	-.09	.01	.09	.08	.13	.15	-.07	-.13	-.14	-.11	.06	.05
Support ties to close friends	.02	-.10	.05	.06	.11	-.01	-.08	.00	-.10	-.12	.10	.18
Partner along when socializing with friends	.13	-.07	.09	.05	.17	-.10	.13	.01	.25*	.16	.28**	-.14
Contact with partner's v. own friends	.35**	.02	-.08	-.16	.00	-.19	.10	-.11	.01	-.05	-.04	-.17
												

Table 6.3. (continued)

Variable	Commitment		Autonomy		Life disrupted if relationship ended		Say in important decisions		Altered habits to please partner		Influence over daily decisions	
	Partner		Partner		Partner		Partner		Partner		Partner	
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Chosen family												
Have a chosen family	.02	-.08	-.04	.19	-.02	.01	.00	-.03	-.19	.00	-.10	-.02
Own associates	-.04	-.10	-.00	.20	-.05	-.02	.00	-.05	-.23*	-.07	-.05	.03
Chosen family/own network (%)	.04	-.09	-.04	.20	-.04	-.03	-.04	-.02	-.25*	-.02	-.13	.02
Support ties to chosen family associates	-.04	-.13	.01	.18	-.02	-.01	-.08	.08	-.21	-.10	-.12	.07
Social network support for individual												
Own associates	-.21	-.00	.12	.02	.01	.12	.09	-.03	.10	-.11	.18	.13
Partner's associates	-.06	.00	.10	.13	-.19	-.08	-.01	-.18	-.05	.02	-.01	-.01
Own support ties	-.10	-.10	.03	.01	.04	.06	-.03	.03	.01	-.14	.14	.20
Partner's support ties	-.07	-.07	.19	.02	-.04	-.01	-.08	-.02	-.04	.01	.00	-.16
Biological relatives/own network (%)	.02	.07	.08	.06	.03	.25*	-.10	.07	-.02	.08	-.09	.15
Men in own network	-.03	-.02	.32**	-.10	.13	-.05	.01	.12	-.13	.07	-.06	.19
Men/own network (%)	.08	-.03	.32**	-.14	.12	-.13	-.08	.13	-.20	.12	-.19	.06
Sexual minorities in own network	.04	-.07	.10	.08	-.05	.08	.11	-.07	.03	.01	.00	.08
Sexual minorities/own network (%)	.15	-.15	.06	.08	-.06	.03	.05	-.07	.01	.02	-.10	-.01
Gay or bisexual men/own network (%)	.07	-.02	.24*	-.14	.04	-.13	-.05	.10	-.19	.17	-.21	.09
Lesbian or bisexual women/own network (%)	.00	-.04	-.21	.23*	-.15	.21	.16	-.16	.20	-.11	.16	-.09
Heterosexual men/own network (%)	-.07	.07	.17	.05	.08	.09	-.05	.13	-.09	-.04	.04	-.05
Heterosexual women (%)	-.14	.18	-.21	-.13	.00	-.11	-.04	-.03	.05	.02	.10	.06
												

Table 6.3. (*continued*)

Variable	Conflict		Dyadic Adjustment		Satisfaction		Together in 20 years	
	Partner		Partner		Partner		Partner	
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Chosen family								
Have a chosen family	.09	-.18	-.14	.25*	-.14	.26*	-.11	.11
Own associates	.13	-.21	-.14	.24*	-.11	.35**	-.00	.18
Chosen family/own network (%)	.10	-.27*	-.15	.28*	-.15	.38**	-.06	.16
Support ties to chosen family associates	.09	-.08	-.15	.12	-.15	.26*	-.00	.14
Social network support for individual								
Own associates	.03	.11	.04	-.28*	.21	-.16	.25*	.08
Partner's associates	-.02	.02	-.10	-.13	-.00	-.06	.05	-.02
Own support ties	.02	.19	.05	-.26*	.20	-.07	.23*	.06
Partner's support ties	-.01	-.11	-.10	-.02	.02	.09	.02	.12
Biological relatives/own network (%)	-.12	.13	.00	-.03	.05	-.05	.10	-.14
Men in own network	.11	.15	-.21	-.15	-.01	-.13	-.07	-.06
Men/own network (%)	.16	.09	-.31**	.00	-.12	-.05	-.28*	-.08
Sexual minorities in own network	.04	.01	.01	-.08	.09	.02	.15	.08
Sexual minorities/own network (%)	.05	-.07	.02	.12	.05	.15	-.01	.10
Gay or bisexual men/own network (%)	.17	.09	-.26*	.03	-.12	-.02	-.14	-.04
Lesbian or bisexual women/own network (%)	-.10	-.18	.26*	.08	.16	.13	.22*	.12
Heterosexual men/own network (%)	.01	-.09	-.14	-.07	-.01	-.04	-.22	-.10
Heterosexual women (%)	-.07	.18	.06	-.13	-.08	-.19	.18	-.05
.								

Table 6.3. (continued)

Variable	Commitment		Autonomy		Life disrupted if relationship ended		Say in important decisions		Altered habits to please partner		Influence over daily decisions	
	Partner		Partner		Partner		Partner		Partner		Partner	
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
<i>Social network support for individual (continued)</i>												
Support ties to partner	-.11	-.25*	-.12	-.04	.10	-.25*	.07	.02	.21	.05	.28*	.06
Support ties to parents	.08	.10	-.07	.10	-.03	.11	-.03	.10	.11	.17	-.03	.17
Support ties to siblings	-.07	-.00	.19	.00	.17	.12	-.01	.04	.01	.04	.06	.21
Support ties to friends	-.06	-.06	.17	-.01	.03	.05	-.05	.01	-.12	-.20	.10	.20
Support ties to ex-partners	-.04	-.13	-.06	.09	-.06	-.06	-.08	.03	-.06	.14	-.08	.10
Support ties to other sexual/romantic intimates	-.13	-.14	.22	.02	-.17	-.08	.03	.12	.00	.16	.02	.14
Support ties to coworkers	.14	-.09	.01	-.04	.16	-.17	-.14	.09	-.07	.13	-.07	.06
<i>Social network support for couple relationship</i>												
Family of origin couple support	-.24*	-.02	.08	-.14	.00	.03	-.05	-.08	-.00	-.11	-.09	.14
Non-family of origin couple support	-.23*	-.03	-.11	-.25*	-.00	-.10	.13	-.08	.00	-.18	.00	.08
Associates living in couples/own network (%)	-.12	.18	-.07	.16	-.08	.09	.17	.02	.02	-.10	.09	.11
Coupled same-sex gays	-.07	-.07	-.02	.12	-.12	.05	.15	-.06	.04	-.13	.04	.17
Coupled same-sex gays/own network (%) ^e	-.09	-.07	-.02	.09	-.04	-.06	.16	-.20	-.00	-.15	.07	.16
Close same-sex gay friends' relationship beliefs ^f	-.11	-.18	.18	.26*	.01	-.03	.07	-.13	.05	.00	.02	.10
Support ties to partner's parents	-.15	.08	-.19	-.09	-.14	-.13	.05	-.07	.02	-.09	-.05	-.05
Commitment ceremony	-.19	.20	-.18	.12	-.16	.14	-.02	.04	.08	.19	.09	.06

Table 6.3. (*continued*)

Variable	Conflict		Dyadic Adjustment		Satisfaction		Together in 20 years	
	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2
Social network enmeshment / strain								
Sexual monogamy	-.21	.00	.22*	.10	.03	.00	.29**	.05
Associates ever intimately involved with	-.03	.13	-.03	-.15	.18	.12	-.13	-.05
Associates causing friction/disputes	.52**	.51**	-.34**	-.36**	-.33**	-.44**	-.01	-.07
Biological relatives causing friction/disputes	.35**	.38**	-.19	-.24*	-.21	-.33**	.08	.06
Friends causing friction/disputes	.45**	.36**	-.29**	-.26*	-.31**	-.31**	-.13	-.14
Ex-partners causing friction/disputes	.13	-.08	-.13	.01	.03	.06	-.04	.03
Intimates causing friction/disputes	.12	.02	-.09	.02	.02	-.02	-.02	.03
Relationship quality								
Commitment	.24*	.15	-.36**	-.25*	-.23*	-.22*	-.58**	-.37**
Autonomy	.16	-.03	-.25*	.07	-.07	.14	-.28*	-.01
Life disrupted if relationship ended	.06	.07	-.04	-.29**	-.05	-.23*	-.19	-.13
Say in important decisions	-.10	-.03	.33**	-.00	.30**	.06	.14	-.17
Altered habits to please partner	-.05	-.08	.30**	.12	.24*	.08	.07	.00
Influence over daily decisions	-.12	-.04	.41**	.13	.37**	.14	.19	.13
Conflict			-.57**	-.60**	-.54**	-.67**	-.28*	-.36**
Dyadic Adjustment					.76**	.63**	.55**	.51**
Satisfaction							.34**	.40**
Together in 20 years								

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$ ^a Partner 1 $N = 81$; Partner $N = 76$ ^b Partner 1 $N = 74$; Partner 2 $N = 78$ ^c Partner 1 $N = 83$; Partner 2 $N = 81$ ^d Partner 1 $N = 81$; Partner 2 $N = 83$ ^e Partner 1 $N = 82$; Partner 2 $N = 80$ ^f Partner 1 $N = 80$; Partner 2 $N = 80$

Constructing the regression models. I did not build regression models to test the multivariate relationships between all independent and dependent variables. Instead I chose independent variables whose correlations had the same sign in both partner samples. In addition, independent variables included in the regressions met one of two criteria: at least one of the correlations was statistically significant at $p < .05$, or the correlations in both samples had an absolute value of .10 or higher. Three examples illustrate these rules: (1) I used the total number of one's individual network associates in an initial regression model to predict commitment because the Partner 1 correlation of $-.26$ was significant and negative and the Partner 2 correlation of $-.07$ was also negative, though not significant. (2) I also included the proportion of one's network more connected to oneself (than to one's partner) because it had a positive though non-significant correlation of $.11$ with commitment in both partner samples. (3) I did not, however, include the percentage overlap between partners' associates, because neither correlation was statistically significant, and the Partner 1 correlation was only $-.01$.

One exception to these rules is that I regressed all dependent variables on the sociodemographic and relationship background measures to ensure that I would not overlook any potential significant effects of these control and background variables, particularly since other research has demonstrated significant patterns between nearly all of them and the properties of networks.

Though the criteria for inclusion of variables in the first-cut regression models were fairly liberal, I employed much more rigorous criteria for the final models. In general, I only report models where the independent variables have statistically significant correlations in the equations for both partners at $p < .05$ or where correlations were significant in one sample (at $p < .05$) and approaching significance in the other (usually at $p < .10$). Suppressor variables, which may not be statistically significant themselves but whose presence enhances the effects of other variables, are also included in some models. Otherwise, I removed most non-significant variables from the final models reported here.⁵

I used a combination of standard and sequential multiple regressions in a three-stage process. First, I used standard regression within each variable block to screen out further those variables having weak non-significant associations with the dependent variable after partialing out the effects of other independent variables in that block. Second, I used sequential regression in

⁵ With the exception of the non-significant component variables of a significant interaction term in one model, discussed later.

building the full models to assess the contributions of each conceptual variable block in predicting the dependent variable. Third, I eliminated variables whose effects were attenuated and non-significant when combined with variables from other blocks in the full models.

Modeling interaction effects, curvilinear, and other nonlinear relationships. I tested two main types of interaction effects: interactions by sex and interactions between partner scores. Income provides a classic example of both types of interaction. Past research is contradictory about the association between income and relationship power for lesbians: some find that it has no connection to the balance of power (Blumstein and Schwartz 1983), while others find that earning power turns into relationship power for lesbians (Caldwell and Peplau, 1984) as it does for gay men (Blumstein and Schwartz 1983). However, the impact of income on relationship quality is also likely to depend on both absolute and relative levels of income between partners: a \$40,000 difference in income is more consequential for two partners earning \$10,000 and \$50,000 than for two partners earning \$120,000 and \$160,000.

Testing these kinds of sex and between-partner interactions show whether social network resources function in similar ways. Following the ANOVAs by sex and location of prior chapters, I computed the interaction between sex and location (distance to gay community) and tested this variable for every model in order to determine if the effect of either of these variables or their interaction mattered.

Beals and Peplau (2001) used power transformations to show a curvilinear relationship between lesbian couples' level of social involvement and their levels of satisfaction and conflict. High- and low-involvement couples had poorer relationship quality than those with moderate social involvement. Therefore, I tested transformations of network property variables by powers of two, three, or four in modeling curvilinear relationships to find out if couples could have either too much or too little of a good thing, or an optimal happy medium.

When the introduction of interactions and power transformations resulted in multicollinearity, I centered the original component independent variables (standardized them so that they had a mean of zero) to resolve the problem. With one exception, interactions and power transformations did not yield any new findings, but through the use of LOWESS line techniques I was able to detect and model several threshold and saturation effects described where they occur.

Regression diagnostics. The transformation of variables to reduce skewness prior to regression analyses also tends to improve the adherence of models to regression assumptions, but I only arrived at the final models after performing a set of regression diagnostics to evaluate multicollinearity, normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, independence of errors (Durbin-Watson statistics within the range of 1.5-2.5), outliers, and influential cases (through the use of leverage [less than .5], Cook's distance [less than 1], and Mahalanobis distance statistics [compared against the Chi-square distribution at $p < .001$]). I identified a number of outliers and influential cases, which I describe where relevant.

COMMITMENT, AUTONOMY, AND POWER

In this group of analyses, I examine whether social networks influence the balance of partners' commitment, autonomy, and power in the couple relationship. Overall, there were almost no bivariate correlations between predictor and dependent variables in this group that attained statistical significance for both partners, but the regression models managed to explain modest proportions of the variation in commitment, autonomy and power, ranging from a low of 2% to a high of 28%.

Commitment

None of the bivariate correlations between the independent variables and commitment were significant in both partner samples, nor was commitment significantly correlated with any of the indicators of autonomy and relationship power across both samples. In the Partner 2 sample, the higher the level of commitment to the relationship, the more one's life would be disrupted if the relationship ended, but this correlation was not significant for Partner 1 (though the effect was in the same direction).

Table 6.4 displays the standardized coefficients for the regression model predicting commitment. The effect of each variable was significant in one sample but not the other, though in the same direction in both samples. The model explained a modest amount of variance with an adjusted R^2 of .16 in the Partner 1 sample, .12 for Partner 2. Families of origin, close friends, and social network support contributed to the prediction of commitment. The more contact with a partner's relatives (compared to one's own), the more the partner was committed to the relationship (and the less committed the respondent was). The converse was also true: the more contact with

respondent's own relatives compared to the partner's, the more committed the respondent was. The correlation for the Partner 2 sample was fairly strong, at $-.42$, while the Partner 1 correlation of $-.08$ did not attain significance. Contact with friends showed the opposite pattern. The more contact with a partner's original friends (rather than one's own) when socializing together as a couple, the less committed the partner was and the more committed one was to the relationship; conversely, the more contact with one's own original friends, the less committed one was to the couple relationship and the more committed one's partner was. The coefficient of $.38$ for Partner 1 was significant, and the Partner 2 effect approached significance. Finally, the more supportive of the relationship one's own family of origin, the more committed one was to the relationship. Overall, this was the weakest of the three effects, with a significant coefficient of $-.26$ in the Partner 1 sample and a non-significant correlation of $-.10$ for Partner 2.

Table 6.4. Standardized regression coefficients for commitment

Variable	I		II		III	
	<i>Partner</i>		<i>Partner</i>		<i>Partner</i>	
	1	2	1	2	1	2
<u>Family of origin</u>						
Contact with partner's v. own relatives	.05	-.34**	-.04	-.40**	-.08	-.42***
R^2 change	.00	.12				
<u>Close friends</u>						
Contact with partner's v. own friends			.36**	.16	.38**	.16
R^2 change			.12	.02		
<u>Social network support for couple relationship</u>						
Family of origin couple support					-.26*	-.10
R^2 change					.07	.01
R^2	.00	.12	.12	.14	.19	.15
Adjusted R^2	-.01	.11	.10	.12	.16	.12

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

One outlier was detected in the Partner 1 solution, and two in the Partner 2 solution. All three outliers had lower levels of commitment than predicted by the models. The deletion of the Partner 1 outlier had no appreciable effect on the any of the model coefficients, significance levels, and the proportion of variation explained. This particular woman had a high level of

involvement with her family, which was very important to her, so much so that it seemed to displace her loyalty to her partner.

In the Partner 2 model, the deletion of one outlier slightly improved the strength of the effects with no change in the adjusted R^2 . I noted nothing remarkable about this woman or her relationship with her partner that would otherwise indicate that they were unusual in any other way than her reported lower level of commitment. The deletion of the second outlier in the Partner 2 model had the effect of reducing the significance level for contact with relatives while increasing the p-values for the other two variables to statistically significant levels, accompanied by a decrease in the adjusted R^2 from .12 to .10. The resulting pattern of significant effects thus matched those of the Partner 1 sample. This person, also a woman, seemed quite despondent about the relationship with her partner and emotionally detached from her. Similar to the Partner 1 outlier, this woman reported spending a lot of time with her family of origin, but her partner did not. The situations of these women seem to indicate that the model is more applicable when contact with one's family also includes one's partner, and that in fact, not including one's partner is a sign of low commitment to the couple relationship. However, inclusion of the partner was not specified in the measure of contact with relatives. These two cases from the Partner 2 sample proved to be outliers in several of the analyses.

The removal of these three outliers did not greatly change the overall patterns found in the full samples, and in some cases strengthened the results. Because two of these three persons were more distressed about their couple relationships than most other respondents, truncating the sample by removing them from the analysis would have eliminated crucial variation in relationship quality. Particularly given that a sample of intact couples introduces a bias toward more satisfied and committed couples, these cases were important to include and they clearly belonged in the sample. The model statistics reported here are therefore based on the full samples including outliers.

Both samples showed significant associations between the family of origin and one's level of commitment to the relationship. It is not possible to determine with these data the direction of influence between commitment and family of origin interactions. It is likely that the good opinion of the family of origin about one's couple relationship (or even pressure to stay with one's partner) helps to solidify commitment, but it may also be that the more committed one is, the more one is able to enlist family support of the relationship. Likewise, contact with the family of

origin probably only increases after one has crossed a certain threshold of commitment to one's partner. If greater integration with the family included one's partner as well, this contact could have a reinforcing effect of its own on one's sense of couplehood and commitment. Intriguingly, greater involvement with one's own original friends indicated the opposite: either a pre-existing condition of lower commitment to the couple relationship, the undermining of commitment through contact with friends, or some other influence accounting for this association. Thus maintaining stronger ties to one's own friends also meant favoring an individual resource over commitment to the couple relationship. Investing in external social alternatives is likely to make one less dependent on the relationship, as the next set of analyses demonstrates.

Autonomy

Autonomy was measured as the ability to function in a variety of ways without one's partner. Bivariate correlations showed that respondents tended to feel a greater sense of autonomy if either their own income was high or their partner's income was low. The positive correlation with life disruption if the relationship ended meant that the more autonomous one was, the more a partner's life would be disrupted (compared to one's own life) if the relationship ended. This association was expected, since the two measures were similar, except that the autonomy variable did not compare one's own level autonomy with that of one's partner.

Table 6.5 displays the standardized regression coefficients for the model predicting autonomy from the relationship. The models for the two samples match closely, and they explained a moderate proportion of the variance, each with an adjusted R^2 was in the mid- to upper teens. There were no outliers in the solution for either sample. Income remained the strongest predictor, but length of relationship, and family and friends also played a role.

Table 6.5. Standardized regression coefficients for autonomy from relationship

Variable	I		II	
	<i>Partner</i>		<i>Partner</i>	
	1	2	1	2
Sociodemographics and relationship background				
Own income	.31**		.32**	
Partner's income	-.05	.09	-.08	.09
Length of relationship	-.24*	-.27*	-.24*	-.31**
		-.19		-.21*
<i>R</i> ² change	.13	.12		
Family and friend network				
Own associates			.30**	
				.27*
<i>R</i> ² change			.09	.07
<i>R</i> ²	.13	.12	.22	.19
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	.10	.09	.18	.15

* p < .05

** p < .01

*** p < .001

The higher Partner 1's income, the greater his or her sense of autonomy. The *lower* Partner 2's *partner's* income (that is, Partner 1's income), the greater Partner 2's sense of autonomy. I reported in Chapter 3 that income was significantly higher for Partner 1 than for Partner 2. Thus the influence of income was consistent in both samples, but it appears that the higher earner's income, which happened to be that of Partner 1 more often than not, was the point of reference for both partners. The effect of the interaction between partners' incomes, however, was not significant. In addition, the longer the couple had been together, the more the partners depended on each other. However, the larger one's network of family and friends, the easier respondents thought it would be to live without a partner, providing further evidence of the role of networks in securing one's position both inside and outside of the relationship. Family and friends represented almost as significant a resource as income; their coefficients were nearly equal in size.

Life Disruption if Relationship Ended

This variable had a similar pattern of bivariate correlations with Partner 1 and 2 incomes as the autonomy variable did, only stronger. As noted above, this variable was also positively correlated with autonomy, but it did not correlate significantly with any of the other dependent variables.

Table 6.6 displays the standardized coefficients for the regression model predicting whose life would be more disrupted by the ending of the relationship. The proportion of variance explained was modest: the adjusted R^2 was .12 for Partner 1 and .15 for Partner 2. Once again, having greater economic self-sufficiency (or economic disadvantage in one's partner) was associated with believing that one's partner's life would be more disrupted than one's own if the relationship ended.

Table 6.6. Standardized regression coefficients for life disruption if relationship ended

Variable	I		II	
	<i>Partner</i>		<i>Partner</i>	
	1	2	1	2
Sociodemographics and relationship background				
Own income	.33**		.36**	
Partner's income	-.02	.06	-.01	.06
		-.39***		-.41***
R^2 change	.11	.15		
Social network support for individual				
Own associates			.07	
Partner's associates			-.26*	.22
				-.12
R^2 change			.06	.04
R^2	.11	.15	.17	.19
Adjusted R^2	.08		.12	.15
		.13		

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

The total support exchange network also appeared to play a role in predicting disruption caused by the ending of the relationship, and this role was similar to that played by the total family and friend network in predicting autonomy. In the Partner 1 sample, the smaller one's partner's

support exchange network, the more disruption to the partner's life compared to one's own if the relationship ended. In the Partner 2 sample, the larger one's own support exchange network, the more disruption to one's partner rather than oneself. This correlation was almost significant with a p-value of .05, and the overall pattern in the two samples was consistent. Once again, respondents with more money and larger networks tended to feel that they were better equipped to survive the loss of their couple relationship.

Say in Important Decisions

There were no statistically significant bivariate correlations in both samples between having a say in important decisions and any of the independent variables. This variable did correlate in predictable ways with altering habits to please one's partner and influence over daily decisions: the more say one had over important decisions, the more one's partner had changed for the relationship and the greater influence one had over daily decisions as well, a strong correlation of .56 for Partner 1 and .37 for Partner 2.

Table 6.7 presents the standardized coefficients for the regression model predicting having a say in important decisions. The adjusted R^2 was .09 for Partner 1 and .05 for Partner 2. In this model, one's own income was what mattered in both samples, not the partner's income. The higher one's income, the more say one had in important decisions, though the coefficient was not quite significant for Partner 2, with a p-value of .11.

