

The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

College of Education

**THE DEVELOPMENT AND PSYCHOMETRIC PROPERTIES OF THE
SOURCES OF LESBIAN RELATIONSHIP SELF-EFFICACY SCALE**

A Dissertation in

Counseling Psychology

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

August 2009

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation consisted of four studies that aimed to develop and explore the psychometric properties of the Sources of Lesbian Relationship Self-Efficacy Scale (SLRSE). Study 1 describes the initial item development of the SLRSE which consisted of focus group research, professional consultation, and a review of literature. The purpose of Study 2 was item reduction as well as establishing the content validity. In Study 3, further item reduction was conducted and the SLRSE's factor structure and reliability was assessed. The purpose of Study 4 was to conduct a confirmatory factor analysis and assess the validity of the SLRSE. Content, criterion, divergent, and known-groups validity were also explored in Study 4. For each study, the participant recruitment, inclusion criteria, procedures for collecting data, instruments, analysis of data, and a discussion of the results is presented. The results of these four studies indicated that the SLRSE evidenced a four-factor structure parallel to three of the four sources of self-efficacy. Moreover, the SLRSE evidenced sufficient reliability and validity. Nevertheless, further exploration of this scale's psychometric properties with a more heterogeneous sample is warranted. The limitations of this study, as well as the theoretical, research, and clinical implications are discussed.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the many people who walked with me in this journey. First, I want to express my overwhelming gratitude to my academic adviser and committee chair, Dr. Kathy Bieschke. My appreciation extends far beyond her role as my committee chair. Her guidance, support, humor, and uncanny ability to demonstrate patience throughout my entire graduate career was invaluable. She taught me how to be a better researcher, therapist, and colleague. She taught me how to see each obstacle as an opportunity, even the ones that “I did not want or wish for.” Words cannot describe my appreciation, and I feel incredibly fortunate for her guidance and mentoring.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my other committee members, Mary McClanahan, Bob Slaney, Ben Locke, and Stephanie Shields. Thank you so much for your expertise, contributions, and willingness to read innumerable pages. Your feedback and advice was always appreciated, and although I always felt challenged, I also felt supported and encouraged. I was incredibly fortunate to have such an amazing committee!

My family has also been vital in this process. I would like to thank them for providing support and encouragement when I struggled most. Your words of encouragement, the flower deliveries, and Starbucks gift cards made the obstacles bearable. Thank you! I would also like to thank Amy Brunner for the strength, support, praise, and encouragement she provided every step of the way. Even with distance, her belief in my ability to succeed was unyielding and it motivated me when I needed it most. My love and gratitude is immeasurable.

For the countless hours spent cheering me along, I am also very grateful for my closest friends and loved ones. This includes Bunny Edmonds, Jenny Borushko, Donna Thomas, Kelly Blasko, Nadine Mastroleo, and Patty McKenna. You have all offered bottomless encouragement, feedback, and support. You knew when I needed a pep talk, a road trip, a hike, a run, a Kleenex, or just a cold beer. Your unconditional support was even evident in your willingness to help me collect data, edit dissertation chapters, and offer statistical consultation. You always knew what I needed, and for this, I am truly grateful. Moreover, during my Pre-doctoral Internship I was blessed with several amazing friends that helped me in the last leg of this journey. Thank you to Nate Mitchell, Anna Settle, Leena Varma, Maggie Hope, Valri Bromfield, and Kylie Stanley. I would not have made it through my final year without you.

There are countless others to whom I am truly grateful, including Jill Morgan, Alycia Chambers, Carleen Britton, Tom and Connie Schmelz, and Breean Walas. You each helped me stay grounded, and in many ways, you taught me how to thrive during difficult moments. Your confidence in me, words of wisdom, insight, and love nourished me. Thank you!

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the LGBT research team members: Dr. Kathy Bieschke, Kelly Blasko, Megan Marks, Parrish Paul, and Jocelyn Williams. Your assistance, thoughtful contributions, and advice over the course of five years were staples of my graduate experience and vital to my dissertation. I feel incredibly grateful for the experience of working with such intelligent, caring, and dedication colleagues.

As a final note, I would like to thank the many participants who took the time and energy to respond to my studies. I feel immense appreciation for your time, energy, and willingness to share your experiences. Thank you! Furthermore, I am also grateful to Dr. Larry Kurdek, whose line of research paved the way for many others. His research served as the foundation for this dissertation, and it was both politically and socially important for same-sex couples. Although Dr. Kurdek recently passed away, his contributions to the lesbian and gay community are remembered.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

As gay and lesbian individuals have become more open and visible, so too have their romantic relationships. This increased visibility has several implications for researchers, one of which is a call for further investigation into these intimate relationships (Peplau & Fingerhut, 2007). The current dissertation study aims to contribute to this understanding by examining the utility of Bandura's (1986; 1997) self-efficacy theory as a conceptual model for investigating women's same-sex relationships. More specifically, I sought to develop and establish the psychometric properties of the Sources of Lesbian Relationship Self-Efficacy Scale (SLRSE). The construction of this measure may enable researchers to identify what contributes to lesbian's self-efficacy for romantic relationships.

The purpose of the current chapter is to provide a brief description of the theoretical and empirical framework used to support the construction of the SLRSE. I begin by providing a brief overview of Bandura's (1986) self-efficacy theory, the four sources thought to contribute to self-efficacy beliefs, and the available research on relationship self-efficacy. Next, I review the current same-sex relationship literature, which underscores the close parallels between Bandura's (1986) four self-efficacy sources with the constructs that have been associated with relationship satisfaction. While I highlight the relevant research with lesbians, I also utilize evidence from the gay male and heterosexual literature when research pertaining to lesbians is not available.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in her/his ability to succeed in a given situation or task (Bandura, 1986; 1997). It often takes the form of a self-fulfilling prophecy in that the more an individual believes she/he can achieve a goal, the more likely she/he is to do so (Bandura, 1986; 1994; 1997). Self-efficacy beliefs are thought to affect the choices an individual makes, the amount of effort one contributes to attain a goal, one's perseverance of a given task, and one's emotional patterns and reactions when encountering a situation (Bandura, 1986; 1997; Schunk & Pajares, 2002). For these reasons, people are thought to choose tasks they believe they are capable of and confident about doing, and avoid tasks they do not believe they can accomplish.

According to Bandura (1986; 1997) there are four sources from which self-efficacy may develop. The first, and typically the most salient, is personal performance accomplishments (i.e., past successful experiences performing the actual task). The second source is vicarious experience (i.e., observing and/or listening to the successful experiences of another similar person). The third source is verbal persuasion (i.e., peers, family, or friends offering advice, support, and encouragement), and the final source is emotional arousal (i.e., the physiological or emotional cues that are associated with the idea of the future act). Bandura's theory posits that each source rarely operates independently, and each contributes to an individual's overall self-efficacy to accomplish a specific goal.

Self-efficacy research is quite exhaustive (for review see Bandura, 1997) and has been explored in a broad range of topics including teaching (Hoy & Woolfolk; 1990), research (Bieschke, 2000), sports (Feltz, Short, & Sullivan, 2008), exercise (Benisovich,

Rossi, Norman, & Nigg, 1998), and nursing (Lez & Baggett, 2002). Additionally, two studies have explored self-efficacy beliefs in romantic relationships.

