

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

**ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600**

UMI[®]

DISSERTATION

THE ROLE OF PERCEIVED ATTITUDE SIMILARITY
IN RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION AMONG
HETEROSEXUAL AND LESBIAN COUPLES

Submitted by

Jennifer B. Yaffee

Department of Psychology

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Fall 2002

UMI Number: 3075397

UMI[®]

UMI Microform 3075397

Copyright 2003 by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.

All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.


ProQuest Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346


COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

July 12, 2002

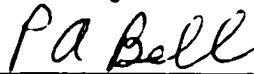
WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DISSERTATION PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY JENNIFER B. YAFFEE ENTITLED THE ROLE OF PERCEIVED ATTITUDE SIMILARITY AMONG HETEROSEXUAL AND LESBIAN COUPLES BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

Committee on Graduate Work









Adviser



Department Head/Director

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

THE ROLE OF PERCEIVED ATTITUDE SIMILARITY IN RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION AMONG HETEROSEXUAL AND LESBIAN COUPLES

This study was designed to help breach the gap of knowledge about women in intimate relationships. Specifically, the relationship between perceived attitude similarity, objective attitude similarity, length of relationship, and relationship satisfaction was examined for heterosexual women and lesbians.

Objective similarity was operationalized as correspondence between one's own attitudes and the attitudes expressed by one's partner on 30 attitude items. Perceived similarity was defined as the correspondence between one's own attitudes and how one believed the partner would respond to the same items.

The primary sample of participants were 26 heterosexual women and their partners and 26 lesbians and their partners, all of whom participated through the Internet. Perceived similarity was shown to be significantly greater than objective similarity, consistent with past research on heterosexual relationships.

No significant difference in relationship satisfaction was found between heterosexual women and lesbians. In the primary sample objective similarity did not significantly correlate with relationship satisfaction for heterosexuals or lesbians, nor did perceived similarity.

In an expanded sample including the 26 partners of the lesbians in the original sample and 8 heterosexual women and 4 lesbians whose partners did not participate in the study, perceived similarity correlated modestly with relationship satisfaction for both heterosexuals ($\underline{r}=.42$, $p<.007$) and lesbians ($\underline{r}=.23$, $p<.045$). In the expanded sample, perceived similarity did not correlate with length of relationship for lesbians, but did for heterosexual women.

Overall, the results suggest that previous relationships between similarity and satisfaction among heterosexual couples can be extended to lesbian relationships as well. Issues concerning data collection via the Internet are discussed.

Jennifer B. Yaffee
Psychology Department
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523
Fall 2002

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	vii
Chapter I: Introduction	1
Objective Similarity	2
Interpersonal Attraction	5
Homogamy in Relationships	7
Research on Lesbian Couples	9
Perceived Similarity	12
Length of Relationship	14
Previous Use of Similarity and Satisfaction Measures	16
Statement of the problem	18
Hypotheses	19
Chapter II: Method	20
Participants	20
Materials	20
Procedure	22
Chapter III: Results	25
Operational Definitions	25
Demographic Variables	27
Paired t -Tests and Correlations Between Objective Similarity and Perceived Similarity	30
Chapter IV: Discussion	34
Demographic Variables	34
Correlations of Objective and Perceived Similarity	37
Other Correlations	41
Exploring Possible Explanations for Lack of Significant Findings	43
The Pros and Cons of Internet Research	47
Pros	47
Cons	49
Final Summary and Future Directions	51
References	53
Appendix A - Recruitment Statements	63
Appendix B - Survey of Perceived Attitudes, Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale and Assessment of Demographic Variables	65
Appendix C - Cover Letter	71
Appendix D - Debriefing Statement	73

LIST OF TABLES

1.	Means and <u>t</u> -Tests of Demographic Variables	28-29
2.	Paired <u>t</u> -Tests on the Proportion of Objective Similarity and Perceived Similarity by Relationship Type	31
3.	Correlations and <u>p</u> Values among Objective Similarity, Perceived Similarity, Items Considered Important, Length Of Relationship and Relationship Satisfaction	33
4.	Correlations and <u>p</u> Values among Perceived Similarity, Items Considered Important, Length of Relationship and Relationship Satisfaction (<u>n</u> =90)	46

Chapter I:

Introduction

Satisfaction within an intimate relationship can depend on many different factors. In order to understand whether individuals are satisfied in their relationships, we must look at what people want in a relationship. One important area to examine when studying relationship satisfaction is perceived attitude similarity, which differs from actual similarity. People are shown to display actual similarity when they respond to the same attitude statement in the same way. For example, if a husband and wife were both asked to respond to the following statement, "Is religion important in a child's upbringing?" (1=not very important to 5=very important), the correspondence of the numerical responses gives an indication of actual similarity. Perceived similarity, however, is shown by the correspondence between one's own response on the attitude item and one's belief about how the spouse would respond to it. Many couples show greater perceived similarity than actual similarity. In fact, perceived similarity may be more important to relationship satisfaction than actual similarity (e.g., Buunk & Bosman, 1985; Jones & Stanton, 1988).

Before reviewing the effects of perceived similarity on satisfaction, there are other background topics that will be summarized. First, what are the origins of perceived similarity, where did the idea come from, and why is studying objective similarity a necessary precursor to perceived similarity? Next, the role similarity has played in interpersonal attraction will be covered: Are people more attracted to those with whom they share commonalities? Third, homogamy (or like choosing like) within intimate relationships is important. What characteristics do individuals find to be most important in an intimate partner? Before the 1970's, the only individuals or couples that had been studied in this context were those in heterosexual relationships. Starting in the mid to late 1970's, we began to see more research focusing on "alternative" relationship styles, i.e. gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people. Specifically, several researchers have focused on lesbian relationships; what makes them the same (or different) from heterosexual relationships and what aspects have been shown to lead to satisfaction in lesbian relationships?

Objective Similarity

Research on attitude similarity originally started with looking at similarity among friends and how it

affected the formation of childhood and adolescent friendships (Williams, 1926; Zaluzhni, 1931). In an early study on the relationship between childhood friends Bonser (1902) found that attraction was what brought two children together as friends, but noted that most of the children questioned in this study said they became friends with someone because they were close in proximity. He also noted that children who were thrown together in a close environment were almost sure to be mutually attracted to each other through common play interests. In a study on adult relationships, Newcomb (1956) found that people in general are most likely to be attracted toward those in closest contact with them. Another study by Smith (1957) looked at how accepting college students were of hypothetical others who were either similar or dissimilar to them. The results showed that participants gave higher acceptance ratings to those who were seen as more similar.

The next step in understanding similarity and satisfaction was to go beyond friendship and look at individuals who were in intimate relationships. It was important to find out what it was that brought two people together and what kept them together. One of the earliest studies looking at similarity within an intimate relationship was by Richardson (1939) who assessed

resemblance between husbands and wives on different character traits. She found that correlations were higher on attitudinal traits than on traits of temperament, implying that married people do resemble each other more in their sharing of attitudes than in sharing a similar personal disposition. Richardson (1939) also noted that "correlations in attitude scores were among the highest that had been found in any type of trait," (p. 117). This finding did not necessarily demonstrate that individuals seek out others who are similar to them.

Donn Byrne was another major name in research on attitude similarity and is a pioneer in the field of similarity and satisfaction. Byrne (1961) found that attraction was a function of similarity versus dissimilarity of attitudes on selected issues. This was an important initial finding for him because previous studies only looked at basic similarity between friends or married couples; they did not assess actual attraction between people. In other words, where Richardson (1939) found that married people were more alike in one area of the relationship than in another, Byrne (1961) found that partner similarity was actually related to interpersonal attraction. He also came to another important conclusion:

People are not only attracted to similar others, but they also find dissimilar others unattractive.

Within the context of an intimate relationship, Byrne and Blaylock (1963) conducted a study on attitude similarity by studying rewards based on consensual validation of political beliefs in married couples. Their view was that married individuals would share political beliefs because sharing personal beliefs is validation of one's own belief system, thus seen as a reward of being in the relationship. They did find a significant relationship between married couples on their political beliefs, once again showing that similarity is found between intimate couples. A general conclusion from this study was that attitude similarity was one variable that most likely increased the probability of two individuals deciding to marry.

Interpersonal Attraction

Once research demonstrated that people generally share some common beliefs with their romantic partners, the next step was to find out if such beliefs led to interpersonal attraction. Before a couple becomes a couple, they first have initial attraction to each other. If there were no attraction, future partners would probably not take the time to get to know one another. There are several personal

attributes that affect whether or not two individuals are attracted to each other.

