

EXPLORING THE COMPOSITION AND FORMATION  
OF LESBIAN SOCIAL TIES

by

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B.A., University of Nebraska at Kearney, 2006

A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work  
College of Arts and Sciences

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

2008

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## **Abstract**

The literature on friendship and social networks finds that individuals form social ties with people who are like them; this is termed “homophily.” Several researchers demonstrate that social networks and social ties are homophilous with regard to race and class, for example. However, few studies have explored the relationship of homophily to the social ties of lesbians, and fewer still have explicitly examined sexual orientation as a point of homophily. This study intends to help fill that gap by looking at homophily among lesbian social ties, as well as how urban and non-urban residency might shape homophily and lesbian social ties. I gathered data that would answer the following central research questions: Are lesbian social ties homophilous and if so around what common characteristics? What are lesbians’ experiences with community resources and how does this influence their social ties? How does population influence lesbian social ties? Data for this research come from 544 responses to an internet survey that asked lesbians about their social ties, their interests and activities and those of their friends, and the cities or towns in which they resided. Using the concepts of status and value homophily, I attempt to make visible some of the factors and forces that shape social ties for lesbians.

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## Acknowledgements

It is a genuine pleasure to have this opportunity to thank the individuals who have supported my efforts as a Masters student. I express my deep and sincere gratitude to my mentor, major professor, teacher, and friend Dana Britton, whose brilliance, generosity, encouragement, candor, kindness, and enduring good humor have been invaluable to me in too many ways to count. I am also indebted to Professor Britton for the opportunity to work under her editorship for the journal *Gender & Society* – truly a dream job. Thank you to Betsy Lucal for her support, insight, wit, and willingness to answer any question. I extend my appreciation to sociology faculty and students at Kansas State University for creating a vibrant intellectual community, with special thanks to Spencer Wood for his enthusiasm and encouragement. Thanks also to committee members Theresa Selfa and Michelle Bemiller. In addition, I thank Daryl Kelley, Carol Lilly, Suzanne Maughan, Paula Rieder, and Diane Wysocki for early support of this research during my undergraduate tenure at the University of Nebraska at Kearney.

I owe many thanks to my family and friends. Cindy Whitney deserves much appreciation for teaching me the ropes at the journal and for being a supportive friend. I thank Sarah Jones for Wonder Woman, the blue Sharpie abduction, many meaningful kindnesses, and all the laughter. My pal Travis Linnemann has my thanks for his encouragement, example, and friendship. I am thankful to Victor Force for his faith in me and for gourmet French toast. Thanks also to Ben Bolander and Allison Teeter for brainstorming methods with me. I likewise appreciate the steady stream of support, laughter, and affection from Wendy Barnes, Drea Boyles, Jeremy Briggs, Erin Fritch, and Becky McIntire-Goff. Terri Keller, Mandy O'Connor, Tessa Roberts and Elizabeth

Schnieder deserve special thanks for their love and unconditional support of my goals, despite the miles between us. Many thanks to Isabel, Geneva, Carol, and the circle.

I thank my siblings, Liz, Kate, and J., and their families, for the letters, calls, care packages, personal appearances, and other expressions of love and encouragement. To my parents – Jim and Linda Carlson – I offer my loving thanks for their support and devotion. I am particularly grateful to my children and their families – Rachel, Joshua, and Colton Muzzey, and Aaron, Kristen, and Kayla Bond-Logan; to them I offer my most heartfelt appreciation and gratitude for their patience and love, and for knowing that we must each find and honor our own path.

Finally, I am especially indebted to the women who responded to this survey. I thank them for their replies, for sending the survey to others, and for helping me learn more about lesbian friendships and social ties.



## **Dedication**

Dedicated to Kacy, Kristi, and Keegan. Dedicated also to Helen Orman at Houston Community College, for seeing potential slumped hopefully in the back row of her classroom. And, to Lola.

## Preface

In the summer of 1995, I moved from Houston, Texas, which had then a population of about two million people, to Kearney, Nebraska, which at that time had a population of less than 30,000 people. In Houston, opportunities to socialize with other lesbians were only as far away as the nearest gay bar, community organization, lesbian/gay newspaper, gay/lesbian owned business or women-owned business. Learning about lesbian culture and finding other lesbians was relatively uncomplicated. I could easily find books at Lobo or Crossroads Market (gay/lesbian bookstores) or on the shelves of many of the big chain bookstores. I could read local lesbian/gay newspapers and newsletters (*Houston Voice* and *Outsmart*). And I could telephone the gay community hotline. In Houston, I could attend a pride parade, a drag show, and other lesbian/gay events. There were ample resources to facilitate the forming of friendships and social ties with lesbians.

In Kearney, there appeared to be nowhere to go to meet other lesbians. There were no local gay organizations, newspapers or gay bars, and no hotline. Even the local chain bookstores offered precious little or nothing at all in the way of lesbian literature. I lived in Kearney, Nebraska for more than a year before I met another lesbian. That meeting was by chance, through our activist work to end violence against women. During my first years in town, I wondered how lesbians in small communities – communities with few or no formal resources for lesbians – form new friendships with each other. In fact, I wondered how lesbians found each other at all in such communities.

Later, after I had been in Kearney for a few years and made some social connections, I continued to wonder about lesbians and their friendship ties. It is important to me to have lesbian friends. Is it important to other lesbians to have lesbians in their social circles, I wondered. I wondered, do lesbians form friendships primarily around sexual orientation or other common characteristics or interests. Are lesbian social ties lesbian-centric? Does the presence or absence of lesbian community resources influence lesbian friendships? Is a thriving social life for lesbians only available in cities like San Francisco, New York City, and Houston? When I returned to college to earn my undergraduate degree in sociology, I decided to ask my questions within the framework of sociological research.

## **CHAPTER 1 - Introduction**

In this thesis, I explore lesbian social ties in their wider social context as well as in terms of their composition. One of the most important concepts in the study of social ties is the notion of homophily – the principle that people tend to congregate with others like themselves. Though we have many studies of social ties and networks that validate this general principle, very few have examined sexual orientation as a point of homophily, or explored the composition and formation of social ties among groups differentiated by sexual orientation. This study is one of the first to do so.

In exploring the social ties of lesbians, I employ Lazarsfeld and Merton's (1954) multidimensional formulation of homophily. Lazarsfeld and Merton (1954) argue that homophily actually encompasses two dimensions – homophily can be based on status, and/or it can be based on values. Status homophily is similarity in social networks and among social ties on ascribed and achieved characteristics, such as race, sex, class, age, and occupation. Value homophily encompasses similarity in outlook and behavior; people may form relationships around shared political beliefs, for example, or an interest in the same sports teams. Many studies have validated the influence of status and value homophily. In fact, social distance is strongly related to differences in sociodemographic characteristics and in behavioral, cultural, and material differences (Barrera 1986, Cotts Watkins 1996, Duck, 1991, Fischer 1982, Foster 2005, Fredericks and Durland 2005, Granovetter 1983, Hoyt and Babchuk 1983, Huckfeldt 1983, Lazarsfeld and Merton 1954, McPherson et al. 2001, Nahemow and Lawton 1975, Van Duijn et al. 1999, Valentine 1995, Verbrugge 1977, Verbrugge 1979, and Verbrugge 1983). Conversely,

similarities in these same characteristics are related to social proximity. But again, sexual orientation has rarely been explored as a basis for social ties.

A third important dimension in the study of social ties is that of the context in which they are formed. We know, for example, that people often meet friends at work, or on a larger scale, that social circles often take on higher levels of density and complexity in urban versus rural areas. I explore this dimension specifically in relation to lesbian social ties. If you ask almost anyone to identify the places in the United States where lesbians live, you are likely to get answers such as San Francisco, New York City, Miami, Los Angeles, Seattle, or another metropolitan city. Data from the 2000 U.S. Census finds that same-sex couples are more likely than opposite-sex couples to reside in metropolitan areas; 84 percent of lesbian couples and 86 percent of gay men couples report that they live in urban areas. Moreover, same-sex couples are most likely to live in urban coastal cities such as San Francisco, Berkeley, Atlanta, and Seattle. If you ask a lesbian where to find the most thriving lesbian communities, she will likely identify some of those same cities or at the very least a *city*. The literature suggests there is a long history of lesbian and gay migration to cities and lesbian and gay urban life. However, there is less in the literature about lesbians and urban residence, apart from gay men, and even less about lesbians in non-urban settings. In this thesis, I explore how population influences social ties for the lesbians in my sample.

Data for this research come from 544 responses to an internet survey that asked lesbians about their social ties, their interests and activities and those of their friends, and the cities or towns in which they resided. Considering population and using the concepts of status and value homophily, I attempt to make visible some of the factors and forces that shape social ties for lesbians. In the second chapter, I will review the literature about social networks, lesbian social

ties, and the theoretical concept of homophily, in addition to where and how lesbians meet other lesbians. In the third chapter, I will discuss the hypotheses and methods. I will present the findings in chapter four and the discussion and conclusion in chapter five.

## **CHAPTER 2 - Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

Social circles and friendships have been the focus of studies in several disciplines, including psychology, history, economics, geography, and sociology. The vast majority of the research in this area draws on samples from the general population (Cotts Watkins 1995, Doherty and Feeney 2004, Fischer 1982, Huckfeldt 1983, McPherson et al. 2001, Reeder 2003, Van Duijn et al. 1999, Yamaguchi 1990), though there are some noteworthy exceptions (Bell and Binnie 2004, Faderman 1991, Esterberg 1997, Galupo 2007, Nardi 1992, Price 1998, Stanley 2002, and Valentine 1995). Within the small but growing body of literature about lesbian or LGBT (lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender) social circles, several studies have examined social ties in urban areas (Aldrich 2004, Binnie 1995, Binnie and Valentine 1999, Casey 2004, Esterberg 1997, Faderman 1991, Fischer 1982, Franzen 1993, Galupo 2007, Harry 1974, Thorpe 1997, Valentine and Skelton 2003, and Weston 1995); fewer have looked at social ties in rural areas (Bell 2000, Fellows 1996, Fischer 1982, McCarthy 2000, and Oswald and Culton 2003).

Researchers have approached the study of social networks and friendships from two distinct directions. Until recently, network analysis has been the primary methodology in studies of social ties and social networks (Cotts Watkins 1995, Foster 2005, Fredericks and Durland 2005, Granovetter 1983, Huckfeldt 1983, Kalmijn and Vermunt 2007, McPherson 1983, McPherson et al. 2001, Scott 2000, Van de Bunt et al. 1999, Walker et al. 1994, Wasserman and Faust 1994, Wasserman and Galaskeiwicz 1994, Van Duijn et al. 1999, Verbrugge 1977, 1979, 1983, Yamaguchi 1990). Social network analysis uses complicated statistical techniques (e.g.,

Newman and Park 2003) to map the relationships between social actors and those with whom they have ties, often producing complex maps of ties between people in organizations or other social environments . Though this kind of analysis has been widely used, some have suggested that it is limited by its explicit focus on the individual. Social network analysts operationalize social networks, and social interactions, solely in terms of the “configuration of personal relationships [an individual] maintains . . . [it is] in essence a very individualistic approach. (Allan 1989: 33). In simple terms, network analysis often fails to consider the influence of context on shaping relationships, and hence ignores the larger social factors that allow relationships to form and to flourish in the first place.

As Allan (1989) has noted, these questions are central to the sociology of friendship. Research in this tradition (e.g., Adams and Allan 1998, Fischer 1982) has employed both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to explore the contextual elements shaping friendships (e.g., technology or urban versus rural settings), and the life history and depth of social ties (e.g., Price 1998). Adams and Allan (1998), critiquing the tradition of examining friendship at the dyadic level and arguing for sociological research that illuminates friendship and its relationship to society, encourage scholars to focus on social ties in the contexts of immediate environments, networks and communities, and larger social and institutional structures. Examining the influence of structural elements, such as population and community resources, on lesbian social ties is a primary objective of this study; however, I also draw on the findings of network analysts to inform my understanding of the composition of friendship ties themselves.

Regardless of their methodological approach, researchers agree that social circles are comprised of friends of varying degrees of intimacy. Social circles include “strong ties” and



“weak ties” (Bruhn 2005, Granovetter 1983, McPherson 1983). “Strong ties” are the bonds one has with one’s partner, closest friends and close family members, whereas “weak ties” are the links one has with acquaintances and those otherwise less intimately connected. Esther Rothblum writes that friendships are “polyamorous” (1999, 71); she relates intimately to several close friends, some more than others, and some of her friends know each other while others of her friends do not. Rothblum is describing her social circle. From her description we can see how weak and strong ties co-exist and weave through social circles, connecting social actors to each other (or not) in varying degrees and within circles of varying sizes.

Research on friendship and social networks indicates that social ties display high levels of homophily (Granovetter 1983, Kalmijn and Vermunt 2007, Lazarsfeld and Merton 1954, McPherson et al. 2001, and Nahemow and Lawton 1975); that is, people form ties with people who are like them or - as Lazarsfeld and Merton (1954) express it - birds of a feather flock together. Research on general population samples very clearly demonstrates that those within social circles share one or more things in common. Research on lesbians, gay men and bisexuals also supports this claim (e.g. Galupo 2007, Queen 1998, and Valentine 1995). While homophily itself is easy enough to grasp, it is somewhat less clear how this occurs, and around what characteristics, circumstances, or social and structural elements.

Merton discusses social networks as social structures where normative values govern behavior common to the members of the group (1968). In this formulation, he places emphasis on norms and values as the key binding factors in social circles. Much of the research on social networks, on the other hand, has demonstrated that obvious and more accessible characteristics, such as sex, race, and class, provide the basis for the formation of social networks (Huckfeldt 1983, Kalmijn and Vermunt 2007, Lazarsfeld and Merton 1954, McPherson et al. 2001, Van

Duijn et al. 1999). Cotts Watkins (1996) bridges the gap between this finding and Merton's observation in this way:

similar structural positions . . . provide a basis for imaginative sympathy, for recognizing that someone else is much like oneself, and that conversations with those whose standpoint is similar can be meaningful. Thus class, gender, ethnicity, and race channel our social interaction, our personal networks, into some grooves but not others (306).

Most research about social ties points to the strong relationship of sex, race, and class to social circle composition. For example, Huckfeldt (1983) notes, "friendship groups tend toward social class homogeneity," although he also points to the general lack of availability of socially dissimilar individuals within one's social and professional environments (651). Huckfeldt's research does not consider sexual orientation but he, like others, finds that individuals tend to limit their social contact to people who are like themselves in terms of race, class and to a lesser degree sex.

It may well be that lesbians, like heterosexuals, congregate with others who are like them in these ways – with lesbians or women of the same race and class. We simply do not know; there has not been enough research in this area. Moreover, we know little about how lesbian-centric lesbian social circles are, about how relevant sexual orientation is as a point of homophily. In the vast majority of research on social circles, sexual orientation is invisible; i.e., investigators rely on general population samples and/or presume their participants are heterosexual (Barrera 1986, Cotts Watkins 1995, Fischer 1982, Foster 2005, Fredericks and Durland 2005, Granovetter 1983, Hoyt and Babchuk 1983, Huckfeldt 1983, McPherson et al. 2001, Van Duijn et al. 1999, Verbrugge 1977, 1979, 1983). Research specifically on lesbians'

social ties is often focused on lesbian communities, or researchers draw on existing lesbian social circles or friendships, thereby describing lesbians' friendships exclusively with other lesbians or LGBT individuals (Bell and Binnie 2004, Binnie 1995, Bledsoe et al. 2001, Faderman 1981, Franzen 1993, Galupo 2007, Kennedy and Davis 1993, Nardi 1992, Queen 1998, Rothblum 1999, Schneider and Witherspoon 2000, Stanley 2002, and Valentine 1995). Although valuable, these studies do not reveal the significance of sexual orientation to lesbians' social ties because they fail to consider lesbians' non-lesbian friendships. Social scientists need to ask about lesbian social ties in general, as well as their friendships with other lesbians, to get a sense of the relevance of sexual orientation to lesbians' social relationships.