For example, an early study conducted by Lopez and Lent (1991) examined three types of efficacy beliefs (self-efficacy, other-efficacy, and relationship-inferred self-efficacy; SE, OE, RISE, respectively) that unmarried heterosexual couples may have about their relationships. After accounting for age, sex, and prior romantic relationships, Lopez and Lent (1991) found that the three efficacy measures accounted for 40% of the variance in relationship satisfaction, 47% of the variance in relationship adjustment, and 12% of the variance in expected persistence. At their three month follow-up study, they found that the three self-efficacy measures combined (SE, OE, and RISE) were significantly predictive of relationship adjustment scores.

A more recent study conducted by Morua and Lopez (2005) built upon Lopez and Lent's (1991) relationship self-efficacy measure (RSE) by adding 10 items and clarifying the factor structure of the scale. Morua and Lopez found that their revised relationship self-efficacy scale was also significantly related to relationship satisfaction.

Both Lopez and Lent's (1991) study and Morua and Lopez's (2005) study provide initial evidence that Bandura's (1986; 1997) self-efficacy theory may be a useful model for exploring intimate heterosexual relationships. Furthermore, Kurdek's (1994; 1995; 1998; 2004; 2006a) comprehensive line of research comparing same-sex to opposite-sex couples suggests that there are more similarities between heterosexual and same-sex couples than there are differences. By extension, this indicates that self-efficacy theory may also be valuable in exploring the relationships of lesbian and gay individuals.

It is important to emphasize that Lopez and Lent (1991) and Morua and Lopez (2005) examined relationship self-efficacy beliefs, not the sources. Unfortunately, I have located no published research which explores the sources of relationship self-efficacy for heterosexual or same-sex relationships. Interestingly, when each of Bandura's (1986) four self-efficacy sources are broken down into their respective constructs (e.g., verbal persuasion is explored as social support and/or encouragement provided by others), it appears that these sources have been explored in the lesbian and gay literature, and they appear to be factors that uniquely affect same-sex relationship satisfaction (e.g., Balsam & Szymanski, 2005a; Berzon, 1990; Connolly, 1999; Grossman & D'Augelli, 2004; Kurdek, 1987; 1998; 2005; 2006; Kurdek & Schmitt, 1987; LaSala, 1998; Lewis et al. 2001; Rostosky et al., 2004; Todosijevic, Rothblum & Solomon, 2005). Therefore, if relationship self-efficacy beliefs are associated with relationship satisfaction for heterosexual individuals, and the four constructs (i.e., sources) thought to contribute to self-efficacy are associated with relationship satisfaction for lesbians and gay men, then it follows that exploring the sources of relationship self-efficacy may be a useful model to explore same-sex relationship satisfaction. In an effort to provide an empirical foundation for the construction of the SLRSE, I next review key research findings that investigate each of the four constructs as explored with the lesbian and gay community.

The Four Constructs Explored in Same-Sex Relationship Research

This review of same-sex relationship research is presented to highlight that (a) there are unique factors affecting same-sex relationship satisfaction, and (b) these factors are also conceptually consistent with Bandura's (1986; 1997) four sources of self-efficacy. For instance, researchers and authors consistently speak to the greater

dissolution rate of same-sex couples (i.e., past performance), the limited availability of role models (i.e., vicarious experiences), the limited support from family and society (i.e., verbal persuasion), and the negative emotions (i.e., emotional arousal) frequently associated with being an LGBT individual in American society (e.g., minority stress and internalized homophobia). These factors, as described below, closely resemble the four sources thought to contribute to self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986; 1997). Further, I have emphasized the research indicating differences between gay men and lesbians, as they relate to Bandura's (1986) proposed self-efficacy sources because this evidence was fundamental to the decision to focus on developing a measure specific to lesbians.

Past performance. Past performance accomplishments are considered the most salient and influential source of self-efficacy because individuals who performed a specific behavior/action in the past will have strong evidence about their abilities to accomplish that task in the future (Bandura, 1986; 1997). Evidence irrefutably suggests that gay and lesbian couples have satisfying relationships at a level comparable to that of heterosexual couples (Kurdek, 1994; 1998, 2005; 2006; Beals, Impett, & Peplau, 1982; Beals & Peplau, 2001; Julien, Chartrand, Simard, Bouthillier & Begin, 2003). Further, Kurdek (2003) found that when compared to gay men, lesbians tend to report significantly greater equality within the relationship, more "liking" of their partner, and more trust in their relationships. Lesbians also reported higher relationship quality in the beginning of their relationships and, over time, they demonstrated smaller negative declines in relationship quality.

Nevertheless, the longevity of lesbian relationships does not mirror that of heterosexual relationships. That is, lesbian relationships tend to dissolve at a greater rate

when compared to their heterosexual counterparts. (Andersson, Noack, Seierstad, & Weedon-Fekjaer, 2004; Kurdek, 1998; 2006). Early research even suggested that lesbian couples dissolved at a faster rate when compared to gay male relationships (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983), but more recent research found these differences to be insignificant (Kurdek, 1998).

It is evident that the longevity of lesbian s' relationships should not be the sole outcome variable for assessing relationships because longevity may not imply satisfaction or health. It does suggest, however, that there are factors that uniquely affect lesbian relationships when compared to heterosexual relationships. Moreover, how efficacious does a lesbian woman feel about her future partnerships if she observes her relationships dissolving at a faster rate compared to the dominant heterosexual paradigm that is presented? If successful past experiences build one's belief in her/his ability to accomplish a task and failures weaken one's beliefs, then, in some ways, dissolution rates may serve as rudimentary markers of past performance experiences in relationships.

Vicarious experience. Vicarious experience is the second source of self-efficacy proposed by Bandura (1986) and he posits that individuals increase their self-efficacy by observing similar others successfully perform the task. This construct is also addressed in the lesbian and gay literature as role models. Despite the fact that qualitative research and anecdotal literature suggest the importance of relationship role models, these authors also report a lack of available models (e.g., Berzon, 1990; 1996; Connolly, 1999; Piazza, 1995). Recent research has begun to examine role models for lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth (LGB; e.g., Grossman & D'Augelli, 2004), but no known empirical research to date has examined same-sex *relationship* role models for lesbian and/or gay individuals.

Due to the dearth of research, evidence gathered from the heterosexual population may be instructive.

One viable source of vicarious experiences may be found in parental relationships. Amato and DeBoer (2001) first explored the influence of parental divorce on offspring's marital instability by exploring two theories of learning: the Transmission of Interpersonal Skills and Behavior, and the Transmission of Marital Commitment. These two theories are vastly different, but both imply that children learn about relationships from their own parents. Results from Amato and DeBoer's (2001) study concluded that parental divorce does not significantly impact their adult children's marriages by teaching them bad relationship skills (Transmission of Interpersonal Skills theory); rather, divorce appears to show children that marriage is not a life-time commitment where people work through conflict no matter what (Transmission of Marital Commitment theory). It is evident that children from intact families learn that marriage is meant to last, and their parents act as clear role models that this is possible.

The above outline of research suggests that lesbian and gay role models are scarce, and this may be even truer of lesbian and gay relationships. Additionally, it is unknown if lesbian and gay individuals learn similar lessons about commitment from heterosexual couples, or whether they learn primarily from other same-sex couples. Given that lesbian relationships have greater dissolution rates when compared to their heterosexual counterparts (Kurdek, 1998; Andersson, Noack, Seierstad, & Weedon-Fekjaer, 2004), it is also questionable if the higher dissolution rates in same-sex couples have the same effect on lesbian and gay individuals as heterosexual parents have on their offspring.