There is a reasonable amount of experimental support for the similarity/attraction paradigm, which includes the notion that the more similar two people are, the more attraction they will feel toward each other. In an early study by Newcomb (1956), it was reported that individuals were attracted to those whom they thought shared both their shortcomings and their virtues. This finding brings to mind an important hypothesis: We are attracted toward those who not only agree with us on our attitudes, but who also share common faults with us. Sharma and Kaur (1994) have found that similarity of attitudes is highly correlated with interpersonal attraction and that attitudinal similarity generally leads to attraction. Jones and Stanton (1988) concur that there is a positive association between attitude similarity and initial interpersonal attraction. This relationship has been found to be very robust and independent of cultural influences (Shaikh & Kanekar, 1993). We can conclude from this research that similarity and attraction are not only correlated, but the similarity-attraction paradigm can be found in all types of couples, regardless of their culture.

Homogamy in Relationships

Before getting into the research on perceived similarity, it is important to look at research that has focused on homogamy within a couple. Homogamy refers to the idea of dating or committing to someone who possesses similar social or personal characteristics such as race, religion, age or socioeconomic status (Benokraitis, 1999). Before we can assess how satisfied someone is with her partner regarding similarity, we need to know if there are any specific attributes that a woman may look for or desire in her partner.

Most people would tend to agree that having common interests with someone is necessary to facilitate happiness within a romantic situation. Kurdek (1988) posits that partner homogamy on demographic and psychological variables has been of interest to researchers because similarity between partners is thought to facilitate communication, understanding and empathy within the relationship, and to allow partners to create social environments that are based on shared values and interests. Buss's (1984) research is consistent with Kurdek's findings in that Buss hypothesized that partner homogamy could be an important predictor of relationship satisfaction. It is not vital to share every aspect of oneself with one's partner, but if there are too

many uncommon characteristics, people are more likely to have arguments, which may in turn undermine happiness.

There are several personal characteristics that affect whether or not individuals are attracted to one another. Typically, the pattern of attraction is for an individual to select a mate who is similar in education, socioeconomic status, race, religion, degree of religiousness, desired family size, attitude toward sex roles, cultural background, general attitudes, physique and physical attractiveness (Byrne & Murnen, 1988). In other words, we look for those who share some basic physical, financial and spiritual features. Barry (1970) argues that homogamy, or like choosing like, is a basic norm in mate selection. Feng and Baker (1994) have reported that studies of happily married individuals show high degrees of spousal similarity with regard to age, education and ethnic background. The previous findings can be summed up with a study conducted by Klohnen and Mendelsohn (1998) who found that individuals generally pair up with others of approximate equal value (similar level of education, socioeconomic status, age, etc.). If people choose dissimilar mates, does the relationship generally last? Byrne and Murnen (1988) reported that college students who had broken off their intimate relationships within a two-year period were less

similar to their previous partners with respect to age, education and attractiveness compared to those who had not broken off a relationship. This supports the hypothesis that similarity, with respect to certain demographic characteristics, is important in the maintenance of an intimate relationship, thus generally leading people to choose partners who share these characteristics.

Research on Lesbian Couples

Research on lesbian relationships has found similar patterns to those in heterosexual relationships in terms of desiring partner homogamy. Kurdek and Schmitt (1987) found that lesbian partners are similar with regard to age, income and education. With regard to education level, partners tended to have comparable levels of education. If there was a difference in education level, it tended to be by only one level (e.g., one partner had a master's degree while the other partner had a doctoral degree; Eldridge & Gilbert, 1990). Kurdek (1988) found in his study on gay and lesbian couples that cohabitating lesbian couples tended to be more similar to their partners than different from their partners on demographic variables. Kurdek (1988) also believes that lesbian mate selection is not a random process and that there is as much thought put into it as in heterosexual mate selection (c.f. Buss, 1984). Peplau,

Padesky and Hamilton (1982) found that their sample of lesbian participants tended to be fairly similar to their partners in background (which included age and level of education). In a study comparing heterosexual, gay male and lesbian couples on their degree of partner homogeneity, lesbian partners showed a higher degree of homogeneity than either heterosexual partners or gay male partners across variables (Kurdek & Schmitt, 1987). An interesting point that Kurdek (1987) made was that lesbians share one aspect of similarity that heterosexuals do not share, namely, sex-role socialization. When Kurdek talks about similarity in regard to sex-role socialization, he is referring to the fact that women and men are socialized differently and two women together share a common societal bond, being female. Kurdek speculates that this circumstance might result in lesbians sharing more in common with their partners than would be the case for heterosexual couples. It appears from the above noted research, then, that partner similarity on certain demographic variables is important for women in lesbian relationships as well as those in heterosexual relationships.

Other areas of research on lesbian couples have centered on satisfaction within the relationship: What aspects of the relationship contribute to satisfaction?

Peplau (1993) found that lesbian couples reported their relationships to be satisfying when asked about general relationship satisfaction. Kurdek and Schmitt (1986) also found with their sample of lesbian couples that most reported they were satisfied with their relationships. A third study by Peplau, Veniegas and Campbell (1996) found that lesbian couples reported as much satisfaction in their relationships as did heterosexual couples. But what specifically has been found that may lead to satisfaction within lesbian relationships? Zacks, Green and Marrow (1988) found that cohesion and adaptability are highly correlated with overall relationship satisfaction in lesbian couples. Zacks et al. also found that both equality (sharing of relationship responsibilities) and power (control or influence within the relationship) were positively associated with relationship satisfaction. Although many people strive for equality within their relationship, they do not want to feel they are powerless or have no say about what goes on in the relationship. Eldridge and Gilbert (1990) reported that lesbians showed high levels of dyadic attachment and low levels of personal autonomy, which they found correlated with relationship satisfaction. The authors also found that in lesbian relationships, the greater sense of influence one has in

the relationship, the higher the satisfaction ratings. Littlefield, Lim, Canada and Jennings (2000) found that communication, mutual respect, and trust were very important in maintaining happy, satisfying and long-term relationships in lesbian couples. An interesting finding by Schreurs and Buunk (1996) was that age was found to be significantly correlated with relationship satisfaction; the older the respondent, the higher the degree of relationship satisfaction.

Perceived Similarity

A moderate amount of research has focused on the amount of perceived similarity noted by couples and how much that correlates with attraction and relationship satisfaction. Perceived similarity deals strictly with psychological principles: how the individual interprets and processes the information vs. actual similarity, which is seen more with demographic or physical variables (those variables that are non-subjective).

In an early study by Byrne and Blaylock (1963), perceived similarity between spouses was found to be significantly higher than actual similarity between spouses. This early study brought the importance of perceived similarity in intimate relationships into the limelight for researchers and initiated the start of many

studies in the area. One reason for the higher degree of perceived similarity when compared with actual similarity was provided by Sillars (1985) who stated that people use their own personal perspective as a reference for judging others even though they may have had prior experience with the individual that could distinguish the other person's perspective from their own (otherwise known as the false consensus bias).

Levinger and Breedlove (1966) found that perceived similarity was positively correlated with marital satisfaction. In a similar study, the role of perceived similarity was suggested to be important as an indicator of marital adjustment; perceived similarity of certain attitudes or beliefs was found to be positively correlated with stronger dyadic adjustment within the relationship (Moller & van der Merwe, 1997).

In general, Byrne (1971) has said that couples perceive much greater similarity than is actually the case, and that there is a positive relationship between the degree of perceived similarity and relationship satisfaction. Byrne also claims that marital satisfaction is significantly correlated with the degree to which an individual overestimates his or her assumed agreement with a spouse. These results are supported by Sunnafrank (1992)

who stated that both perceived similarity and expressions of agreement were positively associated with attraction and positively correlated with relationship satisfaction. Byrne (1971) also asserted that those who reported their relationship satisfaction to be low perceived even less agreement with their partner than was actually the case. Consistent with Byrne's conclusions, Jones and Stanton (1988) found that the perception of similarity correlated stronger with marital satisfaction than objective similarity. In fact, high relationship distress was associated with low levels of perceived similarity within the relationship. This finding was also supported by Buunk and Bosman's (1985) study, which found that although there was little correlation between actual similarity and satisfaction, there was a meaningful correlation between perceived similarity and satisfaction. This evidence would lead one to believe that perceived similarity is what is really important when talking about similarity and satisfaction.

Length of Relationship

Another important area of research centers on length of relationship and its connection to relationship quality/satisfaction and perceived similarity. A study by Arriaga and Agnew (2001) found that after certain

individuals had ended a relationship, ratings of psychological attachment to one's partner decreased significantly as opposed to those who stayed in the relationship. For those who stayed in the relationship, the experienced attachment level remained higher across time. The authors also noted that those who stayed in the relationship possessed a stronger long-term orientation, meaning they desired a long-term commitment from their partners.

Kurdek and Schmitt (1986) found in their study on cohabitating gay, lesbian and heterosexual couples that overall relationship satisfaction was frequently related to stage of relationship. They compared couples at three stages of relationship development: stage 1 (the first year of living together), stage 2 (the second and third years of living together) and stage 3 (the fourth and fifth years of living together). Those couples in stage 3 reported the highest degree of relationship quality and satisfaction when compared with couples in stages 1 and 2.