### **Status Homophily**

Studies of social networks, friendship patterns, and social ties indicate that people form connections with people who share their racialized, classed, and gendered identities. Although we know far less about the levels and points of homophily among lesbians and gay men than about heterosexuals, there are studies that indicate lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals also form social ties with individuals with whom they share race, sex, class, and sexual orientation identities (Fellows 1996, Galupo 2007, and Queen 1998). Though heterosexuals are generally the point of reference and the literature indicates homophily around other sociodemographic characteristics, I will focus on the dominant points of status homophily, particularly race, class, sex, family status, and sexuality.

### ***Race***

Among the many dimensions of homophily in social networks, none has been as empirically tested or shown to be as strongly related to network composition as race. McPherson et al. (2001) write, "homophily in race and ethnicity creates the strongest divides in our personal

environments” (415). Significant racial and ethnic homophily exist in relationships between intimates, friends, co-workers, and acquaintances. Though some, particularly sociobiological theorists of race, have suggested that this is just about “natural” affinity, research clearly indicates that social context shapes the importance of race to social network formation and to the strength of social ties. Small (2007), drawing on a sample of 2,490 18–47 year old racially diverse Chicago parents, finds that differences in the composition and size of social networks are fundamentally related to the conditions of the neighborhoods in which respondents live – those in poor, segregated neighborhoods have smaller networks that are highly homophilous with regard to race and class and also tend to have fewer network members on whom to rely for social support. These and other studies demonstrate that location and context matter, and moreover that location and the resources within one’s community may be especially significant for minority populations.

Studies of lesbian and gay social networks and friendships also point to racial homophily as a central feature. Galupo’s (2007a) survey of 405 self-identified lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals suggests that like their heterosexual counterparts, “sexual minorities” primarily form close friendships with individuals who are similar to themselves in sex, race, and orientation (139). This mirrors the findings in Galupo’s other studies of lesbian or “sexual minority” friendship groups (2007b, 2007c). Morris and Rothblum (1999), in their research about lesbian sexuality and the coming-out process, examine data from 2,393 women who answered a lesbian wellness survey and find that Black and other minority lesbians are more integrated in their lesbian communities than white lesbians; they postulate that “it is possible that women of color who identify as lesbian or bisexual are quick to search for a supportive lesbian community” (553). While Morris and Rothblum (1999) do not have the data to discern homophily, this is an

interesting and related finding. If lesbians of color are more likely than white lesbians to seek the support of a lesbian community, will they then be more likely to live in cities where they can more easily access lesbian networks and resources? Are their friendship groups more or less homophilous than are white lesbians' social circles, particularly around race and sexual orientation?

The limited research in this area finds that racial homophily among lesbians is prevalent, especially for lesbians of color – echoing the findings of studies using general population samples. Gruskin et al. (2006) conducted semi-structured interviews with a racially diverse sample of 35 lesbians and bisexual women who go to bars, and found:

the need for support and community was especially evident in interviews with participants of color. These women suggested that the stress of being a double minority caused them to seek bars specifically catering to lesbians of color to minimize the discrimination that they encountered based on their race/ethnicity in other lesbian spaces and in heterosexual bars. (110)

This supports Bell and Binnie's (2004) assertions in their theoretical discussion on sexualized space within cities; they suggest, "many 'gay' consumption spaces are bounded communities, where processes of exclusion operate, for instance on the basis of race and gender" (1810). In these environments, then, will we find significant racial division, as Morris and Rothblum, Gruskin et al. (2006), and Bell and Binnie (2004) propose? What role do formal lesbian resources play in racial homophily, and for whom? Race, as the literature demonstrates, has a dominant influence on social ties, though we know less about its affect on social ties among lesbians.

## *Class*

Class is also very influential in shaping social ties and friendship connections. This is due in part to the association of class with education, occupation, and other important characteristics. Huckfeldt (1983), for example, finds high levels of class homophily among his all white male Detroit respondents, and Fischer (1982) finds that education is the single factor that most reliably affects social network composition and size among his respondents, all residing in urban or rural communities in northern California (see also Verbrugge 1997). Similarly, Wright and Cho's (1992) comparative study of the United States, Canada, Sweden, and Norway, documents clear patterns of homophily in relation to property, expertise (professional status), and authority. These studies demonstrate that class and other variables linked to socioeconomic status are meaningful points of homophily.

Class homophily is linked in the literature to some elements of value homophily; that is, people socialize with those who are in their class and those who are in their class often share similar behaviors, beliefs, and social customs. Walker (1999) suggests that class homophily is related to differing expectations and norms around friendship: "norms of working-class friendship emphasized being able to rely on friends for...services. Middle-class respondents, in contrast, celebrated shared leisure and the existence of large networks of interesting friends" (1999, 273). Walker also finds more kinship social ties for working class participants, as well as different frequencies of contact and patterns of interaction among working and middle class participants (1999; see also Marsden 1987, Huckfeldt 1983).

The research about the effects of class on the social relations of lesbians and gay men is far more limited. Galupo's work focuses on social ties among lesbians, gay men and bisexual men and women but fails to consider class or socioeconomic status (2007a, 2007b, and 2007c). Franzen (1993) describes a university-based lesbian network in Albuquerque that identifies not

only as lesbian but as feminist lesbian. Though she does not discuss class, it seems likely that a university-based feminist network would be composed mostly of middle class women.

McCarthy's (2000) study of rural lesbians does observe that social ties exist among working and middle class lesbians living in small towns and rural areas, which might suggest that rural lesbians have less homophily around class. In her extensive historical research, Faderman (1991) tells us that working-class lesbians were key in the "establishment of lesbian bars, which became the single most important public manifestation of the [lesbian] subculture for many decades, eventually attracting young lesbians who were not of working-class backgrounds" (79-80). These bars offered the first public space for lesbians to meet and form social ties with each other, though not all lesbians felt comfortable in those spaces; the early bars were dominated by poor and blue-collar gays and lesbians - "well brought up women" were uncomfortable in those settings (Faderman 1991, Kennedy and Davis 1993). In addition, older lesbians, wealthy lesbians, and lesbians of color were less likely to have utilized the bar scene (Faderman 1991, Kennedy and Davis 1993). Histories of lesbian communities offer limited, but important information about the relationship of class to social ties.

Perhaps the most revealing research about the relationship of class to social ties in the gay community is the recent work of Barrett and Pollack (2009). Using survey data from 2,881 adult men who have sex with men and reside in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco, this study shows that social class is related to visibility and community ties (259). Barrett and Pollack's (2009) analysis indicates:

...being in the lower class is related to a decreased likelihood of describing oneself as gay, participating in gay social groups, reading the national gay press, living in a neighborhood that would be considered as a 'gay ghetto,' using events

such as parties to socialize with other gays, and having a male primary partner (459).

Although the sample is limited to men who have sex with men or who identify as gay or bisexual, these findings suggest that social class (and urban location) affect the social ties and community involvement patterns in at least some portion of the gay community.

### *Sex/Gender*

Homophily by sex in social networks is far less prevalent than is homophily around class and race. Adult social networks in general are comprised of more or less nearly equal numbers of men and women (Marsden 1987, Verbrugge 1977, McPherson et al. 2001). Race and class homophily are strongly influenced by differences in social and economic characteristics such as education and neighborhood of residence; however, men and women “are linked together in households and kinship networks that induce considerable similarities in residence, social class, and other characteristics” (McPherson et al. 2001, 422, see also Booth and Hess 1974, Marsden 1987, Verbrugge 1977). It is obvious that sex-integrated social networks are linked to heterosexuality, however. Socially legitimized marriage and childbearing among heterosexuals mean “high heterogeneity on sex” (McPherson et al. 2001, 431). This finding may simply be inaccurate when applied to lesbians’ networks, particularly when we consider that intimate partnership for lesbians often does not result in having children, nor does it shift lesbians into mixed-sex couple networks shaped by heterosexual norms.

Studies that examine social ties and sex are more abundant than are those that examine social ties and gender (Blieszner and Adams 1992). This means that though we know adult social networks are sex-integrated, this is not the same as understanding how gender gives rise to these patterns or influences the nature of relationships. Many studies conflate sex and gender (Allan



1989, Bell and Binnie 2004, Booth and Hess 1974, Doherty and Feeney 2004, Huckfeldt 1983, McPherson et al. 2001, Reeder 2003, and Van Duijn et al. 1999). Yet we know that friendship is highly gendered – several studies note that men and women report more intimate and more satisfying friendships with women than with men, (Bank and Hansford 2000, Fehr 2004, Hill 1981, Johnson et al. 2007, Roy 2000). However, the women in these studies are either heterosexual or presumed to be heterosexual, leaving us with little information about how gender influences the social ties of lesbians.

### *Family*

According to the literature, family and intimate relations shape social ties in a variety of ways. For single and childless young adult women and men, attachment to friends is highly important (e.g., Allan 2008, Doherty and Feeney 2004). Other studies suggest the same finding, noting that individuals who are married or partnered have weaker social ties to friends, even when they have larger social circles (Bank and Hansford 2000, Bidarta and Lavenub 2005, Doherty and Feeney 2004, Fischer 1982, Gerstel 1988, Liebler and Sandefur 2002, Moore 1990). Also, large families reduce both the number and the strength of non-kin social ties (Granovetter 1983). In a survey of 2,460 individuals, Lansford, Sherman, and Antonucci (1998) find that fewer non-kin ties are related to family obligations and aging. In addition, homophily around marital status is common in social networks, though more so for married than single individuals (Gerstel 1988, Kalmijn and Vermunt 2007).

The effects of family status are also contingent upon gender – marriage and childbearing shape social networks in ways that reflect women’ greater responsibilities in these areas. When women have children, especially during periods where they are not employed outside the home and when their children are minors, they have smaller social network groups and tend to form

friendships with other mothers as opposed to women without children (Bidarta and Lavenub 2005, Fehr 2004, Fischer 1982, Liebler and Sandefur 2002, Moore 1990). In general, women's networks – particularly mothers and married women's networks – are comprised of more kinship ties than are men's networks (Julien, Chartrand, and Bégin 1999, Liebler and Sandefur 2002, Moore 1990 and Verbrugge 1979). And, because family ties tend to be quite homophilous with regard to race and class, the more one's friendship ties are connected to family the less heterogeneous are one's social circles (McPherson et al. 2001).

We know less about how family status influences lesbians' social networks. Commonly, lesbians and other LGBT individuals are described as identifying their non-kin friends as family (Gruskin et al. 2006, Johnson and Samdahl 2005, Julien, Chartrand, and Bégin 1999, Muraco 2006, Nardi 1992). The literature also indicates that lesbians and gay men are far more likely to reveal their sexual identities to friends than to family members and to receive support from friends rather than from families of origin (Gruskin et al. 2006, Julien, Chartrand, and Bégin 1999). Gruskin et al. (2006) note that their study participants relied on the community and lesbian bars to “find their culture and chosen family” (109). Being in a romantic partnership that connects to family members on either side of the partnership most often requires being out of the closet – that is, overtly or covertly letting family know that one is gay – which may not be the choice that some lesbians make due to family disapproval or rejection (Julien, Chartrand, and Bégin 1999; Kaufman and Johnson 1993). In a study of couples, 33 lesbian couples, 50 gay couples, and 50 heterosexual married couples, Julien, Chartrand, and Bégin (1999) find that those in lesbian and gay couples have larger social networks and share more friendship ties than do those in heterosexual couples (525). They suggest this is in large part associated with less

familial and institutional support for these couples as well as the lesbian or gay individuals in them.

Social ties may also be associated with support for LGBT people's status as parents or non-parents, as well as their connections to the families and children of their friends. Bruhn (2005) observes that gay and lesbian parents might discontinue or weaken social ties with lesbians and gay men who are not parents. Muraco (2006) finds that gay men who form family ties with heterosexual non-kin women do so in part to gain access to some of the elements of traditional family life, namely children. Lesbians are far more likely than gay men to have children. An analysis of 2000 Census data indicates that more than 1/3 of lesbian couples have children at home; the same is true for only 22 percent of gay male couples. Similarly, McVannel Erwin's (2006) content analysis of *Lesbian Connection*, a free lesbian magazine, finds that of the 88 discussion topics, "children" is second only to isolation, safety, and aging. But overall, there is a dearth of literature on how family and relationship status influence lesbian friendships and social ties. If lesbians follow the patterns of heterosexual women, they will have fairly mixed-sex social networks when partnered (though that makes little sense as that effect is, at least in part, the outcome of heterosexual partnership), fewer social ties if they have children at home, and if they are in a relationship they will have more social ties with partnered lesbians than with single individuals.

### *Sexuality*

Few researchers have explored the relationship of sexual orientation to friendship ties. The vast majority of studies of social networks and friendship ties fail to mention sexual orientation at all (for exceptions, see Galupo 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, Nardi 1992, and Price 1998). There is a body of research on lesbian social ties and lesbian communities in particular, however,

that reveals interesting patterns. Several studies find that lesbian friendships involve intersecting social circles (Rothblum 1999, Esterberg 1997, Podolsky 1992, Queen 1998). Esterberg, who researched lesbian identity and community in a medium sized Midwestern urban community, finds that the lesbian community “is actually fragmented into many smaller, overlapping social circles, or friendship networks” (1997, 119). Some studies suggest that lesbians are more likely to befriend other lesbians (e.g., Stanley 1996) and gay men are more likely to befriend other gay men (e.g., Nardi 1992). Quite a few questions remain unanswered, including: If the social ties of adult heterosexuals are generally sex-integrated – in large part because they are socially organized via kinship and heterosexual marriage – will the absence of marital kinship ties result in less sex-integrated social ties for lesbians? The general lack of attention to sexual orientation in the social network literature presents an opportunity for researchers.

There is scant research on friendships across lines of sexual orientation. Price (1998) interviewed gay men and their straight friends, finding that cross-sexual orientation friendship is often a serious struggle for both men in the friendship. However, the friendships characterized by the straight man’s sincere appreciation of his friend’s sexual identity were more intimate and more satisfying. Still, Price (2005) notes that most gay men claim other gay men as their closest friends. Galupo (2007c) finds that among her non-heterosexual women respondents, “although cross-orientation friendships did not consistently include a feminist/political dimension, when friends also differed in racial identity a feminist/political dimension in the friendship became apparent” (2007c, 473); this hints at the relevance of value homophily in cross-orientation social ties. Similarly, Muraco (2006) finds that friendships between straight individuals and lesbian or gay men were most successful when, among other factors, the straight person embraced “radical political ideologies about gender and family” (1322). These studies provide some idea of the

interaction between gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals and their straight friends but we are left with little sense of how often such friendships form and to what degree lesbians or gay men might welcome friendship with straight individuals.

### **Value Homophily**

Although there are far fewer studies on value homophily than on status homophily, the literature suggests that people form social ties in relation to characteristics such as political and religious beliefs (Crandell, Schiffhauer and Harvey 1997, Centola et al. 2007, Granovetter 1983, McPherson et al. 2001, Verbrugge 1977, 1979 and 1983). In some cases, ties based on values may be equally, or even more, important than those based on status (Granovetter 1983; Bruhn 2005). Interestingly, there is some evidence that value homophily can mitigate the social divisions fostered by status homophily (Galupo 2007c, Muraco 2006, Warde, Tampubolon, and Savage 2005) – in other words, shared values or interests can help bridge gaps created by race and class. For instance, Warde, Tampubolon, and Savage (2005) find that the respondents in their research show less homophily around sociodemographic characteristics and more homophily related to their recreational interests. While value homophily appears to be a less powerful influence on the composition of social networks, some have suggested that political, religious, and other value characteristics might have greater effects on the social ties of minority or marginalized populations (Mehra, Kilduff, and Brass 1998; Warde, Tampubolon, and Savage 2005).