Verbal persuasion. Verbal persuasion is the third source thought to contribute to self-efficacy in that support and encouragement from peers, family, and friends increases one's belief in his/her ability to accomplish a given task. Research indicates that, when compared to their heterosexual counterparts, lesbian and gay couples report significantly greater support from friends and significantly less support from family (see Kurdek, 2005; 2006; 1987; Kurdek & Schmitt, 1987; LaSala, 1998; Rostosky et al., 2004). In fact, research consistently finds that individuals in the lesbian and gay community may compensate for their lack of familial support by creating close friendship networks that are affectionately referred to as "families of choice" (Carrington, 1999; Oswald, 2002). Some researchers have concluded that due to rejection and negative relations, these self-created families often serve a similar function as biological family members typically serve (Carrington, 1999; Oswald, 2002).

In addition to the lack of support provided by family, same-sex couples tend to experience less support from the broader society (e.g., legal recognition of their relationships), and individuals endure greater rates of harassment and violence as youth (GLSEN, 2005), and as adults (Herek, Gillis & Cogan, 1999). Interestingly, social support (Kurdek, 2005; 2006; 1987; Kurdek & Schmitt, 1987; LaSala, 1998; Rostosky et al., 2004), as well as experiences of discrimination, prejudice, and oppression have been associated with lesbian and gay individual's romantic relationships (e.g., Balsam & Szymanski, 2005a; Meyer & Dean, 1998; Otis, Rostosky, Riggle, & Hamrin, 2006; Szymanski & Chung, 2003).

Emotional arousal. The fourth source of self-efficacy is emotional arousal. This may include physical and/or physiological information (e.g., fatigue, aches, pains,

pounding heart, sweating) or mood states (e.g., anxiety, joy, stress, depression). A unique emotional/physiological experience that is specific to the lesbian and gay community is internalized homophobia. Internalized homophobia is a lesbian or gay individual's "direction of negative social attitudes toward the self, leading to a devaluation of the self and resultant internal conflicts and poor self-regard" (Dean & Meyer, 1998, p. 161). Interestingly, these negative attitudes and views toward lesbian and gay individuals have been shown to affect their mental health, psychological well-being, development as healthy individuals, and ability to be intimate (see Cass 1984; Dean & Meyer, 1998; Meyer & Dean, 1998; Troiden, 1989). Moreover, other studies indicate the emotional/physiological consequences of such negative views on lesbian and gay individual's romantic relationships (e.g., Balsam & Szymanski, 2005a; Dean & Meyer, 1998; Meyer & Dean, 1998; Szymanski & Chung, 2003). Further, research consistently suggests that internalized homophobia is significantly and negatively associated with lesbian and gay couples' relationship satisfaction (Meyer & Dean, 1998; Balsam & Szymanski, 2005a; Szymanski & Chung, 2003). Several researchers have found a link between relationship quality and internalized homophobia for both lesbian and gay male couples (e.g., Balsam & Szymanski, 2005; Otis, Rostosky, Riggle, & Hamrin, 2006).

In addition to the devaluation of the self, acts of discrimination, prejudice, and lack of support appear to affect lesbian's relational experience. There evidence to suggests that lesbians may be affected differently by some of these factors when compared to gay men. For example, Todosijevic, Rothblum, and Solomon (2005) found that gay-specific stressors were inversely related to relationship satisfaction for lesbian couples but not for gay male couples. Moreover, a study on minority stress experiences

further supported the conclusion that, when compared to gay men, lesbians were more likely to experience stress due to familial reactions to their partner (Lewis, Derlegay, Berndt, Morris & Rose, 2001). Although it is evident that both gay men and lesbians experience significant minority stress and internalized negative beliefs from society, it appears that gay men and lesbians may be affected differently.

Statement of the Problem

In summary, past research has linked relationship self-efficacy beliefs with relationship satisfaction, commitment, and persistence in heterosexual couples (Lopez & Lent, 1991; Morua & Lopez, 2005). Further, an investigation of the same-sex relationship literature suggests that the four constructs (i.e., sources) thought to contribute to self-efficacy are also associated with relationship satisfaction for lesbian and gay couples. Currently, there is no known measure that assesses the four sources of relationship self-efficacy (for heterosexual or same-sex relationships). The above review of literature also suggests that when compared to gay men, lesbians may be affected differently by, or have limited access to, some of the sources of relationship self-efficacy. Based on the aforementioned review of theory and research, I contend that Bandura's self-efficacy theory may serve as a useful heuristic for understanding factors that affect lesbian's relationship satisfaction. The primary goal of this research was to develop a psychometrically sound scale that measures the four sources thought to contribute to relationship self-efficacy beliefs for lesbians.

To that end, the following dissertation study included four separate studies. Study 1 describes the initial item development of the SLRSE which consisted of focus group research, professional consultation, and a review of literature. The purpose of Study 2

was item reduction as well as establishing the content validity of the SLRSE. In Study 3 further item reduction was conducted and the SLRSE's factor structure and reliability was assessed. The purpose of Study 4 was to conduct a confirmatory factor analysis and assess the validity of the SLRSE. Content, criterion, divergent, and known-groups validity were explored in Study 4. For each study, the participant recruitment, inclusion criteria, procedures for collecting data, instruments, analysis of data, and a discussion of the results is presented.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

In heterosexual relationships, self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura; 1986; 1997) have been shown to be associated with different relationship variables (Lopez & Lent, 1991; Morua & Lopez, 2005). No known research to date, however, has investigated relationship self-efficacy beliefs with the lesbian and gay community. Furthermore, despite the availability of literature that suggests its utility, researchers have also not considered whether the four sources that are thought to contribute to self-efficacy could be a useful method for examining same-sex partnerships. Based on a review of Bandura's self-efficacy theory, research on same-sex relationships, and available evidence from lesbian couples, I posit that the sources of self-efficacy serve as a valuable heuristic for exploring factors that influence lesbian relationships. Since no measure currently exists, the goal of this study is to construct a reliable and valid scale that measures the four sources of lesbians' relationship self-efficacy.

This chapter aims to integrate the available anecdotal, theoretical, and empirical evidence to support the development of the Sources of Lesbian Relationship Self-Efficacy Scale (SLRSE). That is, based on evidence and theory, does Bandura's model offer a valuable heuristic for investigating lesbian relationships? To this end, I first describe self-efficacy theory and the four sources thought to contribute to self-efficacy (i.e., past performance, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal; Bandura 1986; 1997). Second, I review the available evidence on relationship self-efficacy beliefs. Third, I examine the same-sex relationship literature which underscores the close parallels between Bandura's (1986) four self-efficacy sources to constructs that

uniquely contribute to same-sex relationship satisfaction. When relevant research with lesbians is not available, I utilize research with gay men and heterosexuals.

Bandura's Theory of Self-Efficacy and

The Four Sources

In the current section I discuss Bandura's (1986; 1997) theory of self-efficacy and how the four sources are thought to contribute to self-efficacy beliefs. I next provide a brief review of research evidence that supports the role of self-efficacy theory in goal attainment. I conclude with a discussion of the available research on relationship self-efficacy beliefs.

According to social cognitive theory, self-efficacy is the belief in one's own ability to execute behaviors that will result in a desired outcome (Bandura, 1986; 1997). Self-efficacy is an individual's belief that she/he has the ability to succeed in a given situation; self-efficacy often takes the form of a self-fulfilling prophecy in that the more people believe they can achieve a goal, the more likely they are actually able to do so (Bandura, 1986; 1994; 1997). Self-efficacy beliefs are thought to influence the way people think, feel, behave, and motivate themselves.