The next area approached in this line of research was greater perceived similarity based on length of relationship. One explanation for this phenomenon could be explained by dynamic social impact theory, which states that anything, including feelings, beliefs and values, can

be affected by the presence or actions of another person (Latané, 1981). Latané modeled his theory after Bosner (1902) whose study looked at the formation of friendships among young boys. Bosner concluded that the boys were more likely to befriend those who were close in physical proximity to them. When looking at similarity, then, it is important to take into consideration the influence one partner will have on the other within the relationship. In computer models this influence has been shown to result from either the strength of the source (S), the immediacy or proximity of the source (I), or the number of sources (N) (Nowak, Szamrej & Latané, 1990). In the case of an intimate relationship, influence would most likely be the result of the immediacy of the source because according to dynamic social impact theory, the closer in proximity of the source (I), the greater the influence. In other words, having close contact with another person (such as cohabitating or spending a lot of time together) will increase the influence one partner has on the other.

Previous Use of Similarity and Satisfaction Measures

Byrne (e.g., 1971) designed one of the first reliable measures of attitude similarity, which he called the Survey of Attitudes Scale. This scale was initially used to study how attitude similarity led to interpersonal attraction

(Byrne, 1961). Several future studies used the Survey of Attitudes Scale when looking at objective and perceived attitude similarity and interpersonal attraction (Neimeyer & Mitchell, 1988; Porwal & Jain, 1985; Shaikh & Kanekar, 1994). The reliability coefficient for the scale was found to be .83.

Spanier (e.g., 1976) designed one of the most widely used instruments for measuring relationship quality and relationship satisfaction, which he called the Dyadic Adjustment Scale. Spanier described this scale as useful because it allows researchers with limited needs to use any of the subscales alone without losing confidence in the reliability or validity of the measure. The scale was then broken down into four subscales: 1) dyadic consensus, 2) affectional expression, 3) dyadic satisfaction, and 4) dyadic cohesion. A factor analysis of the 32 items on the scale resulted in the four subscales. As with Byrne's scale, Spanier's Dyadic Adjustment Scale has been used in many research endeavors examining relationship quality and satisfaction (Aube & Koestner, 1995; Creamer & Campbell, 1988; Kurdek & Schmitt, 1986; Möller & Van Zyl, 1991). Later, Busby, Christensen, Crane and Larson (1995) realized that the scale may need some reworking because they, and many other researchers, found that some subscales contained

items that were homogeneous while other subscales contained items that were heterogeneous, making the original factor loadings quite weak. They corrected this problem by selecting out items that were considered to be homogeneous (a total of 18 items were removed from the DAS) and the result was three subscales: (1) dyadic consensus, (2) dyadic satisfaction, and (3) dyadic cohesion. Cronbach's alpha for the revised scale and its subscales were quite high: dyadic consensus, .81; dyadic satisfaction, .85; dyadic cohesion, .80; total RDAS, .90. The scale was thus renamed the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS).

Statement of the Problem

To date, no research has examined either objective or perceived attitude similarity within a lesbian couple, nor has there been empirical research examining the correlation between length of relationship and perceived similarity in lesbian couples. The current study was designed to breach this knowledge gap by: (1) examining objective and perceived attitude similarity between women in lesbian relationships, and (2) examining the correlation between length of relationship and perceived similarity among women in lesbian relationships.

Hypotheses

Based on previous research, there were several hypotheses for the current study: (1) perceived attitude similarity would be greater than objective attitude similarity; (2) the greater the perceived similarity, the higher the ratings of relationship satisfaction; (3) perceived similarity would show a stronger correlation with relationship satisfaction than would objective similarity; and (4) the longer the relationship, the greater the perceived similarity between partners. Thus, regardless of current relationship situation (heterosexual or lesbian), if individuals report high levels of perceived similarity with their partners, they should also report high levels of relationship satisfaction, and perceived similarity should be greater the longer the relationship has lasted.

Chapter II:

Method

Participants

The primary sample of participants consisted of 104 individuals from 26 heterosexual couples and 26 lesbian couples where both partners completed the survey. Four unmatched lesbians and eight unmatched heterosexual women (unmatched refers to those individuals whose partner never filled out the survey) were included in secondary analyses reported in the Discussion. The ages of the 116 participants ranged from 18 to 66, with a mean age of 35.92 years. The participants were recruited through online message boards, chat rooms, e-mail, listservs, and posting fliers in gay and gay friendly establishments (see Appendix A for recruitment statements used). About 80 individuals or organizations were e-mailed the recruitment statements.

Materials

Participants were asked to complete a survey assessing their own attitudes and their partners, dyadic adjustment and demographic variables (see Appendix B). The survey was divided into three sections. The first section consisted of an updated version of Byrne's (1971) Survey of Attitudes Scale, which had been renamed the Survey of Perceived Attitudes for the purposes of this study. Because the

survey was originally constructed in 1971, some of the issues it asked about were no longer relevant and issues that are relevant today were added to the current scale (such as statements regarding computer use). Also, the phrasing of many of the statements was awkward by today's standards, so they were revised using more appropriate language. The Survey of Attitudes Scale asked participants to rate their own feelings on 30 different topic areas ("self-responses") and how they perceived their partner would feel about the identical topic area ("perceived partner responses"). The second section of the survey was eight questions from the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS) (Busby et al, 1995), which was originally constructed by Spanier (1976). The scale is broken down into three subsections: satisfaction, consensus and cohesion. Most of the consensus subscale assessed agreement with certain statements regarding the relationship but because this type of information was obtained using the Survey of Perceived Attitudes and because repetition of questions was to be avoided, six questions were excluded from the RDAS in this study. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with these statements about relationship satisfaction, consensus, and cohesion with their partner. The alpha coefficients for two of the three

subscales were as follows: relationship satisfaction .731 and cohesion .763 (the consensus subscale consisted of only one question). The RDAS had an overall reliability of .686. Previous alpha coefficients for the RDAS have shown reliability above .80, but it should be noted that the entire RDAS was not used for this study; thus, a complete alpha coefficient could not be calculated for the entire scale. The third section consisted of demographic statements, which included: age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, current relationship involvement, education, years together, years living together and number of children in the home.

Procedure

The survey was posted on an online Web site so participants completed the survey from a computer they could access. Once participants logged onto the Web site, the first thing they saw was the cover letter (see Appendix C), which told them what the survey was about and what each participant needed to do to participate in the study. At the bottom of the cover letter page was a link to the survey, which the participant clicked on to take him or her to the survey.

Once they arrived at the actual survey, participants were instructed to make up a password in the space provided

if they were the first from their couple to fill out the survey. If they were not the first person from the couple to complete the survey, they were asked to provide the password their partner had provided on his or her survey. Each individual in the couple used the same password so that the couples could be matched up appropriately for data analysis. Next, the participant began filling out the survey. Instructions for the Survey of Perceived Attitudes were in an introductory statement that asked them to reply with the response that most closely agreed with their beliefs and then asked them to reply with the response that most closely agreed with what they thought their partner's beliefs would be for each issue. Once participants had completed the entire survey, they hit the "submit" button, which sent their results via e-mail to the investigator. After hitting the "submit" button there was a link for them to click on to take them to the debriefing statement (see Appendix D). At this point, the participant was finished with the study.

The data were imported into a Microsoft Excel file as it came in via e-mail. Once all of the data had been collected, the Excel file was converted into an SPSS file. To further ensure confidentiality, the code names that participants gave themselves were changed into sequential

numbers (e.g., couple one became 1a and 1b, couple two became 2a and 2b, etc). It should also be mentioned that as each individual's data were imported into the Excel file, the original e-mail sent with their data was deleted.

Chapter III:

Results

Operational Definitions

Relationship satisfaction was defined as the total score on the dyadic satisfaction subscale from the RDAS. Objective similarity was defined as the proportion of similar answers from the Survey of Attitudes between self-scores for each individual in the couple. The Survey of Attitudes used a six-point scale with three choices falling on the agreement side of the scale and three choices falling on the disagreement side of the scale (there was no neutral point on the rating scale so all answers had to either agree or disagree with the statements). Responses were then coded as either similar or dissimilar depending on whether they fell on the same or opposite side of the hypothetical neutral point. For example, if the response options on a 6-point attitude item were hypothetically labeled 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, the item would be coded "similar" if both individuals in a couple answered on the 1, 2, or 3 side of the scale or both endorsed the 4, 5, or 6 side of the scale; the item would be coded as "dissimilar" if one individual in a couple endorsed the 1, 2, or 3 side of the scale and the other individual endorsed the 4, 5, or 6 side. The proportion of similarity was then

calculated by coding dissimilar responses as 0 and similar responses as 1, summing these coded responses, and dividing by the total number of questions (30). If an individual failed to answer one or more of the statements, the denominator proportion of similarity was adjusted (e.g., if subject 15 did not answer statement 9, her coded responses were divided by the total number of questions she answered, or 29). Perceived similarity was calculated in the same manner but perceived partner's responses were used in place of the partner's actual responses.