### ***Religion***

Religion is in many cases an ascribed characteristic – individuals often retain the religious identification of their family of origin. In other cases, religion is chosen or changed as an adult. As religion is at least in some cases voluntary, I treat it here as a value characteristic

(though I am aware that this is an arbitrary distinction). There is little consensus among researchers about the weight of religion's influence on social ties. Some studies suggest that religious similarity –in and of itself - is important in shaping the composition of individuals' social networks (Fischer 1982, Liu et al. 1998, Putnam 2000, Verbrugge 1977, Wuthnow 2004). Still other research argues that the influence of religion is secondary to the kinds of associations it fosters. Notably, Bruhn (2005) and Putnam (2000) observe that people who attend church with some regularity have more social ties, suggesting that the communal structuring of active church participation is strongly related to larger than average supportive social circles. In addition, where religious identity is wedded to ethnic or racial identity, the influence on social ties is stronger (Fischer 1982, Kalmijn 1998, McKenzie 2004, McPherson et al. 2001). Overall, the literature suggests that religion has a mild to moderate influence on social networks and social ties, though again there has been almost no attention paid to the intersection of religion and non-heterosexual orientation.

### *Politics*

The literature suggests that homophily around political beliefs is important but not crucial in shaping social networks (Knoke 1990, Verbrugge 1977, 1979, 1983; McPherson et al. 2001). Verbrugge (1983) finds that, “friends with similar marital status and political preference see each other more than friends who differ. McPherson et al. (2001) observe that men's social networks, more than women's, are politically homophilous; they speculate this may be related to men's relative lack of emotional intimacy and emphasis on public rather than personal matters within homosocial networks. Several studies also note the significance of politics and activism to lesbian and LGBT social ties and networks (Bell and Binne 2004, Holt and Griffin 2003, Jennings 2006, Johnson and Samdahl 2005, Kaufman and Johnson 2004, Murray 2007, Podolsky

1992, Queen 1998, Valentine and Skelton 2003, Weston 1993) in the era following Stonewall, the 1970s feminist movement, and the emergence of the AIDS epidemic (Bruhn 2005, Weston 1993). But the effect of political beliefs may be double-edged, particularly in small communities. In a study of the lesbian bar community in Manchester, England, Jennings (2006) documents that political beliefs and agendas worked not only to unite segments of the lesbian population but also to clearly divide that population between lesbians who identified the lesbian bar culture as a means to remedy isolation and those who identified the lesbian bar culture as a means to organize for feminist and lesbian/gay activism. Political beliefs and actions can create or at the least influence social distance and social cohesion, and may in fact act to bridge differences that typically create social division or distance.

## **Friendship, Population, and Location**

### *Urban*

Context matters in shaping social networks and in creating space for social ties to form. The literature on friendship and the city suggests that among the factors that influence the formation and maintenance of social ties is a large and diverse physical location where one can find socially similar individuals (Fischer 1982, Huckfeldt 1983, White 2003). In urban rather than rural environments, for example, individuals are more likely to form ties with people of the same social class in part because they have little contact with people not of their social class. Urban environments are also linked to the likely development of nonkin ties over kin ties (Bell and Boat 1957, White and Guest 2003). White and Guest observe that urbanization “encourages the segmentation of social ties by discouraging density or interconnectedness. In addition, urbanization does have noteworthy effects in encouraging exclusively nonkin ties, which are presumably highly voluntaristic” (2003, 239). In cases of urban migration, ties to kin are often

weakened or limited by distance and infrequent contact; ties with nonkin then form in lieu of kinship ties. The literature about friendship and the city suggests that individuals in urban areas form more nonkin ties than their rural peers and that they form ties with people with whom they have at least one, though likely more than one, social characteristic in common – such as class. The increased ability to form non-kin ties in urban areas might be especially important for lesbians, who may be disconnected from kin due to prejudice around their sexual orientation.

From the point of view of the individual, dense urban social networks are actually composed of smaller groups, subcultures within the urban culture. Fischer (1982) offers a “subcultural theory of urbanism,” which holds that:

community size leads to a variety of distinct and intense social worlds . . .

[C]ities, by their very nature, are more socially heterogeneous than small communities. Because they attract migrants from a wider hinterland, cities have a relatively varied racial, religious, and national composition. Also, the complex differentiation of urban society, especially in division of labor, means that there are more distinct social contexts – in jobs, organizations, locales, and so forth – that people occupy. Given the way people build personal ties, this means that urbanites will have more varied and distinct social networks than residents of small communities. (1982, 11)

Moreover, Fischer suggests that urban life actually “intensifies” the “distinctiveness” of subcultures:

The very numbers of people in any social location means that they are more likely to reach the ‘critical mass’ it takes to become worlds unto themselves: to support institutions such as clubs, stores, and newspapers; to provide the entirety of an



individual's social needs so that relations with outsiders are unnecessary; to enforce cultural norms; and to provide a clear identity. (1982, 12)

The concept of subcultures and how urban and rural populations influence social networks for members of subcultures, such as lesbians, are relevant to this study.

Several scholars have pointed to LGBT people's migration to and apparent preference for living in, or at least near, urban centers (Aldrich, 2004; Bell 2000; Binnie 1995; Binnie and Valentine, 1999; Casey, 2004; Castells, 1983; Fellows 1996, Harry, 1974; LaVay and Nonas, 1995; Oswald, 2002; Oswald and Culton 2003, Weston, 1995). Major LGBT events take place in cities, including pride parades, drag shows, and protests, such as the notorious Stonewall Riots in 1969 and the 1987 March on Washington where the AIDS quilt had its inaugural display. It is in the city, not the countryside or even the suburbs, where lesbians and other LGBT people have established and frequented their own bars, community centers, and bookstores, where they can find their own newspapers and social organizations.

Although non-heterosexuals and urban life are undeniably linked, researchers' treatment of gay men and lesbians as one population may mask differences in their relationships to the city. LaVay and Nonas note that lesbians are more dispersed than gay men and that "really intense concentrations of gay people within metropolitan areas, such as the Castro District in San Francisco and Greenwich Village in New York, tend to be dominated by gay men" (1995, 105). This suggests that city life, despite its connection to a visible lesbian or LGBT culture, may not be as accessible to or hold the same appeal for lesbians. In fact, some lesbians recognize smaller communities as ideal living places less because of urban and gay cultural attractions than for the number of lesbians who live there. According to *Newsweek*, "Country-music fans gravitate to the Grand Ole Opry, painters dream of Providence and ski bums settle in Aspen. Lesbians have a

mecca, too. It is Northampton, Mass., a.k.a. Lesbianville, U.S.A.” (Krantrowitz and Senna, 1993, 56). Undoubtedly, lesbians have more than one mecca; however, for my purposes the significance of Northampton is that it is not a large metropolis – according to 2000 U.S. Census Bureau statistics, Northampton has a population of less than 30,000 people – and yet it is a desired location for lesbians. One of the questions left unanswered in the literature is how meaningful is city life to lesbian social life? If lesbians are in many ways devoted to having lesbian friends, do we know that they are more likely to find those friends in cities? In part, the answer rests in examining lesbian social ties and social lives as separate from gay men’s social ties and lives.

### *Rural*

The literature on friendship and social networks and rural life suggests that social ties are influenced by the “density of acquaintanceship” – that is, the proportion of residents who know each other (Freudenberg 1986). Freudenberg (1986) notes that the number of potential social ties within a small community shape the quantity but not the quality of social ties. Moreover, Freudenberg (1986) observes that the diversity of potential ties hinders social networks. As rural areas tend to be less diverse than urban areas, this points generally to the concept of homophily as integral to shaping rural social networks. Sampson (1988) finds that rural residents are less socially active than are urban dwellers and that length of residence positively affects rural and inner city friendship ties. Petrzela and Mannon (2006) find that women in rural communities often form social ties around community volunteerism. As early as 1963, researchers noted that rural residents have more incidents of social contact and less physical distance to traverse to make contact with their social ties (e.g., Sutcliffe and Crabbe 1963; see also Bell and Valentine 1995). In addition, local church participation in rural communities has a significant influence on

the development and maintenance of social ties (Fischer 1982, Liu et al. 1998). Sociologists and others have focused more on urban areas than on rural areas in both the social network literature and the developing area of sociology of friendship. From this research we find that rural social ties are related to residential stability; they are also related to church involvement, volunteerism, and the community's "density of acquaintanceship."

Social scientists seldom explore sexuality and rural life (for exceptions, see Bell & Valentine 1995; Fellows 1996, Miller, 1989, Oswald and Culton 2003). Oswald and Culton (2003), who surveyed 527 nonmetropolitan gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender people (GLBT) about "the 'best' and 'worst' aspects of being GLBT in that area, found that respondents reported the best things were "close relationships, high quality of life, involvement with GLBT social networks or organizations, and self-acceptance" and the worst things were "weak and fragmented GLBT resources, living within a homophobic social climate, and lacking equal rights" (2003, 72). McCarthy (2000), who conducted focus group research with ten rural lesbians, ages 18-52, from towns with populations of 600-5000 and that were more than 100 miles away from a large city, finds that their social circles are comprised almost exclusively of women, most often lesbians. Further, McCarthy notes:

The data show that for this sample, although rural lesbians initially felt isolated and unsure of how to develop a sense of group identity, the opportunity to connect with a small informal network of friends and acquaintances helped alleviate these problems. Further, because these women have little access to information, public gathering space, or to local gay culture, this network was said to be crucial.

Without it, the women feel invisible and isolated, that is, their identity remains unseen." (2000, 76)

Rural life does not offer the same social opportunities that urban life offers but the few studies that look at rural life for lesbians and gay men indicate that they develop friendships that provide some of the same benefits that urban lesbians and gay men experience – among them, connection to a lesbian or gay community and identity.

Research about gays and lesbians in rural spaces suggests living in rural areas is less desirable in large part because rural cultural norms are wedded to traditional heterosexual and gender norms, but also because homosexuals are isolated and often closeted within rural communities (Bell 2000, Bell and Valentine 1995, Fellows 1996, Gillespie, Krannich, and Leffler 1985, McCarthy 2000, Oswald 2002 and 2003). Among the studies on gay rural life, Bell's (2000) and Fellows' (1996) research note the differing constructions and performances of gender in urban and rural cultures; both note the different masculinities associated with being a rural gay man as opposed to being an urban gay man. Rural cultures offer a more butch presentation of gay masculinity whereas urban life shapes or at least permits a more effeminate masculinity (Bell 2000, Fellows 1996). Though both studies exclude women, Bell's and Fellows' ideas echo Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) theoretical framework of hierarchally ordered masculinities and in particular geographies of masculinities. This suggests, as other studies have, that urban life permits more deviation from gender and sexuality norms than does rural life.

One wonders then if urban lesbians more inclined to live outside the closet. Overall, the literature on friendship in urban and non-urban settings suggests that we can predict more lesbians will be located in cities than not; that those in cities are more likely to be connected to lesbian or gay culture than their non-urban sisters; that they are more likely to be out of the closet; and that urban locations are more likely to have lesbian resources.

## **Finding Lesbian Friends**

How lesbians have found and networked with each other has varied in accordance with place, time, circumstance and other factors, including age, race, and class. Some of the most revealing information about lesbian social circles comes from historical texts (Faderman 1981, 1991; Lapovsky Kennedy and Davis 1993). Virtually all of the literature reveals that safe space is central to lesbian networking.

Heterosexuals can, and do, find love and friendships with other heterosexuals in nearly any and all settings; whereas lesbians may not even claim their sexuality in those settings, let alone find each other there. “Gay men and women therefore have to consciously seek other sexual dissidents in ‘safe places’” (Valentine 1995, 96). It seems that lesbians have been creative, and in some cases ingenious, in their efforts to create or find safe spaces within which to interact with each other, particularly when – as is often still the case – there has been strong social pressure to remain invisible. Safe space is so crucial to lesbian networking and can be so challenging to locate that one popular guidebook, *Damron Women’s Traveler: The Best Lesbian Guide to the USA, Canada, European Cities & More*, which offers detailed information about where to go to find other lesbians, flies off bookstore shelves—more than 25,000 sold per year since its first edition in 1989 (Gatta, 2005). Significantly, Damron first published its guidebook for gay men in 1964, 25 years before there was a Damron guide for lesbians, mirroring the privileging of men even within the disadvantaged population of homosexuals relative to heterosexuals.

Among the many ways lesbians have networked with each other are private parties, lesbian or LGBT bars, organized sports, and feminist activism. Perhaps though, the most common method of networking for lesbians is simply friendship with women. The literature on homosocial friendship suggests individuals overwhelmingly select close friends of the same sex

(Flood 2008, Foster 2005, Hoyt and Babchuk 1983, McPherson et al. 2001, Reeder 2003, Van de Bunt et al. 1999, Verbrugge 1977, Verbrugge 1979, Verbrugge 1983). For example, in a study of 3500 undergraduate students Foster (2005) finds that “peer groups are overwhelmingly same-sex” (1464). Women have been forming friendships with other women forever and several authors and scholars have indicated that those friendships have acted to connect lesbians with other lesbians. More than one female friendship has developed into a lesbian love relationship or lesbian friendship and whole books have been devoted to the subject, such as, *Unexpected Pleasures: Leaving Heterosexuality for a Lesbian Life* by Tamsin Wilton (2002). Some lesbian social ties then form not as a result of a deliberate seeking out of other lesbians but rather are the product of friendship interactions seemingly unrelated – at least at first – to sexual orientation.

The question that follows then is, how have lesbians networked outside of happenstance or coincidental contact? Central to this study is developing an understanding of the relevance of community resources in relation to the development of lesbians’ social connections with other lesbians. Community resources that target, or are at least inclusive of, lesbians offer one avenue to the formation of lesbian social ties. Because many community resources for lesbians are reputed to exist only in metropolitan locations, this is key to the discussion of the relevance of urban life to lesbians’ social ties with each other.

Some of the community resources that have provided friendship opportunities for lesbians are women-owned or gay-owned bookstores, coffee houses, and cafes. These places are more easily found today than in past decades because lesbians and women are less invisible in the public sphere; however, they are certainly part of the urban (not rural) scene (LeVay and Nonas, 1995). Some of these places include The Abbey Café in San Diego; Good Vibrations, a

women-friendly sex toy store in Berkeley; and Hydrangea House Inn in Newport, Rhode Island, all places that welcome or specifically target lesbian or LGBT customers (Gatta, 2005).

### ***Churches and Religious Organizations***

Another location for lesbians to meet each other might be a place of worship. As more and more lesbians and gay men come out of the closet and claim their right to gather for worship in their chosen faiths, more places of worship are working to accommodate them. The United Church of Christ recently aired commercials depicting a gay couple going to church with the message that all are welcome in their churches. There are even gay churches, such as the Metropolitan Community Churches (the largest is in New York City) and the Cathedral of Hope in Dallas. Pastor Jo Hudson at the Cathedral of Hope, herself a lesbian, says about her church: “Every week we open our doors, and 1,500 people come to worship” (Hudson, 2005, 20). Hudson further observes that more and more churches welcome gay people, noting that the local gay paper in Dallas features more than 25 advertisements from churches to the local LGBT population (Hudson, 2005, 20). For lesbians and gay men, networking at their places of worship is more possible now than ever. I consider this because previous studies about lesbian social circles, with other lesbians and in general, often failed to do so. Moreover, one wonders if this is an urban phenomenon or if lesbians in smaller cities and towns are also finding friendships within their faith communities.

### ***Organizations***

Formal organizations, many of them centered on lesbian/gay rights or women’s rights, such as the Daughters of Bilitis and the National Organization of Women, have also provided resources for lesbians. The Daughters of Bilitis (DOB), founded in San Francisco in 1955 by Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, is known as the first official lesbian group in the United States (Martin

and Lyon, 1972). Discussing the development of DOB, Martin has said that she and her partner Lyon had frequented the lesbian bar subculture in an effort to find friends but that most of the friendship groups seemed exclusive and the lesbians in them “seemed wary of strangers” (1972, 140). So we see that not only did DOB serve as a way of meeting other lesbians and forming social ties, it was intended to perform that function. DOB is now gone but other organizations have developed that serve to provide networking and other supports for lesbians, from national organizations like the Gay/Lesbian National Hotline to local groups such as Kansas State University’s Queer Straight Alliance student group.