The theory asserts that a strong sense of self-efficacy strengthens attitudes towards past accomplishments and helps in other difficult tasks because individuals utilize their experience to build confidence from such successful experiences (Bandura 1986; 1997). Self-efficacy beliefs are thought to affect the choices an individual makes, the amount of effort one contributes to attain a goal, one's perseverance in a given task, and one's emotional patterns and reactions when encountering a situation (Bandura, 1986; 1997; Schunk & Pajares, 2002). For these reasons, people are thought to choose

tasks they believe they are capable of and confident about doing, and avoid tasks they do not believe they can accomplish. The theory posits that individuals have little incentive to attempt a task when they do not believe their goals will be attained. In addition, Bandura's (1986; 1997) theory proposes that the higher one's self-efficacy beliefs for a specific domain, the greater one's effort and persistence; people with a robust sense of competence will try harder and longer, and recover their sense of self-efficacy after failures. Thought patterns and emotional reactions to an approaching task are also thought to be regulated by self-efficacy. People with low self-efficacy might feel stress or anxiety in a situation that is arduous, whereas someone with high self-efficacy for a particular task might believe the task will require little effort and be self-assured about their ability to accomplish the task. Ultimately, self-efficacy theory suggests that the level of accomplishment is mediated by an individual's self-efficacy beliefs to perform the task (Bandura, 1986; 1997; Schunk & Pajares, 2002).

Sources of Self-Efficacy

According to Bandura (1986; 1997) there are four sources that influence the development of self-efficacy. The first, and typically the most salient, is *personal performance* accomplishments (i.e., past successful experiences performing the actual task). The second source is *vicarious experience* (i.e., observing and/or listening to the successful experiences of another similar person). The third source is *verbal persuasion* (i.e., peers, family, or friends offering advice, support, and encouragement), and the final source is *emotional arousal* (i.e., the physiological or emotional cues that are associated with the idea of the future act). Bandura's theory posits that these four sources contribute to an individual's overall self-efficacy to accomplish a specific goal and each source

rarely operates independently. According to Bandura (1997), efficacy beliefs are essentially “the product of cognitive processing of diverse sources of efficacy information conveyed enactively, vicariously, socially, and physiologically” (p. 115). That is, an individual’s self-efficacy is believed to be the culmination of information from her/his past experiences with the task (past performance), observing similar others performing the task (vicarious experiences), support provided by others about the individual’s ability to successfully complete the task (verbal persuasion), and the emotions associated with the future task (Bandura 1986; 1997). Having outlined the theory of self-efficacy and the sources, I briefly describe how each of the four sources is thought to contribute to self-efficacy beliefs.

Past performance. Past performance is also referred to as *enactive mastery experiences* and is considered the most salient and influential source of self-efficacy because individuals who performed a specific behavior/action in the past will have strong evidence about their abilities to accomplish that task in the future (Bandura, 1986; 1997). Successful past experiences build one’s belief in her/his ability to accomplish the task, and failures weaken one’s beliefs. Albeit success provides strong evidence of one’s capabilities, it is important to note that how an individual cognitively processes her/his success is thought to be crucial. That is to say, interpretation of one’s performance affects whether the experience raises, lowers, or leaves her/his efficacy unaffected. Take for example, a fictional scenario where an employee was given a small task by a work supervisor, and he successfully completed the task within the specified time frame. Given this situation, there are many ways the employee could assess her/his performance. One way s/he may think about this performance is to consider the completion of the task

as evidence that s/he does the job well. Another way the individual might perceive the task is to consider it to be too easy, and if s/he can do it, it cannot be that hard.

Essentially, the evaluation that an individual places on her/his performance also plays a role in how the past performance source contributes to self-efficacy.

Vicarious experience. Vicarious experience, or role modeling, is another source thought to influence an individual's self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1986; 1997). Observing models that are similar in specific ways provides more information about one's own ability to accomplish that task; the more similar an individual is to her/his model, the more powerful the inferences drawn from the model's failures and successes. Models are thought to be found in everyday life and from multiple sources simultaneously (i.e., more than one individual at a time). Bandura (1997) suggests that people may judge themselves against a social "normative standard" of how most people may perform, or they may observe specific individuals such as classmates, colleagues, or friends. Observing similar others successfully perform a task raises one's efficacy beliefs to accomplish the same task; observing a model's failures are thought to lower one's self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997). Interestingly, Bandura (1997; 2004) proposes that media and videos may also serve as sources of modeling. Overall, Bandura (1997) suggests that vicarious experiences may be especially persuasive for individuals who have not attempted the task before and have no prior knowledge of their own capabilities.

Verbal persuasion. Verbal persuasion is the third source thought to contribute to the development of self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1986; 1997). This source consists of another's expression or appraisal beliefs regarding one's ability to accomplish a task. This may be in the form of support, validation, expression of faith or encouragement, or

even the lack of support, expression of discouragement, and/or doubt regarding one's ability to accomplish a task. Bandura (1997) posits that verbal persuasion may affect individuals' effort toward goal attainment because individuals who are verbally persuaded in a task may extend greater effort in accomplishing the goals and persist longer during obstacles.

Bandura's (1986; 1997) theory states that support, or evaluations from others, are thought to be most potent when those opinions are from others who appear to have more experience and are considered a credible source by the individual (Bandura, 1997). Appraisals, evaluations, and/or support may come from individuals or a group of individuals and evaluations from society may also provide information about one's abilities. Interestingly, theory suggests that subtle or disingenuous forms of support may be less helpful as "low social evaluations are usually masked in disingenuous comments or social practices that convey the message that one does not expect much of the recipients... individuals at the receiving end of such indirect appraisals are generally well practiced in seeing through thinly veiled devaluations" (Bandura, 1997, p. 102). That is, when evaluations of an individual's performance are low, people (or groups) may be more likely to use less explicit, or more subtle ways of communicating these beliefs; however, those individuals receiving the encouragement (or lack thereof), are typically capable of seeing past the artificial support. Bandura (1997) states that this contrived sense of support may come in many forms including gratuitous praise for a below-average performance, excessive offering of assistance, less recognition when compared to others who demonstrated similar performance capabilities, and delegation of tasks that are not demanding (because the expectations are low). Verbal persuasion, therefore, can

be provided by a single person, a group of individuals, it can be implicit or explicit appraisals, and individuals on the receiving end are typically good at interpreting the genuine meaning of the evaluation.

Emotional arousal. Physiological and affective state, or emotional arousal, is the fourth source that is thought to contribute to self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1986; 1997). This may include physical and/or physiological information (e.g., fatigue, aches, pains, pounding heart, sweating) or affective and/or mood states (e.g., anxiety, joy, stress, depression). Similar to past performance, how one interprets her/his emotional arousal is just as important as the intensity itself. If a specific emotional arousal (e.g., anxiety) was paired with debilitating effects, then the emotion would lower self-efficacy beliefs; however, if that emotion was paired with a successful experience, then the emotional arousal would raise self-efficacy beliefs. The attributions one makes for the emotional and/or physiological arousal are thought to be vital to whether it raises or lowers self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1986; 1997). For example, a college athlete was returning to her sport after an injury left her unable to participate. Upon preparing for her first game back, she noticed that her heart began to race and her palms began to sweat. Based on Bandura's theory (1986; 1997), she may use this somatic/physiological information to judge her capabilities to do well in the game (i.e., sport self-efficacy). She may "read" her arousal response as excitement and anticipation, or rather, she may "read" it as fear or dread. Depending on how she interprets this information, she may raise, lower, or keep stable her sport self-efficacy beliefs.

There are no hard-and-fast rules about how the four sources contribute to self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). As previously stated, past performance is typically the

strongest contributor, but this is not always the case (e.g., Anderson & Mavis, 1996).

Bandura (1997) states that each modality may contribute unique variance, or each source may have an additive or multiplicative effect to self-efficacy.