As elsewhere, I tested interactions between partners and by sex, but neither had statistically significant effects. Given the role that income also played in predicting relationship autonomy and disruption if the relationship ended—a measure of dependence—the effects of income appear to be robust for both gay men and lesbian women. These results differ from the finding of Blumstein and Schwartz (1983), using a sample of 788 lesbian couples in the late 1970s, that lesbians were able to minimize the effects of income disparity between partners in making important decisions. Equality between lesbian partners did have some qualifications, however: they found that the higher earner had more control over financial decisions involving expensive items and joint recreational activities (a finding that also held for gay men). Caldwell and Peplau (1984), with a smaller sample of 77 lesbians from 1976, found that differences in education and income determined relationship power, despite the fact the women were nearly unanimous in holding an egalitarian ideology. More than two decades have passed since those two studies, and I did not test the effect of relationship ideology on power, but the findings of this study lend

support to the conclusion that income is related to power in lesbian relationships. Education levels did not have an effect. Ideology may mute or mask reported power differences, but it seems likely that with rising income and power in the larger society, women are more likely now than before to derive some of their relationship power on financial resources. This correlation seems particularly plausible in a sample with high-earning women such as this.

Table 6.7. Standardized regression coefficients for having a say in important decisions

Variable	I		II	
	<i>Partner</i>		<i>Partner</i>	
	1	2	1	2
<u>Sociodemographics and relationship background</u>				
Own income	.25*		.27*	
		.17		.17
<i>R</i> ² change	.06	.03		
<u>Social network support for individual</u>				
Partner's associates (threshold)			-.23*	
				-.22*
<i>R</i> ² change			.05	.05
<i>R</i> ²	.06	.03	.11	.08
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	.05	.02	.09	.05

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

Income was not the only external resource that had an impact on the balance of decision-making power within the relationship. The size of one's partner's support exchange network had a negative effect on one's relative power, but graphical inspection of the bivariate plot using LOWESS lines revealed that this effect only mattered after the network size reached a threshold of 5.1 (for the log of partner's support exchange associates). To model this threshold effect, I set all values up to 5.1 equal to 5.1. This value corresponded to 26 associates in the untransformed variable. The mean number of support exchange associates was about 23 for Partner 1 and 21 for Partner 2. Thus a partner's support exchange network did not affect relationship power for the majority of respondents, but when the partner had a higher than average number of these associates, one's own sense of power in the relationship declined.

There was one influential case in the model for each sample, and once again, these respondents were more distressed about their relationships than the vast majority of couples. The men who

constituted influential cases in both sample models reported unusually low levels of relationship power compared to their partners in terms of having a say in important decisions. The man in the Partner 1 sample had a partner with an extremely large support exchange network (43 associates), such that deleting this case from the sample caused the effect of this network variable to become non-significant. The man in the Partner 2 sample reported income in the lowest category (from \$0-9,999) and his partner also had a large support network (36 associates). Eliminating this case from the sample attenuated the correlations of both income and partner's support exchange network with the dependent variable. Furthermore, the deletion of these outliers from each sample led to new outliers in the solution, and their deletion led to more extreme cases, and so on.

It appears that the dependent variable itself was problematic, in that couples are highly likely to say that both partners have equal power in the relationship. Two-thirds of all participants gave this response, and only a small handful reported more than a one-point difference in power compared to their partners. This lack of variation in the dependent variable makes the model dependent on the more extreme cases on either end of the distribution. This problem in measuring relationship power is probably also at least partly responsible for the very modest amount of variance explained by the model, less than ten percent. A better measure of relationship power that captures more variation between partners and across couples would strengthen the results. The model reported in Table 6.7 is based on the full sample because, once again, truncating the sample would have removed a theoretically important group of cases that belongs within the scope of this study—distressed but intact couples. These results suggest that income and network resources may show relatively little effect on the reported balance of power in the majority of couples but powerful effects at the extremes. I suspect, however, that strict equality between partners is over-reported, and a more sensitive measure of power differences would reveal more widespread effects of relative resources.

Altering Habits to Please One's Partner

There were no statistically significant correlations present consistently in both samples between altering one's habits to please one's partner and any of the independent variables. Altering habits did correlate predictably with having a say in important decisions, as noted above, and also with influence over daily decisions: the more one's partner had changed for the relationship, the greater one's influence over daily decisions, a moderately strong correlation of .46 for Partner 1 and .26 for Partner 1.

Table 6.8 displays the standardized coefficients for the regression model predicting which partner had changed more for the relationship. The adjusted R^2 was a modest .11 for both samples. A set of independent variables emerged in this model that was entirely different from the results of the other models predicting commitment, autonomy, and power. The greater the proportion of one's own total individual network thought to be more connected to oneself, the more one's partner had altered his or her habits. Surprisingly, however, the more close friends one had, the less one's partner had changed (or conversely, the more one had changed to please one's partner). This effect was not quite significant in the Partner 1 sample ($p = .07$), but the pattern was the same. Finally, the more one's partner came along when socializing with friends, the more the partner had changed for the relationship.

Table 6.8. Standardized regression coefficients for altering habits to please one's partner

Variable	I		II	
	<i>Partner</i>		<i>Partner</i>	
	1	2	1	2
Total individual and couple networks				
Own network more connected to self (%)	.12	.20	.28*	.27*
R^2 change	.02	.04		
Close friends				
Own associates			-.20	-.21*
Partner along when socializing with friends			.34**	.26*
R^2 change			.13	.10
R^2	.02	.04	.14	.14
Adjusted R^2	.00	.03	.11	.11
* $p < .05$	** $p < .01$		*** $p < .001$	

It thus appears that those who maintain more separate ties wield more relationship power. In addition, including—or cajoling—a partner into social activities with friends seems to indicate greater power to enforce one's social agenda, or it may even increase one's power to change a partner's habits through peer pressure or other processes. In contrast, the effect of close friends appears somewhat inconsistent on its face with the other two correlations. One possibility is that

close friends serve a compensatory function, as suggested by Oliner (1989). She argues that wives who are less powerful and more dissatisfied than their husbands turn to friends for support. But respondents rarely mentioned relying on their friends in the way this Seattle man described:

If I was having a problem with the relationship, I'd go to the close people I mentioned, or even just to vent some steam.

And as it turns out, this man was in the minority of respondents who reported that their *partners* had changed more for the relationship than *they* had, the opposite of Oliner's prediction. As we shall see, none of the other relationship quality analyses provide evidence for her claim.

It seems more likely that having too many close friends may require adjustments in order to join with a partner in a couple relationship and reduce the claim of those same friends on one's time, energy, or other resources. The experience of this Seattle man provides some support for this interpretation:

He accuses me of not liking his friends and never wanting to do anything with them. Or I have a friend he becomes friends with, then whose friend is it? I've been jealous of his friends—and not very nice to them. As a rule I haven't cared for his friends too much, but not vice versa. But I feel threatened by them—I don't want someone to take him away. But also maybe some jealousy that he has more friends. But more the first insecurity. It's definitely affected our relationship. It's been a problem since the beginning of the relationship. It hasn't made or broken the relationship, but it's important to mention.

The couple also fit the pattern of correlations in the regression model: this man had a smaller than average number of friends, while his partner had more than the average number, and both agreed that the partner had changed more for the relationship.

The same Partner 2 sample respondent who was an influential case in predicting relative say in important decisions was both influential and an outlier in this model. He had the most extreme values of all respondents on every variable. He listed a large network, but only counted 2% of his associates as being more connected to him—much lower than the mean of 48% for the Partner 2

sample. At the same time, he listed the largest number of close friends, 35 in all. Finally, he reported having altered his habits for the relationship much more than his partner. The deletion of this case reduced the effect size to $-.14$ and its significance to $.19$. This result suggests that the effect of close friends on changing to please one's partner is more likely to operate among those with the largest circles of friends.

Influence over Daily Decisions

There were no statistically significant correlations in both samples between influence over daily decisions and any of the independent variables, but as noted earlier, this measure of relationship power correlated with having a say in important decisions and altering habits to please one's partner.

Table 6.9 shows the standardized coefficients for the regression model predicting influence over daily decisions. The adjusted R^2 was a respectable $.28$ for Partner 1. The extremely low adjusted R^2 of $.02$ for Partner 2 was due to the poor performance of all candidate predictors in modeling influence over daily decisions for this sample. Neither of the effects of the independent variables in the Partner 1 model attained statistical significance for Partner 2, though they correlated in the same direction with the dependent variable. The results from Partner 1 must be interpreted with caution in light of this less-than-desirable replication.

Two variables measuring support ties (the number of times associates were listed as performing various support functions) were powerful predictors of influence in the Partner 1 model. The more total support ties one listed—a reflection of the richness of support provided by one's associates—the more influence one had over daily decisions compared to one's partner. In addition, having more support ties specifically from one's partner, the greater one's influence in the relationship. Both variables reached saturation points, and I transformed them to reflect these effects using the optimal saturation points for each sample. Influence increased as total support ties increased up to a total of 25 ties for Partner 1 and 31 ties for Partner 2. Support ties to one's partner reach saturation at three ties for Partner 1 and four ties for Partner 2.

Table 6.9. Standardized regression coefficients for influence over daily decisions

Variable	<i>Partner</i>	
	1	2
Social network support for individual		
Own support ties (saturation)	.27**	.10
Support ties to partner (saturation)	.49***	.14
R^2	.30	.04
Adjusted R^2	.28	.02

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Having a rich support network thus gives one leverage in making daily decisions with one's partner, but the association with support ties to one's partner was somewhat surprising. One might think that listing a partner more frequently as a provider of different types of support might indicate more dependence on the partner and therefore less power in the relationship. But the opposite was true, and this correlation was quite strong at .49. The intra-couple correlation for support ties to one's partner was small and not statistically significant, and discrepancies between partners in this were fairly common, and in some cases quite large.⁶ What these patterns seem to indicate instead is that being able to enlist a partner's support in a variety of ways is itself relationship power, not a sign of dependence. Or rather, given the saturation effect, it is the inability to enlist a partner's support that shows a lack of power. In fact, the saturation point for this effect for Partner 1 occurs below the sample mean, which is 4.75. Thus those who are deprived of a partner's support tend to be shut out of decisions.

This model had one influential case and two outliers in the solution for Partner 1 and one outlier for Partner 2. The deletion of the influential case attenuated the effect of support ties to one's partner to .20, and the level of significance fell to .06. The man in this couple was one of the most unsatisfied respondents. I found out incidentally later on that the couple had broken up. This man had the lowest possible number of support ties to his partner, a value of one, which merely reflected the fact that they lived together—no other support ties. That is, he did not list his partner as providing any of the practical or emotional support functions queried in the

⁶ Pearson's $r = .16$, $p = .14$. The maximum number of support ties to partners in both samples was eight, and in about a third of couples, the difference between partners in their ties to each other was two or more.

interview. This lack of reliance on the partner could also have been a symptom of the fact that he was in the process of uncoupling, a time when people look elsewhere to build a new support network (Vaughan 1986).

The two outliers in the Partner 1 model, both of whom had somewhat lower numbers of total support ties, had small effects on the model when deleted. The coefficients were virtually unchanged with the deletion of one case. Deletion of the other case caused the effect of support ties to partner to strengthen slightly and the effect of total support ties to decrease somewhat to a level approaching significance ($r = .16$, $p = .09$). Deletion of the Partner 2 outlier attenuated the effects of both independent variables slightly, but the model did not fit the sample well to begin with.

This dependent variable had some of the same problems measuring the balance of power as partners' relative say in important decisions. It had a highly peaked distribution in the middle of the scale because of the tendency for same-sex couples to report an equal balance of power, whether this reflects reality or merely the prevailing ideology about same-sex relationships (Carrington 1999). Thus variation in this measure of power was limited to a small minority of cases in the tails of the distribution. It appears that in these circumstances, removal of outliers and influential cases only tends to lead to more extreme cases in the new models. As previously, I left all cases in the model in order to preserve variation in relationship quality and because all couples in this study were properly part of the population according to my sampling frame.

CONFLICT, ADJUSTMENT, SATISFACTION, AND STABILITY

The six measures of commitment, autonomy, and power were candidate independent variables for the models of conflict, adjustment, satisfaction, and stability that follow. Conflict, adjustment, and satisfaction were also added to the list of predictors for stability (the likelihood of staying together for 20 years).

Conflict

The conflict scale, defined as frequency of open disagreements or fights in 14 areas, had a positive bivariate correlation with the total number of associates causing friction or disputes between partners, and more specifically, friction over both biological relatives and friends. Conflict

had strong negative correlations with dyadic adjustment and satisfaction, and a moderately negative correlation with staying together for 20 years.

Table 6.10 presents the standardized coefficients for the regression model predicting conflict. The model explained a substantial amount of the variance in conflict: the adjusted R^2 was .37 for Partner 1 and .29 for Partner 2. The total number of associates over whom the two partners had had friction or disputes explained the greatest proportion of the variation in conflict. This is not at all surprising, because this independent variable measures an aspect of conflict. However, the conflict scale is a global measure, and thus this correlation confirms the role of social network strains in couple conflict more generally. Partners' relative level of commitment to the relationship was also associated with conflict, though this correlation did not attain significance in the Partner 2 sample. The less committed one was relative to one's partner, the greater the level of reported conflict. This correlation may indicate several possibilities: either an imbalance in commitment generates conflict, or high conflict causes commitment to falter, or some combination of these possibilities are the most likely explanations.

The interaction of respondent's sex and involvement in same-sex only organized activities with other lesbians or gays was significant in the Partner 1 sample and approached significance in the Partner 2 sample. The effects of the component variables were not statistically significant by themselves, but they interacted such that for men only, the greater the involvement in organized activities with other gay men, the greater the level of conflict, and what mattered was one's own level of involvement, regardless of how involved or not one's partner was. Women's levels of involvement in lesbian-only activities had virtually no effect on their levels of conflict. Thus, although frequenting of gay bars did not seem to matter in any way for gay men, greater participation in all-gay-male activities could create problems or be a sign of distress. This was the only significant effect of gay community involvement in any of the relationship quality models.

One outlier in the Partner 2 sample was the same woman who reported an extremely low level of commitment to her partner. It was the combination of her low commitment to the relationship and moderate level of friction with her partner over others, in the context of a high level of conflict, that made her unusual. However, the deletion of this case had little effect on the model. This deletion did give rise to a second outlier, the other woman who was an outlier because of her lower-than-predicted level of commitment to the relationship. Her level of conflict was close to the mean, which was also lower than predicted based on her level of commitment. The

deletion of this case also had no significant consequences for the model, and no further outliers were detected. As elsewhere, the final model reported is based on the full sample.

Table 6.10. Standardized regression coefficients for conflict

Variable	I Partner		II Partner		III Partner		IV Partner	
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Sociodemographics and relationship background								
Sex	.15		.02		.03		-.03	
		.05		.04		-.02		-.02
R^2 change	.02	.00						
Gay community involvement								
Same-sex only gay activities			-.01		-.00		-.04	
				.16		.02		.01
Sex X same-sex only gay activities			.21		.27		.32*	
				.11		.23		.24
R^2 change			.02	.05				
Social network enmeshment/strain								
Associates causing friction/disputes					.56***		.55***	
						.52***		.51***
R^2 change				.30		.26		
Relationship quality								
Commitment							.24**	
							.06	.14
R^2 change								.02
R^2	.02		.05		.35		.41	
		.00		.06		.31		.33
Adjusted R^2	.01		.01		.32		.37	
		-.01		.02		.28		.29

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Dyadic Adjustment

Dyadic Adjustment correlated negatively with the total number of associates causing friction or disputes, friends in particular, but the correlation between Dyadic Adjustment and friction over biolegal relatives was also significant in the Partner 2 sample and approached significance for Partner 1. The more one was committed to the relationship compared to one's partner, and the less conflict, the higher the level of dyadic adjustment. Dyadic Adjustment had a very strong positive correlation with satisfaction, and a strong correlation with staying together 20 years.

Table 6.11 presents the standardized coefficients for the regression model predicting Dyadic Adjustment. The adjusted R^2 was .28 for Partner 1 and .24 for Partner 2, explaining a respectable amount of the variation in the dependent variable. The negative correlation of commitment with the dependent variable meant that one's own higher commitment to the relationship was associated with a higher level of Dyadic Adjustment. As with conflict, however, the strongest predictor of Dyadic Adjustment was the number of associates causing friction or disagreement between partners. This correlation may be somewhat inflated given that agreement about friends and "in-laws" is assessed in the Dyadic Adjustment Scale, but these two scale items account for only about five percent of the total Dyadic Adjustment Scale score.

Table 6.11. Standardized regression coefficients for Dyadic Adjustment Scale scores

Variable	I		II		III	
	<i>Partner</i>		<i>Partner</i>		<i>Partner</i>	
	1	2	1	2	1	2
Total individual and couple networks						
Overlap in couple network (%)	.17		.20		.19*	
Own biolegal relatives/own network (%) (saturation)	.21	.19	.15	.22*	.16	.20*
		.24*		.30**		.28**
R^2 change	.08	.08				
Social network enmeshment/strain						
Associates causing friction/disputes			-.33*		-.32**	
				-.41***		-.39***
R^2 change			.10	.16		
Relationship quality						
Commitment					-.37***	
						-.19*
R^2 change					.13	.04
R^2	.08	.08	.18	.24	.31	.28
Adjusted R^2	.05	.06	.15	.21	.28	.24

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Other aspects of networks appeared to be influential as well. Greater overlap between partners' individual networks was associated with higher levels of adjustment. In addition, adjustment was higher the more one's network was made up of biolegal relatives. This correlation held up to a point of saturation that ranged from 45% for Partner 1 to 64% for Partner 2. Several interpretations suggest themselves: not maintaining connection with one's biolegal relatives, or perhaps the inability to tolerate them to at least some degree, could be a sign of poor relationship skills. Disconnection from biolegal relatives could also indicate a failure to integrate the couple relationship with pre-existing family. Either of these conditions could affect the Dyadic Adjustment score.

There were two outliers in the Partner 1 solution and two for Partner 2. In the Partner 1 sample, one woman had a higher than expected level of adjustment given the low proportion of her network consisting of biolegal relatives. Deletion of this case had no appreciable effect on the model. Another woman's level of adjustment was low, but not as low as would be expected given

her much lesser commitment to the relationship relative to that of her partner. The effect of deleting this outlier was to attenuate slightly the relationship between commitment and adjustment, but the effect was still significant. In the Partner 2 sample, the same woman in a distressed relationship who was an outlier in other models reported the lowest possible level of commitment to the relationship. When deleted from the sample, the effect of biolegal relatives was strengthened while the effects of commitment and network overlap were attenuated and non-significant. Another woman had an unusually low level of commitment relative to her partner while values on all other variables would predict a high level of adjustment. This woman's slightly low level of adjustment thus depended entirely on her low level of commitment. When this outlier was deleted from the sample, the relationship between commitment and adjustment was attenuated and non-significant. All outliers were left in the samples on which the final model was based.

Satisfaction

One bivariate correlation with satisfaction was statistically significant in both samples: the greater the number of one's immediate family members, the more satisfied one was with the couple relationship. Associations with other dependent variables followed the same pattern as Dyadic Adjustment. The more associates causing friction or disputes between partners, and the more conflict generally, the lower the level of satisfaction. The more one was committed to the relationship compared to one's partner, the higher the level of satisfaction. Satisfaction also had strong positive correlations with Dyadic Adjustment and believing the couple would still be together in 20 years.

Table 6.12 presents the standardized coefficients for the regression model predicting satisfaction. The models explained a moderate to substantial proportion of the variance in satisfaction: the adjusted R^2 was .20 for Partner 1 and .32 for Partner 2. Most of the bivariate relationships remained significant in the multivariate analysis. Though the effect was not quite significant for Partner 1, satisfaction was lower the longer a couple had been together. The larger one's immediate family, the more satisfied the respondent was with the couple relationship. The strongest predictor was disputed associates: the fewer persons one had disagreements about with one's partner, the greater the satisfaction.

Finally, being more committed to the relationship relative to one's partner was associated with a greater level of satisfaction. This result seems counterintuitive, because one might think that a

discrepancy in commitment would lead to distress and dissatisfaction. An examination of the correlation between relative commitment and partner differences in satisfaction provides some insight into this result. More committed partners were also relatively more satisfied with the relationship than their partners.⁷ The most likely interpretation is that those who are aware that they are more satisfied than their partners also sense that, because of their higher level of satisfaction, they are more committed to the relationship. Thus any distress they feel about the imbalance may be outweighed by the ways that they see themselves benefiting from the relationship. It is also important to keep in mind that reported imbalances in commitment were few and typically small, usually just one point from equality.

The composition of immediate families, which often included biolegal relatives of one's own and one's partner, but more of one's own, offers a clue as to why listing a larger immediate family was associated with higher couple satisfaction. One possibility is that listing a larger immediate family meant including additional associates recruited from the partner's network, most likely persons who were highly significant to the partner as well. If so, a larger immediate family would indicate greater solidarity and network integration with one's partner, a likely correlate of satisfaction.

⁷ The strength of this association paralleled that of the regression coefficients in each model, where the effect was stronger for Partner 1 than Partner 2. Pearson r for the correlation of relative commitment and partner difference in satisfaction was $-.31$ ($p < .01$) for Partner 1, and $-.18$ ($p = .11$) for Partner 2.

As with several other models, one woman in the Partner 2 sample who was particularly unsatisfied in her relationship emerged as an influential case, reporting the most extreme values on every variable in the model. The deletion of this case from the sample did not affect most variables in the model, though the correlation between commitment and satisfaction was attenuated to a level that was no longer significant ($r = -.11$, $p = .24$). The effects of length of relationship and the network variables remained unchanged, and the adjusted R^2 decreased slightly to .28. I tested the effect of eliminating the commitment variable from the model, but this choice weakened the Partner 1 model considerably and did not improve the Partner 2 model. Once again, I left the sample and the models intact in recognition of the fact that this particular case was unusual in the low level of relationship quality, and for this reason, an important source of information.

Together in 20 Years

There were no statistically significant bivariate correlations occurring in both samples between any of the independent variables and one's belief in the likelihood of being together in 20 years. Interestingly, the number of associates causing friction with one's partner, which was associated consistently with conflict, Dyadic Adjustment, and satisfaction, did not correlate significantly with being together in 20 years for either partner. Being together in 20 years had a strong positive correlation with commitment, meaning that the more one was committed compared to one's partner, the more one expected to be together in 20 years. Significant associations with other dependent variables were as follows: the less frequent conflict, the higher Dyadic Adjustment, and the higher satisfaction, the greater one's expectation of stability.

Table 6.13 presents the standardized coefficients for the regression model predicting whether respondents thought they would still be with their partners in 20 years. These models explained a large proportion of the variation in the dependent variable: the adjusted R^2 was .54 for Partner 1 and .42 for Partner 2. The longer one had been with one's partner, the greater the expectation of staying together in the long term. A higher level of commitment to the relationship (relative to that of one's partner) was also associated with the likelihood of being together. These two concepts are closely related; the belief that the relationship will last another 20 years may itself be a statement of commitment. Thus the strong correlation between these variables is not surprising. Dyadic Adjustment showed an even stronger correlation with staying together.

Table 6.13. Standardized regression coefficients for expectation of being together in 20 years

Variable	I		II		III		IV	
	Partner		Partner		Partner		Partner	
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Sociodemographics and relationship background								
Length of relationship	.23*	.16	.25*	.19	.23*	.17	.20*	.19*
R^2 change	.05	.03						
Immediate family								
Support ties to immediate family associates (threshold)			.30**	.31**	.25*	.30**	.17*	.28**
R^2 change			.09	.10				
Social network support for individual								
Lesbian or bisexual women/own network (%) (saturation)					.23*	.18	.17*	.15
R^2 change					.05	.03		
Relationship quality								
Commitment							-.38***	-.25**
Dyadic Adjustment							.38***	.44***
R^2 change							.38	.31
R^2	.05	.03	.14	.12	.19	.15	.57	.46
Adjusted R^2	.04	.01	.12	.10	.16	.12	.54	.42

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Even after taking account of the other relationship quality variables, the effect of support ties to one's immediate family associates attained statistical significance in the models for both samples, and the effect of proportion of lesbians in one's network was statistically significant for Partner 1 and nearly so for Partner 2 ($p = .09$).