Feminist organizations, intended to advance women’s rights, have also provided resources for lesbians, often with lesbians surfacing as pioneer feminists who have rejected the restrictive social limitations imposed on women by a sexist and heterosexist society. Some lesbians first connected to other lesbians because of their involvement in the feminist movement, some even first realized their lesbian identity as a result of consciousness raising that took place in the 1960s and 1970s. Trisha Franzen describes a university-based lesbian network in Albuquerque that identified not only as lesbian but as feminist lesbian, demonstrating the networking opportunities connected to feminist organizations (1993, 898). Women’s issues, varied though they are by factors such as class and race and sexual orientation, are nonetheless women’s issues and lesbians have been leaders in the struggle for women’s rights. Thus we see that feminist work provides networking opportunities for lesbians. In fact, an extreme form of the lesbian social circle grew out of the feminist movement, that of lesbian separatism where lesbians form communities populated only by lesbian feminists.

Other organizations that have served to bring lesbians in contact with each other include alcohol and drug recovery groups, support groups, and professional organizations. In a large



metropolitan area, one might find groups for lesbian parents, elder lesbians, lesbians with disabilities, co-dependent lesbians, lesbian musicians, and more. In some cities, like Berkeley, there are Alcoholics Anonymous meetings exclusively for lesbians, advertised much like AA meetings for non-smokers. Additionally, there are any number of professional organizations for lesbians, such as Lavender Accountants and, if fortunate enough to work for a gay-friendly corporation, one can join the company's gay/straight alliance group. Formal organizations, be they feminist, professional, or otherwise, offer opportunities for lesbians to meet each other and form or connect to lesbian social circles.

### *Lesbian/Gay Events*

In addition to formal organizations, events such as women's music festivals, pride parades, and benefits for AIDS or ending violence against women are venues that have provided social space wherein lesbians connect with each other. Women's music festivals began in the early 1970s; typically they feature several female musical artists (such as the bestselling artists, Indigo Girls and Tracy Chapman) at one venue for a day, a weekend, or even a week. According to Liz Tracey and Sydney Pokorny, co-authors of *So You Want to be a Lesbian?*, "these festivals fostered a sense of unity among the lesbians who attended" (1996, 156). The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, undoubtedly the most successful of these events, continues to draw lovers of women's music, including a large lesbian audience. Not only can and do lesbians meet at these events, they create for themselves safe space in which to nurture their already developed social ties.

More accessible perhaps than a music festival are LGBT Pride events. In June and July in many cities across the country, one can find a LGBT Pride Parade. Parades are biggest in cities such as San Francisco, New York City, Atlanta, Chicago, Boston, and Houston; however, even

smaller cities such as Omaha, Wichita, Hartford, and Little Rock host pride parades. Lesbians who live in cities where there are no pride parades can and do travel to the nearest parade, often in groups. Pride parades are resources that have provided social space for lesbians—even when protesters attend to voice their opposition to homosexuality (as they do at many of the pride parades), lesbians and other LGBT individuals seem to feel safe because of the highly public setting, as well as the media interest and police protection frequently present at these events. In addition, many lesbians gather at benefits for AIDS and other causes close to their collective hearts – these may be walkathons, drag shows, silent auctions, or other types of fundraising/awareness raising events specifically intended to help LGBT people or women.

### ***Media Resources and the Internet***

Some cities in the United States have newspapers and other publications for lesbians or the LGBT population, such as *MGW* (Mom Guess What), a monthly in Sacramento, *Out Front Colorado* (statewide bi-weekly), and *Gay Chicago* (weekly). There are national publications, including *Girlfriends*, *Out Traveler*, and *The Advocate*. One periodical, *Lesbian Connection*, published bi-monthly, is particularly interesting in that it began in 1974 as a grassroots newsletter of sorts, intended to help lesbians find each other and is now distributed in 41 countries. *Lesbian Connection*, in its early days a “monthly xeroxed compendium of letters, random thoughts, and questions from lesbians all over the U.S.,” (Armstrong, 1981, 333) remains today a small publication that markets itself primarily through its readers as “the free worldwide forum of news and ideas for, by, and about lesbians” (2006, 58). Finally, in the area of printed materials, one cannot overlook the growth of available popular literature for lesbian readers, from fiction to non-fiction and including genres such as science fiction, financial planning, romance novels, lesbian history, sex manuals, and parenting books. The lesbian and

community has come along way since the days of dime-store pulp fiction novels with titles like, *Lesbian Jungle* and *The Third Sex*; it is now possible for lesbians to meet while browsing the LGBT bookshelves of a chain bookstore.

In addition to books, newspapers, and magazines, internet sites targeting lesbians have increased in number, including [pamshouseblend.com](http://pamshouseblend.com), [pinksofa.com](http://pinksofa.com), and [afterellen.com](http://afterellen.com); many of these sites provide chat rooms, message boards, personals, and news relevant to lesbian lives. This greatly expands the boundaries of proximity. Burke (2005) writes, “the Internet has become an important source for many lesbians to connect with each other to find potential partners and create community ties” (591). These sites may be particularly important to lesbians who are for some reason or another isolated or homebound. One can easily argue that publications and internet sites, while not providing physical space in which lesbians form social ties, allow lesbians to hear from other lesbians and to read about lesbian culture more easily than ever before in our history, and in fact ultimately serve to connect some lesbians to other lesbians in real time and space.

### *Sports*

Another arena in which lesbians may find social ties is organized sports. Sports, perhaps especially softball, can provide informal networking opportunities for many lesbians, even in small cities. Yvonne Zipter, an author and lesbian who describes softball as a place of refuge for lesbians, writes:

What is it about softball that inspires such passion among lesbians?...What begins as cooperation and teamwork on the field often evolves into off-field intimacy and support. The many hours of practice in which we help each other play our best, the impromptu meals afterwards, the games in which we share a common goal,

the celebrations and post-mortems that follow – all of these things produce a heightened sense of camaraderie among the players, camaraderie not easily found elsewhere. (1993, 334)

Zipter is not only providing us a glimpse of her social circle, to some degree she is describing its formation. While certainly not all women athletes are lesbians and not all lesbians are athletes, the connection between lesbians and sports is undeniable. Being an athlete used to be, and is still today for some women, a form of gender rebellion and a rejection of heterosexual norms (Bledsoe, Jay, and Rogers, 2001). According to Bledsoe (2001), “not too long ago, it was considered so unfeminine to be an athlete, or even an outdoorswoman, that many straight women stayed away” (9). Playing sports is a source of connection within the lesbian culture, an avenue for friendship (Bledsoe, Jay, and Rogers, 2001; Zipter, 1993). Sports, therefore, are significant to the development of social circles for many lesbians.

### *Lesbian or Gay Bars*

Perhaps the most well known social resource for lesbians is the lesbian or gay bar. In the 1930s and 1940s in Buffalo, New York, the bar culture was integral to lesbian networking. Kennedy and Davis write that lesbians formed community in the setting of bars, removing them from the isolated and “restricted boundaries of their own living rooms” (1993, 29), while also protecting them from a larger homophobic and often dangerous heterosexual population. Many of the bars in the 1930s through the 1950s and into the 1960s that catered to lesbians or welcomed them in addition to straight clientele, were cloaked in secrecy and subject to police raids: “The location and layout of lesbian bars mirror two characteristics of the gay community: secrecy and stigmatization” (Wolfe, 1992,149). Kennedy and Davis describe bars in dark, crime-ridden areas but where patrons felt “relatively safe,” unless there was a raid (1993, 34-35). Even

as late as the 1980s, long after Stonewall (1969) and the routine practice of police raids, some gay bars remain cloaked in secrecy. Roey Thorpe writes that when her lesbian friends showed her the local lesbian bars, they were “unrecognizable as such,” because they were unmarked or hidden establishments and that it “felt like an initiation into the secret society of lesbians” (Thorpe, 1997, 165). This suggests that lesbian or gay bars can be well hidden and need not then necessarily be located in highly populated areas. Today, lesbian bars may be more recognizable, or not – with names such as The Rainbow Room, Molly’s, Chances, Tootsies, and The Panic – but they remain safe spaces in which lesbians can and do meet each other.

However, bars are not the first choice for many lesbians. Some lesbians are in recovery for alcohol or drugs, some are too young to go to bars, some choose not to drink or go to bars for other reasons, and some live too far away to access a lesbian or LGBT bar, while others simply find the bar environment undesirable. Other deterrents to utilizing bars as venues for forming social ties with other lesbians include entry fees (which women may be less able to pay than gay men as women are more likely to be poor) and fear of male violence, which is particularly true if the bar is located in a dangerous area or if late night travel is required. Nonetheless, bars were the first public resources for lesbians.

Resources specifically for lesbians or LGBT individuals are generally not marked like a casino in Vegas. What the literature indicates is that, in addition to obvious resources such as some lesbian bars and lesbian organizations, many of the resources that lesbians use to find each other are less observable. If lesbian resources are hidden, one could argue that they need not be hidden necessarily in a city. Perhaps lesbians use resources to facilitate social connections in smaller communities as effectively as their urban sisters do. One goal of this study is to find out

how the availability of community resources facilitates lesbian social networks and if urban areas provide more or better resources.

## **Conclusion**

The literature about social circles and friendship ties is dominated by network analysis; only more recently have scholars in the area of sociology of friendship been addressing such topics as value and status homophily. We know that race and class homophily are strongly linked to social network formation and composition, while sex and gender are circumstantially linked and more so for women. Family status shapes social networks though how it may do so for lesbians is unclear. On the whole, status homophily more strongly influences the formation and composition of social circles than value homophily, though there are some suggestions that value homophily minimizes status differences enough to foster social connection, particularly among minorities.

The literature about lesbians and their networks is not, at first glance, plentiful; however, there has been increased attention to lesbians in research over the past decades. Much of the literature about lesbian social ties and practices comes from other disciplines, some even in popular reading materials. In the general literature on social networks and friendship ties, many of the studies fail to consider sexual orientation or focus exclusively on heterosexual populations. Studies that do examine the relationship of sexuality to social ties suggest sexual orientation might well be a salient point of homophily. For lesbians and other LGBT people, the literature suggests that status homophily in relation to race and class is a prevalent characteristic of friendship circles while sexuality is generally under-researched. With regard to value homophily, there is little empirical research; however, what there is – along with other sources – suggests

that lesbians have an identifiable culture with its own values, images, and social norms around which they form social ties that are meaningful to them.

Overall, the literature suggests that lesbians are devoted to finding each other, using whatever means are available to them, means that appear to differ in accordance with location, age, class, personal interests, and more. Some lesbians use the bars, some use sports, some join a gay rights organization, some attend a woman's music festival, and others surf the net. Some struggle with isolation and go out of their way to connect to other lesbians. Some live in cities; others do not. No matter the method employed or the location, lesbians appear to want to make friendship connections with other lesbians. In addition, the literature indicates that lesbian social circles will be homophilous with regard to sex, race, and class – though we know little about the influence of sexual orientation. This study intends to increase our knowledge of homophily among this sample of lesbians, as well as explore how population influences social ties for the lesbians in my sample.

## **CHAPTER 3 - Hypotheses and Methods**

### **Hypothesis**

This study focuses on the composition and formation of lesbian social ties in relation to sociodemographic characteristics, common interests and values, community resources, and population. I use quantitative analysis to test hypotheses suggested by the literature, ordering the hypotheses into categories of status homophily, value homophily, and population. The findings of the research reviewed in the previous chapter suggest the hypotheses that I have listed below.

### ***Homophily***

The theoretical concept of homophily posits that individuals form social ties with those who resemble them in status and/or those who share their values. The hypotheses below test the relationship of status and value homophily to lesbian social ties.

Status Homophily: Race, Class, Sex, and Sexuality

- H1. Lesbian social ties will demonstrate racial homophily.
- H2. Lesbian social ties will demonstrate class homophily.
- H3. Lesbian social ties will demonstrate sex homophily.
- H4. Lesbian social ties will demonstrate homophily around sexuality.

Status Homophily: Family

- H5. Partnered lesbians will have fewer social ties than will single lesbians.
- H6. Lesbians with children in the home will have fewer social ties than will lesbians

without children in the home.

Value Homophily



- H7. Lesbian social ties will demonstrate political homophily.
- H8. Lesbian social ties will demonstrate religious homophily.

### ***Population***

The literature about lesbians in relation to population suggests that urban environments offer more opportunities for lesbians to socialize with and connect to the lesbian and gay culture. In contrast, the literature about lesbians and population indicates that living in rural areas restricts not only social opportunities but also expression of sexual identity. The hypotheses below will test the relationship between population and lesbian social ties, as well as its relationship to being out of the closet or openly lesbian.

#### Urban/Rural

- H9. Urban lesbians will have more social ties than non-urban lesbians.
- H10. Urban lesbians will have more lesbian social ties than non-urban lesbians.
- H11. Urban lesbians are more likely to be satisfied with their number of lesbian social ties than non-urban lesbians.
- H12. Urban lesbians will be more likely to meet other lesbians via formal resources than will non-urban lesbians.
- H13. Urban lesbians will be more likely to be out of the closet than non-urban lesbians.

### **Methods**

Data for this project come from 544 responses to an internet survey I designed and administered during the Spring and Summer of 2005. The survey gathered data from a non-random sample of lesbians about their social ties, interests and activities of the respondents and their friends, and information about the city or town in which they resided (see the survey tool in Appendix A). My intention was to gather data that would answer the following central research

questions: Are lesbian social ties homophilous and if so around what common characteristics? What are lesbians' experiences with using community to meet other lesbians? How does population size influence lesbian social ties?

I formatted and administered the survey instrument via the internet using the software, Opinio. I used Opinio to collect and store the responses until the data collection was complete. All survey responses are anonymous; I utilized an option within the Opinio software that makes it impossible to discern the identity of the respondents at any and all points during the process. Participation was voluntary and respondents agreed to respond only if they were adult lesbians at least 19 years of age (the age of majority in Nebraska, the home state for my university). An electronic consent form preceded the actual survey when the respondents logged onto the Opinio website. I obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at University of Nebraska at Kearney (IRB# 033105-1) and Kansas State University (IRB# 4792). I exported the data from Opinio and used SPSS 11.0.1 to analyze the data.

To obtain respondents I used snowball sampling, initially emailing the survey to twelve lesbian contacts located in three states – Texas, California, and Nebraska. The email invitation into which I posted the link to the online survey described the research goals and asked the reader to complete the survey if she was a lesbian who was at least nineteen years of age. The email served as the consent form for this study; respondents who completed the survey were considered to have consented (Appendix B). The email also asked respondents to forward the email to other adult lesbians they knew. Snowball sampling is often used when members of a special population are difficult to reach (Babbie, 2002: 179); this allows the researcher to systematically exclude and therefore target some members of the population—in this case, non-lesbians are excluded. A limitation of snowball sampling, and certainly relevant for this study, is

that respondents can more closely resemble each other than in random samples. As this study is exploring what these lesbians have in common, among other things, it is important to keep this limitation in mind. I also realize that by using networks to conduct a study about networks, I am in some ways sampling on the dependent variable, and am likely to find more homophily than in a truly random sample. This caution is somewhat tempered by the fact that my original sample of 12 became 544, suggesting at the very least a high proportion of those with weak ties (or no ties) to the original twelve contacts.

Lesbians are a hidden population, difficult to reach primarily because of their invisibility, smaller numbers relative to non-lesbians, and to some degree the stigma attached to being homosexual in a heterosexist and all too often homophobic society. Crisp observes:

Although it is not known how many lesbians there are in the United States, prevalence estimates suggest that between 2% and 10% of women in the United States are lesbians, regardless of how one defines the term. This relatively small number suggests that probability sampling in lesbian research might simply not be cost-efficient or practical for many researchers, given the large number of subjects who would have to be contacted to obtain a decent sample size. (2002, 141)

Crisp - who examined 59 studies conducted on gay men and lesbians between 1995 and 1997 and found that 51 of the 59 studies (86.4 percent) used non-random sampling (2002, 144) - further notes that “snowball sampling and friendship networks were the most frequently used method of obtaining [lesbian] respondents” (2002, 139).