Self-Efficacy Research

Now that the theory of self-efficacy and its contributing sources has been discussed, I briefly focus on research supporting the robustness of self-efficacy in goal attainment. A large-scale review of self-efficacy research is beyond the scope of this paper (for review see Bandura, 1997). Instead, I provide a brief outline of research evidence suggesting the robustness of self-efficacy theory in general goal attainment. An important observation is that the current investigation found that most research examines the influence of self-efficacy on outcome variables (e.g., self-efficacy beliefs on relationship satisfaction), and few studies explore the *sources* of self-efficacy, or the extent to which the sources contribute to self-efficacy beliefs. For this reason, available research on self-efficacy is presented as support for the exploration of the sources.

As stated, the self-efficacy literature is vast and has been explored in various disciplines including smoking cessation (Yzer & van den Putte, 2006), teaching (Hagen, Gutkin, Wilson, & Oats, 1998), students' academic performance (Gore, 2006; Usher & Pajares, 2005), math interest and performance (Lent, Lopez, Brown & Gore, 1996), research interest (Bieschke, 2000), sports (Theodorakis, 1996;1995), relationship satisfaction (Lopez & Lent, 1991; Morua & Lopez, 2005), safer sex practice and/or HIV risk reduction (e.g., Rosario, Mahler, Hunter & Gwadz, 1999; Mao, Van de Ven & McCormick, 2004), LGB affirmative counseling (Dillon & Worthington, 2003), and the "coming out" process for lesbians (Anderson & Mavis, 1996).

Although self-efficacy research appears exhaustive, limited information still exists about the role of relationship self-efficacy beliefs for heterosexual couples and even less information is known about same-sex couples' relationship self-efficacy. More specifically, no known research explores how the *sources* of self-efficacy affect romantic relationships (same-sex or opposite sex). Lent and Lopez (2002) suggest that investigating self-efficacy beliefs in close relationships may prove to be a useful tool for looking at romantic relationships. To this end, I explore the relationship self-efficacy beliefs literature, and currently, the available research has used heterosexual samples. This review aims to provide support for utilizing self-efficacy theory to investigate same-sex relationships.

Relationship Self-Efficacy Beliefs

Exploring the impact of cognitive processes on relationships has been a topic of inquiry for quite some time (e.g., Bradbury & Fincham, 1987; Fincham, Harold & Ganophillips, 2000; Reiss, 1999), but specific attention to self-efficacy beliefs has been more sparse (Lent & Lopez, 2002). Lopez and Lent (1991) examined three types of efficacy beliefs that people may have about their relationships, and explored whether these beliefs predicted relationship satisfaction, adjustment, and persistence. The three dimensions of efficacy were (a) self-efficacy (SE), one's belief in her/his performance capabilities in the relationship, (b) other-efficacy (OE), one's belief about her/his partner's performance capabilities in the relationship, and (c) relationship-inferred self-efficacy (RISE), "beliefs that the other is assumed to have of one's own efficacy" (Lopez & Lent, 1991; p. 224). The authors hypothesized that the three dimensions of efficacy were related, that each dimension would contribute unique variance to participants' current relationship

adjustment, and that the three types of efficacy would contribute significant variance to relationship adjustment over a 3-month period of time (i.e., persistence).

Participants were 67 college students (15 males, 52 females) with a mean age of 20.4 years, and in their current relationship for an average of 20 months ($SD = 20.55$).

Lopez and Lent's (1991) sample was predominantly Caucasian and unmarried.

Participants responded to several measures including the Relationship

Background/Demographics questionnaire, a five-item Relationship Satisfaction Scale

(Lopez & Lent, 1991; Cronbach's alpha = .90), a five-item Expected Persistence Scale

(Lopez & Lent, 1991; Cronbach's alpha = .82), and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS;

Spanier, 1976; Cronbach alpha for subscales = .73-.94). Participants responded to three

efficacy scales including the Self-Efficacy scale (SE; 25 items), Other-Efficacy scale

(OE; 25 items), and the Relationship-Inferred Self-Efficacy (RISE; 25 items). Each of

the scales contained the same items, but differed in their instructional sets. Participants

were given the option of completing the measures again in a three-month follow up in an

effort to explore the predictive nature of the efficacy scores to relationship adjustment.

Each efficacy scale was measured using a 10-point rating scale (0 = *not at all sure*, to 9 =

completely sure). Internal consistency reliability coefficients were calculated for the

three efficacy scales and all had high levels of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha

range = .87 to .90).

Hierarchical regressions were utilized to predict relationship satisfaction,

adjustment, and expected persistence. Participant's age, sex, number of prior romantic

relationships and length of current relationships were entered as a block, and then scores

on the SE, RISE, and OE were entered sequentially into a regression equation. Results

indicated that the demographic and relationship variables block did not significantly contribute to variance in relationship adjustment, satisfaction, or expected persistence.

The three efficacy scores combined (SE, RISE, OE) accounted for 40% of the variance in relationship satisfaction ($R^2 = .28, .02, .10$, respectively), and 47% of the variance in relationship adjustment ($R^2 = .26, .14, .07$, respectively), 12% of the variance in expected persistence ($R^2 = .04, .07, .01$, respectively). Regression suggested that, taken together, the three self-efficacy measures (SE, RISE, and OE) accounted for 12% of the variance in relationship adjustment scores at the three month follow-up (i.e., expected persistence; $F(3, 29) = 2.88, p < .05$).

Interestingly, each measure of self-efficacy contributed unique variance to the abovementioned outcome variables; however certain efficacy beliefs contributed substantially more variance. For instance, Other-Efficacy (OE), in general, contributed less variance to relationship adjustment and persistence. Self-Efficacy (SE), on the other hand, contributed the most variance to relationship adjustment, satisfaction, and three month adjustment scores ($R^2 = .26, p < .001; .28, p < .001; .20, p < .01$, respectively).

Lopez and Lent's (1991) study is the first known study to empirically examine self-efficacy beliefs in relationships, including its influence on relationship satisfaction, adjustment, expected persistence, and future adjustment. The results of Lopez and Lent's study have several implications for the current study. First, Lopez and Lent provide initial support for the investigation of efficacious belief systems in romantic relationships. Second, their study highlights the power of self-efficacy beliefs in predicting relationship satisfaction and adjustment. Third, Lopez and Lent's study highlights the importance of receiving feedback about one's competence as a partner for the future adjustment of the

relationships (RISE beliefs). There are, nevertheless, obvious limitations to this study. For starters, this study was conducted with a homogeneous sample consisting of young Caucasian college-age students, whose relationships were deemed to be “stable” if they lasted three months. Additionally, each of the efficacy measures was created for their study, and no validity information was reported. Due to such limitations, Morua and Lopez (2005) attempted to examine and improve upon Lopez and Lent (1991) study by further examination and validation of the SE scale, which was the scale most predictive of relationship satisfaction, adjustment, and future adjustment.

Morua and Lopez (2005) made noticeable improvements to Lopez and Lent’s (1991) self-efficacy measure (SE). First, they used a larger and more diverse and representative sample that included 487 college students (313 women, 174 men), with a mean age of 22 years. The sample was also more racially heterogeneous (34.7% Caucasian, 19.3% Black, 19.7% Asian, and 18.9% Hispanic; 3.9% Multiracial; 1.8% Native American, and < 1% other). Additionally, ten items were added to the original SE scale (originally 25-items), which resulted in an increased Cronbach’s alpha from .90 to .94.