The number of support ties from one's immediate family exhibited a threshold pattern with the dependent variable and I transformed it accordingly. The threshold was at six in both samples; as the number of support ties increased past six, the more one expected to remain with one's partner for at least the next twenty years. Given the significant effect of the immediate family on relationship satisfaction and the R-square change of about ten percent on introducing this variable into the model for perceived stability, this variable was quite robust in predicting positive aspects of couple quality. The role of immediate family support, which typically included one's partner, some biological relatives, and possibly friends, points to the importance of significant others in one's personal communities for sustaining the belief, if not the reality, that this particular relationship would last a long time or a lifetime.

The proportion of one's social support network made up of lesbians exhibited a saturation pattern with the dependent variable. The saturation point was low in both samples: having at least a couple of lesbians in one's network was associated with a greater belief in the likelihood of staying together.⁸ There was no absolute standard, but persons who had only one or no lesbians in their support networks were less likely to believe they would stay together for 20 years. Of course, this effect involved mostly men, since the vast majority of women in the sample had at least a few lesbians in their lives. It was not simply a matter of the respondent's sex, because the effect of the sex variable was not significant in the model. The influence of lesbians in one's network, particularly for men, may signify something unique about those men in addition to playing a causal role in supporting the belief in lasting relationships. We have seen that there was relatively little involvement between gay men and lesbians in this sample of couples. Thus men who do have lesbians in their lives may be a different breed from those who socialize almost exclusively with other gay men or in the straight world. Like the stereotype of their lesbian counterparts, these men may be more couple-oriented and also open to what women can teach them about relationships.

⁸ For the Partner 1 sample, the saturation point for the proportion of the support network consisting of lesbians was 23%; all respondents at that threshold or higher had two or more lesbians in their networks. For the Partner 2 sample, the saturation point was lower, nine percent, and all respondents at that level had at least one lesbian in their support networks.

The same Partner 2 sample woman who has proven to be either an outlier or influential case in several other models appears to have an undue influence on the commitment variable in this model as well. The removal of this case from the sample caused the effect of commitment to drop in significance, while the effect of lesbians strengthened to statistical significance. None of the other variable effects changed appreciably. Following a by now well-established pattern, deletion of this case caused the other woman with a low value on commitment to become an outlier, and the removal of that case almost completely erased the power of commitment to predict staying together. Thus these two cases became influential whenever commitment entered the equation because of their unusually low scores. No more outliers were detected, and on the basis of the rationale against sample truncation, and the strength of the Partner 1 model, I reported the models based on the intact sample.

SUMMARY OF RELATIONSHIP QUALITY FINDINGS

To sum up briefly the findings of this chapter, Table 6.14 presents a comparison of the regression models for each aspect of relationship quality analyzed. The table shows only variable blocks containing variables retained in the final models, and only those variables. I organize the following review of important findings in terms of the blocks of conceptual variables used as predictors in the analyses.

Table 6.14. Standardized regression coefficients for relationship quality regression models

Variable Block	Variable	Commitment		Autonomy		Partner's (+) or own (-) life		Say in important decisions		Power: own (+) v. partner (-)		Influence over specific decisions	
		Partner's (+) v. own (-) commitment		Difficulty living without partner		Partner's (+) or own (-) life disrupted in breakup		Say in important decisions		Power: own (+) v. partner (-)		Influence over specific decisions	
		Partner 1	2	Partner 1	2	Partner 1	2	Partner 1	2	Partner 1	2	Partner 1	2
Sociodemographics and relationship background	Own income			.32**	.09	.37**	.08	.27*	.17				
	Partner's income			-.08	-.31**	.01	-.43***						
	Length of relationship			-.24*	-.21*								
Total individual and couple networks	Own network more connected to self (%)									.28*	.27*		
	Own associates			.30**	.27*								
	Own emotional closeness to own family				.10		.19						
Family of origin	Contact with partner's (-) v. own relatives (+)	-.08	-.42***							-.20	-.21*		
	Own associates												
	Close friends/own network (%)				.16		.17						
Close friends	Partner along when socializing with friends									.34**	.26*		
	Contact with partner's (-) v. own friends (+)	.38**	.16										
	Own associates				.07		.19						
Social network support for individual	Partner's associates (linear and saturation)				-.24*		-.17	-.23*	-.22*			.27**	.10
	Own support ties (saturation)											.49***	.14
	Support ties to partner (saturation)												
Social network support for couple	Family of origin couple support	-.26*	-.10										
	Adjusted R^2	.16	.12	.18	.15	.12	.15	.09	.05	.11	.11	.28	.02

Table 6.14 (continued)

Variable block	Variable	Conflict		Dyadic Adjustment		Satisfaction		Together in 20 years	
		Partner	1	Partner	1	Partner	1	Partner	1
Sociodemographics and relationship background	Sex (0 = F, 1 = M)		-.03	-.02					
	Length of relationship				-.17	-.25*	.20*	.19**	
Gay community involvement	Same-sex only gay activities		-.04	-.01					
	Sex X Same-sex only gay activities		.32*	.24					
Total individual and couple networks	Overlap in couple network (%)			.19*	.20*				
	Own biological relatives/own network (%) (saturation)			.16	.28**				
Immediate family	Own associates				.22*	.25**			
	Support ties to immediate family associates (threshold)						.17*	.28**	
Social network support for individual	Lesbian or bisexual women/own network (%) (saturation)						.17*	.15	
Social network ermeshment / strain	Associates causing friction/disputes		.55***	.51***	-.32**	-.39***	-.28**	-.38***	
	Partner's (+) v. own (-) commitment		.24**	.14	-.37***	-.19*	-.23*	-.38***	-.25**
Relationship quality	Dyadic Adjustment								
							.38***	.44***	
Adjusted R ²			.37	.29	.28	.24	.20	.54	.42

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

Sociodemographics and Relationship Background

The only demographic and relationship background variables that were related to relationship quality were income and length of relationship, and their effects were scattered. Partners together for a longer period of time were more dependent on the relationship and less satisfied, but more confident in its stability. There were no effects of age, education, or past relationships on any aspect of relationship quality, even when looking at differences between partners on these variables, surprising because education differences in particular can have a negative effect (Blumstein and Schwartz 1983; Caldwell and Peplau 1984). The sample criteria, particularly the minimum age of 30, may have limited variation in some of these characteristics. For example, over half the respondents had had at least three prior relationships lasting a month or more, and this one was the first for just 15% of the sample. However, the relationship skills of a more experienced partner might help compensate for the other's lack of experience. Though there were five couples where both partners were in their first relationship, an overwhelming majority of couples, 94%, had at least one partner with prior relationship experience. Furthermore, because the respondents appeared to have established solid sexual identities, their relationships were less likely to be fraught with the issues that can affect couples where one or both partners are still trying on a same-sex relationship identity. A sample with a wider age range, especially on the lower end, might improve our understanding of the effects of relationship experience and identity.

Higher income was associated with greater relationship autonomy and power, and the effect was the same for male and female couples. This result stands in contrast to some of the earliest research on the balance of income and power in relationships finding that women could escape money's effects if there was no man involved (Blumstein and Schwartz 1983). If this finding accurately captures the workings of money in lesbian couples at present, it suggests either that true equality between economic unequals was illusory in the past—perhaps a statement of ideology more than fact—or that women's relationship to money has changed, becoming more similar to men's.

Gay Community Involvement

A variety of independent variables measuring aspects of gay community yielded one significant effect on couple conflict: the more involved gay men were in all-gay-male organized activities, the higher their level of conflict. Men's involvement was fairly low overall, and partners were

likely to be similar in their level of involvement.⁹ But discrepancies between partners' involvements were not associated with conflict; rather, greater involvement of either or both partners in these outside gay-men-only activities was either a marker or cause of distress in the couple. There were no other differences between couples by sex or geographic location in the effects of any predictors explaining relationship quality. Gay community involvement did not play a role either in supporting or undermining commitment, autonomy or power in the relationship, nor was it associated with satisfaction, adjustment or stability. Notably, simply living in gayer neighborhoods did not appear to expose partners to relationship alternatives that might facilitate a breakup or otherwise cause them to question whether they would still be together in 20 years. A longitudinal study would be needed to determine whether couples' predictions of their future were accurate.

Total Individual and Couple Networks

Total individual networks consisted of all associates an individual listed in response to all name-eliciting questions (covering social support, and family and friends). Total couple networks consisted of the combination of two partners' total individual networks. The degree to which associates were connected to one or both partners had effects on both relationship power and adjustment. Greater connectedness of one's own network associates to oneself (as opposed to being equally shared with or more connected to one's partner) meant that the partner had changed more for the relationship. Overlap between partners' networks—in terms of associates listed in common by both partners—was associated with higher couple adjustment, while too few biolegal relatives in one's own network were associated with decreased couple adjustment. These results suggest that a failure of partners to integrate their networks or to integrate biolegal relatives into the couple's life, or the unwillingness of relatives to incorporate the couple into the biolegal family, has negative consequences for couple adjustment. The effect of biolegal relatives could also operate in reverse—poor couple adjustment could push relatives away. In either case, those on the lower end of biolegal family involvement had lower adjustment scores. There were no other effects of total network composition—including size of partners' networks or the sex and orientation distribution of associates—on relationship quality.

⁹ The intra-couple correlation was .36 ($p < .01$).

Family and Friend Networks

Family and friend networks included the family of origin as well as immediate family, extended family, close friends, and chosen family lists as defined by the respondent in most cases. Analyses included measures for the total family and friend network as well as four of these subsets (all except extended family, whose exceptional qualities did not lend themselves well to this analysis). I discuss the support exchange network (inventory of specific types of support provided) more generally in its own section, but I also calculated the number of support ties provided in each of the family and friend categories, which I include in the discussion here.

The larger one's total family and friend network, the greater one's autonomy from the couple relationship, an effect that was consistent with the effect of having more associates connected to oneself (in the total network) on relationship power. All other family and friend effects operated through specific subsets of this network. Chosen family variables had no effects on relationship quality, a subject we return to later.

The size of the immediate family was positively associated with couple satisfaction, while more support ties (based on the support inventory) to immediate family (over a minimum threshold) were associated with perceived relationship stability. Support ties had no other significant effects on relationship quality in any other family and friend group, though they did operate through specific associates as we will see later. The effect of immediate family size is intriguing. People were unconstrained in naming immediate family members, either in the criteria or the number of persons. Naming a larger group of those most immediate, important associates may signify underlying relationship skills and an affiliative orientation that serves both coupling and family-making.

The family of origin was connected to relationship quality in two ways. Having more contact with one's own relatives rather than those of the partner was correlated with greater commitment to the relationship, while greater emotional closeness to them made one feel less vulnerable to the disruption of a breakup. The measure of contact with family did not specify inclusion of one's partner, but contact with one's family that involves one's partner is likely to be a sign of greater commitment to the couple relationship. At the same time, close ties to family can provide a safety net in case of relationship disruption. The residential proximity of the family of origin, level of openness about one's orientation, the partner's relations with either family, and differences between partners in outness and closeness to family made no difference in levels of couple

quality. Most respondents were out to their biolegal families, and at the same time, they usually lived more than an hour away, meaning that interaction with them probably tended to be relatively infrequent.

Close friend measures were related to commitment, autonomy, and power. Imbalances in contact with one's own and the partner's friends signified imbalances in partners' levels of commitment, but in the opposite direction of the effects of family contacts: more contact with one's own friends meant lower, not higher, commitment. In addition, having the partner along more often when socializing with friends meant that the partner had changed more for the relationship. Having greater numbers of close friends, one expected less life disruption from a breakup, but it also meant changing more to please one's partner. These intriguing patterns seem to point to different sets of norms governing biolegal family versus friend relationships. One may feel more entitled to expect a partner to set limits on the time and energy that friends use up. But we may expect (biolegal) family relationships to take priority over friends, and if that is the case, allowances are made for family interaction. Certainly partners must negotiate with each other over both family and friend relationships, but friends may be viewed as more optional and a more legitimate object of compromise. Furthermore, continuing to maintain a higher level of contact with one's own friends meant that one was less willing to make this compromise, less committed to the couple relationship. Close friends had no effects on the outcomes of conflict, satisfaction, adjustment, or stability. Thus, though friends provided more types of support than biolegal family, they acted more as individual than joint network resources by establishing or challenging the balance of commitment, autonomy, and power between partners, but they did not serve to enhance couple satisfaction, adjustment, or stability.

Individual Support Exchange Networks

The individual support exchange network consisted of those associates named in response to a set of questions about whom the respondent would rely on for specific types of emotional and practical advice and support. Measures derived from this network included numbers and types of associates as well as numbers of support ties—multiplexity of relationships—with specific types of associates. The results showed that the respondents evaluated their relative relationship autonomy and power in terms of their own and their partners' support exchange network sizes, consistent with the effects of close friends noted above. The smaller one's own network and the larger the partner's, the more one's life would be disrupted by the ending of the relationship. The more associates in the partner's support exchange network, the more say she or he had in

important decisions. Likewise, the richer (more multi-stranded) the support network ties were overall, the greater one's influence over daily decisions. Conversely, a lack of support ties from one's partner specifically indicated less power in the relationship. All of these patterns were consistent: support networks in terms of both persons and the number of support functions they provided were resources that determined the balance of autonomy and power. In addition to the effects of immediate family support ties noted earlier, having lesbian associates also had an effect on perceptions of relationship stability. Those with few lesbians in the support exchange network had less confidence in the future of the relationship.

Couple Social Network Support

Respondents rated their associates' levels of support for the couple relationship explicitly, from which I calculated mean ratings of support from the family of origin versus all others. Like the effect of contact with one's own relatives noted previously, the family of origin's greater support for the couple was associated with one's greater commitment to the relationship. Apart from this effect, no other measures of support for the couple relationship had any predictive power for the dependent variables. The support of other associates, which was generally high, did not matter. The presence of coupled associates in general, or gay coupled associates of the same sex in one's networks did not matter, nor did close same-sex gay friends' relationship beliefs. Support ties from a partner's parents had no effect, nor did community support through the ritual and symbolic act of having a commitment ceremony.

This is the first study I am aware of to measure and relate the coupled status of network associates to couple relationship quality. Though coupled associates of any kind, straight or gay, made up a fairly high proportion of networks with a narrow range of variation, the proportion of coupled associates of the same sex and orientation was slightly lower and more varied across couples.¹⁰ The lack of significance of these direct and indirect measures of network norms, beliefs, and behaviors specifically related to couplehood was surprising.

Social Network Strain

The only significant variation in monogamy involved gay male couples in this sample, but neither monogamy nor an open relationship conferred any advantages or presented significant challenges to the quality of their relationships as measured here in a variety of ways. Both men

¹⁰ Two-thirds of all associates were coupled ($SD = .13$) compared to 57% of same-sex gay (or lesbian) friends who were coupled ($SD = .30$).

and women listed in their networks past or present romantic or sexual intimates other than their partners, including ex-partners, but neither their presence in one's networks nor any disagreements between partners over them had any effects on couple quality. What did matter was the total number of associates of any kind that partners reported having friction over, and this measure had strong positive correlations with overall conflict and negative correlations with satisfaction and adjustment.

Looking at the models side by side in Table 6.14 above, it is readily apparent that the first group of models—commitment, autonomy, and power—performed less well than the rest of the models in explaining variation in the dependent variables. Nevertheless, the consistency of particular predictor variables—such as income and the partner's social network—and particular conceptual blocks—such as close friends and individual social network support—suggest robustness in the predictors of relationship autonomy and power. The models predicting conflict, adjustment, satisfaction, and staying together individually performed better, and taken together, the pattern of findings is robust and explains a substantial amount of variance, more than 40% in the case of staying together for 20 years. In the final chapter, I explore further these and other key findings in light of the original questions that motivated this study, evaluate the significance of networks for couple quality, and consider future directions for research and for relationships.

Chapter 7

The Power of Networks

This study began with 43 female and 40 male couples, almost equally divided between Washington residents in and outside of Seattle, to answer a simple question: how did their networks affect the quality of their couple relationships? While these 83 couples played the starring role in the analysis, a much larger number of people were the supporting cast of this study: couples named a total of 3,662 persons (991 listed by both partners) that populated their social worlds as family, friends, and support providers.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

Sample representativeness is always a problem in studies of stigmatized minorities. Here I consider how the sample characteristics influence the ability to generalize the findings to other populations.

This sample is biased toward those with more education and higher incomes, and these factors are consequential in shaping networks. Compared to those with lower levels of education and income, the couples in this sample are likely to have larger and more varied networks with relatively fewer kin and more non-kin associates (Fischer 1982). These patterns are partially evident in this sample in that men and women in Seattle had larger networks than women outside Seattle, along with higher incomes, but the variation within the sample on these socioeconomic status characteristics was probably not sufficient to yield other statistically significant differences that we might expect in a more diverse sample.

The requirements of study participation themselves may have limited the participation of certain kinds of couples. Those with the largest networks, who may lead especially busy lives, reclusive people with smaller networks, and couples who lead lives of secrecy are all less likely to be represented in a study requiring a significant amount of time and discussion of intimate details. Studies of couples, particularly with cross-sectional designs, are also likely to net couples with

higher-than-average relationship quality. Distressed couples disproportionately exit the population of interest by breaking up, and intact but distressed couples may resist participation for a number of reasons, including for example, the simple inability of partners to agree on and coordinate their participation.¹

I excluded couples living together less than one year, younger couples, and the oldest of couples. I am therefore unable to draw conclusions about relationships of shorter duration or couples who do not share a residence, both situations where partners are likely to share fewer associates and reconfigure their networks to a lesser degree than longer-term cohabiting couples. Excluding younger persons also meant eliminating some who were more embedded in gay community and those engaging in first relationships where partners come to terms with their sexuality, gain relationship skills, and frequently come out to family and others for the first time. Younger persons are also in a period of greater career instability, with fewer financial resources to bring to bear on their relationships. Setting the upper age limit eliminated retired couples from the sample, a dramatic life change that seems to have differential impacts on men's and women's networks. All of these factors probably reduced the variability in network characteristics or relationship quality or both in my sample (though variability in network characteristics was substantial).

In the interest of interview length, I did not purposely gather information about the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the sample, and therefore, I can say nothing about the impact of HIV/AIDS on couple networks and support systems. There is a vast literature on the effects of social support on health and disease, and some studies of gay male couples and AIDS, but little research that I am aware of about how health problems affect not only couples, but their personal communities too.

Having to rely on gay pride events, particularly for recruitment of men outside of Seattle may have created a bias toward couples who were more open about their sexuality and their relationships and unconcerned about being identified in public. In contrast, secrecy about one's sexuality or same-sex relationship can have several effects on couples and their networks. Secrecy about the relationship can signal ambivalence about one's own or the couple's identity. Partners may purposefully engage in secrecy as a protective strategy for the couple in a hostile

¹ On the other hand, some distressed respondents seemed quite anxious to disclose their frustrations and disappointments to an outsider who would listen.

environment or for other interests of one or both partners. In secret or forbidden relationships between status unequals, such as an affair between a married and an unmarried person, behaviors aimed at protecting status, in this case marital status, confer power on the married person (Richardson 1988). In a same-sex couple context, one partner may have a career that would be threatened by disclosure of sexual orientation. A few respondents in this study shared this type of concern. Even when being in the closet is in the interest of both partners, secrecy can shield relationship problems from outside scrutiny, make the relationship seem “less than” the need to preserve other social priorities, and cut couples off from support. There were too few closeted respondents in this sample to allow for any substantial analysis of these dynamics, which I address in the next section.

Couples who chose to participate in this study may care more about the subject of study—couple, family, and friend relationships—than non-participants. This bias may particularly affect the men, who refused to participate or complete all aspects of the study at higher rates than women. Male participants may constitute more of a select sample than the women. This potentially stronger orientation toward intimate relationships among study participants may mean that this sample consists of those who are more committed, more skilled, and more supported in their relationships. This limitation had one advantage: respondents’ thoughtfulness, social awareness, and desire to cooperate may have yielded better information and insight about the dynamics of networks in couple relationships than a completely random sample of the population might have provided.

I purposely excluded couples with children because of the known impacts of children on networks and couple quality that were beyond the scope of this study. This exclusion particularly affects lesbians, since more lesbians have children than gay men. The childless couples in this study probably look quite different from couples with children, who are a minority of same-sex couples but a majority of heterosexual married couples. A number of people I spoke to during recruitment outside Seattle said that children were more a part of life outside the big city, and the no-child restriction would disproportionately exclude suburban and rural couples. Census data on same-sex couples back up this claim, since those with children were more likely to live outside of urban gay neighborhoods in favor of outlying areas where heterosexual couples were raising children (Gates and Ost 2004). Because couples with children experience a realignment of their networks in favor of kin, especially female kin, it is not surprising that the same-sex couples in this and other studies have reported greater support from friends than from biological kin. The

gender balance of support providers for couples with children may be more skewed toward women compared to that of couples in this sample. Greater kin involvement also increases the potential for conflict with kin and disagreements between partners over kin. One of the intriguing hypotheses generated by this study is that increased friction between partners over kin relations might explain some of the decline in relationship quality associated with the arrival of children, documented in heterosexual couples (Huston and Vangelisti 1995). I save for later discussion of the gendered implications of children for same-sex couples, but it was clear from the visible disappointment of excluded couples that the networks of same-sex couples with children are worthy of study in their own right.

Washington's population is overwhelmingly non-Hispanic and white, but the sample was less racially and ethnically diverse than the state's coresident same-sex couple population as a whole. I was not able to investigate racial or ethnic patterns of coupling and networking with this sample, but variations are likely. For example, a recent study using data from the National Survey of Family and Households showed that African-Americans engaged in more practical daily support activities with their kin, such as help with domestic tasks, than whites, while whites gave greater emotional and financial support to their kin (Sarkisian and Gerstel 2004). Social structural factors accounted for most of the racial differences in kin support, but cultural differences also played a role.

Diverse family systems in African-American, Asian, Latino, indigenous, and other cultures are also likely to support same-sex couples in different ways and to different degrees. Sexual minorities from these cultural backgrounds can experience discrimination in gay communities where they are not well represented, with potential influences on the processes of coupling and couple networking. They also may develop institutions tailored for their own specific interests. The gay and lesbian Latino and Latina community in Seattle has seen substantial development of its resources over the past fifteen years in the form of organizations and opportunities to meet in culturally appropriate social spaces. Latino cultures are dancing cultures, and both men and women, and singles and couples, are drawn to socialize and dance at the weekly *Noche Latina* ("Latino Night") at a local gay bar. The existence of this highly circumscribed social opportunity may lead to greater bar attendance among Hispanic couples than non-Hispanic couples. Cultural solidarity may also bring more women and men together there and in ethnically-based community organizations than was observed in the predominantly non-Hispanic couples of this

study's sample. Latino gays and Latina lesbians in migrant farm worker communities would undoubtedly reveal a different picture of coupling, community, and family dynamics.

In thinking about her more advantaged status, this African American respondent suggested that a critical factor to consider in thinking about the networks of racial and ethnic minorities is their lower socioeconomic status:

With a lot of people of color, who need to be dependent based on economics, would it look different? We're privileged to be able to not depend on our networks so much. (woman outside Seattle)

None of the non-white respondents were outliers in statistical analyses. This result could suggest that many of the fundamental properties and processes of networks may influence diverse individuals in couples in similar ways, but the data do not even begin to provide an answer to this question. Furthermore, a Washington state sample may not adequately represent the experiences of same-sex couples living in other regions of the country with different population characteristics and different degrees of gay community development and involvement.