In order to access my hidden population, I used a variation on the typical snowball sampling method, in which initial respondents are generally contacted face to face before they then also make face-to-face contact as a means of securing additional respondents. In this case,

all contacts were made via email – a strategy that probably accounts for both the number and the wide geographical range of respondents. Research about using internet surveys to reach hidden populations suggests that they are particularly effective for this purpose, and may well provide data that can be generalized to the hidden population – depending on the population. Koch and Emrey’s research indicates that samples of LGBT people that were obtained using internet surveys can, in fact, be representative. In a study in which the demographic data of respondents to a series of surveys posted on LGBT websites was compared to national data on gays and lesbians, they found that participants and non-participants were more alike than not. Koch and Emrey’s sample of lesbian and gay respondents “comported well with the national sample. Demographic characteristics of those electing to participate in the surveys and non-participants are practically indistinguishable” (2001, 131). Overall, the literature suggests that internet surveys are a highly effective method of reaching hidden populations, those who are “difficult to identify using standard survey research techniques” (Koch and Emery 2001, 131; see also Duncan et al. 2003). Despite this, the vast majority of research indicates that results from internet surveys and from snowball sampling, particularly combined as they are in this study, are not reliably generalizable (e.g. Babbie 2002). Because I cannot know if my sample is representative of the lesbian population in the United States, my findings should not be generalized beyond my sample – despite Koch and Emery’s findings that hint at perhaps greater generalizability of internet survey data from lesbians and gay men than we might assume.

Internet surveys are emerging as an increasingly common method of collecting data (Couper et al. 2007, Daley et al. 2003, Duncan et al. 2003, Koch and Emrey 2001). Researchers in several disciplines, including sociology, public health, and higher education, are using internet surveys because they are cost-effective, wide-reaching, relatively fast, and often generate more

replies from some populations than traditional mail surveys. Internet surveys allow respondents to complete the survey at a time and in a place of their convenience; this alone might result in more thorough or thoughtful replies than other survey methods generate. Daley et al. (2003) also note that “respondents may be more likely to be self-disclosing or less likely to respond in a socially desirable way because of the sense of distance associated with responding on the internet” (117). The chief limitation with this method of data collection is selection bias. This is related to lack of online access but researchers are finding more diverse samples of internet respondents than in previous years – suggesting that internet surveys are less hindered by selection bias than in the past (Daley et al. 2003). Census (2003) figures demonstrate that online households skew toward younger, educated, and more affluent households, while older people, Blacks and Hispanics, and poor families continue to have less access to the web. For these and other reasons, internet surveys do far more to provide information about particular samples than about an entire population. Thus, even when the sample appears to resemble the population, researchers should avoid generalizing the findings from internet surveys.

The survey was available from April 2005 through early August 2005, ultimately generating 544 completed surveys from respondents residing in the United States. There were nearly 100 international responses as well; however, I did not anticipate responses from outside the country and failed to format the survey instrument in *Opinio* in such a way as to correctly gather postal code data for other countries. Rather than asking respondents to identify the population of their communities, I asked for their zip codes. I then used those zip codes to obtain population data from the U.S. Census Bureau. When a zip code was but one of many for a metropolitan area, as is the case for many urban cities, I used population data for the entire city – thus revealing the population of the cities and towns (not the zip code areas) of each respondent.

As zip codes are central to this project – permitting me to know the exact population size for each respondent – I have excluded the international responses at this time.

### *Sample Characteristics*

As Table 3.1 indicates, the age distribution in the sample is bimodal, with peaks between the ages of 26-31 and 41-49 years. Most of those in the sample are white (87 percent) and well educated; more than forty percent have a Master’s degree or more. The sample is almost evenly split between homeowners and renters. Not surprisingly, the respondents are politically liberal (82 percent) and most (62 percent) attend religious services either never or less than twice per year.

**Table 3.1: Sample Characteristics**

	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>AGE</b>		
Under 21	22	4.0%
21-25 years	92	16.9%
26-30 years	103	18.9%
31-35 years	80	14.7%
36-40 years	59	10.8%
41-49 years	107	19.7%
50-59 years	62	11.4%
60-65 years	17	3.1%
Over 65 years	2	0.4%
<b>RACE</b>		
African American	10	1.8%
Asian or Pacific Islander	16	2.9%
Latino or Hispanic	15	2.8%
Native American	5	0.9%
White	472	86.8%
Other	26	4.8%
<b>EDUCATION</b>		

Some high school	2	0.4%
High school graduate	16	2.9%
Some college	82	15.1%
Two year degree	24	4.4%
Four year degree	180	33.1%
Masters	157	28.9%
PhD or equivalent	83	15.3%
RESIDENCE		
Own	282	51.8%
Rent	262	48.2%
POLITICAL VIEWS		
Liberal	446	82.0%
Conservative	13	2.4%
Middle of the road	85	15.6%
ATTEND PLACE OF WORSHIP		
Never	240	44.1%
Once a year	101	18.6%
Four times a year	83	15.3%
Monthly	55	10.1%
Weekly	57	10.5%
More than weekly	8	1.5%

The communities in which the respondents live vary in size from 108 residents to more than eight million residents and represent 191 United States cities and towns and 35 states (see Appendix C for a complete list). More than 40 percent of the respondents reside in cities with populations greater than 250,000 people and more than 70 percent live in cities with populations of 50,000 or more. Only about 11 percent live in cities with populations of less than 10,000 and slightly more than 25 percent live in cities with populations of less than 50,000 (see Table 3.2 for more details).

**Table 3.2: Population Breakdown**

	N	%
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1-499	4	0.7%
500-749	5	0.9%
750-999	5	0.9%
1,000-1,499	2	0.4%
1,500-2,499	5	0.9%
2,500-4,999	10	1.8%
5,000-7,499	10	1.8%
7,500-9,999	9	1.7%
10,000-14,999	7	1.3%
15,000-19,999	11	2.0%
20,000-29,999	22	4.0%
30,000-49,999	30	5.5%
50,000-74,999	32	5.9%
75,000-99,999	50	9.2%
100,000-149,999	23	4.2%
150,000-249,999	24	4.4%
250,000-499,999	74	13.6%
500,000-999,999	104	19.1%
1,000,000-1,999,999	6	1.1%
2,000,000-4,999,999	9	1.7%
5,000,000 and higher	7	1.3%
Missing	95	17.5%
Total	544	100
500-749	5	0.9%

## Measurement of Variables

### *Dependent Variables*

Composition of social ties - status and value homophily

I operationalize “composition of social ties” using two questions on the survey tool, items 27 and 28. Question 27 asked respondents to select from a list all of the options that applied to this statement: “My closest friends and I have the following in common.” The options were:



“sexual orientation;” “we’re women;” “religion;” “race/ethnicity;” “near the same age;” “sports related recreational activities;” “non-sports related recreational activities;” “we’re homeowners;” “political views;” “educational backgrounds;” “we’re single;” “we’re in relationships;” “we’re parents;” and “other.” Question 28 asked respondents to select from a list all of the options that applied to this statement: “Most of my lesbian friends and I have the following in common.” The options were: “religion;” “race/ethnicity;” “near the same age;” “sports related recreational activities;” “non-sports related recreational activities;” “we’re homeowners;” “political views;” “educational backgrounds;” “we’re single;” “we’re in relationships;” and “other.” These were not forced choice options, rather, respondents could choose as many or as few categories as they wished. For analysis, I transformed these variables into individual questions with “yes” or “no” replies (coded one and zero, respectively). If a respondent selected an option from the list, I coded the reply as a “yes;” (a value of one) if she did not select that option, I coded the answer as “no” (zero). “Yes” responses on these items indicate homophily along a particular dimension. . As the distribution of these responses serves to test hypotheses, it appears in chapter three. For all dummy variables, means can be read as proportions, e.g., the value of 0.63 for “satisfaction with # of lesbians in my life” can also be read as indicating that 63% of the sample reports satisfaction on this dimension.

#### Number of Social Ties

I operationalize the “number of social ties” using two questions in the survey tool, questions 22 and 23. Question 22 asked respondents to select from a list the one option that applied to this statement: “The number of people (gay or straight) in my closest social circle is.” The options were: “1-2;” “3-5;” “6-8;” and “more than 10.” Question 23 asked respondents to

select from a list the one option that applied to this statement: “The number of lesbians in my closest social circle is.” The options were: “No other lesbians;” “1-2 lesbians;” “3-5 lesbians;” “6-8 lesbians;” “9-10 lesbians;” and “more than 10 lesbians.” To facilitate analysis, I transformed each of these values into their category midpoints (i.e., a value of “1-2” is 1.5, “more than 10” is 11.) As Table 3.3 indicates, the mean number of people in respondents’ social circles is 7.3, the number of lesbians is 4.8.

**Table 3.3: Univariate Statistics**

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>
# People in my closest social circle (coded to category midpoints)	7.34	2.86
# Lesbians in my closest social circle (coded to category midpoints)	4.75	3.26
Satisfaction with # of lesbians in my life (1 = satisfied)	0.63	0.48
Partnered (1=yes)	0.74	0.44
Children at home (1=yes)	0.16	0.37
Urban residence (1 = urban, 0 = rural or suburban)	0.78	0.42
Closeted Status (1=closeted, 0=out of the closet)	0.25	0.44
<b>I meet other lesbians (1=yes)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>
<i>Gay/lesbian bar</i>	0.41	0.49
<i>Gay/lesbian organization</i>	0.62	0.49
<i>Gay/lesbian community center</i>	0.25	0.43
<i>Women's business</i>	0.39	0.49
<i>Sports</i>	0.43	0.49
<i>Non-sports recreation</i>	0.76	0.43
<i>Work</i>	0.75	0.44
<i>Lesbian friends</i>	0.97	0.16
<i>Online</i>	0.39	0.49

### Formation of Social Ties

I operationalize the “formation of social ties” using questions 31 through 40 in the survey tool. I asked respondents to select one of the following responses to each individual question: “never,” “sometimes,” or “often.” Questions 31-40 were as follows: “I meet other lesbians at

lesbian/gay bars or nightclubs;” “I meet other lesbians through a local lesbian (or gay/lesbian) organization;” “I meet other lesbians at a local lesbian (or gay/lesbian) community center;” “I meet other lesbians at a woman-centered business, such as a bookstore or restaurant;” “I meet other lesbians at sports activities;” “I meet other lesbians at recreational activities (non-sports);” “I meet other lesbians through work;” “I meet other lesbians through other lesbians;” “I meet other lesbians on the internet;” “I meet other lesbians in another city;” and “other.” I recoded these questions so the responses are now placed into “yes” or “no” categories. If respondents selected “sometimes” or “often,” I coded the answer as one. If the respondents selected “never,” I recoded the answer as zero. I recoded these replies to facilitate analysis, understanding that although “sometimes” and “often” are not the same they both indicate meeting other lesbians via these resources to some degree, while “never” indicates no degree of successfully using these resources for meeting other lesbians. Moreover, this recoding is required by the hypothesis – which asks whether lesbians do or do not use these resources. This kind of recoding is common practice in quantitative analysis (e.g., Almanzar, Sullivan-Catlin, and Deane 1998; Conover, Searing, and Crewe 2002; Gallant and Dorn 2001; Ohlander, Batalova, and Treas 2005; Roderick and Engel 2001; Rojas-Guyler, Ellis, and Sanders 2005). These were forced-choice questions, rather than “check all that apply.” The distribution of responses appears in Table 3.3. Not surprisingly, most respondents indicate that they meet other lesbians through friends (95 percent), non-sports recreation (76 percent) and at work (75 percent).

#### Satisfaction with number of lesbian social ties

I operationalize “satisfaction with the number of lesbian social ties” using question 41 in the survey tool. I asked respondents to reply to the following question: “Are you satisfied with

the number of lesbians in your life?” Respondents could only select one of the two possible answers: “yes” or “no,” coded as one and zero, respectively. As Table 3.3 indicates, the mean of this variable is 0.625, indicating that 63 percent of respondents are satisfied with the number of their lesbian social ties.

#### Closeted Status

I operationalize “closeted status” using question 18 in the survey tool. I asked respondents to complete the following statement: “I am.” The options were: “out to everyone;” “completely in the closet;” “in the closet only at work;” and “in the closet only with family.” I transformed this variable so the responses are in categories of “in the closet” and “not in the closet.” Those who replied “out to everyone” were given a response value of one; those who replied otherwise were categorized as zero. As indicated in Table 3.3, 25 percent of the sample reports that they are in the closet.

### *Independent Variables*

#### Relationship status

I operationalize this variable using question four from the survey. I asked respondents to complete the following statement “My relationship status can best be described as.” The options were “single,” “in a monogamous relationship,” and “in a non-monogamous relationship.” I transformed this variable into two categories to indicate whether respondents were in a relationship or not, using the categories of “single” and “in a relationship.” I recoded the replies “in a monogamous relationship,” and “in a non-monogamous relationship” into one category with a value of one. As Table 3.3 indicates, 74 percent of respondents fall into this latter category.

## Parenting Status

I operationalized this variable by using two contingent questions on the survey tool. After responding to item seven – which asks respondents to select one of the following options under the heading “parenting status:” “I have one child,” “I have 2-3 children,” “I have more than 3 children,” and “I have no children” – respondents who indicated that they had children were directed automatically to a contingency question, item nine on the survey tool. Question nine asked respondents, “do your children live with you?” The options were, “yes,” “no,” and “not applicable.” I recoded this into the categories of “children in the home” (one) and “no children in the home” (zero) to facilitate analysis.

## Urban Residence

I use U.S. Census Bureau guidelines to operationalize “rural,” “suburban,” and “urban.” According to the Census Bureau, areas with populations of less than 2,500 are categorized as rural. The Census makes a further distinction between urbanized and non-urbanized areas; the latter have populations of 50,000 or greater. Populations of 2,500-49,999 are suburban. The data for this variable come from question one of the survey tool which asks respondents to enter their zip code. I then used the U.S. Postal Service zip code data to find the city or town to which the zip code belonged. Following that, I used U.S. Census Bureau data to find the population for the city or town in which each respondent claimed residence. I created two new variables, one that indicated the name of the city/town and another for the population of that city/town. I recoded the latter into a variable with three categories, rural, urban and suburban. As the sample was heavily skewed toward urban residents (only 21 respondents, or 3.9 percent of the sample,

indicated that they lived in rural areas), I created a dummy variable for “urban.” A value of one on this variable indicates that the respondent lives in an area with a population of 50,000 or more. All others, coded as zero, are categorized as non-urban. While I recognize the limitations of these basic categories, for this study – given the very few rural respondents – this is the most useful manner in which to facilitate analysis that permits me to consider the influence of non-urban population on lesbian social ties. Theoretically, given the emphasis of the literature on the links between gays and lesbians and large urban settings, this distinction also makes substantive sense.

## CHAPTER 4 - Results

Generally, the results of my analysis consist of univariate distributions for some measures of homophily (see Table 4.1) and independent samples t-tests for hypotheses suggest differences across groups. Independent samples t-tests are the appropriate tests for comparisons across groups of respondents (Cronk 2006; Norusis 2002). Though t-tests of this kind presume a normal distribution of means, the test is robust to violations of this assumption. This is particularly true in large samples ( $n > 30$ ) (Cronk 2006). All t-tests conducted here are sample dependent – they compare means within the sample, rather than making predictions about the population. Hence before getting to the analysis I offer a reminder about generalizability: these findings tell us about my sample only; they are not generalizable and are best understood as exploratory information.

Table 4.1 details the degree to which respondents report having general and lesbian social ties that resemble them in some ways. As these were not forced choice questions – respondents were directed to choose “all that apply” - the distribution of responses is perhaps best read as a ranking of the most important traits tying respondents to their friends. As Table 4.1 indicates, sex, political beliefs, age, education, and sexual orientation are the most important dimensions on which the adult lesbians in the sample report similarity with their closest friends and their lesbian friends. The variables most significantly related to lesbian social ties are – in order – political views, age, and educational background. I find that race/ethnicity, non-sports recreation, homeownership, and being in a relationship are moderately important as common characteristics. For general social ties, being parents, and religion were less important; for lesbian social ties, being single and religion are least important.