The purpose of Morua and Lopez’s (2005) study was to clarify the factor structure of Lopez and Lent’s (1991) relationship self-efficacy scale (now RSE) and examine the association between the RSE and relationship satisfaction and commitment. Morua and Lopez (2005) also investigated other constructs previously associated with relationship satisfaction including gender differences, personality traits, and adult attachment (specifically anxiety and avoidance in relationships). Participants responded to several measures including a demographic questionnaire, the revised Relationship Self-Efficacy

Scale (RSE; Lopez & Lent, 1991), the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI; Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003), the Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998), and the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS; Hendrick, 1988).

To examine the factor structure of the RSE, three separate factor analyses (with varimax rotation) were conducted; one with the full sample (both men and women), and two separate analyses for women and men. Scree tests were used to determine the number of factors and results from the full sample (men and women) suggested that two factors accounted for 43% of the interitem variance of the RSE. The first loading factor (eigenvalue = 12.74; 35.4% of the variance) appeared to capture one's efficacy-beliefs about giving and receiving care and affection; this factor was labeled "Caring Self-Efficacy" (CSE). The second factor (eigenvalue = 2.81; 7.8% of the variance) appeared to assess one's efficacy-beliefs in establishing and accepting "differentiated and emotionally respectful boundaries" (p. 2) and was labeled "Boundary Regulation Self-Efficacy" (BRSE). Results from the separate factor analyses with men and women suggested that a two factor structure (CSE and BRSE) was also supported for each gender group, but interestingly, the importance of these two structures was reversed for male participants. That is, the CSE scores accounted for a larger share of the RSE item variance for the full sample and among female participants, when compared to the factor structure of male participants.

Correlational analyses indicated that the CSE and BRSE were only moderately correlated ($r = .33, p < .01$), suggesting that these subscales are not redundant, and measuring interrelated dimensions of relationship self-efficacy. Additionally, both the CSE and the BRSE were significantly related to relationship satisfaction ($r = .52, .27, p <$

.01, respectively). Finally, hierarchical regression analyses to predict relationship satisfaction were conducted. Gender and commitment status entered as a block (step 1), extraversion and emotional stability entered as a block (step 2), attachment avoidance and anxiety entered as a block (step 3), and the CSE and BRSE scores were entered as the final step (step 4). Results indicated that 41% of the total variance was accounted for by the model. Gender and commitment accounted for 17% of the variance in relationship satisfaction ($p < .001$), attachment avoidance and anxiety explained an additional 18% of the variance ($p < .001$), and CSE and BRSE scores accounted for an additional 6.6% of the variance in relationship satisfaction ($p < .001$; Morua & Lopez, 2005).

The results of Morua and Lopez's (2005) study have several implications for the current study. First, it corroborates Lopez and Lent's (1991) study by suggesting that self-efficacy is related to relationship satisfaction. Second, factor analyses suggested that the CSE subscale accounted for more variance of the RSE when compared to the BRSE subscale for women. This implies that women's ability to demonstrate care and affection toward their partner may contribute to their relationship self-efficacy beliefs. Results also suggest that anxiety and avoidance (i.e., adult attachment), or what Bandura (1986) might refer to as emotional arousal, is also associated with relationship satisfaction as it accounted for more variance than any other block (18%). The implications of these findings will be addressed later when I further examine the role of emotional arousal (Bandura's fourth source) in relationship satisfaction.

Summary of Relationship Self-Efficacy Research

The preceding review of relationship self-efficacy research (e.g., Lopez & Lent, 1991; Morua & Lopez, 2005) suggests that an efficacious belief system may be useful in exploring relationship satisfaction. Limitations of this research, however, include the generalizability of findings because the participant samples were primarily female college students in heterosexual relationships. Second, although these researchers have taken the initial steps in exploring relationship self-efficacy, neither study explored the influence of the four self-efficacy *sources* in romantic relationships. To date, no known research currently exist which explores the sources of relationship self-efficacy for heterosexual or same-sex relationships.

An interesting observation is that when each of Bandura's (1986) four self-efficacy sources are broken down into their respective constructs (e.g., verbal persuasion is explored as social support and/or encouragement provided by others), it appears that these sources have been explored in the lesbian and gay literature, and they appear to be factors that uniquely affect same-sex relationship satisfaction (e.g., Balsam & Szymanski, 2005a; Berzon, 1990; Connolly, 1999; Grossman & D'Augelli, 2004; Kurdek, 1987; 1998; 2005; 2006; Kurdek & Schmitt, 1987; LaSala, 1998; Lewis et al. 2001; Rostosky et al., 2004; Todosijevic, Rothblum & Solomon, 2005). Essentially, if relationship self-efficacy beliefs are associated with relationship satisfaction for heterosexual individuals, and the four constructs (i.e., sources) thought to contribute to self-efficacy are associated with relationship satisfaction for lesbians and gay men, then it follows that investigating the sources of relationship self-efficacy may be a useful model for exploring same-sex relationship satisfaction. Although exploring relationship self-efficacy beliefs with same-sex couples is a viable next step to investigating their relationship satisfaction, exploring

the sources that contribute to self-efficacy may better describe how factors that are unique to same-sex couples tend to affect their relationship satisfaction.

In the following sections, I summarize the same-sex relationship literature to provide support for further consideration of Bandura's (1986; 1997) four self-efficacy sources as a theoretical model for exploring lesbian women relationships. I first review research that examines lesbian and gay relationship satisfaction, and how some of the factors thought to contribute to relationship satisfaction are also constructs described by Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy. Please note that I may now refer to the four *sources* of self-efficacy as *constructs* because the available research only assesses constructs similar to the four sources (they do not refer to these constructs as sources).

I then discuss pertinent research addressing each of these four constructs, and how they contribute to different relationship variables (e.g., satisfaction). This literature review includes an investigation of the longevity and dissolution rates of lesbian and gay relationships (i.e., past performance), sources of support for same-sex relationships (i.e., verbal persuasion), relationship role models for the lesbian and gay community (vicarious experience), and the emotional experiences involved in marginalized relationships (i.e., emotional arousal).

Lesbian and Gay Relationship Research

In this section I discuss lesbian and gay relationships as well as review those factors found to influence relationship satisfaction. This review of same-sex relationship research is presented to highlight (a) there are unique factors affecting same-sex relationship satisfaction, and (b) these factors are also conceptually consistent with Bandura's (1986; 1997) four sources of self-efficacy.

A noticeable trend observed in the lesbian and gay (LG) relationship research is that same-sex relationships are frequently compared to opposite-sex relationships. The exact reasons for this are unknown, but the results of research consistently indicate that same-sex relationships fare as well as, if not better than, heterosexual couples on many relationship variables (e.g., Kurdek, 2006a; 2006b; 2004; 1998; 1994). For example, Kurdek's (1994) early comparison of relationship conflict issues suggested no differences in the frequency of conflict among lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couples. In addition, similarities even existed in the type of conflict reported in that the two highest ranked problem areas were intimacy and power (Kurdek, 1994). Finally, evidence repeatedly confirms that gay and lesbian couples have satisfying relationships at a level comparable to that of heterosexual couples (Kurdek, 1994; 1998, 2005; 2006a; 2006b; Beals, Impett, & Peplau, 2002; Beals & Peplau, 2001; Julien et al., 2003). Although there are many ways that same-sex and opposite-couples parallel one another, there are documented differences as well.