The sample restrictions seem to have netted male and female couples in structurally similar positions. This is advantageous for isolating variation in other variables of interest, but an unintended consequence is that gender effects, if they exist, may have been muted—a finding of interest in itself. Insufficient representation of couples on the extremes in the predictor variables, then, is likely to have attenuated some of the effects on the dependent variables. The findings of this study need to be viewed in the context of these sample characteristics, and I explore these issues further where appropriate in the discussion that follows.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY ON NETWORKS AND COUPLE QUALITY

Social support influences on couple relationships are thought to derive from behaviors operating in both directions: behaviors of network associates toward the couple, and behaviors of the couple toward the network associates of each partner. Partners' investments in the joint network constitute an investment in the couple relationship (Sprecher 1988). Agreement between oneself and one's associates in the assessment of one's partner or one's relationship may reduce uncertainty and foster cognitive balance (Sprecher and Feilmlee 1992). Associates can also exert pressure against dissolution (Sprecher and Feilmlee 1992), while providing relationship models,

guidelines, and social accountability for one's behavior in the relationship. Engagement between couples and networks in both directions reinforces a couple's identity. Several studies have linked relationship approval and social support with increased attachment, commitment, expectations of staying together, and actually staying together (Eggert and Parks 1987; Felmlee et al. 1990; Johnson and Milardo 1984; Lewis 1973; Parks and Adelman 1983; Parks et al. 1983; Sprecher 1988; Sprecher and Felmlee 1992).

This study did not test the social-psychological mechanisms underlying these network effects explicitly but found evidence consistent with a number of these propositions. Sharing associates between partners (and conversely, maintaining a larger separate network) had effects in this sample that were in line with theories predicting the positive effects of couple network integration on relationship quality. Julien et al. (1999) reported no effect of network overlap, which averaged 25% in the support exchange network among same-sex couples in their study, on dyadic adjustment. However, separate friends and separate kin for lesbians, and too many ties to friends for gay men, were associated with lower adjustment. In this study, total couple networks overlapped by a mean of 28%, and greater overlap was associated with higher dyadic adjustment scores.

The effects of immediate family resources on satisfaction and stability constituted perhaps the most powerful evidence for how integrating key individual and couple resources mattered for relationship quality. Immediate families typically consisted of those associates considered most significant, almost always including one's partner. It often also included some combination of one's own biolegal family members, those of one's partner, and a significant friend or two. Immediate family overlapped the most with family of origin but also with chosen family, representing a middle ground between chosen and unchosen family. This group thus tended to constitute a critical nexus between one's partner, one's own significant others and in some cases, the partner's most significant associates. Immediate family was the only one of the five categories of family and friends measured that had effects on two of the positive indicators of couple quality, satisfaction and stability.

Descriptions of couple interactions with family and friends provide some insight into the significance of counting biolegal relatives as immediate family. Couples tended to privilege ties to biolegal relatives (of both partners) over friends. Same-sex partners felt more compelled to

endure and encourage relations with each other's more "mandatory" biolegal families, while eliminating problem friends when necessary:

He's estranged from his family. I think it's unhealthy—I wish he wouldn't be disconnected. He isn't working through issues he needs to work through. His family is horrible, and I want nothing to do with them, but I would gladly go with him if he wanted to, if they were important to him. (Seattle man)

If they're going to stay friends with me, they know they have to be supportive. It's not optional. No one would be happy if we broke up...There is no way friends could cause a problem—they would be gone. (man outside Seattle)

When friends cause us problems, and if they can't rectify it—they're *gone*.
(woman outside Seattle)

Contrast the observations of this man outside Seattle about a partner's friend (here) versus his mother (next quote):

His friend who I don't care for—he feels bad, and I feel guilty. I want him to maintain the relationship—he doesn't have a lot of friends. It's an ongoing thing—we're in a bind here. It's awkward to have an exclusive relationship when you're in a couple.

Though he encouraged his partner to keep the friend, it was clear that having a relationship with his partner's friend was optional for the respondent. Biolegal family relations, however, were not optional, despite the palpable stress on the couple:

His mother is a controlling, unpleasant bitch. I don't like him when he's around her. She's bad news, and I totally understand. All my bad qualities come out. So we minimize contact with her. I like his dad quite a bit, and his sister-in-law. It's an ongoing challenge—you have to see family. I don't know what we're going to do. We get on each other's nerves often before we rally. We got in a really bad fight once when we were with them.

The majority of couples did not have this degree of conflict with and about associates, but these examples serve to point out the differences in felt obligations to family and friends in adverse situations. The cultural norm favoring biolegal family over friends also operated in more benign circumstances, and because of it, immediate family usually represented a more stable group of associates, less subject to changes in membership, than friends or chosen family. Designating more associates as important and immediate and receiving more support from them was likely to indicate positive relations with immediate family and perhaps superior skills at family-making and coupling. Thus it is no surprise that listing a larger immediate family and more supportive ties from them were consequential for couple satisfaction and stability. Including more biolegal relatives in one's network was also predictive of higher dyadic adjustment, an effect consistent with the impact of larger immediate families, which also tended to contain a large number of biolegal relatives.

These results on the importance of the immediate family and biolegal relatives are significant because they challenge the notion that friends are the most consequential associates in the lives of lesbian and gay singles and couples, as suggested by others (Kurdek and Schmitt 1987; Kurdek 1988a; Laird 1996; Smith and Brown 1997). Friends accounted for the preponderance of support ties in sheer numerical terms, as Julien et al. (1999) also found. But respondents listed all except 14% of their family of origin members in other categories of family and close friendship. This multiple classification of biolegal family members, the disproportionate amount of economic support they provided when resources within the couple were insufficient, and their representation in immediate families indicate that they played a significant role—be it practical, emotional, or symbolic—in couple integration and relationship quality.

Symbolic support of the relationship through a union or commitment ceremony was not associated with any aspect of relationship quality. Ceremonies may be on the increase: more than twice as many male and female couples in this sample had had commitment ceremonies than those of a late 1980s sample (Bryant and Demian 1994).² The lack of any correlation between having a commitment ceremony and relationship quality may stem partly from the largely non-institutionalized status and unconventionality of same-sex relationships. In the words of one woman outside Seattle,

² Differences in other sample characteristics could account for some of the change: couples in the present sample had been together longer.

I feel it's more of a challenge to be a couple as a gay. You have to fight and claw your way. If we were married, it would be a given, whether they liked me or not. We talked about having a ceremony but gave up the idea, because we felt people still wouldn't see it as a marriage.

Another woman outside Seattle spoke of her commitment ceremony in a way that implied that it had less value than her sister's wedding:

No family members were invited—we just decided to have friends. It was very small and intimate. There were no bad relationships with family, but I didn't want to compete with my sister's wedding.

Apart from the fact that more than twice as many female than male couples had had ceremonies, couples having ceremonies were indistinguishable from those who had not. They did not differ in age, religiosity, proximity to gay community, or length of relationship. Variability in what constituted a ceremony, without the weight of tradition or legal standing behind these couples, might have meant that the social significance of their rituals was not altogether certain, as these descriptions of unconventional ceremonies illustrate:

We had decided only a week or so before to do it in Amsterdam. Where and when, we only decided after we had arrived there. It was three blocks from our hotel. He created the ceremony, and we worked out our vows just beforehand. His family and our friends in Seattle weren't able to make it. (Seattle man)

Sometimes, partners themselves did not even agree on what counted as a ceremony, as in the case of a couple where one partner caught the other off guard with a surprise wedding. Yet even when a ceremony begins with conventional intentions, the strategy that the following two women partners outside Seattle adopted shows that social and economic constraints requiring a creative solution can turn it into something else entirely:

We snuck into a United Methodist Church with a lesbian United Methodist pastor and four friends and had a wedding. We couldn't afford to do what we wanted. She was more religious at the time—she needed to say vows in front of God. But she wants a big wedding some day.

We eventually want to have a big one. This was seven persons, all women, including the pastor—each of our best friends and two friends who wanted to come. Money was the reason we didn't have a large one. No one else knows we invited anyone at all—we didn't want to hurt their feelings. We'd invite all the people on the list next time.

A pledge before one's god is undoubtedly a profound experience, but religious prohibitions against blessing same-sex marriages and insufficient finances effectively cut this couple off from wider social recognition of their rite of passage and new "married" status, even after the ceremony. It is also worth noting that financial support from biolegal family tends to be more forthcoming for a heterosexual weddings, while same-sex couples such as this one must rely more on their own resources. As same-sex commitments are increasingly recognized in religion and law, union celebrations like this one may emerge from hiding and become normalized. With legal same-sex marriage in Massachusetts and in countries such as Canada, a comparison of cohabiting and married same-sex couples (along with their heterosexual counterparts) will be a new and compelling area for research on the developing institutional and ritual status of same-sex couples as these customs gain a cultural toehold.

Unlike the effects of immediate family, some segments of networks did not always enhance couple solidarity. Social support networks—based on the inventory of specific exchanges with the individual respondent—had numerous effects on several measures of relationship autonomy and power. Olicker (1989) found in her study of heterosexual marriage that personal networks performed a compensatory function for the less powerful or less satisfied partner, usually the woman. Rich ties in the support networks of same-sex partners in this study were a sign of another mindset entirely: a sense of power. Similarly, when the partner's support exchange network was small, one's own sense of autonomy and relative power was greater. These patterns suggest that the specific network resources measured by the support exchange inventory used in this study generally benefited the individual rather than the couple as a whole. This man outside Seattle was conscious of the power associated with network resources:

We're pretty dependent on each other. Especially me on him, because I don't have as many others to fall back on as he does, even family. He's not extremely close to his family, but he cares. The fact that I don't have a bigger circle puts

some pressure on us, and we're both aware of this. I had more friends at one time.

In addition to the effects of the support exchange network, a larger total network of family and friends predicted a greater sense of autonomy from the relationship, and the more associates who were judged to be more connected to oneself (as opposed to one's partner), the greater one's relationship power. Finally, the more one's partner socialized with one's own original friends, the more the partner had changed for the relationship. These results were also consistent with research suggesting that unhappy partners who have social support resources are more likely to leave the relationship (Heaton and Albrecht 1991), because they are less dependent on it. The only contradiction to the general pattern was the finding that having more close friends meant that one had changed more to please one's partner. In the context of couple norms limiting the claims of friends on partners, however, this finding may not be entirely inconsistent. More often, individual network resources did not predict the positive relationship quality indicators such as satisfaction or adjustment; rather, they bolstered individual autonomy and power.

A key distinction revealed in these results, and consistent with the work of others (Bryant and Conger 1999; Smith and Brown 1997), is that network resources can support the couple as a couple, or they can support the individual partner, potentially undermining couple stability through the creation of power imbalances between partners. I asked respondents to rate relationship support from various categories of associates. The family of origin was given the lowest mean rating overall, "somewhat supportive," while most other associates were closer to the "strongly supportive" end of the scale. There was weak evidence that less support from one's family of origin was associated with lower commitment to the couple relationship (relative to one's partner). Nevertheless, the immediate family and other aspects of couple network integration reported earlier appeared to have a more concrete and fundamental connection to relationship quality than mere perceptions of couple support.

It has been suggested that hostility toward the couple could enhance solidarity by causing partners to take comfort in each other (Driscoll et al. 1972; Leslie et al. 1986). Alternatively, negative network interactions could destabilize the relationship. My sample of couples, having lived together at least a year, may have been too established to provide a good test of the "Romeo and Juliet effect." The comments of a few couples who were or had been closeted, to

protect against perceived negative consequences from coming out, were pertinent to this question. Evidence supporting the hypothesis that protecting the relationship from external threats leads partners to unite more tenaciously was rare:

We were afraid to be out in the world for many years. We had a *small* circle of friends. It may have bonded us together more—we relied on each other and our few friends. (man outside Seattle)

It was far more common to hear about the negative impacts of secrecy, in line with other studies of lesbian couples (Caron and Ulin 1997; Murphy 1989):

Her work affects our relationship. She has to be relatively closeted about our relationship being in a visible public position. It was very painful to me, and debilitating to her—hiding breaks down your psyche bit by bit. We had lots of conflict about it. (woman outside Seattle)

She's not out to her family. It's been a big bone of contention for us. She treats me differently around her family, like we're just friends. (woman outside Seattle)

We are so out as a couple here, it's freed us a lot, even at our jobs—like burdens that have been lifted off—there's no pretense, and it's made us stronger. Having to pretend came between us—it made it harder for us. It interfered with our intimacy. It was not "you and me against the world." (woman outside Seattle)

Seattle's an influential place to live. I've never been so out before. I came from a small city, and I was *only* involved in the gay and lesbian community there. Gay and lesbian people are more mainstream here—I didn't realize what I was missing. It's nice to have *heterosexual* friends. It's nice to have a church where it's *not* an issue. I wouldn't *go* to church before coming here. Here acceptance is a *matter of course* in church. It's also useful to be out and open at work—there's a non-discrimination policy. It's a profound sense of ease. I've never gone to work functions with my partner before—it's pretty cool. I don't have to watch my pronouns—it changes my personality at work. (Seattle woman)

These anecdotes suggest that, for most couples, being out as a couple is a pre-requisite for establishing one's couple identity and gaining relationship support, as others have argued (Haas and Stafford 1997; Johnson and Keren 1996). Ten percent of respondents reported conflict between partners or stress on their relationship because of relations with biolegal family, and of these, just two mentioned that it had created more solidarity with their partners. These retrospective views of the relationship—as limited as they are—combined with regression findings, provided little support for the notion of a "Romeo and Juliet effect." If there is such an effect, it seems more likely to play a role in earlier stages of relationships.

Another potential negative influence on couple quality is the existence of attractive alternatives (Blumstein and Schwartz 1983; Feilmee et al. 1990; Sprecher 1988). Socializing with other couples might be one way to reduce the threat of alternatives and get support for being a couple, but contrary to expectation, being surrounded by a couple culture, by having coupled associates in one's network and gay or lesbian friends who believed in long-lasting gay relationships, had no impacts on relationship quality. Friendships with other couples had at least as much potential to be complicated and problematic for the couple as they were supportive. Together these findings suggest that resource mobilization in service of the couple relationship occurred mostly through partners' individual, concrete, day-to-day engagement of their own and each other's networks in specific ways. Mere exposure to norms favoring coupling and coupled associates had no perceptible net effect on relationship quality. Perhaps general network orientations toward coupling and toward the couple as a couple underlie these specific behaviors and thereby validate the couple relationship indirectly, but my data do not allow a test of this proposition. In and of themselves, associates' attitudes toward the couple and the degree of immersion in a coupled network yielded little information about the quality of same-sex relationships.

Almost none of the measures that might indicate the presence of alternatives—gay community involvement, nonmonogamy, and potential partner rivals in one's network—made a difference in couples' relationship quality. However, my results overall suggested that having alternative network resources to meet one's needs for companionship, assistance with tasks, and so on—to substitute for the goods and services provided by one's partner—operated in a similar fashion as alternative partners would. Combined with the positive effects of income on autonomy and power, these findings are consistent with Waller's principal of least interest: the person less interested in maintaining a relationship (or alternatively, less dependent on a relationship) is able

to wield more power within it. Taken all together, the great bulk of the evidence showed that social network resources provided an alternative to dependence on one's partner that in this analysis proved to be as consequential as the effect of personal income in conferring relationship power.

Even more powerful than individual or couple support, however, were the effects of associates causing couple discord. Others have suggested that the negative effects of just a few associates can overwhelm the positive network effects of a large number of associates (Milardo 1992; Pagel et al. 1987; Rook 1992). Managing the effects of controversial associates in the couple's network appeared to be a crucial task for the quality of couples' relationships:

We make sure people *don't* affect our relationship. If we look closed to others, so be it. Protection is important, and surrounding ourselves with people we trust.
(woman outside Seattle)

Even though the number of persons causing friction between partners was a small handful of a couple's associates, just one in ten on average, their effects on relationship outcomes—overall conflict, satisfaction, and adjustment—were larger than the effects of any other variable in those models.

An intriguing finding of this study was that both absolute numbers and proportional measures of network associates mattered for relationship quality. Absolute numbers accounted for three times as many of the significant effects in regression models as proportional measures. This study also provided evidence of both threshold and saturation effects governing the role of network associates. These effects suggest that specific numbers of associates may result in specific effects on relationship quality. There were five instances of saturation effects and just one threshold effect. The gains in power, dyadic adjustment, and perceived stability leveled off above a certain number of associates (or support ties), while only abundant support ties from the family of origin were connected to perceived stability. Better sample representation of couples with small networks might have demonstrated some of these effects to an even greater degree. It would seem that too many riches give one more possibilities than too few, but more research would be needed to determine under what conditions couples are most vulnerable to extremes in network properties.

The regression models predicting conflict, dyadic adjustment, satisfaction, and the expectation of being together in 20 years explained substantial amounts of variation in these aspects of relationship quality, from 20% to 54%. The effects of disputed associates (those causing disagreement between partners) and relationship commitment were quite large, but the effects of networks were fairly robust as well.

The performance of models predicting commitment, autonomy, and power was less impressive, explaining 2% to 28% of the variance. The measures of commitment and power in particular may not have been sensitive enough to capture variation between partners and across couples because of a tendency for respondents to report equality with their partners on these items, a perception that may not have accurately reflected reality. Even when respondents reported greater commitment to the relationship than their partners, they may not have found this imbalance troubling, but rather viewed it as a virtue and evidence of their own contentment. Despite these limitations, the effects of income and network resources were consistently robust in predicting relationship autonomy and power.

This study advances our understanding of network impacts on relationship quality on several fronts. First, the results are consistent with other research and network theory in suggesting that couples' networks can support their relationships in ways that enhance adjustment, satisfaction, and perceived stability, with important qualifications. But the binding aspects of networks appear to operate in specific ways, through integrating specific types of influential associates from the two partners' networks. Second, network resources do not necessarily express unqualified support for the couple; they can also signify support for an individual partner. This study demonstrated clearly that the accrual of independent network resources brings with it increased individual autonomy and power in the couple relationship. Third, difficult relationships with associates and the conflicts they can create between partners can have negative influences on the couple disproportionate to their numbers. In these ways, this research revealed a number of compelling subtleties in the meanings and consequences of interactions with various kinds of network associates. I now consider the implications of these study findings more fully as they relate to gay communities, kinship, and gender.

GAY COMMUNITY AND NETWORKS

One of the goals of this study was to determine whether proximity to lesbian and gay communities affected couple relationships. I expected to see different levels of involvement in

gay community and corresponding differences in couples' networks—who their associates were and how they mattered for couple quality. There were some differences between respondents based on whether they lived near or far from the urban gay communities of Seattle and Portland, but in reality these differences were few. Seattle respondents reported more parental rejection of their sexual orientation than those living elsewhere. A finding that may be related is that women and men outside Seattle listed more biolegal relatives in their support networks. This effect may have been partly mediated by the lower incomes of non-Seattle residents. Those with lower incomes listed more associates to borrow money from, and those associates were likely to be biolegal relatives. But the correlation between distance from gay community and biolegal family support was not entirely erased by controlling for income. Since biolegal families were the same size regardless of the respondent's location, a plausible (though not definitive) explanation for these patterns is that greater family rejection helps to account for both the pattern of residence and the level of biolegal family support, if more Seattle respondents have migrated away from rejecting families. Indeed, family acceptance of gayness did moderate the relationship between place of residence and biolegal relatives in the support network. The pattern of biolegal representation in support networks is also consistent with urban-rural differences noted by Fischer (1982).

Overall, differences by proximity to gay community were fairly small; on average, couples' networks looked remarkably similar regardless of where they lived. Furthermore, couples did not differ by location in the effects of their networks on relationship quality, which was another surprise of this study. Involvement in gay activities and living in a gay ghetto in the 1970s seemed to create a context for breaking up (especially among lesbians: see Blumstein and Schwartz 1983), and later research also suggested that gay communities are not supportive of couples (Bigner 1996; Meyer 1989). In the context of these earlier studies, the lack of differences by geographic location seems especially remarkable, and it suggests several possibilities.

Gay community infrastructure and culture now extend well beyond the gay community institutions and social spaces found in every big U.S. city. A couple of trends are responsible for this shift. One is the internet. The fact that I was able to identify couples in remote locations through internet sites represents an entirely new way of connecting with people that did not exist as recently as ten years ago. This means that most sexual minorities can now find others like them no matter where they live, except for the poorest and most rural persons without internet access and other resources.

Along with this access to gay community through technology, gay community infrastructure is growing in medium-sized cities and towns. Spokane, the largest city east of the Cascade Mountains in Washington State, recently received national attention for the efforts of local gay leaders to create a gay district to attract a critical mass of the “creative class,” ostensibly for economic development (Geranios 2005). This phenomenon points to the development of a gay consciousness in a city known for its conservative climate (Linneman 2003). It also reflects a greater willingness of gays and lesbians to be out and visible in smaller communities. This higher profile not only means that same-sex partners can more easily find each other, it also opens them to the possibility of finding support for their relationships, from both gays and straights. As one gay man from a town of fewer than 5,000 people explained,

There are a lot of gay people here. They still want to connect with other gay people. They come here and still want that. I socialize with our straight neighbors, and we get along, but even so, we still want connection to other gay people.

And gay communities may constitute less of a threat to stability by offering more possibilities for validation of couple relationships now than in the past. Or as some who lived close to Seattle’s gay community believed, it may have less relevance to their relationships than it once did:

We’re not part of a gay circle, and it seems to matter less and less. Values matter more than sexual orientation. We used to be more surrounded by gay people, but that was when we lived in a more homophobic area. Here in Seattle it’s just not a big issue. (Seattle man)

We often see ourselves as conventional white middle class, rather than lesbians, and our relationships have changed as a result. Lesbian potlucks used to be so wonderful, but now we wouldn’t be caught dead. It’s because of where we live—Seattle—and work...We don’t have the pressures of other gay relationships. Our community desires us to stay together now. We don’t need so much external validation, but we also don’t assume the external validation will be withheld. (Seattle woman)

These findings on Washington's lesbian and gay couples may not necessarily generalize to other parts of the U.S. The "live and let live" individualism of Washington's frontier communities, by no means universal, allows same-sex couples sanctuary in some unexpected places. Intolerance toward same-sex couples seems to be more apparent in some other parts of the country. Gay life is likely to have regional flavors and variations, and the life chances for lesbians and gays vary considerably across the U.S., depending on structural and normative factors. Taking a long perspective, a trend toward greater social tolerance of homosexuality (Treas 2002) and same-sex relationships is likely to lead to some homogenization of sexual minority opportunities and experiences over time as society jerks forward gradually, or suddenly, on the path of change.

FAMILISM: THE RELEVANCE OF KITH AND KIN

Familism has been defined as "a reciprocal sense of commitment, sharing, cooperation, and intimacy that is taken as defining the bonds between family members" (Dizard and Gadlin 1990:6). Some have argued that obligations to traditional family relations have declined in favor of individual selection of the bonds that constitute familism, with friends increasingly called on to fill the gaps in kinship (Settles 1987; Weston 1991). Friendship and family structures may be converging: affiliation with family members appears to be increasingly a matter of choice, less of duty. Continuing this line of reasoning, friendships have become "fictive kin," and parent-child (and other kin) relationships are developing into "fictive kith" (Lawton, Silverstein, and Bengtson 1994:67).³ Indeed, a third of respondents named family as their friends.

Lesbians and gays have been on the leading edge of these trends in response to the challenges and opportunities of living out their relationships in both heterosexual and gay communities. The chosen family strategy that some same-sex couples have adopted has been held up as a model of creativity, personal agency, and possibility (Weston 1991). What impact did chosen families have on the couples of this study, and how did the impact of this group of associates compare with that of other family and friend groups?

As discussed earlier, immediate family seemed to represent the most significant group of associates in terms of its collective power to influence relationship quality. The immediate family almost always included one's partner, but the richness of ties to one's partner alone did not have a significant and discrete effect on relationship quality. Rather it was the number of associates

³ Weston (1991), however, challenges the usage of the term "fictive" because in a sense, all kinship is fictive in that its meanings are socially constructed.

and the richness of ties to one's immediate family that were related to enhanced couple satisfaction and belief in the relationship lasting. While close friends and family of origin had effects on relative commitment, autonomy, and power, immediate family alone predicted satisfaction and stability.