**Table 4.1: Homophily**

I have the following in common with (1=yes)	My closest friends		My lesbian friends	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Sexual orientation	0.47	0.50	N/A	N/A
Women	0.67	0.47	N/A	N/A
Religion	0.09	0.29	0.08	0.28
Race/ethnicity	0.37	0.48	0.35	0.48
Age	0.61	0.48	0.60	0.49
Play sports	0.15	0.35	0.17	0.38
Non sports recreation	0.29	0.46	0.28	0.45
Homeowners	0.19	0.40	0.21	0.40
Political beliefs	0.65	0.48	0.68	0.47
Educational background	0.53	0.50	0.44	0.50
Single	0.05	0.22	0.05	0.22
In relationships	0.24	0.43	0.30	0.46

Though this univariate distribution provides useful information, it is also apparent that there are fairly sizable differences between some proportions. For example, 53% of respondents indicate that they have their educational background in common with their best friends, 44% with their lesbian friends. To test whether any of these differences in proportions are statistically significant, I conducted paired samples t-tests (see Table 4.2). Paired samples t-tests are appropriate when comparing values on two measures across the same respondents (e.g., pretests and posttests) (Norusis 2002; Cronk 2006). For all t-tests conducted below, the critical value of t is +/- 1.96, indicating significance at  $p < .05$ , two tailed test. Though some of the hypotheses are directional, the relatively large sample size here suggests the more conservative test is more appropriate than a one-tailed test of significance. I discuss the significant tests in relation to the relevant hypotheses below.



**Table 4.2: Homophily with t-values**

I have the following in common with	My closest friends	My lesbian friends	t-value
Sexual orientation	0.47	N/A	N/A
Women	0.67	N/A	N/A
Religion	0.09	0.08	1.09
Race/ethnicity	0.37	0.35	1.32
Age	0.61	0.60	0.44
Play sports	0.15	0.17	-1.64
Non sports recreation	0.29	0.28	0.66
Homeowners	0.19	0.21	0.09
Political beliefs	0.65	0.68	-2.03*
Educational background	0.53	0.44	3.9*
Single	0.05	0.05	0.38
In relationships	0.24	0.30	-3.26*

\* indicates a significant difference,  $p < .05$

### **Status Homophily: Race, Class, Sex and Sexuality**

H1. Lesbian social ties will demonstrate racial homophily.

Slightly more than 37 percent of respondents report having race in common with their closest friends, 34.7 percent with their lesbian friends (see Table 4.2). On its face, this does not seem to demonstrate that race is an important point of homophily for those in the sample. Given the importance of racial homophily in the literature, this finding is curious. This may be an artifact of several factors. First, unlike some social network analysis, I do not have sociodemographic data on the social ties that my respondents claim, nor did I ask them to first list the social ties about which they were referring – which might have revealed less racial diversity among their social ties than they realized. Second, whites in particular are unlikely to

see race as a primary dimension of social life or social interaction. Whiteness (87% of my respondents are white) is an unmarked social category.

To investigate this issue further, I compared the responses of whites to those of non-whites on this question, using an independent samples t-test. The literature suggests that the social ties of racial minorities are more homophilous around race than they are for white individuals (Mollica et al. 2003, Sigelman et al. 1996), though as Small (2007) indicates, this may have to do with residential concentration more than racial affinity, per se. I compared the means of “yes” responses for whites and non-whites. The results appear in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3: Mean comparison for racial homophily by race of respondent**

		Close friends Same race	Lesbian friends Same race
Non-White	<b>Mean</b>	0.25	0.22
	<b>N</b>	72	72
	<b>Std. Dev.</b>	0.44	0.42
White	<b>Mean</b>	0.39	0.37
	<b>N</b>	472	472
	<b>Std. Dev.</b>	0.49	0.48
t value		-2.49*	-2.67*

\* indicates significant difference in mean comparison at  $p < .05$

As the table indicates, whites were more likely to indicate racial similarity with their close friends and close lesbian friends than non-whites. Moreover, the independent samples t-test for these differences in means indicates that they are statistically significant differences. The t value for the mean comparison between non-whites and whites who claim to be the same race as their close friends is -2.49 ( $p < .05$ , two-tailed test). The t value for the mean comparison between non-whites and whites who claim to be the same race as their lesbian friends is -2.67 ( $p < .05$ , two-tailed test). This means that in both cases we can reject the null hypothesis of no differences

between groups. This contradicts the literature in that in my sample whites are more likely to choose this option and indicate racial homophily – but given that this was not a forced choice question it is difficult to know what to make of this result. Though this additional information is interesting, the initial findings suggest that respondents do not identify race as an important point of homophily with either their close friends or their lesbian friends.

H2. Lesbian social ties will demonstrate class homophily.

Class, at least as measured by the proxy of educational background, is an important basis for both general and lesbian social ties, as Table 4.2 indicates. Fifty-three percent of respondents indicate that they have their educational background in common with their close friends; 44% with their lesbian friends. The difference in the proportion of respondents who chose “educational background” for their close friends (53 percent) versus those who said this about their lesbian friends (44 percent) is the greatest for any such comparison in the sample. To test whether these proportions are significantly different, I conducted a paired samples t-test (see Table 4.2). This test is appropriate because it aggregates the difference between two items for each respondent in the sample and tests whether this difference is significant. As the table indicates, the t value for this test is 3.9, which is significant at the  $p < .05$  level. This means that I can safely reject the null hypothesis that there is no difference between the level of similarity in educational background that respondents indicate between their close friends and their lesbian friends. This indicates that lesbians may be less selective – or less able to be selective, depending on the available pool of lesbian social contacts – about the educational backgrounds of their lesbian social ties than they are about the same among their general social ties. If so, this is likely a reflection of the importance of both class and sexuality as points of homophily for this sample.

Class as measured by homeownership is not as important; only about 20 percent of the sample indicate this as something they have in common with their closest friends or their lesbian friends. A paired samples t-test indicates there is no difference in the proportion of respondents who report that they and their friends are homeowners versus those who report that they and their lesbians friends are homeowners ( $t=0.91$ ,  $p>.05$ ). Again, the latter may have to do with the fact that respondents did not see this as an important point of similarity.

Taken together these findings support hypothesis two, at least in part. Class – as measured by education – is an important point of homophily for those in my sample. Home ownership does not appear to be as important, however. Of note, however, is that my measurement of class is imperfect. The survey did not ask for income information, leaving me with homeownership and education as the measures of class. I have used education here as a proxy for class. Were I to conduct this study again, I would gather additional data about respondents' socioeconomic status.

H3. Lesbian social ties will demonstrate sex homophily.

As Table 4.2 indicates, 67 percent of respondents chose “we’re women” as a point of commonality with those in their closest social circle, clearly indicating the importance of sex homophily to lesbian social ties. For obvious reasons, I did not provide this option for a description of lesbian social ties. Examining the other variables related to sex homophily, I find this pattern repeated. More than 85 percent of my sample indicated that women are their best friends and the vast majority, 89.2 percent, indicated that most of their friends are women (see Table 4.4). My sample's social ties are homophilous around sex. Further exploring the significance of sex to best friend versus most friends, I ran a paired samples t-test to compare the

difference in these two items. The results reveal that these proportions are significantly different at the .05 level ( $t=2.20$ , two-tailed test). This means that I can safely reject the null hypothesis that respondents are equally as likely to have mostly women friends and a woman as their best friend. Lesbians in my sample are more likely to say that most of their friends are women rather than that their best friends are women. While the statistical difference is significant, this is not a particularly substantive difference – the actual difference is less than three percent. In the end however, hypothesis three is supported by the data, which indicate that the lesbians in my sample have social ties that are homophilous around sex.

**Table 4.4: Sex homophily**

My best friend is a			Most of my friends are		
	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std. Dev.</u>		<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std. Dev.</u>
Woman	0.89	0.31	Women	0.86	0.35

H4. Lesbian social ties will demonstrate homophily around sexuality.

Homophily around sexuality is significant if also less pronounced than is homophily around sex. It is understood that social ties between lesbians are exclusively lesbian, but the findings demonstrate that composition of general social ties is also homophilous around sexuality. At 46.7 percent, this is the fifth ranked point of homophily in my sample’s general social ties. Examining the other variables related to homophily around sexuality, I find this pattern generally repeated. Almost half of the women in my sample indicate that their best friends are lesbian or gay and 63.6 percent indicate that most of their friends are lesbian or gay (see Table 4.5). Lesbians’ general social ties as well as their social ties to other lesbians are homophilous around sexuality, though sexuality is not quite as central a point of homophily as are sex, education, and political views. Further analysis reveals that there is a significant

difference in the likelihood of claiming to have a gay best friend versus the likelihood of claiming that most of one’s friends are gay. I ran a paired samples t-test to compare the difference in how the women in my sample responded to these two items. The results reveal that these proportions are significantly different at the .05 level ( $t=7.51$ , two-tailed test). This means that I can reject the null hypothesis that respondents are equally as likely to have mostly gay friends and a best friend who is gay.

It seems likely that this difference might be attributable to the women in my sample who have a straight woman as their best friend rather than a lesbian. In the original questions, this difference is evident. While 57 percent of my sample report that most of their friends are lesbian, only 39 percent report that their best friend is also a lesbian and 39.7 percent report that their best friend is a straight woman. In general, then, the data support my hypothesis that the lesbians in my sample have social ties that are homophilous around sexuality.

**Table 4.5: Sexuality homophily**

My best friend is			Most of my friends are		
	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std. Dev.</u>		<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std. Dev.</u>
Lesbian or gay	0.47	0.50	Lesbian or gay	0.64	0.48

### **Status Homophily: Family**

H5. Partnered lesbians will have fewer social ties than will single lesbians.

To assess this hypothesis, I compared the mean number of social ties and lesbian social ties for women with partners and without. Table 4.6 reports the results of this analysis.

**Table 4.6: Mean comparison for number of social ties by relationship status**

		Social circle midpoints	Lesbian social circle midpoints
Single	Mean	7.20	4.82
	N	141	141
	Std. Deviation	2.99	3.51
Partnered	Mean	7.39	4.74
	N	403	403
	Std. Deviation	2.82	3.18
t value		-0.70	0.25

As the table indicates, partnered and single lesbians are very similar in terms of their numbers of social ties both in general with other lesbians specifically. Using an independent samples t-test because I am comparing across groups, I find these differences in means are not statistically significant. The t value for the test of the differences between single and partnered lesbians for the number of people in their social circles is -0.70 ( $p > .05$ , two tailed test). The t value for the test of differences between single and partnered lesbians for the number of people in their lesbians circles is 0.25 ( $p > .05$ , two tailed test). This means that in both cases we cannot reject the null hypothesis of no differences between groups.

The literature suggests that heterosexually partnered women may have fewer social ties than single women (Booth and Hess 1974, Granovetter 1983) but this may be due, in part, to the division of labor in the home. Some studies demonstrate that lesbian couples more equally divide household responsibilities than do heterosexual couples (e.g. Kurdek 2007). Perhaps this is related to heterosexually partnered women's fewer social ties than their single peers. If so, we can speculate that partnered lesbians do not see the decrease in social ties that heterosexual women see because they are less likely to be tied to the home. This hypothesis is not supported by the data; partnered lesbians in my sample do not have significantly fewer social ties than single respondents.

H6. Lesbians with children in the home will have fewer social ties than will lesbians with no children in the home.

To assess this hypothesis, I performed the same comparison as above between respondents with and without children in the home. Results appear in Table 4.7.

**Table 4.7: Mean comparison for number of social ties by parenting status**

		Social circle midpoints	Lesbian Social Circle Midpoints
Child/children do not live with me	Mean	7.35	4.90
	N	458	458
	Std. Deviation	2.88	3.30
Children in the home	Mean	7.28	4.05
	N	86	86
	Std. Deviation	2.78	2.99
t value		0.21	2.36*

indicates significance,  $p < .05$

Using an independent samples t-test to compare across groups, I find no significant difference in the number of people in the social circles of lesbians without children in the home and lesbians with children in the home ( $t=0.21$ ,  $p>.05$ ). This means that we cannot reject the null hypothesis of no differences between lesbians without children in the home and lesbians with children in the home on the number of general social ties.

There is, however, a significant difference in the number of lesbian social ties; those with children in the home report fewer lesbians in their social circles ( $t = 2.36$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This means that we can reject the null hypothesis of no differences between these groups in my sample on the number of lesbian social ties. The literature suggests that mothers form social ties with other mothers (Bidarta and Lavenub 2005, Fehr 2004, Fischer 1982, Liebler and Sandefur 2002,



Moore 1990). If the lesbian mothers in my sample also form ties with other mothers, it is likely that they have access to considerably fewer lesbian mothers than to heterosexual mothers. This may explain, at least in part, why lesbians with children in the home have fewer lesbian social ties, but the same number of general social ties. Also, as I suggested with regard to the former hypothesis, perhaps lesbian couples' more egalitarian division of domestic responsibilities protects those in my sample who are partnered and have children in the home from seeing the decrease in their social ties that the literature suggests takes place for heterosexual mothers. In the end, this hypothesis is only partially supported by the data in that we find lesbians with children in the home have fewer lesbian social ties but not fewer general social ties.

### **Value Homophily**

H7. Lesbian social ties will demonstrate political homophily.

Table 4.2 indicates that similarity in political beliefs is one the most important components of general and lesbian social circles. Slightly more than sixty-four percent of respondents noted that they share the same political views as their general social ties and 68.2 percent share political views with their lesbian social ties. In fact, sharing political views is the top ranked characteristic for lesbian social ties and the second ranked characteristic for general social ties. As 82 percent of the sample indicates that they are politically liberal, it is likely that so too are those in their social circles.

A paired samples t-test indicates there is a significant difference in the proportion of respondents who report that they and their friends share political views versus they and their lesbians friends ( $t=-2.03$ ,  $p<.05$ ). This means that I can safely reject the null hypothesis that there is no difference between the similarity in political views that respondents indicate sharing with their close friends and their lesbian friends. Here, unlike the finding for education, lesbians in my

sample are more homophilous around political views with their lesbian social ties. This might reflect an absence of widely varied political views among the lesbian population as compared to the general population. These findings support hypothesis seven. Political views are an important point of homophily for those in my sample among their general ties and even more so among their lesbians ties.

H8. Lesbian social ties will demonstrate religious homophily.

Table 4.2 does not indicate that religiosity is a particularly important factor in the composition of general or lesbian social circles. Fewer than ten percent of the sample selected religion as a point of commonality among their general or lesbian social ties. This may indicate that not only are lesbians not concerned about sharing religious views with their social ties but also that many lesbians are not interested enough in religion to even discuss it with their social ties. The case could be made that lesbians – not unlike feminists – are not a particularly religious population, at least in conventional terms, and therefore do not engage as often in religious discussions with their social contacts. If that is the case, lesbian social ties actually may be significantly homophilous around religion or lack thereof without their being conscious of that. I ran a paired samples t-test to further analyze this. The findings indicate no significance, with a t value of 1.09 ( $p > .05$ ). This means that I cannot safely reject the null hypothesis that there is no difference between the level of similarity in religion that respondents indicate between their close friends and their lesbian friends. Hypothesis eight is not supported by the data; my sample does not indicate that religion is an important point of homophily.

### **Population: Urban/Non-Urban**

H9. Urban lesbians will have more social ties than non-urban lesbians.

H10. Urban lesbians will have more *lesbian* social ties than non-urban lesbians.

To assess these hypotheses, I compared the mean number of general and lesbian social ties for both urban versus non-urban respondents. Results appear in Table 4.8.

**Table 4.8: Mean comparison for number of social ties by urban/non-urban residence**

		Social circle midpoints	Lesbian social circle midpoints
Non-Urban	Mean	7.28	4.73
	N	120	120
	Std. Deviation	2.99	3.46
Urban	Mean	7.36	4.76
	N	424	424
	Std. Deviation	2.83	3.21
t-value		-0.30	-0.91

As the table indicates, there are no significant differences between urban and non-urban lesbians in terms of either their general or their lesbian social ties. Using an independent samples t-test because I am comparing across groups, I find these differences in means are not statistically significant. The t value for the test of the differences between non-urban and urban lesbians for the number of people in their social circles is -0.30 ( $p > .05$ , two tailed test). The t value for the test of differences between non-urban and urban lesbians for the number of people in their lesbians circles is -0.91 ( $p > .05$ , two tailed test). This means that in both cases we cannot reject the null hypothesis of no differences between urban and non-urban lesbians. This finding contradicts the literature. It is difficult to know the reasons that non-urban lesbians have nearly the same numbers of social ties as urban lesbians. It may be that some of their social ties are not local residents and include lesbians in other communities, including online communities. Or, perhaps the non-urban lesbians in my sample live close enough to urban centers to have access to a pool of urban lesbians – more of the sample is suburban than urban, so that is certainly

possible. Hypothesis ten is not supported by the data as I find no significant differences between groups in the number of their general or lesbian social ties.