Comparing independent samples of women from heterosexual and lesbian couples was important, so the women from the 26 heterosexual couples where both completed the survey (H group) were treated as one group and only one partner from the 26 lesbian couples where both completed the survey constituted the lesbian group. The selection of individuals included in the lesbian group was based on whether they were the first or second person in their couple to complete the survey. When data from heterosexual couples were submitted, 14 women were the first in their relationship to complete the survey and 12 women were the second person to complete the survey. The lesbian group for analysis (L group) was derived in a parallel manner; 14 women who completed the survey first were chosen, and for

the remaining 12 couples the second woman to fill out the survey was chosen. So, the sample size used in the primary analyses was $n=52$ (26 heterosexual women and 26 lesbians). The remaining 26 lesbians (L² group) and the 26 males (M group) were used as comparison groups in some analyses. With alpha set to .05, power with a sample of 26 was .26 for an effect size of .04 ($r=.20$). With alpha at .01 with the same effect size, power was .09.

Demographic Variables

Means and ranges for the four groups are presented in Table 1 for age, ethnicity, education level, number of years together, number of years living together and number of children living at home. The Table also shows means and ranges for objective similarity, perceived similarity, and relationship satisfaction. Independent samples t -tests for age, education, number of children living at home, objective similarity, perceived similarity and relationship satisfaction indicated no significant differences between heterosexual women and lesbians. Also, the majority of the women were of European ancestry (100% of heterosexual women and 84.6% of lesbians) indicating a quite homogeneous sample. Tests for years together and number of years living together, however, were significant. The heterosexual

Table 1

Means and t-Tests of Demographic Variables

	<u>M</u>	Range	<u>t</u> *	<u>p</u>
Age			.569	.572
(H)	36.04	21-59		
(L)	34.31	19-58		
(M)	38.31	21-59	2.29	.026
(L ²)	31.46	19-51		
Education			-1.333	.188
(H)	15.62	12-20		
(L)	16.38	14-20		
(M)	15.62	12-20	-1.896	.064
(L ²)	16.77	14-20		
Years Together				
(H)	10.42	1-32	3.688	.001
(L)	3.95	0-19		
(M)	9.92	.50-32	3.635	.001
(L ²)	3.67	.30-18.5		
Years Living Together				
(H) (<u>n</u> =24)	7.84	0-22	3.555	.001
(L) (<u>n</u> =21)	2.59	0-18		
(M) (<u>n</u> =24)	7.34	0-22	3.784	.000
(L ²) (<u>n</u> =21)	1.95	0-18		
Number of Children			.832	.409
(H)	.27	0-2		
(L)	.15	0-2		
(M)	.27	0-2	.832	.409
(L ²)	.15	0-2		
Ethnicity (EA = European)				
(H)	100% EA			
(L)	84.6% EA			
(M)	96% EA			
(L ²)	92.3% EA			
Objective Similarity			-1.839	.072
(H)	.677	.53-.87		
(L)	.728	.50-.97		
(M)	.677	.53-.87	-1.39	.072
(L ²)	.728	.50-.97		
Perceived Similarity			1.282	.206
(H)	.895	.76-1.00		
(L)	.864	.59-1.00		
(M)	.889	.72-1.00	1.874	.067
(L ²)	.839	.56-1.00		

Relationship Satisfaction			-.203	.840
(H)	15.96	12-19		
(L)	16.08	12-20		
(M)	15.65	10-19	.739	.463
(L ²)	15.15	10-20		

Note: (H) = Heterosexual female

(L) = Lesbian

(M) = Heterosexual male

(L²) = Partner 2 in lesbian relationship

* The first t-test for each variable is comparing the H and L groups; the second t-test is comparing the M and L² groups.

sample had been together significantly longer than the lesbian sample, and for those women who were currently living with their partner, heterosexual women had been living with them significantly longer than lesbian women.

Paired t -Tests and Correlations Between Objective Similarity and Perceived Similarity

Table 2 presents t -tests for comparing objective versus perceived similarity for the heterosexual women (H) and lesbian (L) groups from Table 1. For both groups of women, the means for perceived similarity were found to be significantly greater than the means for objective similarity.

The next step in the analysis consisted of calculating the following correlations: (1) relationship satisfaction and objective similarity; (2) relationship satisfaction and perceived similarity; (3) length of relationship and perceived similarity; (4) length of relationship and relationship satisfaction; and (5) relationship satisfaction and perceived similarity based on items from the Survey of Attitudes Scale that were considered more important than other items from the scale. The items that were considered important (#5 above) were 11 items from the attitude survey that were selected based on a breakdown of Table 2

Paired t -Tests on the Proportion of Objective Similarity and Perceived Similarity by Relationship Type

	t	p
Heterosexual Women (H)	-9.996	.00
Lesbians (L)	-4.563	.00

item importance from a study by Byrne and Nelson (1964), who described important attitude items as those that dealt with religion or social issues whereas non-important items were those that dealt with topics such as art or gardening. All correlations were calculated on each group of women separately. Table 3 shows the correlations calculated along with their p values. Only perceived similarity and length of relationship for heterosexual women reached a $p < .05$ level of significance.

Table 3

Correlations and p Values among Objective Similarity, Perceived Similarity, Items Considered Important, Length of Relationship and Relationship Satisfaction

	Relationship Satisfaction	p*	Length of Relationship	p*
Objective Similarity				
(H) <u>n</u> =26	.055	.395	.111	.295
(L) <u>n</u> =26	.117	.284	-.050	.405
Perceived Similarity				
(H) <u>n</u> =26	.078	.352	.385	.026
(L) <u>n</u> =26	.152	.229	-.085	.340
Perceived Sim.-Important				
(H) <u>n</u> =26	.180	.190	-.080	.350
(L) <u>n</u> =26	.196	.169	-.029	.443
Relationship Satisfaction				
(H) <u>n</u> =26			-.078	.353
(L) <u>n</u> =26			-.211	.150

*one-tailed

Chapter IV:

Discussion

Relationships between objective attitude similarity, perceived attitude similarity, length of relationship and relationship satisfaction were examined in the present study. Although these constructs had been correlated within heterosexual relationships, attitude similarity (objective and perceived) and length of relationship had not been studied at all with a lesbian population. All results are discussed: (1) as they relate to previous findings, (2) for what they tell us about the current study, and (3) with respect to any limitations or problems to consider for future research. In addition, different aspects of conducting Internet research are discussed and a final summary of the study is reported, which includes possible future directions.

Demographic Variables

The mean ages for both samples (H=36.04, L=34.31) were actually higher than in other similar studies; Hahn and Blass' (1997) mean age was 20.2; Dainton and Stafford's (1993) mean age was 26; and Kurdek and Schmitt's (1987) mean age was 30.2.

The mean education level of the heterosexual women (15.62) was similar to that reported in studies where a

B.A. degree (16.00 years) was the norm (Feng & Baker, 1994; Klohnen & Mendelsohn, 1988). The mean education level of the lesbians in this study was 16.38, which is also similar to the B.A. degree obtained by participants in other studies (Peplau et. al, 1982; Schreurs & Buunk, 1996). Although the mean education level for the heterosexual women was not quite a B.A. degree, the majority of the women did hold at least a B.A. degree and an even larger majority of lesbians held at least a B.A. degree.

Heterosexual women in the current study had been together an average of 10.42 years, whereas lesbians had been together an average of 3.95 years. Those heterosexual women who were currently living with their partners (92%) had been doing so for an average of 7.84 years, whereas those lesbians who were currently living with their partners (81%) had been doing so for an average of 2.59 years. These results are consistent with Kurdek and Schmitt's (1987) findings and Schneider's (1986) findings that heterosexual couples were not only together longer than lesbian couples, but had been living together significantly longer than lesbian couples as well. Schneider (1986) proposed that one reason heterosexual couples may have more enduring relationships is that individuals in lesbian relationships tend to have a low

level of permanence, thus, they are less likely to share in financial ventures together, possibly due to the inability to legally marry.