Men and women in this sample, 70% of all respondents, were roughly equally likely to name chosen families. The chosen families enumerated by the respondents in this sample may be distinct in composition from those in Weston's study. The chosen families of both men and women were about 40% heterosexual (two female and one male associate) and 21% were biolegal relatives on average. They tended to have more non-biolegal, more same-sex, and more gay associates than other groupings, but they were made up of both family of origin and friends, both gay and straight. Chosen families added few associates that were not mentioned already in other parts of respondents' networks, and in this sense, they seemed to represent a way of bracketing a different configuration of more conventional ties.

But in contrast to immediate families, chosen family measures played no discernable role in couple quality. Chosen families were clearly highly significant for those who named them, but they did not seem to be a couple strategy or have the institutional status to bind partners together, or conversely, to interfere with couple life. Instead, chosen family was more of an individual creation with individual meanings and consequences. Chosen families on average provided the most individual support ties of all family and friend groups (immediate family ranked third), but as the data on the effect of support exchange associates and ties suggested earlier, individuals were generally the target of specific support ties; these support exchanges did not tend to support the couple directly or enhance relationship quality. This description of a chosen family, consisting of a former partner and friends, but not the man's current partner, was one of the clearest examples of its individual focus:

My first lover knows me better than my partner, and he doesn't pull any punches about my weaknesses and strengths. Some of the friends I listed have been a group of friends since college—my "gang." I lived with another friend on the list for years. Most people I listed I've spent over half of my life with—we've watched each other grow up. We've seen each other through bad times. (Seattle man)

As this example illustrates, most of the chosen families described by respondents placed the individual respondent at the center of the group, with bonds radiating outward (or inward). The couple was rarely the center, though unlike in this example, partners were usually named as chosen family members. Often one partner in a couple listed a chosen family and the other did not. Frequently, chosen family members did not think of each other as family, and occasionally, respondents did not know or believe that chosen family members regarded the respondent the same way, as family. This lack of reciprocity in chosen family bonds was part of what allowed the individual to be creative (within the constraints of structural opportunities to create family [Carrington 1999]). But non-reciprocity may also have weakened the social significance of the bonds, because they may not have been understood or accorded significance by others, even by one's partner. Those who reported a chosen family often struggled to define membership and did not always have a label for this group of associates.

As a largely individualized notion among same-sex couples and sexual minorities more generally, and without institutional status, the chosen family appears to lack patterned rules and norms that might lead to any systematic impact on same-sex couples. These findings do not diminish the importance of chosen families for individual partners, especially given the relatively large number of support functions these associates provided. Nor do these findings necessarily invalidate the perspective that relations with kin and kith are increasingly mutable. However, they do call into question the current utility of chosen family for integrating partners into each other's networks and for understanding relationship quality in same-sex couples.

This study thus extends and revises the work of Weston on chosen families and on gay kinship more generally. An either-or distinction between family and friends is clearly not appropriate for describing the associates of many same-sex couples. Most respondents did not hold tightly to exclusive definitions of biolegal family and non-biolegal friends when listing their family and friends by category. Indeed, people's definitions of their relationships with family and friends could be quite messy. Yet the data suggest that most couples do assign different priorities to friends and biolegal family and they engage them in different ways, with significant and distinct consequences for couples' relationships. Thus individual creativity in negotiating and constructing the boundaries of couple and family life was not limitless, as we shall also see in looking at the impact of gender.

WE GET BY WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR LESBIANS (AND MOTHERS AND SISTERS)

This discussion considers the networks of lesbians and gay men in the context of gender and coupling. There were few differences in network composition between male and female couples. The similar network patterns of these women and men were at odds with a consistent body of research showing women have greater involvement with kin (Fischer 1982; Fischer et al. 1989; Irving 1972; Komarovsky 1962; Moore 1990; Pugliesi and Shook 1998; Rosenthal 1985), friends, and non-kin confidants (Irving 1972; Rubin 1985) than do men.

One small difference between men and women was the greater degree of sex-segregation of women's networks. A correlate of this sex-segregation in both men's and women's networks was a lack of integration between lesbians and gay men. Many had very few same-orientation opposite-sex associates in their networks. Heterosexual men, the second most common friend and family associate for both men and women, even outnumbered gay men in gay men's networks. This is due mostly to their representation in the biolegal families of oneself and one's partner. But these patterns do not explain why there was surprisingly little mixing of lesbians and gay men in couples' networks.

I cannot say whether this was a complete return to the segregation of the 1970s, or a just a minor backslide from the collaboration between men and women that was the hallmark of the early AIDS era. On the other hand, the pattern may obtain for another reason entirely. In a 1990s study of gay male couples, lesbians also turned up near the bottom of their list of support providers (though they exceeded numbers of heterosexual men: see Smith and Brown [1997]). Does coupling somehow bring a retreat from cross-sex friendship? Census data from 2000 show that same-sex couples tend to concentrate around other couples of the same sex, but this residential segregation has been suspected for much longer, particularly for economic reasons: urban centers are prohibitively expensive for some lesbians who have lower incomes on average than gay men. Particularly when it is time to settle down with a partner by buying a home, lesbians frequently must look outside the city. Perhaps reports of the collaboration between men and women were overblown in the 1980s and 1990s, the product of more urban or academic perspectives, or maybe it existed and continues to exist mostly among singles and younger, more activist lesbians and gays. These explanations are speculative but intriguing. As lesbians and gays engage in greater activism for recognition of gay relationships, coupled women and men would seem to have common cause that could involve them more in each others' lives, but economic

and residential segregation, not to mention sexism among some gay men, may be difficult to overcome.

If lesbians and gay men follow the life course trends of women and men more generally, a sample of those over 55 might reveal more network differences, as women's networks tend to remain resilient with age while men's networks atrophy, especially with retirement (Oliker 1989). Network size (whether measured in total, as family and friends only, or as support exchange associates only) and support ties were completely unrelated to age for women, and if anything, showed an increasing trend for men (though not significant in both samples). However, the lack of greater differences in male and female couples' networks is consistent with the findings of Julien et al. (1999) using the same social support inventory as this study with lesbians and gay men who were younger but more closely matched on age, relationship length, and income. Restricting this study's sample to midlife meant that most respondents were career-involved, which, as noted earlier, probably went a long way toward erasing differences in men's and women's networks.

Contrary to Becker (1988), women had no greater propensity than men to carry past partners along with them. Women's and men's relationship trajectories differed somewhat from each other, however: men got involved with their partners more quickly than women, the reverse of conventional wisdom about lesbian and gay relationships. But women ended up "tying the knot" at higher rates than men: almost half of women, compared to one-fifth of men, had had commitment ceremonies. Women were also 20% more likely to have exchanged rings or other relationship symbols. Ritualizing the relationship with a commitment ceremony, however, had no effect on relationship quality, and thus women had no advantages over men in this respect.

Patterns of sexual monogamy showed the clearest gender differences: 60% of male couples had had sex outside the relationship and were currently nonmonogamous, compared to 88% of women who had never had outside sex and 93% who were monogamous. Men's lists of associates also included more sexual or romantic intimates than those of women. Yet despite the fact that men reported more conflict over outside sex than women did, their sexual habits did not seem to exert any net impacts on relationship quality (including overall conflict). Nor did support ties from past or present sexual or romantic intimates (other than one's partner) affect relationship quality, even though richness of ties from ex-partners (among the 15% of respondents listing them in their networks) was second only to ties with partners. Finally, men

had more gay bar exposure than women, but it had no significant effects on their relationships either, even for men in Seattle who went out to clubs more often without their partners along.

Non-monogamy was thus the rule rather than the exception among men in this sample, at levels similar to the pre-AIDS *American Couples* sample (Blumstein and Schwartz 1983). This pattern may be an untold story of gay male coupling post-AIDS. AIDS has not “civilized” gay men into monogamous commitment as some predicted it would (Eskridge 1996). Even during the height of AIDS prevention efforts aimed at changing gay men’s behavior, the emphasis was on practicing safer sex through the use of condoms, with lip service to limiting partners, or abstinence. The continued high rates of nonmonogamy do not seem surprising in this light. Given the absence of any measurable effects of couplehood norms and just one effect of gay community immersion on relationship quality, however, one wonders how susceptible male couples would be to community messages encouraging monogamy even if they were clearly articulated.

In predicting couple quality, Julien et al (1999) found that kin mattered more to women than to men regardless of sexual orientation (their study included heterosexual couples). By contrast, gender differences in the predictors of relationship quality were scant in this study. Gay men and lesbians alike reported more support from mothers and sisters than fathers and brothers, and relations with immediate family and biolegal relatives, where women were abundant, were associated with higher relationship quality for both lesbians and gay men.

Though the sex composition of the support network in and of itself was not correlated with relationship quality, very low levels of lesbians in one’s support network—so low that this effect mattered mostly for gay men—were associated with a diminished sense of relationship durability. Men in Seattle had an average of just under one lesbian in their support networks, compared to men outside Seattle with almost two. Although this difference could be an artifact of recruitment,⁴ it could also be due to the fact that urban men and women have the options to be more selective in cultivating their networks (and exclude each other) compared to rural lesbians and gays who may socialize more with each other because of the small size of their communities. In any case, rural men would seem to be advantaged in this aspect of support.

⁴ More men outside Seattle were recruited at gay pride events, making them more “out” and perhaps more involved with lesbians. At the same time, finding couples in that setting may reflect yet another aspect of the more limited options for finding gay community for these men and women such that more mixing between men and women occurs there than in Seattle.

Income played a role in determining the balance of relationship power for both male and female couples in this sample, in contrast to past research in this area showing that women could minimize the impact of income (Blumstein and Schwartz 1983). It has been over 20 years since this early research was conducted, and even though women on the whole have not gained economic parity with men (evident in this sample), they have increasingly broken through barriers that prevented them from wielding social and political power in domains that once belonged almost exclusively to men. It is possible that now even without a man in the picture, women's rising incomes and experience exercising power in the world of work have shifted their orientation regarding money and power at home. It is also possible that egalitarian ideology could have masked relationship reality in the past, that the true connection between money and power in lesbian couples has not changed, but our awareness of it has. Whether these or other explanations account for the different findings, I cannot say. The work of Carrington (1999) lends support to the notion that reality does not always match the ideology that lesbians and gays, through neutralizing the effects of gender, have escaped power imbalances in family life. I did not ask explicitly about the balance of power during interviews, or about the role of income in the relationship, but some respondents' comments connected the two:

So much is tied to this issue—the issue of control. It's easy to say that "you aren't what you do," but it takes a toll on my self confidence, and because I feel I'm not contributing as much to the relationship, and I feel I have less of a say in decision-making. (man outside Seattle)

This man's financial dependence on his partner led to his acquiescence to his partner's nonmonogamy, even though he would have preferred monogamy:

I've come to accept his flings—it would be difficult for me to start over. I can't afford to live on my own. (man outside Seattle)

This Seattle woman, who earned much less than her partner, did not trust her partner if they were to break up. She clearly felt economically insecure and rated herself as the less powerful partner:

I have some baggage from getting screwed in the past. I'd like to feel it's a more equal partnership, but it doesn't feel that way for me...I wonder what she would

go after if it did dissolve...I guess I'd rather spend \$90 on a pair of shoes and be in a shitty relationship.

Money was a source of conflict in this lesbian couple with a single breadwinner, an infrequent arrangement. Even though the women were conscious of the power of money and had tried to mitigate its impact, they had not always been successful:

Money—we used to be very polarized. We've learned how to accommodate. It's a security issue for her—she grew up poor. I didn't grow up poor, and I like to spend. It has been a relationship-threatening issue many times. I have threatened to leave twice. But I don't have an income, and I have a chronic illness. So it's hard. So we've worked hard at addressing the power imbalance. She is very generous at acknowledging my contribution. (woman outside Seattle)

Of course, if income is traditionally a source of male power, networks are often thought of as a source of female power. Yet there were no gender differences in the effects of networks on relationship quality either. Neither with income nor networks did gendered patterns of relationship quality influences emerge. As the social conditions of work and family life continue to change, the connections between gender, sexual orientation, and power relations persist as ripe areas for further research.

The overall lack of gender differences in relationship quality or associated factors was astonishing given what we know about gender in the networks of heterosexual couples, where even similarly situated spouses in paid and household labor have different networks and ways of interacting with them (Cohen 1992; Moore 1990; Rubin 1985), with different consequences for husbands' and wives' relationship quality (Burger and Milardo 1995). A body of research reviewed in the introduction shows consistent differences between men and women in their engagement with kin.

It is possible that the social structural similarities between the midlife, dual-career, childless male and female couples in this sample have attenuated most of the network differences between men and women that might have consequences for relationship quality. The absence of children is likely to have a profound effect. Not only do we know that children rearrange kinship and friendship for heterosexual couples, but we also can infer from the distinct residential patterns of

same-sex couples with children evident in Census data that children dramatically reshape their lives as well. Even same-sex couples who strive to maintain equality in their relationships are unlikely to be able to maintain equal involvement in both paid and domestic labor when children arrive (and Carrington [1999] finds true equality of domestic effort and power rare among "lesbigay" families). Children force partners to specialize. In heterosexual couples, specializing in childcare responsibilities typically means less relationship power for that partner (usually the woman). In lesbian couples, somewhat dated evidence suggests the opposite: biological parents, who were typically the primary caretakers, had greater power (Moore et al. [1998], based on late 1970s data and using some of the same power measures as this study). This correlation may reflect both the value of mothering in lesbian couples and the value of the parent-child bond, but it may also mark valuable kinship resources that flow to mothers as primary parents (a factor that was not part of the study on which this finding was based). How would parenting affect the balance of kin resources and power in male couples? The obvious answer, based on heterosexual patterns and the lower earnings of the primary caretaker, might be that men who "mother" will have less power. But just as income competes with social resources in establishing the balance of power among couples in this sample, it is possible that gay men who parent will gain additional social resources by virtue of their parenting role that blunt the effects of reduced income and career status.⁵ These questions will have to be left for another study.

The persistence of gendered patterns of kinship among heterosexual men and women in similar circumstances (Moore 1990)—and the relative lack of gendered patterns in this sample—point to other possibilities besides the fact that children were not a part of this study. Same-sex couples lack the institutional status and gendered norms of heterosexual marriage that shape kin-keeping just it shapes childrearing (both of which are fundamentally relational tasks that impinge on the couple and are intimately bound up with each other). This is the principal difference between Moore's (1990) structural analysis of the determinants of men's and women's networks and the couples in this study. The gendered aspects of marriage as an institution that affect heterosexual networks are not completely erased when controlling for other structural characteristics, whereas same-sex couples engage their networks from outside of that gendered framework. These results lend some support to the idea, as Green et al. (1996) argue, that lesbians and gay men exist in another category of gender where male and female categories have less relevance for their

⁵ Any pattern of childrearing and relationship power in couples is likely to be highly contingent on whether children were brought into the couple relationship or acquired during the relationship. Pre-existing parental status is likely to be extremely influential in couple decision-making from the very beginning of the relationship.

relationships. The requirements of successful coupling mean that when there are no women in the relationship, men do what they have to do to create family and friendship.

Yet before jumping to the conclusion that gender does not matter, we must consider who provided support to individual same-sex partners and couples. As mentioned earlier, men (and women) who got some help from lesbians may have had better relationships than those who did not, as evidenced by the positive association between lesbians in the support network and confidence about staying together as a couple. Other gendered patterns of support were also noteworthy. Both men and women received more individual support if they had more lesbians in their networks, while gay men provided both women and men the least amount of support. Mothers and sisters provided more support than fathers and brothers, and a mother's reaction to the respondent's sexual orientation was consequential for feeling emotional closeness and obligation to the family of origin. Comments such as these about distance from fathers or closeness to mothers were more common than the reverse:

I resolved my relationship with my dad, but his dad is distant—it's unusual. It feels like we should connect with him a bit more—there's something missing. But he's very close to his mother and sisters. (Seattle man)

The fathers are the least close—this is probably typical—it's not easy to get close. But both are supportive of us, though not like our mothers. (man outside Seattle)

Thus women got most of their support from other women, both lesbian and heterosexual, while men got more support from heterosexual women than heterosexual men, and women were a close second to men overall in men's support networks. Chosen families, the most sex-segregated family form, did not bring palpable benefits to couple quality, while ties to immediate family, and biolegal relatives, both of which reflected more conventional notions of kinship, were closely associated with couple quality. Thus lesbian and gay individuals and couples derived substantial support from a more conventional, heterosexual, and more gendered kinship structure. The inner workings of male and female couples revealed similar levels and determinants of relationship quality, and from this one may correctly conclude that differences within and between female and male couples were minimized. But it would be incorrect to conclude that these same-sex couples somehow escaped gender entirely, because they were

embedded in a larger gendered social structure and they relied on gendered social support to help maintain their relationships (or perhaps, to maintain their power positions within them).

STRENGTHS OF THIS STUDY

This study has a number of strengths and advantages over past research on couples, couple networks, and sexual minority populations, including both sample characteristics and methods.

Same-sex couples are a particularly appropriate population for a study of networks and relationship quality. Partnering with someone of the same sex in the context of sexual communities (of the same sex) has the potential to intensify the impact of gender, such as specialization in kinkeeping, or lack of it. This sample provided fairly limited evidence of the “double dose of gender” phenomenon. Instead, sexual equality between partners reduced some of the impact of gender within couples and allowed us to isolate the effects of other variables such as income and network properties. At the same time, we saw that same-sex couples, like other couples, are connected to a larger gendered kinship structure through their relations with biolegal family.

Unlike most other studies of same-sex couples, the sample included a high proportion of couples from smaller communities and places that were far away from urban gay sexual communities. This variation in gay community involvement was a strength of this sample. Sexual communities also offer alternative partners, alternative norms about coupling, and alternative kinship ideologies. Though I make no claim to representativeness, the sex breakdown of couples matched that of the state’s same-sex couple population according to Census data, an almost equal number of women and men.

I did not eliminate partner differences by averaging partner scores, as most couple researchers tend to do. Differences between partners were not statistically significant in the models, but even when intra-couple correlations are high, mean scores can yield different parameter estimates from the method used here, where I modeled partner similarities and differences explicitly. This is the only certain way to know when partner differences matter. Avoiding mean couple scores had the added advantage of allowing replication of the analysis on two samples. A larger sample might have revealed more or different patterns, but reporting only patterns that were replicated on two randomly-generated samples of individual partners was a conservative strategy to remedy

in part the sample size limitations. The sample was larger than that of many other qualitative studies.

This is a study of how both the structure and content of network ties affected intimate relationships. This is best achieved using a mixed-method approach, while most studies use one method or the other for convenience. Quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other well in the study of complex phenomena such as networks. This combination allowed me to understand the subjective meanings of family and friends while placing them in the context of numerical distributions and prevalence of these relationships. Same-sex couples vary in their degree of outness to straight family and friends; consequently, they receive different reactions to their sexual orientation, and they get different levels of couple support. Since most same-sex couples must fashion their relationships without the benefits of the institution of marriage, others may not know how to treat them, and couples are left to piece together the binding elements of marriage, with varying degrees of success. A mixed-method approach is particularly effective at sorting out these multiple sources of potential variation. The analysis of chosen family is perhaps the best example of the interplay of methods. Quantitative data demonstrated that chosen families were common yet inconsequential for couple quality, while qualitative data revealed that the meanings of chosen family were probably too customized and oriented toward the individual to have clear social significance for the couple. By taking a critical look at the extent to which chosen families "are capable of validating, marking, and celebrating the boundaries of the gay couple" (Weston 1991:238), this study both extended and updated Weston's work.

Whereas most couple network research has looked at two main groups of associates—friends and (bio)legal family, I used a multiple-classification system to describe network members—by relationship, sex, orientation, partnership status, distance, support, and so on—that allowed more fine-grained analyses than previously. The instruments for delineating social support networks (Fischer 1982) and five categories of family and close friends yielded unique contributions in describing the networks and predicting aspects of relationship quality. Additional questions about associates who were a source of disagreement or friction completed the picture of positive and negative exchanges with significant others in couples' networks. This study examined both support for individual partners and for the couple as a couple entity (and unsupportiveness of the couple). All together, these strategies enabled a multi-faceted analysis of the influences of distinct subsets of couples' networks on relationship quality.

The support exchange inventory developed by Fischer (1982) and used in this study missed about two-thirds of biological relatives that couples listed separately as family and friends. There was also wide variation in how much of a person's total network the support exchange inventory captured. Measures derived from both the social support exchange inventory and the family and friend lists explained significant amounts of variation in the regression models. The patterns of significant findings validate the multi-pronged approach to assessing networks. My results suggest that for populations such as lesbians and gays who have more variable kin involvement, Fischer's support inventory alone may not capture significant associates who are consequential for some individuals' and couples' lives precisely because relations are sour, difficult, or unsupportive.

The variety of network properties analyzed called for similar breadth in dependent variables. This study examined multiple relationship processes and outcomes, providing a comprehensive view of same-sex couple quality.

Perhaps the greatest strength of this study was its focus on networks. Networks are the micro- or mid-level social structures that link individuals and couples with larger social structures (Granovetter 1973). Looking at this bridge between levels of analysis and social structure is rare in the study of couple relationships.

DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH AND THEORY

This study's sample limitations point out gaps in our understanding of a same-sex couple population that is diverse in many ways. Research into couples and networks could extend the work begun here by looking at dimensions of social isolation and involvement, secrecy and openness about the relationship, relationship stage (particularly early stages), age, parenting status, and ethnicity. In addition to these possibilities, a partial list of other questions generated by this study follows, in no particular order of priority.

This study looked in depth at couples' micro-communities of family and friends but relied on more distant measures of community context. I tried out several crude measures to capture the relationship of couples to the social geography they inhabited. Rurality encompasses an immense variety of mindsets, behaviors, life circumstances, and opportunities (as does urbanity). A number of urban-rural definitions already exist, but those developed for governmental purposes or health services delivery, for example, are not likely to provide an appropriate classification of

lesbians and gays in terms of their spatial relationships to gay and straight communities. Future research could assess more explicitly how couples perceive their communities in terms of hospitality or hostility to their same-sex relationships. Do gay ghettos undermine or support couple relationships? What makes couples select the communities they live in? We do not really know what couples' perceptions are about where they came from, where they live, the community resources available to them, and how they affect their life as couples. This kind of study could take as a point of departure the work of Linneman (2003) in assessing social climates and activism, but applied to same-sex couple relationships. A geographic approach would also need to take account of regional variations in gay community involvement and kinship patterns.

Similarly, the institutional status of same-sex couples is undergoing change at an uneven pace around the U.S. Same-sex couples have long had available to them the ability to register as domestic partners in many cities, and they can now marry legally in Massachusetts, yet even couples married in that state receive no federal recognition of their relationships. Some states appear to be taking steps backward by undoing recognition of same-sex relationships. For full legal equality between same-sex and cross-sex couples, we must look to other countries. These variations in legal and social recognition of same-sex relationships call out for a comparative study of couples living under different institutional regimes.

We have only a rudimentary understanding of what might be called "minimum support requirements" versus network overload. How much network support and involvement is healthy, how much too little, and how much too much? Related to this question is the need for more research on what partners and couples do for their networks—the reverse of the direction I studied. What support do they give, how does doing so affect them, and what do those patterns say about their relationships? Beyond the more mundane counts of support functions used in this study, some respondents spoke of being role models for other same-sex couples. They felt pressure to be an example in their communities, and this seemed to have a profound effect on couples' views of their own relationships.