Lesbian and gay couples, for instance, report significantly greater support from friends, and significantly less support from family, when compared to their heterosexual counterparts (i.e., verbal persuasion; see Kurdek, 2005; 2006; 1987; Kurdek & Schmitt, 1987; LaSala, 1998; Rostosky et al., 2004). Research and anecdotal evidence consistently report that role models (i.e., vicarious experiences) are important for same-sex relationships, yet the evidence strongly suggests a lack of visible models (Berzon, 1990; Connolly, 1999; Grossman & D'Augelli, 2004). Further, lesbian and gay individuals experience marginalization, harassment, and/or violence (i.e., emotional arousal) in their youth (GLSEN, 2005), as adults (Herek, Gillis & Cogan, 1999), and in

their relationships (Lehmiller & Agnew, 2006). This discrimination, prejudice, and oppression appear to have caused negative influences on their intimate relationships (i.e., emotional arousal; Meyer & Dean, 1998; Balsam & Szymanski, 2005a; Szymanski & Chung, 2003; Otis, Rostosky, Riggle, & Hamrin, 2006). Another remarkable difference is that the longevity (i.e., past performance) of gay male and lesbian relationships does not mirror that of heterosexual relationships (Kurdek, 1998; 2006b; Anderson, Noack, Seierstad, & Weedon-Fekjaer, 2004), even despite evidence that they perform as well as, if not better than, heterosexual couples on several relationship variables (e.g., Kurdek, 1994; 1998, 2005; 2006; Beals, Impett, & Peplau, 1982; Beals & Peplau, 2001),

As highlighted above, these factors appear to resemble the four sources thought to contribute to self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986; 1997). In order to provide a strong foundation for the construction of the SLRSE, I next review key research that investigates each of the four constructs within the lesbian and gay community. Further, I have emphasized the research indicating differences between gay men and lesbians, as they relate to Bandura's (1986) proposed self-efficacy sources because this evidence was fundamental to the decision to focus on developing a measure specific to lesbians.

Same-Sex Relationship Dissolution: Past Performance Experiences

Kurdek (1998) conducted a 5-year longitudinal study comparing heterosexual, gay male, and lesbian couples on five "gender-linked" forces that influence relationships (i.e., intimacy, autonomy, equality, problem-solving, and barriers). Kurdek hypothesized, based on gender theory, that when compared to heterosexual couples, lesbians would report greater intimacy, gay male couples would report greater autonomy, both gay and

lesbian couples would report greater equality and problem solving, and gay and lesbian couples would report fewer barriers to ending their relationships.

Participants were 236 married couples, 66 gay male cohabitating couples, and 51 lesbian cohabiting couples (Kurdek, 1998). Heterosexual married couples were recruited from marriage licenses published in the Dayton Daily News, and gay and lesbian couples were recruited from periodicals aimed toward the LGBT community. A large majority of participants were White (95% of husbands, 97% of wives, 93% of lesbian couples and 93% of gay couples) and had a group mean age range between 34.42 - 41.45 years. The average length of cohabitation was 4.71 years ($SD = 1.09$) for heterosexual partners, 10.88 years ($SD = 8.85$) for gay couples, and 7.12 years ($SD = 5.30$) for lesbian couples. Analysis of participant demographic information suggests that gay and lesbian partners were significantly older, had significantly greater levels of education, and cohabitated significantly longer than heterosexual participants ($p < .01$). To reduce ambiguity of the effects associated with the type of couple, these variables were used as covariates in the analyses. Participants completed several surveys assessing the five dimensions of relationship quality (i.e., intimacy, autonomy, equality, constructive problem solving, and barriers to leaving), as well as the relationship satisfaction each year for five consecutive years. Each measure had appropriate levels of internal consistency across all measures and each type of couple (Cronbach's alpha ranged from .63 to .98).

Results from Kurdek's (1998) two-level (partner-couple) hierarchical linear analyses (while controlling for demographic variables) suggested that lesbian couples reported significantly greater levels of relationship intimacy and equality when compared to gay male and heterosexual couples ($t = 2.06, r = .11$; $t = 54.32, r = .22$, respectively).

Both lesbian and gay couples reported significantly greater levels of autonomy when compared to heterosexual couples ($t = 5.21, r = .27$; $t = 5.06, r = .26$, respectively). Heterosexual couples reported significantly greater barriers to leaving their relationships when compared to lesbian and gay couples ($t = 5.70, r = -.29$; $t = 4.51, r = -.23$, respectively). There were, however, no statistically significant differences between type of couple (i.e., lesbian, gay, or heterosexual) in regard to problem-solving or relationship quality and satisfaction.

Kurdek (1998) also examined the dimensions of relationships quality in participants' first year of the study and explored whether these variables predicted the dissolution of the relationship. Single logistic regressions with intimacy, autonomy, equality, problem solving, and barriers (i.e., the five dimensions of relationships) were entered as predictors and results suggest that the overall model was significant in predicting relationship dissolution $X^2(5, N = 353) = 13.65, p < .05$. Interestingly, of the five dimensions, only the barriers to leaving the relationship uniquely predicted relationship dissolution (unstandardized Wald's statistic = 4.31, $p < .05$). That is, those institutional and social barriers that married heterosexual have in place, appear to serve to prevent relationship dissolution.

Overall, results from Kurdek's (1998) study suggest that lesbian couples have comparable levels of problem-solving, equality, relationship satisfaction, and greater levels of intimacy and equality when compared to both gay male and heterosexual couples. In another study, Kurdek (2003) found that when compared to gay men, lesbians tend to report significantly greater equality within their relationships, more "liking" of their partner, and more trust in their relationships. Furthermore, lesbians

reported higher relationship quality in the beginning of their partnerships, and over time they demonstrated smaller negative declines in relationship quality. These findings might suggest that lesbian relationships should fare as well as, if not better than, gay male and heterosexual relationships in terms of relationship length or stability. This, however, is not the case.

For instance, Kurdek (2004) studied the relationship variables with three types of cohabitating couples (80 gay, 53 lesbian, and 80 heterosexual couples), also found that lesbian and gay couples fared as well as, or better than, heterosexual couples on five domains commonly related to relationship health (i.e., psychological adjustment, personality traits, relationship styles, conflict resolution, and social support).

Interestingly, two areas that same-sex partners fared worse than heterosexual participants were in their perceived levels of social support from family members and their greater rates of relationship dissolution. Similarly, a study conducted in Sweden and Norway that compared same-sex and opposite-sex couples found significantly greater dissolution rates in lesbian couples (20% 11.3%, respectively) when compared to gay male (14.3%, 7.8%, respectively) and heterosexual couples (Sweden dissolution rate not reported, 8% Norway; Andersson, Noack, Seierstad, & Weedon-Fekjaer, 2004). These results suggest that there may be factors affecting successful heterosexual couples that are not necessarily identical for successful same-sex relationships.

Summary of Same-Sex Relationship Dissolution

The aforementioned evidence has several implications for the present study. First, a review of research indicates that lesbian and gay male couples have satisfying relationships comparable to those of heterosexual couples (e.g., Kurdek, 1998, 2004,

2006), and same-sex couples fare as well as, if not better than, heterosexual couples on many relationship variables. Although same-sex and opposite-sex couples report similar levels of satisfaction, their rates of dissolution are not parallel. Ultimately, although there are similarities between same and opposite-sex couples, the disparate dissolution rate does raise the question of what other factors may be affecting same-sex couples. It is evident that the longevity of lesbian women relationships should not be the sole outcome variable for assessing relationships because longevity may not imply satisfaction or health. It does suggest, however, that there are factors that uniquely affect lesbian relationships when compared to heterosexual relationships. Moreover, how efficacious does a lesbian woman feel about her future partnerships if she observes her relationships dissolving at a faster rate compared to the dominant heterosexual paradigm that is presented? If successful past experiences build one's belief in her/his ability to accomplish a task and failures weaken one's beliefs, then, in some ways, dissolution rates may serve as rudimentary markers of past performance experiences in relationships.