Other studies have compared heterosexual and lesbian relationships and found similar results with heterosexuals being together longer and living together longer than lesbians (Moller & Van Zyl, 1997; Schreurs & Buunk, 1996). The theory of low permanence in lesbian relationships due to an inability to legally marry is an area worth watching because as we see more states incorporate same-gender benefits and partnership laws comparable to those for legally married individuals, we might also see greater permanence between lesbian couples and thus, longer relationships. Markowitz (1994) speculated that another reason lesbian couples might not be together as long as heterosexual couples is that lesbians do not have any visible role models for how to have a successful intimate relationship and without some type of positive role model, negative stereotypes can easily take effect, such as thinking that lesbians are doomed to be alone or that everyone was right, homosexual behavior is wrong (also known as internalized homophobia). These issues are specific to lesbian couples and need to be examined in more depth to gain a better understanding about the longevity of

lesbian relationships. Yet another consideration is that "years together" in this type of study is self-defined and may be differently anchored by the respondent from the time of knowing the partner, dating the partner, marrying the partner or some other beginning. Differing points of the self-defined start of the couple being together could vary systematically between heterosexuals and lesbians, e.g., heterosexuals may think of the togetherness beginning at marriage, but lesbians may be more likely to define the origin of the relationship shortly after the first few dates. If so, differences in correlations on the "years together" measure may be artificial.

Correlations of Objective and Perceived Similarity

As predicted, perceived similarity was significantly greater than objective similarity for heterosexual women and lesbians. These findings are consistent with Byrne and Blaylock (1963) and Levinger and Breedlove (1966). It may be inferred from these results that similarity relationships are not necessarily dependent upon gender of partner. Kurdek (1987) stated that lesbians share the common bond of being female and because of this, might share more in common with their partners than heterosexual couples; the results indicate that this was not the case for attitude similarity.

Although the results do not address any specific explanation of this phenomenon, it is informative to ask why people perceive there to be significantly more attitude similarity with their partners than there objectively is. The possibilities of positive illusions or undetected deception occurring in the relationship might explain the significant differences found between objective and perceived similarity.

In many different situations, people tend to see what they would like to see, regardless of the actual "truth" of the matter. That is, our illusions regarding a situation tend to be positive in nature. Taylor (1989) stated in her book that individuals have a tendency to "see" their beliefs confirmed in others, and based on this incomplete confirmation, they prematurely reach their desired conclusion. Taylor refers to this incomplete confirmation as an illusion, and defines an illusion as a perception of something that is represented in a way that is different from the way things are in reality; an illusion can be pleasing or useful to the individual. This is a very important topic area when discussing perceived similarity because an individual's perception of his or her partner could possibly be based on what he or she wants to believe or see in the partner. Taylor (1989) continues by stating

that the more ego-enhancing a situation is, the greater the likelihood of evoking positive or self-serving interpretations. The success of an intimate relationship can be considered an ego-enhancing situation because if our relationship is positive, this means that our partner must really care for us and want to be with us, which should boost our egos. Fiske and Taylor (1991) cite evidence that normal human perception is marked by positive illusions, or mild positive distortions of reality. If normal human behavior includes distortions of reality, it may be possible that those who perceive their partners as having similar feelings and beliefs might be distorting reality in the relationship. Marks and Miller (1987) have shown that perceived similarity effects (e.g., partners perceiving greater similarity than there actually is) are quite common in close relationships and thus, the perceptions that individuals have of those who are close to them are often perceived to match some idealized prototype, such as, "My partner is like me." Again, we see the idea of positive illusions to be present in the context of intimate relationships.

Kenny and Acitelli (2001) pointed out that many social psychologists have emphasized the tendency for perceivers to be generally biased in their overall social perceptions

(which would include intimate relationships). Grigg, Fletcher and Fitness (1989) stated that people in satisfying relationships view the relationship in a way so as to enhance the existing high levels of relationship satisfaction. Another way to state this phenomenon is that couples may view an anthill as a mountain; they want to see a large amount of similarity in the relationship even if it is not actually the case. Lastly, Baumeister (1989) stated that healthy psychological functioning partly depends on a moderate degree of distortion in an individual's perception of herself and those around her. This could be suggesting that most people in happy relationships have a certain degree of illusions about their relationship or partner and that this is actually a good thing to have in an intimate relationship. The ubiquitous nature of interpersonal distortions may mean that such misperceptions are healthy, (e. g., they improve interpersonal relationships).

There is also the argument that a certain degree of deception in intimate relationships enhances perceived similarity. DePaulo and Kashy (1998) found that deception was fairly common among those in intimate relationships, suggesting that deception may be a feature of "normal" relationships. Roloff and Cloven (1990) suggested that many people in intimate relationships willingly acknowledge

withholding information from their partner. When information is withheld, it is left up to the perceiver to believe what he or she thinks to be true. Baxter and Wilmont (1985) stated that many times in intimate relationships, partners try to avoid certain issues altogether. As with information being withheld, when specific topics are avoided an individual may not know what his or her partner is thinking or feeling, thus coming to his or her own conclusion. When deception does occur in intimate dyads, partners have a difficult time detecting deception and tend to assume that their partner is telling the truth (Levine & McCornack, 1992). Honesty is one of the most important aspects of an intimate relationship so it makes sense that those who are intimately involved would tend to think their partner is being honest. Lastly, with regard to deception in intimate relationships, people tend to be happiest when they fail to see situations as they truly are (Simpson, Ickes, & Blackstone, 1995); not knowing the truth may be more beneficial to the level of satisfaction found in intimate dyads.

Other Correlations

Objective similarity was not correlated with relationship satisfaction or length of relationship. As Table 3 shows, there was no significant correlation between

objective similarity and relationship satisfaction. The results of this analysis concurred with previous findings that examined objective attitude similarity and satisfaction including Buunk and Bosman (1985), Sunnafrank (1992) and Jones and Stanton (1988).

Correlation coefficients were reported for perceived similarity and relationship satisfaction for heterosexual women and lesbians separately. Neither correlation was found to be significant which was surprising because most of the research looking at perceived similarity and satisfaction within heterosexual couples has found significant correlations between the two variables. Possible reasons for non-significant findings are discussed later. Perceived similarity was also correlated with length of relationship and was found to be significantly correlated for heterosexual women, but not for lesbians. The fact that heterosexual women were with their partners significantly longer than the lesbian sample may account for such a big difference in correlations between heterosexual women and lesbians when looking at perceived similarity and length of relationship. The correlation between length of relationship and relationship satisfaction was not found to be significant for either group of women. The ratings of relationship satisfaction

were high for both groups of women, so a truncated range may account for the absence of a relationship between some of the variables, as discussed in greater detail below.

Exploring Possible Explanations for Lack of Significant Findings

One possible explanation for the lack of significance between perceived similarity and relationship satisfaction might be due to the population sampled. There were no significant differences in satisfaction ratings between heterosexual women and lesbians (heterosexual women: $M=15.96$, $SD=1.822$; lesbians: $M=16.08$, $SD=2.261$; the highest possible score was 20) indicating that in general, women were happy in their current relationships. Other studies that have looked at measures of satisfaction compared the scores of distressed couples (those who were seeking marital counseling) with the scores of non-distressed couples and found significant differences in ratings of satisfaction (Busby et al., 1995; Moller & van der Merwe, 1997; Moller & Van Zyl, 1991). The current study did not specifically recruit for distressed couples and judging by the mean levels of satisfaction reported, the majority of the individuals did not appear distressed in their responses. This would most likely explain the high ratings of satisfaction for heterosexual women and lesbians.

A second possible explanation for the lack of significance might be related to sample size and power. Because this was a study investigating differences found between women in different types of relationships, the analyses consisted of 52 people, 26 heterosexual women and 26 lesbians. Although some studies that reported differences on the same measure of satisfaction used in this study or that looked at similar factors to those in current study had a sample size comparable to that of the current study (Littlefield et al., 2000; Moller & Van Zyl, 1991; Zacks et al., 1988), other studies with a larger sample size found no significant differences in correlations between objective or perceived similarity and satisfaction (Arrindell & Luteijn, 2000; Buunk & Bosman, 1985).

In order to examine the current correlations with increased power, a second set of analyses was performed with a larger sample. In addition to the original sample of 52 women, the 26 partners of the lesbians were included as individual cases, and those women who were unmatched (i.e., their partner never filled out the survey) were included in the new analyses, which added another 8 women to the heterosexual group and 4 women to the lesbian group. Table 4 shows the correlations along with their p values for the

larger samples. It should be noted that objective similarity could not be calculated for the expanded sample due to the absence of partner data for some and the duplication of objective similarity for each partner in the primary lesbian sample. Comparing Table 4 to Table 3, we see that with increased sample size, perceived similarity and relationship satisfaction were significantly correlated for both heterosexual women and lesbians. We can infer from the significant findings for perceived similarity and relationship satisfaction that adequate sample size and power are important considerations and that the same rules hold true for lesbian couples as well as heterosexual couples, namely, that there is a relationship between perceived similarity and satisfaction for both types of couples.

For the larger sample with alpha at .05, power with a sample of 34 (H) was .31 for an effect size of .04 ($r=.20$) and .44 for a sample of 56 (L). With alpha at .01, power for the same effect size was .12 for $n=34$ and .20 for $n=56$. Although greater than for the original sample, the larger sample also showed low levels of power for both groups of women (for effect size .04 at alpha=.05, a sample of $n=120$ would yield a power of .71, and a sample of 160 would yield a power of .82).