I only looked at associates causing disputes between partners, not at other types of stress on individual partners or the relationship, except to document problems with families of origin or friends in a general way. What is the impact on the couple relationship when both partners are united, rather than divided in a dispute with someone in their network? When do too many

battles between the couple and external parties take too large a toll and overwhelm couple solidarity?

There was some “messiness” in kinship even beyond the ambiguity of chosen families. Some respondents were unsure about the reciprocity of other family ties, naming friends or biolegal relatives as family who they did not believe would feel the same way. These results on their face would seem to contradict exchange theories of relationships, but they raise the questions about whether kinship can be traded for other resources that make the exchange a good bargain, or whether counting someone as kin in these circumstances is more a statement of personal ideology than a social transaction with tangible consequences. Even though calling someone chosen family did not have consequences for couple quality, the processes that people went through and the reasons they gave for counting someone as kin made me wonder frequently what they got out of doing so. Conferring kinship status on someone may constitute a transfer of social capital, but the direction of this transfer probably depends on the relative status of the parties. A person of lower status may confer kinship in the hopes of mobilizing resources (“you are my ‘brother’; therefore, you must help me”), while someone of higher status who confers kinship bestows a gift of social capital on the other. Either way, an exchange has occurred—gifts usually come with strings attached—but these two possibilities serve to point out that the social meaning of counting kin may be difficult to discern, particularly in numerical tallies, calling for qualitative exploration of these dynamics. The doubts about kinship reciprocity expressed by this study’s subjects suggest that this research should be expanded by studying couples’ associates directly in order to elicit their perspectives on kinship and the couple relationship.

A related and obvious question stimulated by this study is how heterosexual kinship patterns would compare using the same method employed in this study, allowing them to define their family and friend networks for themselves. We do not know the extent to which heterosexual couples, married or cohabiting, attempt to choose or otherwise customize their kin relations. It would be surprising to find that 70% of heterosexuals had some distinctly demarcated version of a chosen family, as did the respondents in this sample, but given the increasing rarity of the nuclear family, a substantial minority might bend the rules in some way. Under what circumstances do they create unconventional family forms, how do they do it, and does it affect couple relationship processes and outcomes?

The network changes through breakup documented by Vaughan (1986) in *Uncoupling*, though based entirely on retrospective interpretations, are highly provocative. The results of her work and this study cry out for a longitudinal study of changes in networks and couple quality through the process of coupling and uncoupling to examine stage effects and causal order.

A CONSCIOUS APPROACH TO COUPLE NETWORKING

"He's from a good family" used to be high praise of a prospective spouse. Being from a "good family" connoted both solid moral values and proper family class standing (often equated with each other since the time of the Puritans). This evaluation acknowledged the role of marriage in joining families into an economic partnership.

This perspective on marriage, though not completely defunct, now seems antiquated. Societal ideals of individual autonomy and freedom of choice inform current conceptions of relationships. Desirable characteristics of a good mate inhere in the individual, and the ideal match results from partner attraction based on compatibility in a free marriage market: "She's witty, intelligent, attractive, we enjoy the same activities."

In this view of relationships, we size up a prospective partner based on essential notions of who that person is, not what he has or who his connections are. Compatibility depends on personality traits, acquired skills, and shared interests. Personal characteristics do matter, and they can easily be deal-breakers: inability to control one's temper, failure to balance work with the relationship, sexual practices that one finds distasteful. Yet to say that economics does not enter into this relationship calculus would be naïve. In a dual-earner economy, both men and women realize that economic circumstances and career prospects play a role their compatibility assessments. But economic interests are disavowed while the euphemistic term "successful" provides cover as a flattering description of the prospective partner.

Since marriage has been disconnected from family control and the financial motive has gone tastefully underground, we consider a potential mate's social origins or the company she keeps only for clues about personality. Though we may speak of liking someone's friends or family, we do not often gush about our sweetheart's networks the way we gush about her soul-penetrating gaze or captivating energy. When it comes to other persons in our new love's life, we hope that we will get along, but we do not consider it a necessity. At best, good relations with a partner's family and friends are an extra bonus, at worst, poor relations are a nuisance, and most often,

either possibility is an afterthought when starting out. Love is only believed authentic when it is untainted by the priorities of money, family, friends, and larger social forces. If net worth is not an acceptable reason for attraction, networks rarely even enter consciousness, at least not at first.

And thus returning to that euphemism, when we describe someone as “successful,” we do not mean having a strong support network. We might evaluate net worth (though we would not admit it), but not networks. Few gay men think about whether that hot guy has enough lesbians in his life.

We can never change the family we were born or adopted into, but aside from the facts of our birth, our networks are malleable and adaptable within the constraints of the social worlds we inhabit. They respond to changing personal circumstances and efforts to build them up or pare them down. We know this in the work world: networking is a skill that has become its own agenda item at professional meetings. In the world of coupling, however, we think of networking only when we are single, with the object of finding “the one.” The results of this study suggest that we might also attend to networking after we have found that person. This conscious approach to what networks offer is not to find a new and better partner, the way we network for a new job, but rather to find “the many” and build solid ties to those who surround and support us in our couple relationships:

It helps that we’re both completely open to our families. Both adore each of us, so they adore our partners. (woman outside Seattle)

We are so comfortable, so evenly matched. We are both very supportive of one another. We both like each other’s family. (Seattle man)

We have made a lovely home and hospitality for people. Also generosity with people. My family’s really important to me—I love how she fits in. (Seattle woman)

We have a great support system—it’s important for our relationship. Both of our families and friends support and love us. (man outside Seattle)

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Appendix A

Consent Form and Data Collection Instruments

The consent form, female version of the mail-in questionnaire, and interview instrument follow on the next page.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
CONSENT FORM

COUPLES SURVEY

Investigator: Davis G. Patterson, Doctor of Philosophy Candidate, Department of Sociology
Phone: 206-525-5274
Email: davisdp@u.washington.edu

Investigator's statement

The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether or not to be in this research study. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what I would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called 'informed consent.'

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of the research is to understand more about same-sex couple relationships as they are affected by other important people in couples' lives—family, friends, and the community in which a couple lives. Your participation may help advance scientific knowledge and may also lead to practical applications. If you participate in an interview, you will have the opportunity to reflect on your relationship with your partner and others in your community.

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

I will interview you and your partner separately for approximately 90 minutes to 2 hours each. I will ask you to describe your relationships with the important people in your life—friends, family, and anyone else who matters to you. A few questions ask about past sexual or romantic involvement with anyone in your life presently or current sexual or romantic involvement with anyone besides your primary partner. You may refuse to answer these questions or any other question at any time during the interview without exception and without consequences to you. You are free not to answer any questions you do not wish to answer.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION

The only risks of participation involve potential discomfort with sensitive questions (such as those mentioned above regarding sexuality), to which you are not required to respond. Otherwise, there are no risks to you or your partner.

OTHER INFORMATION

No one but you, your partner, and I will know that you have participated in this research unless you choose to tell someone. I will not share any information you provide with your partner or any other person.

You may choose at any time not to be interviewed or not to finish the interview. Your refusal to answer any individual questions that you prefer not to answer will not affect your completion of the rest of the interview, nor will it affect your compensation for participation. You will receive compensation in the form of gift certificates or cash not to exceed a value of \$20 per couple.

I will use the interview data to augment the data you provided in the written questionnaire; therefore, I will match up these two sets of data. In order to match your two sets of data, I will retain your identifying information from the time you complete the written questionnaire until the time that you and I have completed your interview. During the interview, I will ask you to name others only by their first names. Once we have completed the interview, I will change all names you have given, including your own and your partner's and those of friends and family, as I enter the data into a database. At that time, I will destroy all information identifying you or other people, including both your written and interview questionnaires. In no case will any data—either from the written questionnaire or from the interview—be kept in identifiable form for longer than six months.

At all times, only I, the principal investigator, will have access to any data you provide. I will store and analyze data on a personal computer and diskettes under lock and key with all access to files protected by password. Any examples of interview responses that appear in the dissertation will further prevent the possibility of identification by altering personal characteristics such as occupation, place of residence, etc. I will destroy data once they have been completely analyzed and the completed dissertation has been approved, within one to two years after your interview.

Signature of investigator

Date

Subject's statement

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have questions later on about the research I can ask one of the investigators listed above. If I have questions about my rights as a research subject, I can call the Human Subjects Division at (206) 543-0098. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

Signature of subject

Date

COUPLES SURVEY

Davis G. Patterson, M.A.
Department of Sociology, Box 353340
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Seattle, WA 98195
(206) 525-5274
davisdp@u.washington.edu

STUDY PURPOSE: Thank you for your interest. This questionnaire is part of a research study to understand more about same-sex couple relationships in the context of their families and friendships. Your participation may help advance scientific knowledge and may also lead to practical applications.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your answers will be completely confidential. No one will know that you have participated in this study unless you choose to tell someone. Only I will see the completed questionnaires, no one else. I will analyze the responses from your survey without your name or any other identifying information, and then destroy your original questionnaire. You will *not be required* to give your name or any identifying information unless you also wish to participate in the **OPTIONAL SUPPLEMENTAL INTERVIEW** described below. Either way, your answers to this questionnaire will be an important part of this study.

OPTIONAL SUPPLEMENTAL INTERVIEW: I am also seeking 100 couples to interview in addition to completing this written questionnaire. If you want to participate in an interview for compensation (movie tickets or cash not to exceed a value of \$20) you may leave your contact information on the last page. Supplying this information is strictly voluntary and not necessary for completing this written survey. If you do choose to leave contact information, I will separate the last page containing this information from the rest of your questionnaire upon receipt, at which time I will assign a code number to your data in order to link your interview responses with the written information you provide here. I will contact you within two weeks of receiving your questionnaire to set up an interview with you in less than two months, at which point your participation will be completed. I will keep this identifying information for no more than six months. Remember that you may complete the questionnaire alone and not the interview, eliminating the need to leave your name or any other identifying information. But if you are interested in the interview, you will find further details on the last page.

STUDY REQUIREMENTS: Please continue on only if you meet the following requirements:

- You must be currently *living for at least one year with one same-sex partner*.
- Both you and your partner must be residents of Washington State.
- Both you and your partner must be age 30 to 55.
- Neither you nor your partner must have children, whether or not they live with you.

If these conditions do not apply to you, please do not fill out the questionnaire. At this time, I am only surveying people who are age 30 to 55 and currently living in a same-sex relationship where neither of you have children.

To complete the survey, which takes most people 25 to 45 minutes, continue on to the next page....

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FILLING OUT THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

- Although people use different words to describe the person they live with, this study uses one term—"partner."
- Please answer with complete honesty—I am interested in your true feelings about each question. Don't spend too much time on any one question. Your initial reaction to each question might be the most accurate, honest reflection of your feelings.
- A few questions ask about conflicts in your relationship, as well as past or current sexual or romantic involvement with anyone besides your primary partner. You may refuse to answer these or any other questions by simply skipping them.
- In order to insure that I receive questionnaires from both partners of each couple, and to match up your answers, please create a study code for the two of you. The following questions *MUST BE FILLED OUT IDENTICALLY ON BOTH YOUR AND YOUR PARTNER'S QUESTIONNAIRES* in order for me to include your responses in this study. Please discuss and record the answers to the following questions with your partner before completing the rest of this questionnaire, making sure that you both record identical responses on each of your questionnaires:

Which of you two is <u>older</u> ?	Record her middle initial here: _____
	Now record the first two letters of her city of birth here: _____
Which of you two is <u>younger</u> ?	Record her middle initial here: _____
	Now record the first two letters of her city of birth here: _____
Record the <i>last two digits</i> of the year you two first started living together (for example, 1993 is " 9 3 "; 2000 is " 0 0 "):	_____
Record the <i>current month</i> as a two-digit number (for example, January is " 0 1 "):	_____

- Finally, it is essential that *you do not discuss the rest of your answers with your partner until you have returned it*. To make this easier, you and your partner might want to fill out the rest of your questionnaires when the other is not around.

After you have completed your questionnaire, please return it, including this page, by regular mail in the postage-paid pre-addressed envelope provided.

If you have questions or comments about any items or about the study in general, please contact me at the above phone number or email address (please note that the confidentiality of any information sent by email cannot be guaranteed). If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, you can call the University of Washington Human Subjects Division at (206) 543-0098.

I thank you for your generosity in taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Sincerely,

Davis G. Patterson

About your relationship:

1. How many years and months ago did you and your partner meet? ____ years ____ months
2. How many years and months ago did you and your partner begin "going out together"? ____ years ____ months
3. How many years and months ago did you and your partner first consider yourselves a couple (regardless of when you started living together)? ____ years ____ months
4. How many years and months ago did you and your partner begin living together? ____ years ____ months
5. Do you and your partner currently live together full time? (PLEASE MARK "X" IN THE BLANK IN FRONT OF YOUR ANSWER.)
____ Yes (SKIP TO QUESTION 7.) ____ No
6. If no, about how many days each week do you live apart? ____ days
7. Has there been any extended period of time when you and your partner lived apart after you began living together?
____ Yes ____ No (SKIP TO QUESTION 11.)
8. If yes, how many such periods have there been? ____
9. What, approximately, is the total length of time you were apart, counting all periods apart? ____ years ____ months
10. What was the reason or reasons for your living apart (PLEASE MARK "X" FOR ALL THAT APPLY)?
____ Job-related reasons ____ One or both of us away at school
____ Military service ____ Other (please specify) _____
____ Personal differences (for example, trial separation, "broke up" for a period of time, etc.)
11. Are there any others in your household besides you and your partner? ____ Yes ____ No (SKIP TO QUESTION 13.)
12. If yes, please circle the gender and give the age and relationship of each person to you:

	Gender	Age	Relationship		Gender	Age	Relationship
a.	M	F	_____	d.	M	F	_____
b.	M	F	_____	e.	M	F	_____
c.	M	F	_____	f.	M	F	_____
13. Do you have any children from a current or prior relationship?
____ Yes ____ No
14. Does your partner have any children from a current or prior relationship?
____ Yes ____ No
15. Do you or your partner currently own your place of residence? (CHOOSE ONE ANSWER ONLY.)
____ No
____ Yes, in my name only
____ Yes, in my partner's name only
____ Yes, in both names
16. Do you or your partner own another residence, whether or not you live there any part of the year?
____ No
____ Yes, in my name only
____ Yes, in my partner's name only
____ Yes, in both names
17. Do you and your partner have a joint bank account?
____ Yes ____ No (IF NO, SKIP TO QUESTION 19.)

18. If yes, do you and your partner contribute equally to it?

____ Yes, we contribute equally

____ No, only I contribute to it

____ No, we both contribute, but I contribute more than my partner does

____ No, only my partner contributes to it

____ No, we both contribute, but my partner contributes more than I do

19. Where do you live? City or town: _____ State: _____

20. If you live in a city, what neighborhood do you live in? _____

21. How many years and months have you lived in your present town or city? ____ years ____ months

22. Which of the following best describes the community where you now live?

____ Farm

____ Small city or large suburb (100,000 to 249,999)

____ Rural area but not farm

____ City (250,000 to 500,000)

____ Small town (less than 50,000)

____ Large city or metropolis (greater than 500,000)

____ Medium-size town or suburb (50,000 to 99,999)

Most persons have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list by placing an "X" in the appropriate column:

	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occasionally Disagree	Frequently Disagree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
23. Handling family finances	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
24. Matters of recreation	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
25. Religious matters	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
26. Demonstration of affection	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
27. Friends	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
28. Sex relations	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
29. Conventionality (correct or proper behavior)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
30. Philosophy of life	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
31. Ways of dealing with parents or "in-laws"	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
32. Aims, goals, and things believed important	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
33. Amount of time spent together	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
34. Making major decisions	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
35. Household tasks	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
36. Leisure time interests and activities	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
37. Career decisions	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	All the time	Most of the time	More often than not	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
38. How often do you discuss or have you considered separation or terminating your relationship?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
39. How often do you or your partner leave the house after a fight?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
40. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
41. Do you confide in your partner?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
42. Do you ever regret that you lived together?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
43. How often do you and your partner quarrel?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
44. How often do you and your partner "get on each other's nerves"?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

	Every day	Almost every day	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
45. Do you kiss your partner?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	All of them	Most of them	Some of them	Very few of them	None of them
46. Do you and your partner engage in outside interests together?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

How often would you say the following events occur between you and your partner?

	Never	Less than once a month	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Once a day	More often
47. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
48. Laugh together	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
49. Calmly discuss something	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
50. Work together on a project	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

These are some things about which couples sometimes agree and sometimes disagree. Indicate if either item below caused differences of opinions or were problems in your relationship during the past few weeks. (CHECK YES OR NO).

51. Being too tired for sex _____ Yes _____ No
52. Not showing love _____ Yes _____ No

53. The dots on the following line represent different degrees of happiness in your relationship. The middle point, "happy," represents the degree of happiness of most relationships. Please circle the dot that best describes the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Extremely Unhappy	Fairly Unhappy	A Little Unhappy	Happy	Very Happy	Extremely Happy	Perfect

54. Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the future of your relationship?

_____ I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and *would go to almost any length* to see that it does.

_____ I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and *will do all I can* to see that it does.

_____ I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and *will do my fair share* to see that it does.

_____ It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but I can't do much more than I am doing now to help it succeed.

_____ It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but *I refuse to do any more than I am doing* now to keep the relationship going.

_____ My relationship can never succeed, and *there is no more that I can do* to keep the relationship going.

55. Think about how *your partner* feels about your relationship. Please circle the dot that best describes how your partner would rate the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Extremely Unhappy	Fairly Unhappy	A Little Unhappy	Happy	Very Happy	Extremely Happy	Perfect

For each of the different decisions listed below, first tell (ON THE LEFT SIDE OF THE LINE) who usually has the most influence. Then tell (ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE LINE) whether you feel each decision is a major one or a minor one.

Who usually has the most influence?					Major or minor decision?				
I have all	We have equal influence	She has all	We never make this decision	Very major					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Very minor
56. What groceries to buy.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
57. How to decorate our home.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
58. Where to go on a vacation.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
59. When to go out to eat.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
60. Whether to move to another city, state, or country.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
61. Where to go out for an evening.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
62. Whom to invite to our home.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
63. How much money to spend on groceries.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
64. How much money to spend on entertainment.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
65. How much money to spend on my own clothes.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
66. How much money to spend on furniture and home furnishings.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

	I much more			Both equally			She much more			
67. In general, who has more say about important decisions affecting your relationship, you or your partner?.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
68. Who is more committed to the relationship, you or your partner?.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
69. Who has altered her habits and ways of doing things more to please the other, you or your partner?.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
How satisfied are you with these parts of your relationship?										
	Extremely satisfied							Not at all satisfied	Does not apply to our relationship	
70. Our moral and religious beliefs and practices.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
71. How my partner's job affects our relationship.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
72. How we communicate.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
73. How my job affects our relationship.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
74. How the house is kept.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
75. The amount of influence I have over the decisions we make.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
76. Our social life.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
77. The amount of money coming in.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
78. How we express affection for each other.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
79. How we manage our finances.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
80. Our sex life.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
81. Relations with my relatives.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
82. Relations with my partner's relatives.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
83. Relations with my friends....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
84. Relations with my partner's friends.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
85. How satisfied are you with your relationship in general?.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
86. How would <i>your partner</i> rate <i>her</i> satisfaction with your relationship in general?.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X

Even though you may be quite satisfied with your relationship, you and your partner may sometimes have serious differences of opinion on some issues. How often do you and your partner have *open disagreements* or *fights* in the following areas?

	Daily or almost every day	Three or four times a week	Once or twice a week	Two or three times a month	Once a month	Once every few months	About once a year	Less than once a year	Never	Does not apply to our situation
87. How the house is kept.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
88. How my partner's job affects our relationship.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
89. Our social life.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
90. How my job affects our relationship.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
91. Relations with my relatives.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
92. Relations with my partner's relatives.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
93. Relations with my friends....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
94. Relations with my partner's friends.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
95. Our moral and religious beliefs and practices.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
96. How we communicate.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
97. The amount of money coming in.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
98. How we manage our finances.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
99. How we express affection for each other.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
100. Whether we should both work.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
101. Our sex life.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
102. Sex outside our relationship.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
103. Our openness about being lesbian/gay.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
104. Our relationship in general.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X

How likely is it that you and your partner will still be together, assuming you both live long enough... (CIRCLE ONE ANSWER ON EACH LINE.)

	Extremely likely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Extremely unlikely
105. Six months from now?.....		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
106. One year from now?.....		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
107. Five years from now?.....		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
108. Twenty years from now?.....		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

If something were to happen to your partner and you were forced to live without her, how difficult would it be for you to do each of the following?

	Extremely difficult								Not at all difficult
109. Do household tasks (such as cleaning, laundry, and managing the household).....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
110. Find another partner.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
111. Cook appetizing meals.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
112. Maintain my present standard of living.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
113. Get household repairs done (such as plumbing or electrical repairs).....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
114. Find or continue employment.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
115. Avoid loneliness.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

	Mine much more				Both equally				Hers much more
116. If you and your partner did decide to end your relationship, whose life would this disrupt more, yours or your partner's?.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

117. Have you had sexual relations with anyone other than your current partner since you have been living together?

____ Yes ____ No (IF NO, SKIP TO QUESTION 120.)

118. How many people have you had sexual relations with, other than your current partner, since you have been living together?

____ 1 ____ 3 to 5 ____ 11 to 20 ____ 51 to 100
 ____ 2 ____ 6 to 10 ____ 21 to 50 ____ 101 or more

119. How often in the last year have you had sexual relations with someone other than your current partner?

____ Daily or almost every day ____ Two or three times a month ____ About once a year
 ____ Three or four times a week ____ Once a month ____ Less often than once a year
 ____ Once or twice a week ____ Once every few months ____ Never

120. Have you had a meaningful love affair with someone other than your partner during your current relationship?

____ Yes ____ No (IF NO, SKIP TO QUESTION 122.)

121. If yes, does your partner know about this love affair?

____ Yes, I am certain my partner knows ____ No, I feel fairly sure my partner does not know
 ____ Yes, I feel fairly sure my partner knows ____ No, I am certain my partner does not know
 ____ I am not sure whether my partner knows or not

122. Which one of the following statements best describes you and your partner's current understanding concerning sex outside of your relationship?

____ We have discussed it and decided that under some circumstances it is all right
 ____ We have discussed it and decided that under no circumstances is it all right
 ____ We have discussed it and do not agree (please explain how each of you feels):

____ We have *not* discussed it but I feel we would agree that under some circumstances it is all right
 ____ We have *not* discussed it but I feel we would agree that under no circumstances is it all right
 ____ We have *not* discussed it but I feel that we would not agree (please explain how you think each of you feels):

123. Do you consider the two of you married? (This is not restricted to a legal marriage or one involving a religious ceremony.)

☐ Yes ☐ No

124. Have you and your partner had a "marriage," "holy union," or other ceremony to symbolize your feelings for each other?

☐ Yes ☐ No (IF NO, SKIP TO QUESTION 126)

125. If yes, was this

☐ A ceremony in a church involving clergy

☐ A ceremony involving clergy in a location other than a church

☐ A party involving just friends at which an announcement was made

☐ Other (please specify) _____

126. Have you and your partner ever exchanged rings or other symbols of your relationship?

☐ We have exchanged rings only

☐ We have exchanged other symbols of our relationship only

☐ We have exchanged rings and other symbols of our relationship

☐ We have exchanged neither

127. Some couples write out a formal agreement concerning various aspects of their relationship or ownership of property (such as homes, cars, or furniture). Do you and your partner have such a document?