H11. Urban lesbians are more likely to be satisfied with their number of lesbian social ties than non-urban lesbians.

To assess this hypothesis, I compared the mean level of satisfaction with the number of lesbian social ties for urban versus non-urban respondents. Results appear in Table 4.9.

**Table 4.9: Mean comparison for satisfaction with lesbian social ties by urban/ non-urban residence**

		Satisfied
Non-Urban	Mean	0.61
	N	120
	Std. Deviation	0.49
Urban	Mean	0.63
	N	424
	Std. Deviation	0.48
t value		-0.43

Using an independent samples t-test because I am comparing across groups, I find these differences in means are not statistically significant. The t value for the test of the differences between non-urban and urban lesbians for satisfaction with the number of lesbians in their life is -0.43 ( $p > .05$ , two-tailed test). This means that I cannot reject the null hypothesis of no differences between urban and non-urban lesbians' satisfaction with the number of their social ties. This finding is surprising, given the emphasis in the literature on urban centers as popular among and ideal for lesbian and gay residents; however, as the numbers of social ties for urban and non-urban lesbians are not significantly different (see Table 4.8), it is logical that their

satisfaction with those numbers would not be significantly different. Moreover, though fewer in number, some studies have suggested that gay men are more connected to city life than are lesbians (e.g. LaVay and Nonas 1995). My findings do not support hypothesis eleven.

H12. Urban lesbians will be more likely to meet other lesbians via formal resources than will non-urban lesbians.

To assess this hypothesis, I compared urban and non-urban lesbians' responses to the items that asked where they meet other lesbians. These were forced choice items – respondents had to choose a response for each option. Table 4.10 presents differences in means tests for responses to each of these items.

**Table 4.10: Mean comparison of using formal resources for meeting lesbian social ties by urban/non-urban residence**

<i>I meet other lesbians at (yes = 1)</i>										
		<b>Gay Bar</b>	<b>Gay Org.</b>	<b>Gay Community Center</b>	<b>Women's Business</b>	<b>Sports</b>	<b>Non-Sports</b>	<b>Work</b>	<b>Lesbian Friends</b>	<b>Online</b>
<b>Non-Urban</b>	<i>Mean</i>	0.36	0.58	0.19	0.30	0.43	0.72	0.66	0.97	0.47
	<i>N</i>	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120
	<i>Std. Dev.</i>	0.48	0.50	0.40	0.46	0.50	0.45	0.48	0.18	0.50
<b>Urban</b>	<i>Mean</i>	0.43	0.63	0.26	0.42	0.42	0.77	0.77	0.98	0.37
	<i>N</i>	424	424	424	424	424	424	424	424	424
	<i>Std. Dev.</i>	0.50	0.48	0.44	0.49	0.49	0.42	0.42	0.15	0.48
t-value		-1.37	0.88	-1.67	-2.38*	0.22	-1.08	2.35*	-0.59	1.83

\*indicates a significant difference in means, p<.05

Using an independent samples t-test for each of these formal resource variables, I find significant differences in means for only two of the formal resources, women's business and work. The t value for the test of the differences between non-urban and urban lesbians who meet other lesbians at a women's business or at work are, respectively, -2.38 and -2.35 ( $p > .05$ , two-tailed test). This means that I can reject the null hypothesis of no differences between urban and non-urban respondents who meet other lesbians at women's businesses and at their workplaces. As the findings for the other resources are not significant, this means that I cannot reject the null hypothesis of no differences between urban and non-urban respondents who meet other lesbians via the other formal resources. Notably, online, gay community center and to a lesser degree gay bar are all close to having significant differences in means.

It is not unexpected that women's businesses are meeting places in urban but not non-urban locations; rural and suburban areas may not even have a woman-owned business. That rural and suburban lesbians are less likely to meet at work suggests that urban lesbians might be more open about their orientation, or perhaps simply more plentiful, in urban workplaces. Not unexpectedly, online meeting is more common among non-urban respondents, hinting at non-urban lesbians' lack of access to out lesbians within their communities – or maybe just hinting at their lack of formal meeting places. That gay community centers and gay bars are meeting places for non-urban lesbians, though not quite statistically significant, is unexpected but – as with the lack of difference in their numbers of and satisfaction with social ties – we can speculate that perhaps the non-urban respondents in this study live near urban centers and thus have access to some these resources. Other resources, such as the internet and sports, are not limited to urban areas and are likely to be as accessible to urban as non-urban lesbians. Overall, these findings do not suggest that urban lesbians are overwhelmingly more likely to meet other lesbians via formal

resources. Hypothesis twelve is only partially supported by these findings, in that significant differences in urban and non-urban lesbians who report meeting other lesbians via these formal resources are only present for two of the nine formal resources.

H13. Urban lesbians will be more likely to be out of the closet than non-urban lesbians.

Table 4.11 displays the mean comparisons on the variable “closeted” for urban and non-urban respondents.

**Table 4.11: Mean comparison of closeted by urban/ non-urban residence**

		Closeted
Non-Urban	Mean	0.34
	N	120
	Std. Deviation	0.48
Urban	Mean	0.23
	N	424
	Std. Deviation	0.421
t-value		*2.52

\* indicates significant difference in means

To assess this hypothesis, I compared urban and non-urban lesbians’ closeted status, using an independent samples t-test because I am comparing across groups. As the table indicates, non-urban respondents were more likely to indicate being in the closet than urban lesbians. Moreover, the independent samples t-test for these differences in means indicates that they are statistically significant differences. The t value for the mean comparison between non-urban and urban lesbians who are closeted is 2.52 ( $p < .05$ , two-tailed test). This means that I can safely reject the null hypothesis of no differences between groups. It is possible that the finding of greater likelihood of being closeted among my non-urban respondents could be, in part, a selection

effect; it may well be that closeted lesbians did not receive or respond to this survey. However, the literature also suggests support for this hypothesis.

To test this hypothesis further, I performed a crosstab analysis comparing the distribution of the responses on the item – as originally coded – asking in what contexts respondents are closeted. Table 4.12 displays the results.

**Table 4.12: In or Out? \* Urban/Non-Urban Crosstabulation**

		<i>Non-Urban</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Out to All</i>	Count	79	327	406
	%	66%	77%	75%
<i>Completely In Closet</i>	Count	6	8	14
	%	5%	2%	3%
<i>Closet Only at Work</i>	Count	27	50	77
	%	23%	12%	14%
<i>Closet Only with Family</i>	Count	8	39	47
	%	7%	9%	9%
	N	120	424	544

Chi-square=13.39, df=3, p<.05

The chi-square value indicates a relationship between closeted status and non-urban/urban residence. Again as predicted, non-urban lesbians are more likely than are urban lesbians to report that they are closeted, at least to some degree. The largest percentage difference is in the category of “closet only at work,” which might be an indication of more inclusive workplaces in cities or of greater numbers of lesbians in urban workplaces. This probably also explains why non-urban lesbians are not meeting other lesbians at work (see table 4.11). Though chi-square is a population-based inferential statistic and should be interpreted with some caution in a sample like this one, the value of 13.39 (p<.05, two tailed) mirrors the finding reported in table 4.12



above. The distribution of closeted status differs significantly between non-urban and urban respondents. These findings support hypothesis thirteen.

## **Conclusion**

Of the thirteen hypotheses, five are supported in whole or part by the data. For this sample, lesbian social ties are homophilous around sex, sexuality, education, and political views, and I find that non-urban lesbians are more likely to be closeted than are urban lesbians, particularly at work. I also find that non-urban lesbians are significantly less likely to meet other lesbians at a woman-centered business, at work, also perhaps at a gay community center or gay bar. Though non-urban lesbians do use the internet more than do urban lesbians as a resource for meeting other lesbians. I do not find that urban lesbians in this sample have advantages over non-urban lesbians with regard to their numbers of social ties with other lesbians, or their satisfaction with the number of those ties. I also do not find that partnered lesbians and lesbians with children in the home have particularly fewer social ties, despite the literature on this for heterosexual mothers and women in heterosexual unions. However, as the literature suggests, lesbians with children in the home may well have social ties with other mothers, which would likely result in more social ties with heterosexual women than lesbians – just due to the availability of lesbian versus non-lesbian mothers. That might account for the fewer lesbian social ties among the women in my sample who have children in the home. Overall, the analysis indicates that lesbian social ties are shaped by sex and sexual orientation, and to greater or lesser degrees by family status, education, and political views, and by population. The analysis reveals, however, that despite the literature’s emphasis on lesbian and gay ties to the city, lesbians who reside in non-urban areas may have equally or nearly equally thriving social ties – in general and with other lesbians.

## CHAPTER 5 - Discussion and Conclusion

The literature suggests that adult social ties demonstrate homophily in relation to status and values. Adults most often form and join social circles with those who share their status characteristics, such as race and class. Adults also form social ties with those whose values and beliefs are like their own, particularly around subjects such as politics and religious views. The literature suggests that the most salient point of homophily is race, with class a close second. Sex appears to be less central. For gays and lesbians in particular, the literature suggests that the city is an important site for the formation of social contacts. Gay communities have historically flourished in large urban centers.

The findings of this study regarding status homophily are mixed. The strongest point of similarity for my respondents appears to be sex – most of the respondents' friends are women as are their best friends (hypothesis three). The lesbians in my sample, in contrast to the literature, have mostly sex-segregated social ties. This difference is undoubtedly related to heterosexual gender norms. Heterosexual women, by and large, are funneled into mixed-sex networks via heterosexual marriage and motherhood. Single heterosexual women also network within mixed-sex peer groups; the literature indicates that this is largely for the purposes of securing a mate. Obviously, lesbians do not need to interact with men in order to secure a partner. In addition, the literature points to women as providing more intimate social ties within friend relationships. Heterosexual women form their closest ties with other women and both men and women report more intimate and satisfying friendships with women than with men. If straight women's primary incentive to form social ties with men is heterosexual marriage, as opposed to close friendship – which they are more likely to form with women – it is easy to suppose that lesbians

will have little reason to form social ties with heterosexual men. The lack of attention to sexuality in the literature has, to some degree, veiled the influence of sexuality and how it intersects with gender to influence sex homophily.

Though less central than sex, my findings also indicate that respondents form ties around class, particularly as measured by educational background (hypothesis two). Moreover, the lesbians in my sample prioritize education as a point of homophily differently for their general social ties than they do for their lesbian social ties – marking it as more central to their general ties than to their lesbian ties. It seems possible that sharing the cultural understandings of what it is to be lesbian could be more important than sharing the same educational background for my sample. Here we find seemingly competing points of homophily – sexual orientation and education - but more likely this is less about the clash between sexuality and class and more about how the two intersect for the mostly white educated urban lesbians in my sample.

Sexual orientation is a strong point of homophily for the lesbians who responded to this survey, though perhaps less than both class and sex (hypothesis four). Homophily around sexual orientation, for my sample, includes ties with gay men. This speaks to the importance, I think, of value homophily and quite likely homophily around difference and oppression. Lesbians have their own culture but it is a shared culture in many respects, shared with other non-heterosexuals and most especially with gay men. I think gender is at work in this process, in that the privileging of men – even gay men – shapes lesbian culture as one shared with gay men, sometimes even dominated by gay male norms. As such, lesbians and gay men are united in some ways around their common non-heterosexual status, and around their position of lesser privilege in relation to heterosexuals. This would be homophily centered on shared oppression, as well as sexual orientation. In addition, because the gay culture is a shared culture, lesbians and gay men likely

share some important common interests, and political, social and personal attitudes and concerns. Here, we can imagine that some of the forces that influence homophily around sexual orientation are affected by sexism and by heterosexism.

Family status is relevant to the lesbian social ties of some of my respondents – lesbians with children in the home. These respondents show no significant difference in the number of general ties but they have significantly fewer lesbian social ties (hypothesis six). Homophily related to family status, as revealed in the literature, seems unquestionably heteronormative – shaped not only by heterosexual norms but also by gender norms. One can argue that the women participants in those studies have nearly equal numbers of men and women in their social networks as an outcome of heterosexuality – either they are married or seeking eventual marriage thus interacting socially and/or intimately with men and within men’s networks. They have fewer numbers of social ties when they have children in the home, no doubt, because gender norms designate women as the primary parent and make non-kin social ties secondary to family ties. Their position as primary caregiver would also influence their proximity to and time for social ties. The results of this study show that the lesbians in my sample who have children in the home do have fewer ties to other lesbians. This is likely shaped by homophily around motherhood, which is first shaped by gender and sexuality norms. Therefore, we can speculate that lesbians with children in the home who want to form friendships with other mothers will find many more heterosexual mothers than lesbian mothers with whom to form those ties.

Some of the findings about status homophily that I expected were not in evidence. Although the literature suggests we should find homophily around family status and class, my results do not strongly suggest this is the case for my respondents. For class, we find that although respondents have homophilous ties around education, this study does not demonstrate

class homophily as measured by my other measure of class - shared homeownership (hypothesis two). Moreover, I do not have a solid measure of class; I gathered incomplete information from my subjects about class – their class and the class of those with whom they form ties – making it unclear whether the findings around education definitively indicate class homophily for this sample. In the end, I cannot claim that my sample is homophilous around class as much as I can demonstrate that they are homophilous around education. Finally, findings also do not show that being partnered influences social ties or that having children in the home influences general social ties. Family and relationship status may not influence lesbians’ social ties in the same way as heterosexual women’s social ties most likely because lesbian relationships less rigidly adhere to gender norms around domestic life.

The findings that demonstrate an absence of racial homophily also contrast with the literature (hypothesis one). This is a perplexing finding. As I noted earlier, the measurement for racial homophily might not have been able to accurately provide a snapshot of how racially segregated my sample’s social ties are. Possibly, my sample has racially diverse social circles, maybe because racial differences are less an influence than their shared identities as lesbians, or a combination of their shared identities as educated, lesbian, and politically liberal. The literature supports the notion that value homophily can mitigate status differences and open a window for social ties that might not otherwise develop; perhaps common values have mitigated racial differences for my sample and their friends. Alternately, maybe the lesbians in my sample do have racially homophilous social ties and my survey instrument failed to capture that; perhaps their social ties are less diverse than my finding suggests. If so, this might hint at how whiteness influences social ties and the ideal notions of social ties for my sample of mostly white educated lesbians.

Taken together, the findings in this study about status homophily suggest that sex, gender, and sexual orientation strongly shape social ties for the lesbians in this sample. Although sexual orientation has received little attention from researchers, these data indicate that sexual orientation and likely its intersection with other status characteristics appears to have a significant influence on the sample's social ties, particularly around homophily related to sex, sexual orientation, and children in the home. At the least, these findings indicate that sexual orientation and its intersection with other characteristics merits considerably more scholarly attention.

The findings of this study regarding value homophily are likewise mixed. Value homophily intersects with status homophily; that much is clearly supported by the literature. For instance, class and values are closely linked and operate together to shape social ties. The results from this study suggest that the intersecting status of white, educated lesbian is linked to the value category "political views." The sample is overwhelmingly white, mostly educated, the vast majority very politically liberal and reporting social ties shaped by political homophily (hypothesis seven). Among other things, this points to the nuanced contexts in which social ties form.

Religion, also a point of value homophily in the literature, did not prove important to the women in my sample, however (hypothesis eight). I suspect the absence of traditional religious beliefs, or at least the absence of religious fervor, might well be a point of homophily for lesbians. These data do not permit me to assess that but, given their political views and education, and importantly their membership in more than one oppressed group that has been the target of religious conservatism, it seems a reasonable notion that the lesbians in this sample might form ties with others who share the absence of conservative religious views.

Though limited in scope, my findings on value homophily suggest that sexual orientation influences value homophily and social ties for the lesbians in my sample. Values are without doubt shaped by sexual orientation – particularly in a social and political climate where sexual orientation and the rights of lesbians and gay men are in question and to some degree denied. That values which divide social groups so effectively would shape social ties is not surprising.