Table 4

Correlations and *p* Values among Perceived Similarity, Items Considered Important, Length Of Relationship and Relationship Satisfaction (N=90)

	Relationship Satisfaction	<i>p</i> *	Length of Relationship	<i>p</i> *
Perceived Similarity				
(H) <u>n</u> =34	.420	.007	.382	.013
(L) <u>n</u> =56	.228	.045	-.072	.301
Important Perceived Items				
(H) <u>n</u> =34	-.052	.386	-.095	.296
(L) <u>n</u> =56	.137	.157	.062	.326
Relationship Satisfaction				
(H) <u>n</u> =34			-.038	.416
(L) <u>n</u> =56			-.113	.206

*one-tailed

As previously mentioned, the mean satisfaction ratings were high for both heterosexual women and lesbians, which indicated a possible range restriction problem for the correlations with relationship satisfaction. A test for the correction of range restriction was performed for both groups of women to determine if the estimated correlation between perceived similarity and relationship satisfaction would increase if there were an unrestricted range. For the original sample ($n=52$, Table 3) the correlations between perceived similarity and relationship satisfaction increased from (H)=.078 and (L)=.152 to (H)=.155 and (L)=.293 after correction for range restriction. For the expanded sample ($n=90$, Table 4) the correlations between perceived similarity and relationship satisfaction increased from (H)=.420 and (L)=.228 to (H)=.680 and (L)=.425 after correction for range restriction. These results do support the idea that a less homogeneous sample might show stronger correlations between the variables.

The Pros and Cons of Internet Research

Pros. Research conducted over the Internet is a fairly new concept; thus, there are not that many resources on the topic. Of the few articles there are on Internet research, authors found several positive aspects of conducting research in this manner. Nosek, Banaji, and Greenwald

(2000) stated that Internet research, especially survey studies, have a sampling advantage over standard laboratory research because: (1) people can fill out a survey from their own computers; they do not have to travel and thus, the chance of participation increases due to the convenience factor; and (2) there is a greater chance of getting data from a minority population, a population that is difficult to find, or from those who do not live near the researcher because the experiment is not restricted to just the researcher's local community. McGraw, Tew, and Williams (2000) agree that Internet research can be helpful in sampling procedures because it removes the physical restriction of laboratory research. Recruitment procedures are also enhanced with Internet research because there is the opportunity to send information about the experiment to hundreds of list-servs, message boards, and e-mail addresses (Nosek et al., 2000).

Validity of the data received via the Internet is a concern to some researchers because of the chance of getting bogus data (i.e., people lying or not answering the survey seriously). Krantz and Dalal (2000) and Musch and Reips (2000) tested the validity of data received over the Internet by examining how much Internet data matched laboratory data. Both groups of researchers found similar

results; Internet data matched laboratory data on the majority of factors investigated. It was concluded that the chance of getting valid data over the Internet is good.

Cons. Although there are advantages of conducting Web-based research over laboratory research, there are disadvantages as well. It is important to address these issues so that future research can hopefully correct for these errors. Nosek et al. (2002) pointed out that there are several aspects to consider when collecting data via the Internet, including ethics, security, and sampling procedures. Although the current research plan was for a sample of 220 respondents, after 8 months of using the Web site data were complete for only 52 couples. One of the major difficulties with this study was receiving data via the Internet. One aspect of Internet research that no one has reported on is the actual transmission of the data. The survey used in the current study was posted to a Web site that could easily be accessed from any computer. Once a participant finished filling out the survey, he or she was instructed to hit the "submit" button at the bottom of the survey. Once the button was hit, the data were set up to be sent in an e-mail attachment to the researcher's e-mail address. Computers and computer language can be very complicated and not everyone's e-mail is set up the same.

Specifically, AOL and MSN, two major Internet Service Providers (ISP's), would not submit the data to the researcher. Instead, when a participant hit the "submit" button, a blank e-mail with just the participant's e-mail address and the researcher's e-mail address would be sent; the data never came through. The exact cause of this problem is unknown, but it could be related to the encryption process of AOL and MSN or the encryption process of the researcher's ISP. The researcher kept records of the data that did not come through (just a tick mark on a sheet of paper for each empty e-mail) and a large number of participants (30) who filled out the survey could not be included in the analysis. It was unknown whether any of these "lost participants" were paired couples or not, but that was a possible 15 more couples that were not included in the analysis.

The last problem that was found with doing couple research over the Internet (vs. either in person or a controlled laboratory setting) was that since couples were instructed to complete the survey separate from their partners, not all of the partners ended up filling out the survey, leaving the researcher with many single survey entries. A total of 16 single surveys (meaning there was no partner match for them) were e-mailed, 10 from heterosexual

women, 2 from heterosexual men and 4 from lesbians. Again, had the partners completed the survey as requested, another 16 couples could have been added to the analysis. It is important to remember that when doing Internet research, there are problems that can occur which are not found in laboratory settings, and these possible problems need to be taken into consideration when conducting Internet research.

Final Summary and Future Directions

Some basic conclusions can be made about perceived similarity and relationship satisfaction based on the results for this study: (1) heterosexual women and lesbians were not significantly different in their responses to measures assessing perceived similarity or relationship satisfaction; (2) heterosexual women and lesbians reported greater perceived than objective attitude similarity with their partners (supports Hypothesis I); (3) reported length of relationship was greater for heterosexual women than lesbians; (4) perceived similarity was not significantly correlated with relationship satisfaction for either group of women when using the original sample of 52 women (does not support Hypothesis II), but was found to be significant for heterosexual women and lesbians when the sample size was increased to 90 women (supports Hypothesis II); (5) with the expanded sample, perceived similarity showed a

higher correlation with relationship satisfaction than did objective similarity (supports Hypothesis III); and (6) the longer the relationship, the greater the perceived similarity for heterosexuals (supports Hypothesis IV) but not for lesbians (does not support Hypothesis IV).

These results are very important because they support and extend previous research that has investigated perceived similarity and relationship satisfaction with heterosexual couples. We now find that often, similar rules can be applied to lesbian couples as well.

The absence of relationships among several variables might be a result of not using distressed vs. non-distressed couples/individuals, as opposed to sample size. Regardless of the reason, distressed vs. non-distressed lesbian couples should also be studied to find out if their responses would be similar to those in heterosexual relationships. Other types of similarity can be measured within lesbian relationships as well, such as personality, temperament, and/or love styles (all of which have been examined in heterosexual relationships). Hopefully this research will help open the door to other aspects of relationships that need to be studied, including those individuals in heterosexual as well as non-heterosexual relationships.

References

- Arriaga, X. B., & Agnew, C. R. (2001). Being committed: Affective, cognitive, and conative components of relationship commitment. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 27*, 1190-1203.
- Arrindell, W. A., & Luteijn, F. (2000). Similarity between intimate partners for personality traits as related to individual levels of satisfaction with life. *Personality and Individual Differences, 28*, 629-637.
- Aube, J., & Koestner, R. (1995). Gender characteristics and relationship adjustment: Another look at the similarity-complementarity hypothesis. *Journal of Personality, 63*, 879-904.
- Barry, W. A. (1970). Marriage research and conflict: An integrative review. *Psychological Bulletin, 73*, 41-45.
- Baumeister, R. F. (1989). The optimal margin of illusion. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 8*, 176-189.
- Baxter, L. A., & Wilmont, W. W. (1985). Taboo topics in close relationships. *Journal of Personal and Social Relationships, 2*, 253-269.
- Benokraitis, N. V. (1999). *Marriages and families: Changes, choices, and constraints (3rd Ed.)*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

- Bonser, F. G. (1902). Chums: A study in youthful friendships. *Pedagogical Seminary*, 9, 221-236.
- Busby, D. M., Christensen, C., Crane, D. R., & Larson, J. H. (1995). A revision of the dyadic adjustment scale for use with distressed and nondistressed couples: Construct hierarchy and multidimensional scales. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 21, 289-308.
- Buss, D. M. (1984). Toward a psychology of person environment (PE) correlation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 47, 361-377.
- Buunk, B., & Bosman, J. (1985). Attitude similarity and attraction in marital relationships. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 126, 133-134.
- Byrne, D. (1961). Interpersonal attraction and attitude similarity. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 62, 713-715.
- Byrne, D. (1971). *The attraction paradigm*. New York: Academic Press.
- Byrne, D., & Blaylock, B. (1963). Similarity and assumed similarity of attitudes between husband and wives. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 67, 636-640.