☐ No

☐ Yes, concerning property ownership only

☐ Yes, concerning other aspects of our relationship only

☐ Yes, concerning both property ownership and other aspects of our relationship

About family and community

- | | Extremely
active | | | | | | | | Not at all
active |
|--|---------------------|---|---|--|---|---|---|---|----------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 1. How active have you been in the gay / lesbian rights movement?..... | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. How often do you go to any lesbian or gay bar or club? | | | | | | | | | |
| ☐ Daily or almost every day | | ☐ Two or three times a month | | ☐ About once a year | | | | | |
| ☐ Three or four times a week | | ☐ Once a month | | ☐ Less often than once a year | | | | | |
| ☐ Once or twice a week | | ☐ Once every few months | | ☐ Never (SKIP TO QUESTION 9). | | | | | |
| 3. How often do you go to a primarily lesbian bar or club? | | | | | | | | | |
| ☐ Daily or almost every day | | ☐ Two or three times a month | | ☐ About once a year | | | | | |
| ☐ Three or four times a week | | ☐ Once a month | | ☐ Less often than once a year | | | | | |
| ☐ Once or twice a week | | ☐ Once every few months | | ☐ Never | | | | | |
| 4. How often do you go to a primarily gay male bar or club? | | | | | | | | | |
| ☐ Daily or almost every day | | ☐ Two or three times a month | | ☐ About once a year | | | | | |
| ☐ Three or four times a week | | ☐ Once a month | | ☐ Less often than once a year | | | | | |
| ☐ Once or twice a week | | ☐ Once every few months | | ☐ Never | | | | | |

If you go out to a lesbian or gay bar or club, what proportion of the time do you go...?

	Always				Half the time				Never
5. Alone.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
6. With my partner and possibly other friends.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
7. With friends but <i>without</i> my partner.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

8. How often do you go to a mixed gay and straight bar or club?

☐ Daily or almost every day ☐ Two or three times a month ☐ About once a year
☐ Three or four times a week ☐ Once a month ☐ Less often than once a year
☐ Once or twice a week ☐ Once every few months ☐ Never

9. Excluding bars, how often do you go to public places where lesbians and/or gay men socialize, such as a coffeehouse, lesbian or gay center, community event, etc.?

☐ Daily or almost every day ☐ Two or three times a month ☐ About once a year
☐ Three or four times a week ☐ Once a month ☐ Less often than once a year
☐ Once or twice a week ☐ Once every few months ☐ Never

During the last year, how involved have you been in each of the following activities?

	Extremely involved								Not at all involved
10. Organized mixed lesbian and gay male activities.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
11. Organized lesbian (women only) activities.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
12. Are the people in the immediate area in which you live lesbian or gay, for example, in your apartment building or on your block?.....	All				Half				None
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
13. What proportion of the people you work with are lesbian or gay?.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	All men				Women and men equally				All women
14. Are the lesbian or gay people you work with primarily women or men?.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	All				Half				None
15. What proportion of your close friends are also your partner's friends?.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Always				Half the time				Never
16. When you socialize with friends (either away from home or in your home) how often is your partner with you?.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

17. How does your partner feel about your close friends?

☐ She likes all of them ☐ She dislikes most of them ☐ She does not know my close friends
☐ She dislikes one or a few ☐ She dislikes all of them

18. How do you feel about your partner's close friends?

☐ I like all of them ☐ I dislike most of them ☐ I do not know my partner's close friends
☐ I dislike one or a few ☐ I dislike all of them

How many of your close friends are currently living with a partner or married?

	All				Half				None	No such close friends
19. Gay male friends.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
20. Lesbian friends.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
21. Heterosexual male friends.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
22. Heterosexual female friends.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X

Of your close friends *with partners*, how many have been living with their current partner for at least five years?

	All				Half				None	No such close friends
23. Gay male friends.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
24. Lesbian friends.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
25. Heterosexual male friends.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X
26. Heterosexual female friends.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X

27. How many of your close lesbian friends believe that many lesbian couples can stay together more than ten years?.....	All				Half				None	No such close friends
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	X

28. Overall, do you have more contact of any kind with your relatives or with your partner's relatives?.....	More with my relatives				Equal with both relatives				More with her relatives	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	

29. Overall, do you have more contact with relatives (including both yours and your partner's) or with friends?.....	More with relatives				Equal with relatives and friends				More with friends	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	

30. When socializing together as a couple, do you have more contact with people who were originally your friends or originally your partner's friends?.....	More with "my" friends				Equal with both sets of friends				More with "her" friends	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	

31. Who has more close friends now, you or your partner?.....	I have many more				She and I have about the same number				She has many more	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	

32. How emotionally close are you to your family?.....	Extremely close								Not at all close	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	

33. How emotionally close are you to your partner's family?.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
--	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree								Strongly disagree
34. Adult children have an obligation to keep in contact with their parents.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
35. Partners in a heterosexual marriage have just as much responsibility to keep in contact with their partner's parents as with their own.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
36. Partners in a heterosexual marriage should not be expected to visit their partner's relatives if they do not want to.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
37. Except for emergencies, adult children should not take financial assistance or loans from their parents.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
38. It is the responsibility of adult children to be with their parents in times of serious illness even if the children have moved some distance from the parents.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
39. If a person's parent has a medical bill and cannot pay, the person is morally obligated to pay the debt.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
40. Women in a living-together same-sex couple have just as much responsibility to keep in contact with their partner's parents as with their own.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
41. Women in a living together same-sex couple should not be expected to visit their partner's relatives if they do not want to.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
42. It is very important to live close to my relatives and see a lot of them.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
43. It is very important for my partner to live close to her relatives and see a lot of them.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Do the following people know (or if deceased, did they know) that you are lesbian/gay? (PLEASE MARK "X" IN THE APPROPRIATE BLANK FOR EACH ITEM.)

	Definitely knows and we have talked about it	Definitely knows but we have never talked about it	Probably knows or suspects	Does not know or suspect	No such person / deceased before I came out
44. Your mother.....	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
45. Your father.....	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
46. Your stepmother.....	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
47. Your stepfather.....	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
48. Your best heterosexual female friend.....	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
49. Your best heterosexual male friend.....	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
50. Your supervisor or superior at work.....	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

How has each of the following persons who knows that you are lesbian/gay (whether you have talked about it openly or not) reacted to the fact that you are lesbian/gay (or if deceased and they knew, how did they react)?

	Accepting	Tolerant but not accepting	Intolerant but not rejecting	Rejecting	No such person or this person does not know
51. Your mother.....	1	2	3	4	X
52. Your father.....	1	2	3	4	X
53. Your stepmother.....	1	2	3	4	X
54. Your stepfather.....	1	2	3	4	X
55. Your best heterosexual female friend.....	1	2	3	4	X
56. Your best heterosexual male friend.....	1	2	3	4	X
57. Your supervisor or superior at work.....	1	2	3	4	X

About you:

1. How did you find out about this study? (PLEASE MARK "X" IN ALL BLANKS THAT APPLY.):

☐ From an acquaintance ☐ From my partner
☐ From a neighbor ☐ A printed advertisement or article
☐ From a co-worker ☐ On the internet
☐ From a friend ☐ Other (please specify): _____
☐ From a family member

2. What is your gender? _____

3. What is your age? _____

4. What is your race / ethnicity? _____

5. What is your sexual orientation? _____

6. What is your religious/spiritual identification or denomination? _____

7. Overall, how religious/spiritual are you?.....

Extremely										Not at all
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		

8. About how often do you attend religious services or engage in spiritual practice?

☐ Daily or almost every day ☐ Two or three times a month ☐ About once a year
☐ Three or four times a week ☐ Once a month ☐ Less often than once a year
☐ Once or twice a week ☐ Once every few months ☐ Never

9. Please circle the highest year you have completed in school:

(elementary)	(high school)	(college)	(graduate, professional school)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	9 10 11 12	13 14 15 16	17+

10. Do you have a college degree?

☐ No ☐ Yes, Doctorate
☐ Yes, Bachelor's ☐ Other (please specify) _____
☐ Yes, Master's

11. Are you currently in school?

- ☐ No
☐ Yes, attending graduate or professional school full-time
☐ Yes, attending graduate or professional school part-time
☐ Yes, attending a four-year college or university full-time
☐ Yes, attending a four-year college or university part-time
☐ Yes, attending a two-year community college full-time
☐ Yes, attending a two-year community college part-time
☐ Yes, attending a technical, vocational, or trade school
☐ Other (please specify): _____

12. Which of these best describes your current employment situation?

- ☐ Employed full time (SKIP TO QUESTION 14.)
☐ Employed part time (SKIP TO QUESTION 14.)
☐ Employed but not at work because of temporary illness, strike, etc. (SKIP TO QUESTION 14.)
☐ Unemployed (GO TO QUESTION 13.)
☐ Retired (GO TO QUESTION 13.)
☐ Taking care of the household is my full time job (GO TO QUESTION 13.)

13. If you are currently retired or not employed outside the home, what was your last occupation? Give the specific job description, rather than just the general type of work. For example, "legal secretary" rather than "clerical", or "machine-shop foreman" rather than "foreman." (SKIP TO QUESTION 15.)

14. If you are currently employed, what kind of work do you do? Give the specific job description, rather than just the general type of work. For example, "legal secretary" rather than "clerical", or "machine-shop foreman" rather than "foreman."

15. What occupational plans do you have, if any?

16. Which of the following best describes your own total yearly income (not including your partner's income)? Include all sources, such as wages, salaries, income from investments, interest, etc.

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| ☐ \$0 - \$9,999 | ☐ \$30,000 - \$39,999 | ☐ \$60,000 - \$69,999 |
| ☐ \$10,000 - \$19,999 | ☐ \$40,000 - \$49,999 | ☐ \$70,000 - \$79,999 |
| ☐ \$20,000 - \$29,999 | ☐ \$50,000 - \$59,999 | ☐ \$80,000 and up |

17. How many times have you *been involved* (whether living together or not) for over a month with someone in an intimate romantic same-sex relationship, NOT including your current partner?

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|---|
| ☐ None | ☐ Three times | ☐ Eleven or more times |
| ☐ Once | ☐ Four times | |
| ☐ Twice | ☐ Five to ten times | |

18. How many times have you ever *lived* for over a month with someone in an intimate romantic same-sex relationship, NOT including your current partner?

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|---|
| ☐ None | ☐ Three times | ☐ Eleven or more times |
| ☐ Once | ☐ Four times | |
| ☐ Twice | ☐ Five to ten times | |

Thank you very much for taking the time to fill out this survey. Your responses will be extremely valuable in understanding the relationships of same-sex couples. Please return this questionnaire by regular mail in the pre-paid pre-addressed envelope provided. I will publish a summary of the study results on my web site when the project is complete (most likely in early 2001), so bookmark my home page and check back periodically for updates: <http://students.washington.edu/davisp/>

Interested in being interviewed as well? Read on....

SEEKING 100 COUPLES FOR IN-PERSON INTERVIEWS:

PLEASE NOTE: IF YOU DO NOT WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERVIEW, YOU DO NOT NEED TO LEAVE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION. WHETHER OR NOT YOU PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERVIEW, YOUR ANSWERS TO THE ABOVE SURVEY WILL BE INCLUDED AS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THIS STUDY.

If you and your partner would each be willing to participate in a confidential one-on-one interview, your comments and opinions are also very important to this study. As with this written survey, anything discussed in the interview will be kept strictly confidential. If you are interviewed, you will also receive compensation in the form of a gift certificate or similar item (at a value of no more than \$20 per couple). The interview will take between 90 minutes and 2 hours per person.

If you wish to participate in an interview, please leave your contact information below:

Name: _____

Telephone: _____

Please write in three or four of the best times to reach you by phone, or simply provide your email address below if you prefer email contact:

Days:	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Time(s):	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Email address: _____ (please note that the confidentiality of any information sent by email cannot be guaranteed)

Finally, if you have any questions or comments to make regarding this survey or your answers, feel free to contact me at 206-525-5274 or davisp@u.washington.edu (please note that the confidentiality of any information sent by email cannot be guaranteed). Thanks again for your time and interest.

COUPLES INTERVIEW DATA COLLECTION FORM

RESPONDENT'S NETWORK

[1] Could you verify for me the information about members of your household according to the written questionnaire you completed?

	<i>First Name</i>	<i>Relationship</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Age</i>
a. (Study code:)	_____	RESPONDENT	M F	_____
b. (Study code:)	_____	RESPONDENT'S PARTNER	M F	_____
c. _____	_____	_____	M F	_____
d. _____	_____	_____	M F	_____

Some of the next questions *might* apply to people you know who live out of town, so I want to remind you that I am interested in *them* as well as people who live nearby (and the people who live with you—partner):

[2] When people go out of town for a while, they sometimes ask someone to **take care of their home** for them—for example, to water the plants, pick up the mail, feed a pet, or just check on things. If you went out of town, would you ask someone to take care of your home in any of these ways while you were gone?

1 Yes 2 No

***[IF YES:] Could you give me the first name of each of the persons you would ask?

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

[ASK ONLY IF CURRENTLY EMPLOYED:]

[3] Some people never talk with anyone, either on or off the job, about how to do their work. Other people do discuss things like decisions they have to make, work problems they have to solve, and ways to do their work better. Is there anyone you talk with about how to do your work?

1 Yes 2 No

[IF YES:] Who do you talk with about how you do your work? Could you give me the first name?

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

[4] In the past three months, have any friends or relatives helped with any tasks around the home, such as painting, moving furniture, cooking, cleaning or major or minor repairs?

1 Yes 2 No

[IF YES:] Who helped you (first names only)? [PROBE: Anyone else?]

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

[5] Please read through this list of activities [SHOW LIST]. Which, if any, of these have you done in the last three months?

- 1 Had someone to your home for a meal
- 2 Went to someone's home for a meal
- 3 Someone came by your home to visit
- 4 Went over to someone's home for a visit
- 5 Went out with someone (e.g., a restaurant, bar, movie, park)
- 6 Met someone you know outside your home (e.g., a restaurant, bar, park, club)

7 [OTHER ACTIVITY VOLUNTEERED BY R: _____]

8 [NONE OF THESE]

***[IF ANY:] May I have the first names of the people you do these things with?

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

[6] Sometimes people get together with others to talk about **hobbies or spare-time interests** they have in common.

Do you ever do you this?

1 Yes 2 No

***[IF YES:] Who do you usually do this with? (first names only)

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

[7] When you are concerned about a **personal matter**—for example, about someone you are close to or something you are worried about—how often do you talk about it with someone?

1 Usually 2 Sometimes 3 Hardly ever

***When you do talk with someone about personal matters, whom do you talk with? [PROBE: Anyone else?]

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

[8] Often people rely on the **judgment** of someone they know in making important decisions about their lives—for example, decisions about their family or their work. Is there anyone whose opinion you consider seriously in making important decisions?

1 Yes 2 No

***[IF YES:] Whose opinion do you consider? [PROBE: Anyone else?]

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

[9] If you needed to get a **large sum of money** together, what would you do—would you ask someone you know to lend it to you; go to a bank, savings and loan, or credit union; or do something else?

- 1 Ask someone you know
- 2 Financial institution [SKIP TO "emergency situation" BELOW]
- 3 Both
- 4 Something else (please specify) _____ [SKIP TO "emergency situation" BELOW]

***Who would that be?

_____	_____
_____	_____

What about in an **emergency situation**—is there anyone you could probably ask to lend you some or all of the money?

1 Yes 2 No

***[IF YES:] Who would that be? [PROBE: Anyone else?]

_____	_____
_____	_____

LIST SELECTION PROCEDURE

OK, you've given me the names of some of the people you know. Now, I'm going to pick out the names of a few of those people and ask you to give me a little more information about them.

1. Select names. Take first name given in response to each starred question above (***) and enter on matrix form. If person has already been selected or person is in Respondent's household, go on to next person on the list until you get a name for that question. Take a total of five names if possible. Some respondents will have names on each of the six starred questions. Use only the first five starred questions for those respondents (i.e., all but "borrow money", unless one of the other questions is blank).
2. Ask R questions about names on matrix form.
3. Enter names on self-administered questionnaires.

To find out a little bit more about these people I'd like you to complete these forms for me. While you're doing that, I'll be organizing a list of all the names you've mentioned so I can ask a few more questions about them as well. Please circle only one answer for each question except question 8.

4. Turn back to the enumeration and list household members 16 and over in order, including partner but excluding R. This list will be used by both R and interviewer to refer to names. Then turn to later items and continue compiling a list of names using all name-eliciting items (9 of them including work, help around the house, and disagreements questions plus 6 starred items). Check for accuracy of naming and correct mistakes. Is the same name used for a person each time? If not, make names consistent. Is the same name used for two people? If so, allow respondent to provide labels to differentiate the two.

MATRIX FORM: NAMES FROM STARRED *** QUESTIONS (take care of home, socialize, leisure activity, personal matter, judgment, borrow money)

List the 5 selected names down the column: List the first 4 of them across the top, in the same order, in the spaces provided. Ask about all relationships in column 1, then about all relationships in column 2, etc.

	Do 1. _____ and (2, 3, 4, 5) know each other well?	Do 2. _____ and (3, 4, 5) know each other well?	Do 3. _____ and (4, 5) know each other well?	Do 4. _____ and (5) know each other well?
1. _____				
2. _____	Yes 1 No 2			
3. _____	Yes 1 No 2	Yes 1 No 2		
4. _____	Yes 1 No 2	Yes 1 No 2	Yes 1 No 2	
5. _____	Yes 1 No 2	Yes 1 No 2	Yes 1 No 2	Yes 1 No 2

10 Is there anyone who is important to you who doesn't show up on this list?

1 Yes 2 No [SKIP TO 11]

IF YES: Who is that? [RECORD HERE, THEN ADD TO LIST FORM.]

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Now I'd like to ask you more about your family and friends.

RESPONDENT'S IMMEDIATE FAMILY

11 People have many different ideas in mind when they talk about "family." Sometimes our own ideas of who counts as family don't always match legal definitions or even the ideas that others who are close to us have about family.

Do you currently have people in your life who you regard as your *immediate* family? [IF YES:] Who are all the persons you presently consider *your* immediate family members? Please just give me their first names. [RECORD UNDER "NAME" BELOW. PROBE: Any other *immediate* family members?]

12 Going over the list of names you just gave me, could you tell me what your relationship is with each of them? [RECORD BELOW UNDER "TERM OF REFERENCE." IF NECESSARY: For example, "mother," "father," etc.]

13 Are any of the people on the list you gave me not related to you legally or by blood?
1 Yes 2 No [SKIP TO 15]

14 [IF YES:] Which ones are they? [CODE 1 IN "NOT LEGAL OR BLOOD" COLUMN BELOW.]

15 [GO OVER ALL NAMES AND ASK:]
What makes _____ count as "family" to you? [RECORD UNDER "RELATIONSHIP BELOW.]

	First Name	Term of Reference	Not Legal or Blood?	Relationship
1.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____
7.	_____	_____	_____	_____
8.	_____	_____	_____	_____
9.	_____	_____	_____	_____
10.	_____	_____	_____	_____
11.	_____	_____	_____	_____
12.	_____	_____	_____	_____

16 Going over the list of names you have just given me, is there anyone on the list who would *not* consider you to be a part of his or her *immediate* family?
1 Yes 2 No [SKIP TO 18]

17 [IF YES:] How is it that _____ would not consider you to be a part of his or her family?

RESPONDENT'S EXTENDED FAMILY

18 Do you currently have people in your life whom you regard as your *extended* family? [IF YES:] Could you name up to five persons who you presently consider to be members of your *extended* family? Please just give me their first names. [***IF NO, SKIP TO 31. OTHERWISE, RECORD BELOW AS DONE ABOVE.]

19 And going over this list, could you tell me how you refer to each of them? [IF NECESSARY: For example, "cousin", "great uncle", etc.]

- [20] Are any of the people you just mentioned not related to you legally or by blood?
 1 Yes 2 No [SKIP TO 22]

[21] [IF YES:] Which ones are they? [CODE 1 UNDER "NOT LEGAL OR BLOOD?" BELOW.]
 [PROBE: Are there any other *extended* family members who are not related to you legally or by blood?]

[22] [GO OVER ALL NAMES AND RECORD RESPONSE UNDER "RELATIONSHIP":]
 What makes _____ count as "family" to you?

- [23] Is there anyone on the list who would *not* consider you to be a part of his or her *extended* family?
 1 Yes 2 No [SKIP TO 25]

[24] [IF YES:] How is it that _____ would not consider you to be a part of his or her family?

	First Name	Term of Reference	Not Legal or Blood?	Relationship
1.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____

- [25] Is there anyone else not related to you legally or by blood whom we have missed somehow that you consider to be a member of your family? Think carefully about the members of your family.
 1 Yes 2 No [SKIP TO 29]

[26] [IF YES:] Who are they, and what is your relationship to each of them? What makes them count as "family"?
 [PROBE: Any others?]

- [27] Would any of *these* people *not* consider you to be a part of his or her family?
 1 Yes 2 No [SKIP TO 29]

[28] [IF YES:] How is it that _____ would not consider you to be a part of his or her family?

- [29] Are there any people related to you legally or by blood that you would *not* consider to be a part of your *immediate* or *extended* family for any reason? [IF NECESSARY: For example, sometimes people "disown" relatives or otherwise choose not to count someone related legally or by blood as a family member.]
 1 Yes 2 No [SKIP TO 31]

[30] [IF YES:] Who are they? How is it that you do not consider them to be a part of your family?

RESPONDENT'S FAMILY OF ORIGIN

[31] Now I'd like to know about your family of origin, who you grew up with until you left home as an adult. Could you list the members for me, just first names? [RECORD RESPONSES BELOW.]

- [32] Could you tell me what your relationship is with _____?

	First Name	Relationship
1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____

6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____

RESPONDENT'S CLOSE FRIENDS

[33] People also have many different types of friends—casual friends, close friends, and others. A casual friend [from Nardi & Sherrod, 1994] is "someone who is more than an acquaintance, but not a close friend; your commitment to the friendship would probably not extend beyond the circumstances that bring you together; for example, a work friend or neighbor." A close friend, on the other hand, is "someone to whom you feel a sense of mutual commitment and continuing closeness; a person with whom you talk fairly openly and feel comfortable spending time with."

Do you currently have people in your life whom you regard as *close friends*? [IF YES:] Could you give me their first names? [IF NO, SKIP TO 40. OTHERWISE, RECORD BELOW.]

[34] Are any of the people you just named related to you legally or by blood?
 1 Yes 2 No [SKIP TO 37]

[35] [IF YES:] Which ones [CODE 1 IN "LEGAL OR BLOOD" COLUMN BELOW.]

[36] What is your legal or blood relationship with (name)? [RECORD UNDER "RELATIONSHIP" BELOW.]

[38] [IF YES:] Which ones, and what is your legal or blood relationship with each? [RECORD UNDER "RELATIONSHIP" BELOW.]

[39] How do these people count as close friends to you? [RECORD BELOW.]

	First Name	Legal or Blood?	Relationship	How Do They Count as a Close Friends?
1.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____
7.	_____	_____	_____	_____
8.	_____	_____	_____	_____
9.	_____	_____	_____	_____
10.	_____	_____	_____	_____
11.	_____	_____	_____	_____
12.	_____	_____	_____	_____

RESPONDENT'S "CHOSEN" FAMILY

[40] Nearly all of us have some identifiable family of origin, whether they were blood relatives, adoptive parents, or some other type of family we grew up in. Some only consider the family of origin, the one that they grew up with, and any new additions such as in-laws or new babies born into the family, as their family. Other people make a distinction between this family of origin and another set of people who make up a "chosen" family, a group of people that has evolved into a family that is distinct from the family of origin. Some members of this "chosen" family *could* be from a family of origin, but a "chosen" family might also include other people [IF NECESSARY: For example, friends we have made as adults].

Are there people who you think of in this way, as "chosen" family, or does this idea not really fit the way you think about family? Keep in mind that people use different terms: a chosen family, family of creation, or kinship circle, but you also might have your own way of referring to them.

1 Yes [SKIP TO 41] 2 No

[IF NO, PROBE: What do you think about the idea? Why not? THEN SKIP TO 51]

[41] [IF YES:] Is there some term you use to refer to these people?