These findings, however, suggest two things of potential importance. First, the absence of religious beliefs or traditional religious beliefs may itself be a point of homophily. Second, the degree to which value homophily is important seems to be influenced by with whom one is forming the social tie. For this sample, political views are more commonly shared with other lesbians. Is this because liberal political views are so common among lesbians? Is this because lesbians are less tolerant when another lesbian holds conservative political views? It seems clear that learning about value homophily might require considering sexual orientation and membership in other subgroups or cultural groups who commonly share very similar ideas about points of value homophily such as politics and religion.

The findings of this study regarding the effect of urban residence on social ties suggest that non-urban lesbians may be less disadvantaged than the literature would have us believe. Rural and suburban lesbians are less likely to report meeting other lesbians at a woman-owned business or at work and more likely to be closeted, but beyond those two findings there are no significant differences among these two groups in my sample (hypotheses nine through thirteen). Although the literature strongly suggests that urban lesbians find more lesbian social ties and are more satisfied with their numbers of lesbian social ties, this study does not bear that out. My findings indicate that urban and non-urban lesbians in my sample have comparable numbers of lesbian social ties, and satisfaction with their number of ties. Moreover, the lesbians in my

sample showed little difference with regard to accessing formal resources. The influence of population on lesbian social ties appears in this study to be less than expected. One study (LeVay and Nonas 1995) suggests that while the city is unmistakably linked to gay life, it may be less important to lesbian life. These findings may offer some support for that supposition.

Overall, one of the more important contributions of this study is the inclusion of sexual orientation as a salient point of homophily. Equally important is the consideration of the intersections of sexuality with gender, class, and race. Value and status homophily likewise undoubtedly operate together to affect social ties. When researchers consider these intersections, they are more likely to make visible the often invisible or overlooked contexts in which relationships form. For instance, knowing that patterns of sex homophily in adult social ties is – almost without question – related to heterosexuality illuminates processes of gender and heteronormativity. My findings on status and value homophily for this sample, and on the effects of urban residency, suggest that social context is central to understanding social ties.

Several of the limitations of this study are related to its design – the sampling technique, the administration of the survey, and the survey tool itself present limitations. First, while snowball sampling is effective with this population, this nonprobability sampling technique results in samples that are not likely to be representative. For example, given what we know about racial homophily from the literature, it is not unreasonable to suspect that snowball sampling may be related to the dominant presence in my sample of white educated lesbians. Snowball samples can and have resulted in respondents that more closely resemble each than those in random samples; therefore, research using snowball samples is most often exploratory. Second, internet surveys – while very cost-effective and useful in other ways – result in data that cannot be generalized to the population. Third, the survey instrument gathers primarily



categorical data when continuous data would have been more useful for analysis. In addition, the survey fails to capture sufficient data for some measures, such as class and religiosity. While I am committed to bringing to light the voices of the lesbians in my sample, I recognize the limitations of this study. The findings are exploratory and should not be generalized beyond my sample. However, I believe this study does have something to offer in the way of increasing our understanding of what factors might be considered when researching the social ties of lesbians and non-lesbians.

Future research should take care to prevent some of the limitations of this study by improving the study design – for example, by using probability sampling techniques. Future research should secure a more diverse sample and better capture measures for class, and use an intersectional approach when designing the study and analyzing the data. Future research should also focus on getting more in-depth information about lesbian social ties. What, for instance, is the process by which lesbians form new ties with each other? Is the claim of Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon – that social ties are difficult to form in lesbian bars because the patrons are already members of established social circles that are not particularly welcoming of new members – relevant beyond their experience in 1972? Are lesbian or gay bars particularly restrictive environments in which to form new ties but particularly useful for maintaining existing ties? These and other questions might be more comprehensively explored using qualitative methods, such as interview data. Future research should also consider not just the presence of religiosity but also its absence. Additionally, my findings suggest that future research should consider homophily around sexual orientation in relation to the strength of social ties. Researchers should also look at intersections within and between value and status characteristics, including sexual orientation and gender. Are there differences in patterns of homophily for lesbians as related to

their gender presentation, their identities as butch and femme, for instance? Research on lesbian social networks would benefit from more attention to class and race, as well. Future research should look more closely at population's influence on social ties, including the affects of residential proximity to urban areas – as opposed to residence within those areas. In general, the literature on social ties and social networks should study and discuss sexual orientation as a point of homophily.

This study looks at a population often overlooked in social science literature, and certainly among those researching social ties and networks. In fact, much of the social network research has failed altogether to consider sexual orientation, even when norms of heterosexuality were surely at play for their study participants. Like whiteness, heterosexuality is so privileged as to be socially invisible. I have attempted in this study to consider the influence of context on shaping social ties, thus taking note of social factors that govern how and under what circumstances people build relationships. Some of my results contradict the literature about social ties and raise questions about how the intersection of sexual orientation and gender shape friendship ties and social circles. And, some of the findings suggest that it may be very important to examine how social and structural forces, perhaps especially those related to race, sexual orientation, class, and gender, operate on the formation of social ties.

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## Appendix A - Survey Tool

### Lesbian Networking Survey\*

1. My zip code is \_\_\_\_\_

2. My age is

- Under 21
- 21-25
- 26-30
- 31-35
- 36-40
- 41-49
- 50-59
- 60-65
- Over 65

3. My race is

- African American
- Latino or Hispanic
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Native American
- White
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

4. My relationship status can best be described as

- Single
  - In a monogamous relationship
  - In a non-monogamous relationship
- If you are in a relationship, do you live with your lover?
- Yes
  - No

If you are in a relationship how many years have you been with your current partner?

5. Parenting status

- I have one child

- I have 2-3 children
- I have more than 3 children
- I have no children

If you have no children, do you want to have children?

- Yes
- No

#### 6. My education is

- Some high school
- High school graduate
- Some college
- Two-year college degree
- Four-year college degree
- Masters degree
- Ph.D.

#### 7. My job is?

- Unemployed
- Student
- Factory worker
- Clerical worker
- Retail worker
- Medical/dental professional
- Elementary or secondary teacher
- College/university professor
- Social worker
- Law enforcement
- Landscape worker
- Lawyer
- Military
- Professional athlete
- Sales person
- Real estate
- Food service
- Banking/finance
- Human resources
- Management
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 8. Residence

- I own my home
- I rent my home

9. My political views can best be described as

- Liberal
- Conservative
- Middle of the road

10. I attend church or a place of worship

(check the answer that nearest matches your attendance)

- Never
- Once a year
- Four times a year
- Once a month
- Once a week
- More than once a week

11. My community has one or more (check all that apply)

- Lesbian or gay/lesbian bar or nightclub
- Lesbian or lesbian/gay community organization/group
- Lesbian or gay/lesbian community center
- Gay/lesbian hotline
- Church or place of worship where openly lesbian/gay members worship
- A woman-centered business, such as a bookstore or restaurant
- None of these

12. In my leisure time i like to (check your top 3 answers)

- Watch sports
- Play sports
- Read
- Go to the bar
- Visit museums
- Watch movies/tv
- Gather with friends
- See a play
- Travel
- Surf the internet
- Arts & crafts
- Go camping
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

13. I drink alcohol

- Never
- Rarely

- Sometimes
- Often

14. I use illegal substances/drugs

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- I prefer not to answer

15. I am

- Out to everyone
- In the closet  
If you are in the closet, are you in the closet
  - Everywhere
  - At work only
  - With family only

16. Most of my closest friends are

- Lesbian
- Straight women
- Gay men
- Straight men
- Bi-sexual women
- Bi-sexual men
- Transgendered, identify as male
- Transgendered, identify as female

17. I personally know

(include all the lesbians you know even if you don't socialize with them)

- No other lesbians
- 1-5 lesbians
- 6-10 lesbians
- 10-20 lesbians
- 20-30 lesbians
- More than 30 lesbians

18. The number of people in my closest social circle is

- 1-5
- 5-10



- 10-15
- More than 15

19. The number of lesbians in my closest social circle is

- No other lesbians
- 1-2 lesbians
- 3-5 lesbians
- 6-8 lesbians
- 9-10 lesbians
- 11-15 lesbians
- More than 15 lesbians

20. I socialize with other lesbians (check the best answer)

- Once a day
- Once a week
- Once a month
- Four times a year
- Three times a year
- Twice a year
- Once a year

21. In relation to most of my lesbian friends, I think my income is

- About the same
- Greater
- Lesser

22. My best friend (not a relative or partner) is a

- Lesbian
- Straight woman
- Gay man
- Straight man
- Bi-sexual woman
- Bi-sexual man
- Transgendered, identifies as male
- Transgendered, identifies as female

23. My closest friends and I have the following in common (check all that apply)

- Sexual orientation
- We're women
- Religion
- Race/ethnicity

- Near the same age
- Sports related recreational activities
- Non-sports related recreational activities
- We're homeowners
- Political views
- Educational backgrounds
- We're single
- We're in relationships
- We're parents
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

24. Most of my lesbian friends and I have the following in common  
(check all that apply)

- Religion
- Race/ethnicity
- Near the same age
- Sports related recreational activities
- Non-sports related recreational activities
- We're homeowners
- Political views
- Educational backgrounds
- We're single
- We're in relationships
- We're parents
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

25. When my social circle changes, it's usually because

(check the answer that best applies)

- I move to a new city/town
- Others move out of my city/town
- Conflict between friends
- Conflict between lovers
- People drift apart
- Don't know the answer
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

26. For me, having lesbian friends is

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not important

27. I meet other lesbians

At lesbian/gay bars or nightclubs

Often    Sometimes    Never

Through a local lesbian (or gay/lesbian) organization	Often	Sometimes	Never
At a local lesbian (or gay/lesbian) community center	Often	Sometimes	Never
At a woman-centered business, such as a bookstore or restaurant	Often	Sometimes	Never
Sports activities	Often	Sometimes	Never
Recreational activities (non-sports)	Often	Sometimes	Never
Through work	Often	Sometimes	Never
Through other lesbians	Often	Sometimes	Never
On the internet	Often	Sometimes	Never
In another city	Often	Sometimes	Never
Other:	Often	Sometimes	Never

28. Are you satisfied with the number of lesbians in your life?

- Yes
  - Why? (space for answer, 50 word limit)
- No
  - Why not? (space for answer, 50 word limit)

29. Describe your current social circle (space for answer, 50 word limit)

30. Describe your ideal social circle (space for answer, 50 word limit)

\* This is the original survey tool. All of these questions were asked in this order; however, some questions were renumbered when placed into the online format for *Opinio*. For example, question 27 became multiple questions, with each item considered one question.

## Appendix B - Consent Form

Requesting Email:

My name is Laura Logan. I am an undergraduate student at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, majoring in Sociology with a minor in Women's Studies. I am conducting a study to learn about adult lesbian networking practices, as part of my Women's Studies senior seminar class.

This survey relies on snowball sampling, so please forward this email to any adult lesbian or lesbian/gay organization that you think might be interested in participating. Because the subject of this research is adult lesbian networking, I am seeking lesbian participants who are 19 years or older.

Participation in my research project is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you will be asked a series of questions about your friendships and social activities. You will also be asked questions about yourself. It is anticipated that it will take about 15 minutes to complete the survey. You may choose not to participate or to cease participating at any point before or during the survey.

There are no known personal risks associated with participation. Participants can be assured that the information supplied will be completely anonymous; that is, no one will be able to identify you by your responses. Completion of this survey signifies your voluntary consent to participate in this research.

Please direct any questions or concerns you may have to the principal investigator, Laura Logan, at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, [loganls@unk.edu](mailto:loganls@unk.edu), or her faculty sponsors Dr. Suzanne Maughn ([maughans@unk.edu](mailto:maughans@unk.edu)) and Dr. Diane Wysocki ([wysockid@unk.edu](mailto:wysockid@unk.edu)).

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the investigator, you may contact the University of Nebraska at Kearney Institutional Review Board, telephone 308-865-8235.

If you have read the above information and agree to participate, please click on the link below to access the survey.

Thank you,  
Laura Logan

## Appendix C - Cities and States of Residence

Adams, NY	Charlotte, NC	Flushing, MI	Louisville, CO
Alameda, CA	Chesaning, MI	Freeport, PA	Lubbock, TX
Albany, CA	Cheswick, PA	Fresno, CA	Lyman, SC
Albuquerque, NM	Chicago, IL	Gibsonia, PA	Madison, WI
Anaheim, CA	Chico, CA	Goleta, CA	Manhattan, KS
Anchorage, AK	Christianburg, VA	Grand Blanc, MI	Marianna, FL
Apple Valley, CA	Cincinnati, OH	Greensboro, NC	Martinez, CA
Arvada, CO	Clifton Forge, VA	Greenville, SC	Mason City, IA
Asheville, NC	Collegeville, PA	Greenwood, IN	Mason, OH
Austin, TX	Colorado Springs, CO	Hartsburg, MO	Max Meadows, VA
Auxvasse, MO	Columbia, MO	Hayward, CA	Mc Coy, VA
Babylon, NY	Columbus, OH	Henderson, NV	McKinney, TX
Bay City, TX	Cordova, TN	Herndon, VA	Memphis, TN
Bellevue, NE	Covington, LA	Highland Mills, NY	Mesa, AZ
Bend, OR	Daly City, CA	Hyattsville, MD	Metamora, MI
Benton, IL	Decatur, GA	Indianapolis, IN	Miamisburg, OH
Berkeley, CA	Deland, FL	Jacksonville, FL	Middletown, NY
Birdsboro, PA	Denver, CO	Jefferson City, MO	Mill Valley, CA
Blacksburg, VA	Des Moines, IA	Kannapolis, NC	Minneapolis, MN
Bloomington, IN	Detroit, MI	Kearney, NE	Mishawaka, IN
Boulder, CO	Durham, NC	King of Prussia, PA	Mobile, AL
Brooklyn, NY	Easley, SC	Knightdale, NC	Morrison, CO
Broomfield, CO	Edwardsville, KS	Laredo, TX	Naperville, IL
Brownwood, TX	El Sobrante, CA	Las Vegas, NV	Nashville, IN
Carlsbad, CA	Elkins Park, PA	Lawrence, KS	New Paltz, NY
Caroleen, NC	Ellenboro, NC	Lexington, KY	Normal, IL
Carrollton, TX	Elm Creek, NE	Lincoln, NE	New York City
Carter Lake, IA	Emeryville, CA	Linden, MI	Oakland, CA
Cascade, CO	Ephraim, WI	Littleton, CO	Oceanside, CA
Castle Hayne, NC	Evergreen, CO	Long Beach, CA	Omaha, NE
Champaign, IL	Fayetteville, NC	Longmont, CO	Oneonta, NY
Chanute, KS	Flint, MI	Los Angeles, CA	Overland Park, KS

Pacifica, CA	Sacramento, CA	Santa Monica, CA	Taylors, SC
Palm Bay, FL	Saginaw, MI	Santa Rosa, CA	Terre Haute, IN
Palm Beach Gardens, FL	Saint Charles, MO	Sayre, PA	Topeka, KS
Parker, CO	Saint Cloud, MN	Seattle, WA	Travelers Rest, SC
Philadelphia, PA	Saint Joseph, IL	Sidney, IL	Urbana, IL
Pittsburgh, PA	Saint Louis, MO	Silver Spring, MD	Vallejo, CA
Pleasant Hill, CA	Saint Paul, MN	Simi Valley, CA	Ventura, CA
Portland, OR	Salt Lake City, UT	Simpsonville, SC	Visalia, CA
Prescott Valley, AZ	San Diego, CA	South Bend, IN	Vista, CA
Radford, VA	San Francisco, CA	South San Francisco, CA	Warsaw, MO
Raleigh, NC	San Jose, CA	Southaven, MS	Washington, DC
Ramona, CA	San Leandro, CA	Southport, NC	Watseka, IL
Rancho Cucamonga, CA	San Luis Obispo, CA	Spartanburg, SC	West Salem, WI
Richmond, VA	San Mateo, CA	Springfield, MO	Westland, MI
Roanoke, VA	Santa Barbara, CA	Sun Prairie, WI	Wilmington, NC
Rochester, MN	Santa Fe, NM	Syracuse, NY	