- Byrne, D., & Nelson, D. (1964). Attraction as a function of attitude similarity-dissimilarity: The effect of topic importance. *Psychonomic Science*, 1, 93-94.
- Byrne, D., & Murnen, S. K. (1988). Maintaining loving relationships. In R. J. Sternberg & M. L. Barnes (Eds.), *The psychology of love* (pp. 293-303). New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Creamer, M., & Campbell, I. M. (1988). The role of interpersonal perception in dyadic adjustment. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 44, 424-430.
- Dainton, M., & Stafford, L. (1993). Routine maintenance behaviors: A comparison of relationship type, partner similarity and sex differences. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 10, 255-271.
- DePaulo, B. M., & Kashy, D. A. (1998). Everyday lies in close and casual relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74, 63-79.
- Eldridge, N. S., & Gilbert, L. A. (1990). Correlates of relationship satisfaction in lesbian couples. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 14, 43-62.
- Feng, D., & Baker, L. (1994). Spouse similarity in attitudes, personality, and psychological well-being. *Behavior Genetics*, 24, 357-364.
- Fiske, S. T., & Taylor, S. E. (1991). *Social cognition* (2nd

ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Grigg, F., Fletcher, G. J. O., & Fitness, J. (1989).

Spontaneous attributions in happy and unhappy dating relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 6*, 61-68.

Hahn, J., & Blass, T. (1997). Dating partner preferences: A

function of similarity of love styles. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality, 12*, 595-610.

Jones, M. E., & Stanton, A. L. (1988). Dysfunctional

beliefs, belief similarity, and marital distress: A comparison of models. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 7*, 1-14.

Kenny, D. A., & Acitelli, L. K. (2001). Accuracy and bias

in the perception of the partner in a close relationship. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 80*, 439-448.

Klohnen, E. C., & Mendelsohn, G. A. (1998). Partner

selection for personality characteristics: A couple-centered approach. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 24*, 268-278.

Krantz, J. H., & Dalal, R. (2000). Validity of Web-based

psychological research. In M. Birnbaum (Ed.), *Psychological experiments on the Internet* (pp. 35-60). Orlando, FL: Academic Press.

- Kurdek, L. A. (1987). Sex role self-schema and psychological adjustment in coupled homosexual and heterosexual men and women. *Sex Roles, 17*, 549-562.
- Kurdek, L. A. (1988). Relationship quality of gay and lesbian cohabitating couples. *Journal of Homosexuality, 15*, 93-118.
- Kurdek, L. A., & Schmitt, J. P. (1986). Early development of relationship quality in heterosexual cohabitating, gay, and lesbian couples. *Developmental Psychology, 22*, 305-309.
- Kurdek, L. A., & Schmitt, J. P. (1987). Partner homogamy in married, heterosexual cohabitating, gay, and lesbian couples. *Journal of Sex Research, 23*, 212-232.
- Latané, B. (1981). The psychology of social impact. *American Psychologist, 36*, 343-365.
- Levine, T. R., & McCornack, S. A. (1992). Linking love and lies: A formal test of the McCornack and Parks model of deception detection. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 9*, 143-154.
- Levinger, G., & Breedlove, J. (1966). Interpersonal attraction and agreement: A study of marriage partners. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 3*, 367-372.

- Littlefield, G. D., Lim, M. G., Canada, R. M., & Jennings, G. (2000). Common themes in long-term lesbian relationships. *Family Therapy, 27*, 71-79.
- Markowitz, L. M. (1994). When same-sex couples divorce. *The Family Therapy Networker, 18*, 31-33.
- Marks, G., & Miller, N. (1987). Ten years of research on the false-consensus effect: An empirical and theoretical review. *Psychological Bulletin, 102*, 72-90.
- McGraw, K. O., Tew, M. D., & Williams, J. E. (2000). The integrity of Web-delivered experiments: Can you trust the data? *Psychological Science, 11*, 502-506.
- Möller, A. T., & van der Merwe, J. D. (1997). Irrational beliefs, interpersonal perception and marital adjustment. *Journal of Rational-Emotive & Cognitive-Behavior Therapy, 15*, 269-279.
- Möller, A. T., & Van Zyl, P. D. (1991). Relationship beliefs, interpersonal perception, and marital adjustment. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 47*, 28-33.
- Musch, J., & Reips, U. (2000). A brief history of Web experimenting. In M. Birnbaum (Ed.), *Psychological experiments on the Internet* (pp. 61-87). Orlando, FL: Academic Press.

- Neimeyer, R. A., & Mitchell, K. A. (1988). Similarity and attraction: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 5, 131-148.
- Newcomb, T. M. (1956). The prediction of interpersonal attraction. *American Psychologist*, 11, 575-586.
- Nosek, B. A., Banaji, M. R., & Greenwald, A. G. (2002). E Research: Ethics, security, design, and control in psychological research on the Internet. *Journal of Social Issues*, 58, 161-176.
- Nowak, A., Szamrej, J., & Latané, B. (1990). From private attitude to public opinion: A dynamic theory of social impact. *Psychological Review*, 97, 362-376.
- Peplau, L. A. (1993). Lesbian and gay relationships. In L. D. Garnets and D. C. Kimmel (Eds.), *Psychological perspectives on lesbian and gay male experiences. Between men - between women: Lesbian and gay studies* (pp. 395-419). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Peplau, L. A., Padesky, C., & Hamilton, M. (1982). Satisfaction in lesbian relationships. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 8, 23-35.
- Peplau, L. A., Veniegas, R. C., & Campbell, S. M. (1996). Gay and lesbian relationships. In R. C. Savin-Williams and K. M. Cohen (Eds.), *The lives of lesbians, gays*

- and bisexuals (pp. 250-273). Fort Worth: Harcourt
Brace College Publishers.
- Porwal, N. K., & Jain, K. R. (1985). Attitude similarity as
factor of interpersonal attraction. *Indian
Psychological Review, 28*, 24-29.
- Richardson, H. M. (1939). Studies of mental resemblance
between husbands and wives and between friends.
Psychological Bulletin, 36, 104-120.
- Roloff, M. E., & Cloven, D. H. (1990). The chilling effect
in interpersonal relationships: The reluctance to
speak one's mind. In D. D. Cahn (Ed.), *Intimates in
conflict: A communication perspective* (pp. 49-76).
Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum Associates.
- Schneider, M.S. (1986). The relationships of cohabitating
lesbian and heterosexual couples: A comparison.
Psychology of Women Quarterly, 10, 234-239.
- Schreurs, K. M. G., & Buunk, B. P. (1996). Closeness,
autonomy, equity, and relationship satisfaction in
lesbian couples. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 20*,
577-592.
- Shaikh, T., & Kanekar, S. (1994). Attitude similarity and
affiliation need as determinants of interpersonal
attraction. *Journal of Social Psychology, 134*, 257-
259.

- Sharma, V., & Kaur, T. (1994). Interpersonal attraction in relation to similarity and help. *Psychological Studies, 39*, 84-87.
- Sillars, A. L. (1985). Interpersonal perception in relationships. In W. Ickes (Ed.), *Compatible and incompatible relationships* (pp. 175-206). New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Simpson, J. A., Ickes, W., & Blackstone, T. (1995). When the head protects the heart: Empathic accuracy in dating relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 69*, 629-641.
- Smith, A. J. (1957). Similarity of values and its relation to acceptance and the projection of similarity. *Journal of Psychology, 43*, 251-260.
- Spanier, G. B. (1976). Measuring dyadic adjustment: New scales for assessing the quality of marriage and similar dyads. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 38*, 15-28.
- Sunnafrank, M. (1992). On debunking the attitude similarity myth. *Communication Monographs, 59*, 164-179.
- Taylor, S. E. (1989). *Positive illusions*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers.
- Williams, P. E. (1926). Study of adolescent friendships. *Pedagogical Seminary, 30*, 342-346.

Zacks, E., Green, R. J., & Marrow, J. (1988). Comparing lesbian and heterosexual couples on the circumplex model: An initial investigation. *Family Process*, 27, 471-484.

Zaluzhni, A. S. (1931). Formation of social habits in children of preschool age. In G. Murphy & L. B. Murphy (Eds.), *Experimental Social Psychology* (282-283). New York: Harper.

Appendix A: Recruitment Statements

I am currently collecting data for my dissertation and ask your assistance. It's an online survey that will take about 15 minutes to fill out. I'm looking for heterosexual and lesbian couples. I will need both partners to fill out the survey separately. I ask that you please pass this message along to others you think might be interested in helping out as well. The cover page will explain in more detail exactly what the study is about. I have included a link to the web page below. Those that have AOL as their primary ISP cannot submit info because of the way AOL is set up, so if you have another ISP, please use that. I would like to thank you in advance for any assistance you may be able to give.

<http://lamar.colostate.edu/~demarad/cover.htm>

Jennifer

HOW MUCH DO YOU THINK YOU AND YOUR PARTNER ARE ALIKE?

A study being conducted at Colorado State University is looking for people to help answer this question. We would like to find out how much perceived attitude similarity influences relationship satisfaction in couples involving women. Requirements for participation are as follows: If you are in a heterosexual or lesbian relationship and are over the age of 18. The web site for the study is:

<http://lamar.colostate.edu/~demarad/cover.htm>

If you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact Paul Bell, Ph.D. at (970) 491-7215 or plubium@lamar.colostate.edu.