1 Yes 2 No [SKIP TO 43]

[42] [IF YES:] What term do you use? _____

[43] Now could you list them for me, just first names? [RECORD RESPONSES BELOW.]

[44] Going over this list, could you tell me how you refer to each of them?

[45] Are any of them legal or biological relatives of yours or your partners?

1 Yes 2 No

[46] [IF YES:] Which ones? [CODE 1 UNDER "LEGAL OR BLOOD" BELOW.]

[47] Do all the members of (RESPONDENT'S TERM / your chosen family) think of each other as family?

[48] Would any of these people *not* consider you to be a part of his or her family?

1 Yes 2 No [SKIP TO 50]

[49] [IF YES:] How is it that _____ would not consider you to be a part of his or her family?

[50] How is it that you have come to include _____ as part of (RESPONDENT'S TERM / your chosen family)? How do the friends that you include here differ from your close friends or other friends? What makes *these* "family"?

	First Name	Term of Reference	Legal or Blood?	How Does (Name) Count as Chosen Family?
1.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____
7.	_____	_____	_____	_____
8.	_____	_____	_____	_____
9.	_____	_____	_____	_____
10.	_____	_____	_____	_____
11.	_____	_____	_____	_____
12.	_____	_____	_____	_____

REVIEW PAST 5 QUESTIONS, PUT NEW NAMES (EXCEPT FOR DECEASED) ON LIST FORM.

Now I'm going to ask you about various characteristics of the persons on your list. Try to go over all the names on your list as you think about each question.

[1] [SHOW LIST OF RELATIONSHIPS ON CARD] This is a list of some of the ways people are connected with each other. Some people will be related in more than one way. So, when I read you a name, please tell me all the ways that person is connected with you right now.

How is (NAME) connected with you now?

[PROBE: Any other ways?]

[CODE RELATIONSHIP NEXT TO NAME ON LIST FORM]

- 1 Relative
- 2 Co-worker (someone you work with or see regularly at work)
- 3 Neighbor
- 4 Member of same organization [PROBE: What organization is that?]
- 5 Friend
- 6 Acquaintance
- 7 Other [FOR EXAMPLE: former spouse/partner, spouse of friend, client, customer. PROBE: Please explain.]

[2] CODE SEX [IF NECESSARY: Is that a man or a woman?]

GEOGRAPHIC AFFILIATION

[3] Which of the people on this list (other than the people who live here with you) live within about a five-minute drive from here? [IF NECESSARY: Within a mile?]

- 1 No one 2 Any names [CODE 1 IN COLUMN 3]

[4] Which of the people on this list live outside this area, that is, more than an hour's drive from here? [IF NECESSARY: 30 to 40 miles.]

- 1 No one 2 Any names [CODE 1 IN COLUMN 4]

[5] Some people have a particular place they know they can go to and find their friends when they want to—it might be a park, club, coffee shop, a restaurant, or some other kind of place. Do you have any place like that where you and your friends tend to see each other?

- 1 Yes 2 No [SKIP TO 8]

[6] [IF YES:] Is that place within about a five-minute drive of here?

- 1 Yes 2 No

[7] Which of the people on this list do you usually see there?

- 1 No one 2 Any names [CODE 1 IN COLUMN 7]

OCCUPATIONAL AFFILIATION

[8] What is your occupation? _____
[VERIFY FROM WRITTEN QUESTIONNAIRE.]

[9] Which of these people do you think of as doing the same kind of work you (do/did)?

- 1 No one 2 Any names [CODE 1 IN COLUMN 9]

[10] Do you ever get together with a group of (TYPE OF WORKERS LISTED IN PREVIOUS QUESTION) to socialize outside of work hours? [DO NOT INCLUDE LUNCH HOUR]

- 1 Yes 2 No [SKIP TO 12]

11 [IF YES:] How often would you say that you get together?

- 1 At least once a week
- 2 A few times a month
- 3 Once a month
- 4 Every few months
- 5 Once or twice a year
- 6 Less often than that

ETHNIC / RACIAL / NATIONAL BACKGROUND AFFILIATION

12 Some people describe themselves by their race, ethnicity, or national background. On your written

questionnaire you wrote that you identify as _____. Is this correct?

[VERIFY WRITTEN ANSWER. IF ASKED WHY I WANT TO KNOW: I would like to know whether any of the people you know are of the same race, ethnicity, or national background as you.]

13 IF MIXED: Is either/any of these more important to you than the other(s)?

- 1 Yes [SPECIFY: _____]
- 2 No

14 Are any of the people on the list of names also (ETHNICITY)?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No [SKIP TO 16]

15 IF YES: Which ones are they? [CODE 1 IN COLUMN 15. ASK ABOUT ETHNICITIES OF OTHERS: CAUCASIAN, NON-CAUCASIAN, AND CODE WITH LETTERS ON LIST FORM]

16 Is it important to you to live in a place where there are other (ETHNICITY) people?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

17 Did members of your family regularly speak a language other than English in your home when you were growing up?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No [SKIP TO 19]

18 Do you ever speak it with your family or friends these days?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

19 Now I'd like to ask you a little bit about your religion. On your written questionnaire you said that your religion is

_____. [VERIFY. IF BLANK, CONTINUE WITH 20; OTHERWISE, SKIP TO 24.]

20 What religion are you?

- 1 Protestant
- 2 Catholic [SKIP TO 24]
- 3 Jewish [SKIP TO 24]
- 4 Other [SPECIFY: _____] AND SKIP TO 24
- 5 None [SKIP TO 28]

21 [IF PROTESTANT:] What denomination is that? _____ [SKIP TO 24]

22 [IF NONE:] What religion were you brought up in?

- 1 Protestant
- 2 Catholic [SKIP TO 28]
- 3 Jewish [SKIP TO 28]
- 4 Other [SPECIFY: _____] AND SKIP TO 28
- 5 None [SKIP TO 28]

23 [IF PROTESTANT:] What denomination were you raised in? _____ [SKIP TO 28]

[24] Are any of the people on the list of names (also) (*RELIGION/DENOMINATION*)?
 1 Yes 2 No [SKIP TO 26] 3 Don't know [SKIP TO 26]

[25] Which ones are they? [CODE 1 IN COLUMN 25]

[26] Do you attend or take part in the religious activities of any (church/synagogue/mosque/spiritual group)?
 1 Yes 2 No [SKIP TO 28]

[27] How important is it to you to live in an area where there is a (*DENOMINATION* church/synagogue/mosque/temple)—very important, somewhat important, or not too important?
 1 Very important 2 Somewhat important 3 Not too important

ACTIVITY/INTEREST AFFILIATION

[28] Is there any particular activity—like a sport, organization, or some spare time interest—you devote a lot of time to or find especially interesting?
 1 Yes 2 No [SKIP TO 36]

[29] [IF YES:] What is that? _____

[IF ONLY ONE ACTIVITY, SKIP TO 31.]

[30] [IF MORE THAN ONE ACTIVITY:] Which of these do you find most important or devote the most time to, or are they (all) about the same?

[IF NO SINGLE ACTIVITY, SKIP TO 36.]

[31] Are any of the people on this list also (*ACTIVITYERS*)?
 1 Yes 2 No [SKIP NEXT QUESTION]

[32] IF YES: Which people are they? [CODE 1 IN COLUMN 32]

[33] Do you ever get together with a group of (*ACTIVITYERS*) to have a good time other than when (*ACTIVITYING*)?
 1 Yes 2 No [SKIP TO 35]

[34] [IF YES:] How often would you say you get together other than (*ACTIVITYING*)—about once a week or more, about once or twice a month, or less often than once a month?
 1 Once a week or more 2 Once or twice a month 3 Less often than once a month

[35] How important is it to you to live in a place where you can be around other people who (*ACTIVITY*)—very important, somewhat important, or not too important?
 1 Very important 2 Somewhat important 3 Not too important

G/B/L/T/Q AFFILIATION

[36] Now I'd like to ask you about your sexual identification / orientation. On the written questionnaire, you wrote that you identify as _____ [VERIFY RESPONSE.]

[37] Do any of the people on the list of names also identify as (*R'S SEXUAL IDENTIFICATION*), or as a sexual minority? [FOR EXAMPLE: lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, transgendered, etc.]
 1 Yes 2 No [SKIP TO 39]

[38] [IF YES:] Could you tell me the sexual identification of each person on the list who you know identifies as a sexual minority? [CODE G/B/L/T/Q IN COLUMN 38]

- [39] Do you ever get together with a group of (G/B/L/T/Q) people to have a good time?
 1 Yes 2 No [SKIP TO 40]

- [40] How important is it to you to live in a place where you can be around other people who are (G/L/B/T/Q)—very important, somewhat important, or not too important?
 1 Very important 2 Somewhat important 3 Not too important

- [41-42] I'd also like to know which persons on this list know that you identify as (SEXUAL IDENTIFICATION).
 [SHOW CARD WITH RESPONSE CATEGORIES]
 Please tell me if that person "definitely knows and you have talked about it," "definitely knows but you have never talked about it," "probably knows or suspects," or "does not know or suspect." [CODE RESPONSE IN COLUMN 42]
 1 Definitely knows and you have talked about it
 2 Definitely knows but you have never talked about it
 3 Probably knows or suspects
 4 Does not know or suspect

TIES TO RESPONDENT VS. PARTNER

Then I'd like to know how they are connected to you and your partner now. For example, some friends you might think of as more "your" friends, others more as "her/his" friends, and others really as "our" friends—friends of you both. So let's start by taking the people connected more to you...

- [43] Are any of the people on the list now mostly connected to you alone, people you clearly think of as more "your friends" [or co-workers, etc.] than your partner's?
 1 Yes 2 No [SKIP TO 45]

- [44] [IF YES:] Which people are they? [CODE 1 IN COLUMN 44]

- [45] Are any of the people on the list now mostly connected to your partner alone, people you clearly think of as more "his friends" [or co-workers, etc.] than your own?
 1 Yes 2 No [SKIP TO 47]

- [46] [IF YES:] Which people are they? [CODE 1 IN COLUMN 46]

- [47-48] [Code the rest in database under 48 as being connected fairly equally to both respondent and partner.]

- [49] Now I'd like to ask you about any romantic or intimate involvement with people on your list.

By intimate involvement I mean anything from something very brief such as a casual tryst, to a long-term romantic relationship. This could also include a dating relationship that was romantic but not sexual. What I'm interested in finding out is how many past intimate partners of any kind people remain connected to, whether the intimate involvement was recent or in the more distant past. Have you had any intimate involvement with anyone on your list?

- 1 Yes 2 No [SKIP TO 51]

- [50] [IF YES:] Which person or persons are they? [CODE 1 IN COLUMN 50]

- [51] Outside attractions:

Every couple has to decide how they will handle outside emotional or sexual attractions. I'm interested in finding out what your current understandings are about monogamy or non-monogamy? Have there been any changes in your agreement over time? Has monogamy or non-monogamy ever been an issue in your relationship in any way? How? Has there ever been any concern, or jealousy, about anyone else?

RELATIONSHIP SUPPORT

[52] How supportive is each person on the list of your relationship with your partner, strongly supportive, somewhat supportive, neither supportive nor unsupportive, somewhat unsupportive, or strongly unsupportive? I'd like you to tell me what you think their *true* feelings might be, regardless of how they act or what they say [SHOW CARD WITH RESPONSE CATEGORIES]

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Strongly supportive | 4 Somewhat unsupportive |
| 2 Somewhat supportive | 5 Strongly unsupportive |
| 3 Neither supportive nor unsupportive | |

[CODE RESPONSE IN COLUMN 52]

[53] Now I'd like to find out how you think each person on the list would react if your relationship with your partner ended. For each one, please tell me whether she/he would strongly disapprove, somewhat disapprove, neither approve nor disapprove, somewhat approve, or strongly approve? Again, tell me what you think their *true* feelings might be [SHOW CARD WITH RESPONSE CATEGORIES]

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1 Strongly disapprove/extremely upset | 4 Somewhat approve/extremely pleased |
| 2 Somewhat disapprove/somewhat upset | 5 Strongly approve/somewhat pleased |
| 3 Neither approve nor disapprove/neutral/don't know | |

[CODE RESPONSE IN COLUMN 53]

[54] Are any of the people on this list also in *living together* couple relationships (this is not restricted to legal marriage)?

- 1 Yes 2 No [SKIP TO 56]

[55] [IF YES:] Which ones are they? [CODE 1 IN COLUMN 55]

[56] According to your written questionnaire, you and your partner (had/haven't had) a commitment ceremony. Is that correct?

- 1 Yes [SKIP TO 58] 2 No

[57] [IF HAVEN'T HAD A CEREMONY:] Have you celebrated the relationship you have with your partner in any way that involved other people in your lives? [PROBE: For example, anniversary dinners, celebrations, trips, or any kind of relationship ritual?]

- 1 Yes 2 No [SKIP TO 64]

[58] [IF HAD A CEREMONY OR OTHER CELEBRATION:] Did you include anyone on this list?

- 1 Yes 2 No [SKIP to 61]

[59] [IF YES:] Whom did you invite? [CODE 1 IN COLUMN 59]

[60] And who attended? [CODE 1 IN COLUMN 60]

[61] Could you describe the (ceremony / OTHER CELEBRATION VOLUNTEERED BY RESPONDENT)? [PROBE: What was it? Where did you have it, who performed it (if anyone)? What about inclusion of family and friends not listed here, both yours and your partners?]

[62] Has the (ceremony / OTHER CELEBRATION) changed anything about your relationship with your partner? How so?

[63] Has the (ceremony / *OTHER CELEBRATION*) changed anything about your relationship to other people in your life? Your partner's relationship to others? How so?

[64] Is your partnership registered with the City of Seattle or anywhere? Have you and your partner received memberships, partner benefits, or any other official recognition of your partnership?
1 Yes 2 No [SKIP TO 67]

[65] [IF YES:] Has this (registration / *OTHER OFFICIAL RECOGNITION*) changed anything about your relationship with your partner? How so? What was that for each of you?

[66] Has this (registration / *OTHER OFFICIAL RECOGNITION*) changed anything about your relationship to other people in your life? Your partner's relationship to others? How so?

[67] Now I'd like you to go through the list and tell me whether or not each person thinks of you and your partner as "a couple"? [SHOW RESPONSE CATEGORIES]

- 1 Yes, I am certain she [he] does
- 2 Yes, I feel fairly sure she [he] does
- 3 I am not sure whether she [he] does or not
- 4 No, I feel fairly sure she [he] does not
- 5 No, I am certain she [he] does not

[CODE RESPONSE IN COLUMN 67]

[68] Has anyone on the list been a source of friction between you and your partner, or someone you and your partner sometimes have conflicts or disagreements about?

- 1 Yes 2 No [SKIP TO 70]

[69] [IF YES:] Which people are they? [CODE 1 IN COLUMN 69]

[70] What kinds of conflicts do you have over this person? What causes the friction?

71 How do you two get along with each other's families?

[PROBES:]

To what extent has your partner been incorporated into your family (families)? You in hers/his?

Have there been any problems or disagreements? Competing obligations?

How comfortable are each of you with them?

How supportive have they been of your relationship? Interfering? Examples?

	Respondent's family	Partner's family
Support/incorporation of self or partner in...		
Interference/problems involving...		

72 How do you two get along with each other's friends?

[PROBES:]

To what extent has your partner been incorporated into your circle of friends? You in hers/his?

Have there been any problems or disagreements? Competing obligations?

How comfortable are each of you with each set of friends?

How supportive have they been of your relationship? Interfering? Examples?

	Respondent's friends	Partner's friends
Support/incorporation of self or partner in...		
Interference/problems involving...		

73 All things considered, how satisfied are you with your relationship in general [SHOW CARD WITH RESPONSE CATEGORIES. PROBES:]

Why did you choose that rating?

What do you find especially satisfying?

Are there areas that you wish were more satisfying, in what ways?

74 Are there any major areas of conflict in your relationship? Could you describe them?
What conflicts have you had in the past three months?

75 How does your [and your partner's] social life affect your feelings about [satisfaction with] your relationship?

76 Have you and your partner had conflicts over anyone else [friend, family member]? What was the conflict about? How frequently is this an issue [provide response categories]?

77 [If yes] How have these conflicts affected your feelings about your relationship [your satisfaction with the relationship]?

FINAL QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, FEEDBACK

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Thanks and open discussion about interview and about topics that should have been included, etc.

POST INTERVIEW IMPRESSIONS

1. What was the respondents initial attitude about being interviewed?
 - 1 Very interested or enthusiastic
 - 2 Somewhat interested
 - 3 Indifferent
 - 4 Somewhat reluctant
 - 5 Very reluctant
 - 6 Hard to tell
 2. What was the respondent's attitude during the interview?
 - 1 Friendly, eager, volunteered information
 - 2 Cooperative, but not particularly enthusiastic
 - 3 Indifferent or bored
 - 4 Often irritated or hostile—seemed anxious to get it over with
 - 5 Hard to tell
 3. How open and forthcoming do you think the respondent was about (his/her) personal problems and feelings?
 - 1 Open
 - 2 A little guarded
 - 3 Was basically not frank
 4. Was anyone else present during the interview?
 - 1 Yes, for most of the interview
 - 2 Yes, for some of the interview
 - 3 Yes, but only for a minute or two
 - 4 No, not at any time
 5. If so, who else was present?
 - 1 Partner
 - 2 Other adult household member (18 or over)
 - 3 Teenager (13-18)
 - 4 Child or infant (under 13)
 - 5 Friend, visitor, other (specify: _____)
 6. Did the respondent speak with a foreign or regional accent?
 - 1 Yes, a heavy accent [from where, if known? _____]
 - 2 Yes, a slight accent [from where, if known? _____]
 - 3 No
 7. Did the respondent have any obvious physical disabilities or impairments, such as loss of limb, paralysis, facial disfigurement, serious speech problems, palsy, or the like?
 - 1 Yes (specify: _____)
 - 2 No
- In giving you names of people, did you get the impression that the respondent was exaggerating by giving you extra names?
- 1 Yes
 - 2 No
- If yes, on what questions did that happen?
- Did you get the impression that the respondent was trying to limit the number of names given?
- 1 Yes
 - 2 No
- If yes, on what questions did that happen?

Aside from what the respondent said in answer to the specific questions, is it your impression that the respondent leads a very busy and active life, doesn't really have much to do, or about average?

- 1 Very busy and active
- 2 Doesn't have much to do
- 3 About average

What kind of building does the respondent live in?

- 1 Single family household
- 2 Duplex, town house, row house
- 3 Low-rise apartment (2 stories or less)
- 4 High-rise apartment (3 stories or more)
- 5 Trailer
- 6 Other (specify _____)

How well maintained is the household? Any distinguishing, special, or unusual features?

What types of buildings are on the respondent's street (both sides of street on same block)?
(all that apply)

- 1 Single family detached homes
- 2 Duplexes, town houses, or row houses
- 3 Low-rise apartments (2 stories or less)
- 4 High-rise apartments (3 stories or more)
- 5 Trailers
- 6 Commercial facilities
- 7 Industry
- 8 Institutional structures (schools, churches, hospitals, etc.)
- 9 Other (specify: _____)

How far is the respondent's building from the nearest adjacent building?

- 1 A few feet or less
- 2 No more than the width of a driveway
- 3 More than that

How well maintained is the neighborhood? Any distinguishing, special, or unusual features?

Other comments about respondent's attitude, demeanor, stress or discomfort noticed on any questions, etc.?

First name of person _____

CHECK ONLY ONE ANSWER FOR THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1 How did you first meet this person?

- ☐ We're in the same family
☐ Grew up together
☐ In school
☐ At work
☐ As neighbors
☐ In a group or organization
☐ Through a friend
☐ Through my partner
☐ Other (Please explain how: _____)

2 About how many years have you known this person?

_____ years

3 What city does this person live in?

City: _____ State: _____

4 How often do you usually get together with this person?

- ☐ Daily or almost every day
☐ Three or four times a week
☐ Once or twice a week
☐ Two or three times a month
☐ Once a month
☐ Once every few months
☐ About once a year
☐ Less often than once a year
☐ Never

5 What is this person's age? _____ years

6 Is this person currently employed either full-time or part-time?

- ☐ Employed full-time
☐ Employed part-time
☐ Not currently employed

7 Is this person presently

- ☐ Legally married
☐ Living with a partner but not legally married
☐ Widowed
☐ Divorced or ended live-in partnership
☐ Separated
☐ Never married, single, never partnered
☐ I don't know

CHECK ALL THAT APPLY FOR THE FOLLOWING QUESTION:

8 Does this person have children?

- ☐ No—no children
☐ Yes—pre-school children
☐ Yes—school-age children
☐ Yes—children over 18
☐ I don't know

Appendix B

Dependent Variables by Couple Sex and Location

Table B.1 (on the following page) shows dependent variable means and standard deviations by couple sex and location. None of the differences by sex and location were statistically significant (at $p < .05$) in either sample, and where differences approached significance, the pattern was different in each sample.

Table B.1: Dependent variable means and standard deviations by couple sex and location

Dependent variable	Men in Seattle N = 20		Women in Seattle N = 22		Men outside Seattle N = 20		Women outside Seattle N = 21	
	Partner 1 Mean (SD)	Partner 2 Mean (SD)	Partner 1 Mean (SD)	Partner 2 Mean (SD)	Partner 1 Mean (SD)	Partner 2 Mean (SD)	Partner 1 Mean (SD)	Partner 2 Mean (SD)
Commitment	.20 (.77)	.00 (.32)	-.05 (.21)	.41 (.96)	.30 (.80)	.10 (.64)	.29 (.78)	.00 (.89)
Autonomy	6.85 (1.35)	5.81 (1.54)	5.66 (1.31)	5.97 (1.74)	5.73 (1.68)	5.26 (1.35)	5.51 (1.72)	6.16 (1.91)
Life disrupted if relationship ended	1.10 (1.41)	-.65 (1.53)	-.50 (1.50)	.27 (1.52)	.05 (2.50)	.40 (1.73)	.67 (1.56)	.48 (1.75)
Say in important decisions	2.54 (.36)	2.44 (.26)	2.44 (1.77)	2.44 (.38)	2.35 (.63)	2.58 (.59)	2.47 (.34)	2.43 (.34)
Altered habits to please partner	-.15 (.99)	.20 (1.15)	.00 (1.23)	.18 (1.53)	-1.05 (1.76)	-.20 (1.61)	-.19 (1.08)	-.05 (1.24)
Influence over daily decisions	-.11 (.68)	.23 (.61)	-.06 (.47)	-.14 (.40)	-.39 (1.07)	-.11 (.73)	-.16 (.30)	-.02 (.47)
Conflict	1.64 (.28)	1.70 (.29)	1.53 (.29)	1.65 (.30)	1.63 (.24)	1.55 (.27)	1.57 (.30)	1.55 (.37)
Dyadic Adjustment	9.37 (2.09)	10.52 (2.56)	10.57 (2.82)	8.97 (2.54)	8.77 (3.58)	9.49 (2.59)	9.92 (2.51)	10.97 (2.70)
Satisfaction	2.31 (.47)	2.50 (.48)	2.44 (.44)	2.35 (.54)	2.24 (.60)	2.30 (.53)	2.24 (.48)	2.46 (.52)
Together in 20 years	7.85 (1.56)	8.45 (.89)	8.59 (.80)	8.41 (1.56)	7.00 (2.94)	8.25 (1.86)	7.95 (1.63)	8.43 (1.08)

VITA

Davis Patterson was born in Seattle, Washington. He has lived in Belize City, Belize, as a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer and in San José, Costa Rica, and currently lives in Seattle. At the University of Puget Sound he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Modern Languages. At the University of Washington he earned a Master of Arts degree in Sociology. In 2005 he earned a Doctor of Philosophy degree at the University of Washington in Sociology.