My name is Jennifer Yaffee and I am a graduate student in the Department of Psychology at Colorado State University. I am asking for your assistance in recruiting participants for my research project entitled, "The role of perceived attitude similarity in relationship satisfaction among female heterosexuals and lesbians in intimate relationships." I am looking for participants who are currently involved in heterosexual or lesbian relationships and are at least 18 years of age. Participants will fill out an online survey asking them questions about perceived similarity on several attitude issues, satisfaction within their relationship and demographic variables. The survey should take about 15 minutes to fill out and will be submitted to me online via my e-mail address. The Web address for the survey is: <http://lamar.colostate.edu/~demarad/cover.htm>

I would greatly appreciate it if you would forward this e-mail to anyone who fits the criteria and might be interested in filling the survey out as well as any regional or national women's organizations that you think might be interested.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at jyaffee@lamar.colostate.edu or (970) 491-7125.

Thank you for your assistance.

Appendix B: Survey of Perceived Attitudes, Revised Dyadic
Adjustment Scale and Assessment of Demographic
Variables

Survey of Perceived Attitudes

If you are the first of you and your partner to fill out this form, choose a password and enter it in the space below. There is a limit of 20 characters.

If you are returning to fill in the form after your partner, enter the password your partner chose below.

To the right side of each statement below, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with it.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I like situational comedies very much	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe in God	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think smoking should be banned in public places	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am offended by comedians who use profanity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel people should not act on impulse	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Classical music is one of my favorite types of music	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Country music is one of my favorite types of music	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rock music is one of my favorite types of music	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy science fiction books/movies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe money is one of the most important goals in life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am conservative when it comes to social issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am conservative when it comes to economic issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe there is only one true religion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy watching horror films	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy reading books in general	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe in tipping generously	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'd prefer a dog over a cat as a pet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I am in favor of strict discipline of children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am in favor of the death penalty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy going out dancing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy visiting modern art galleries	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy watching sports on TV	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy playing sports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is important that our home is neat and orderly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am in favor of stricter pollution control legislation on industry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe hunting is a cruel activity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe large families consume too many resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy using a computer for recreational purposes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I don't believe in eating meat	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get more done in the morning than in the evening	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Your partner also probably has opinions about the above issues. Without discussing these with your partner, please respond to the next set of statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My partner likes situational comedies very much	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner believes in God	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner thinks smoking should be banned in public places	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner is offended by comedians who use profanity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner feels people should not act on impulse	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Classical music is one of my partners favorite types of music	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Country music is one of my partners favorite types of music	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rock music is one of my partners favorite types of music	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner enjoys science fiction books/movies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

My partner believes money is one of the most important goals in life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner is conservative when it comes to social issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner is conservative when it comes to economic issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner believes there is only one true religion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner enjoys watching horror films	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner enjoys reading books in general	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner believes in tipping generously	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner would prefer a dog over a cat as a pet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner is in favor of strict discipline of children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner is in favor of the death penalty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner enjoys going out dancing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner enjoys visiting modern art galleries	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner enjoys watching sports on TV	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner enjoys playing sports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner believes it is important that our home is neat and orderly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner is in favor of stricter pollution control legislation on industry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner believes hunting is a cruel activity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner believes large families consume too many resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner enjoys using a computer for recreational purposes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner does not believe in eating meat	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner gets more done in the morning than in the evening	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale

Many times in relationships, people experience both positive and negative events. The following scale is used to measure the occurrence, if any, of these different types of events within your relationship.

	All the time	Most of the time	More often than not	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
How often do you or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you ever regret that you decided to marry, commit to, or live with your partner?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How often do you and your partner quarrel?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How often do you and your partner "get on each other's nerves"?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Every Day	Almost Every Day	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
Do you and your partner engage in outside interests together?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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
Have a stimulating exchange of ideas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Calmly discuss something	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work together on a project	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Demographic Variables

1. Age

2. Gender

3. Ethnicity

- African American
- Asian American
- European American (White, Non-Hispanic)
- Latino or Hispanic
- Native American
- Other (specify)

4. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation

- Heterosexual
- Lesbian

- Bisexual
- Other (specify)

5. Which of the following best describes your current relationship involvement

- Married to a partner of the opposite gender
- Living with a partner (but not married) of the opposite gender
- Living with a partner of the same gender
- Dating partner of opposite gender (but not living together)
- Dating partner of same gender (but not living together)

6. Education

- Some High School
- High School Graduate
- Some College
- Technical College/AA degree
- Bachelors degree
- Masters degree
- Doctorate degree (includes Ph.D., M.D., Psy.D., Ed.D., DO, OD, and any other type of doctorate)

7. How many years have you and your partner been involved (you may use fractions if necessary)?

8. How many years have you and your partner been living together (you may use fractions if necessary)?

9. How many children do you and your partner have living with you?

Submit Continue to debriefing.....

Appendix C: Cover Letter

Dear Participant,

You are being asked to participate in a research study entitled, "The Role of Perceived Attitude Similarity in Relationship Satisfaction among Female Heterosexuals and Lesbians in Intimate Relationships." The purpose of this study is to examine how much perceived attitude similarity affects women in relationships and whether similarity effects differ between women in heterosexual and lesbian relationships. Women and their partners who are currently in an intimate relationship (either heterosexual or lesbian) and have been living with their current partner for at least one year will be included in this study. In order to participate in this study you must be a female or a male currently living with and involved with a female intimately, and at least 18 years of age. You will be asked to complete a survey. This survey assesses perceived partner similarity on a series of attitude questions, the amount of satisfaction and cohesion within the relationship and some general demographic variables. You are free to decline to answer any items you may find objectionable, and all of your answers are strictly anonymous-- no one will identify your name with your responses. When you complete the survey and hit the "Submit" button at the end, your answers will be emailed to the researcher in a coded file. No one but the researcher will be able to decode your answer file. The researcher will remove your email address from the file, so that thereafter your answers will be completely anonymous. (NOTE: Anyone who monitors your Internet use, such as your employer if you access this site through your employer's server or the next user if you access the site at a public library and do not close out the software, would be able to determine that you had accessed this site, but would not be able to read your coded answer file.) It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks. Questions about participants' rights may be directed to Celia S. Walker at (970) 491-1563.

The first person in the couple to fill out the survey will be asked to make up a code that both partners will include on the first page of the survey. This will be used to match one person's data with the partner's since they cannot fill out the survey at the same time. It is important that the individual who makes up the code gives the exact code to her/his partner so that the data can be matched up accordingly. When you submit your responses, your e-mail address will be identified. Once the data from your survey has been added to the database, your e-mail will be deleted so there will be no record of who or where any of the responses came from. The survey should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may stop participating at any time without penalty.

The benefit to participation in this study is advancing the understanding of how perceived attitude similarity affects relationship satisfaction of women in different types of relationships. Should you have any questions about this study upon its completion, please contact Jennifer B. Yaffee, M.A. (970 491-7125) or Paul Bell, Ph.D. (970 491-7215).

Thank you for your participation.

LIABILITY:

The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of taking part in this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

Questions about subjects' rights may be directed to Celia S. Walker at (970) 491-1563.

Sincerely,

Jennifer B. Yaffee, M.A.

Paul Bell, Ph.D.

Questions about participants rights may be directed to Celia Walker at 970-491-1563.

Appendix D: Debriefing Statement

Perceived Attitude Similarity Debriefing Form

For over 40 years social psychologists have been studying how similarities and differences in attitudes, personality, and lifestyle influence relationship satisfaction. In general, the research shows that the more similar, the greater the satisfaction within the relationship. Most of the research to date has been conducted without focusing specifically on men's or women's perspectives, and most often does not look at intimate relationships, and more specifically, lesbian relationships. The study you just completed examines how perceived similarity affects women in romantic relationships and if there is any difference between women in heterosexual and lesbian relationships. We are interested in finding out (1) whether the longer a woman has been with her partner, the more attitude similarity she will report with her partner; (2) whether the higher the perceived similarity a woman feels with her partner, the greater the amount of relationship satisfaction she will report; and (3) whether there is a difference in either the amount of similarity reported and/or the rating of relationship satisfaction between women in cohabitating heterosexual and lesbian relationships. The data from your questionnaire will help researchers gain a better understanding of the importance of perceived attitude similarity from the female perspective, and perhaps help predict the circumstances that result in long-term, satisfying relationships.

Note that your questionnaire will have no identifying marks on it. At no time will your name be connected with your data.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, or would like to discuss the results after the experiment has been completed, please feel free to contact Jennifer B. Yaffee, M.A. (970 491-7125) or Paul Bell, Ph.D. (970 491-7215)