To further investigate possible reasons for the disparate levels of relationship dissolution, one might examine both internal and external pressures on the couple. Thus far, I have discussed the disparate dissolution rates (i.e., past performance experiences) of lesbian and gay relationships when compared to heterosexual relationships. I next review research on one external source (i.e., verbal persuasion) that may also be affecting same-sex relationships.

Support for Lesbian and Gay Relationships: Verbal Persuasion

Whether, or to what degree, a couple receives support for their relationship is another factor that may influence relationship satisfaction. Encouragement and support (i.e., verbal persuasion) is also a source of self-efficacy thought to contribute to an individual's overall self-efficacy in goal attainment (Bandura, 1986; 1997). Such support may be provided by family, friends, co-workers, media, or even society. Compared to heterosexual couples, lesbian and gay couples report significantly greater support from friends and significantly less support from parents (Kurdek & Schmitt, 1987; LaSala, 1998; Rostosky et al., 2004). Further, lesbian and gay relationships receive less institutional support from society (see Clunis & Green, 2000; Stevenson & Cogan, 2003). There are numerous ways, both implicit and explicit, that society demonstrates a lack of support for same-sex relationships. Withholding legalized same-sex marriage and preventing lesbian and gay individuals from adopting are a few explicit forms of discrimination; less noticeable forms of discrimination may come from the lack of lesbian and gay characters on television (and especially of their relationships), and not being able to demonstrate affection in public without the fear of retaliation. It may be that the availability of support, or lack thereof, has significant effects on same-sex relationships.

In fact, early research investigating the intimate relationships of 127 lesbian couples found that over 30% of participants reported that pressure from parents, negative feelings about being lesbian, or societal attitudes towards lesbian relationships were major factors of a past breakup (Peplau, Pakesky, & Hamilton, 1982). Additionally, 20% of women reported these issues as minor factors in their relationship breakup. Not surprisingly, recent research found that relationships which received greater support from all available sources (i.e., family, friends, co-workers) also reported significantly higher

levels of relationship satisfaction ($r = .20, p < .001$) (Jordan & Deluty, 2000). In the next section I explore empirical and qualitative research as well as the anecdotal literature which explores the sources of support for gay and lesbian relationships, including support from society, and parental/family support.

Societal support. Significant societal advances in the lesbian and gay movement have occurred over the past two decades which have contributed to a more positive and supportive environment for gay men and lesbians. The Supreme Court ruling striking down Texas' sodomy law (Lawrence & Garner v. Texas, 2003), the six states that [currently] recognize marriage (i.e., New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Iowa, Vermont, and Maine), and the five states that [currently] offer civil unions (i.e., California, New Jersey, Oregon, Nevada, Washington, and Washington, D.C.) serve as historical and legal markers indicative of the increasing support for same-sex relationships. Nevertheless, Levitt and colleagues (2009) highlight the fact that over 26 states have altered their state constitutions to define marriage as between a man and a woman. In 2006 alone, there were eight states that passed constitutional amendments that prevented same-sex marriages and these efforts have been fervently pursued at the federal level as well (e.g., The Defense of Marriage Act, 1996). Most recently, California's ruling in support of Proposition 8 was announced, thereby stripping same-sex couples of their short-lived right to marry in that state. That is to say, despite recent legal advances and changes, most individuals in society do not support same-sex marriages (Newport, 2004; Masci, 2007). Furthermore, a comprehensive understanding of all the implications of this for the lesbian and gay community is still unclear (Lehmiller & Agnew, 2006).

Additionally, the available research does consistently suggest that societal influences do affect lesbian and gay men in relationships (Beals, Impett & Peplau, 2002; Jordan & Deluty, 2000; Peplau, Pakesky & Hamilton, 1982; Lehmler & Agnew, 2006). There are various ways that society may explicitly and implicitly place value (or devalue) relationships (e.g., legalized marriage). For the purposes of this study, I focus the attention of the next section on how society fails to provide barriers (or “glue”) to prevent the dissolution of same-sex relationships. I also discuss the overall social disapproval of same-sex romantic relationships and the potential emotional consequences of such.

Barriers. One way that support from society (or the government) is found is through the sanctioning of marriage. Marriage provides over 1,049 federal rights, benefits, and responsibilities. Depending on your state of residence, this number may be significantly higher (U.S. General Accounting Office). Although too many to count, some of these rights include financial benefits (e.g., taxes), guardianship, right to visit a spouse in jail or the hospital, and the right to make legal decisions.

It is clear that a sanctioned union provides many financial and legal benefits, but marriage may also provide emotional, psychological, and social benefits. For example, heterosexual couples enjoy the privilege of having sanctioned marriages that may act as the “glue” in a relationship during difficult times. Marital “glue” may take the form of support (e.g., from family, friends, churches), barriers to leaving the relationship (i.e., joint insurance and mortgage policies), as well as commitment to each other typically made in front of family, friends, and usually the couple’s church. For lesbian and gay individuals who do not live in the progressive states listed above, no such glue or societal support exists that parallels that for heterosexuals. Furthermore, research suggests that

barriers to leaving a relationship are associated with greater levels of commitment for lesbian women romantic relationships (Beals, Impett, & Peplau, 2002). Based on his research, Kurdek (2006) has also suggested that same-sex relationships may be affected by the limited institutional barriers that appear to help stabilize heterosexual relationships.

The aforementioned research has several implications. First, it appears that barriers to leaving the relationship may be important contributing factors to same-sex relationship commitment and stability. Beals et al. (2002) suggest that lesbians are able to create self-constructed barriers in their relationships (e.g., checking accounts, shared friends/pets); however, they are unlikely to have societal constructed barriers (e.g., marriage, civil unions). It is questionable whether self-constructed barriers are more permeable than societal barriers (or societal support), thereby allowing lesbian relationships to dissolve more easily than their married heterosexual counterparts. The presence of societal barriers (e.g., marriage), or the lack thereof, is one way that society may demonstrate support for a relationship. Another way society may demonstrate levels of support is by the overall disapproval of the relationship.

Social Disapproval. The *presence* of encouragement and support may not be the only consideration in verbal persuasion as the outright disapproval of a relationship may represent an expression of how a relationship is not supported. Lehmler and Agnew (2006) explored the influence of social disapproval, or external pressures, on marginalized relationships by comparing three types of marginalized couples (i.e., same-sex, interracial, and age-gap) with one group of non-marginalized couples (heterosexual, same race/ ethnicity, and age-similar couple). Marginalization was measured using a

four-item measure created for their study (Cronbach's alpha = .81) which measured social disapproval regarding one's relationship. The scale assessed for disapproval from society and social networks (family and friends). Investment was measured using a modified version of the Rusbult et al. (1998) Investment Model Scale (Cronbach's alpha ranged from .75-.90). The authors explored the impact of prejudice, discrimination and social disapproval on participants' relationship commitment, investment, and satisfaction.

Lehmiller and Agnew (2006) found that, after controlling for relationship duration, cohabitation status, age, and long-distance relationship status, the three marginalized relationship groups reported significantly more marginalization when compared to their non-marginalized counterparts, $F(5, 496) = 158.19, p < .001, p < .001$. In addition, perceived marginalization was significantly and negatively associated with commitment (standardized $\beta = -.10, t = -2.53, p < .01$). Results of a simultaneous multiple regression indicated that marginalization status significantly predicted commitment level (standardized $\beta = -.10, t = -2.78, p < .01, R^2$ values not reported) in a model that also included relationship satisfaction and investments.

Lehmiller and Agnew (2006) also found that marginalized couples invested significantly less in their relationship than did participants in non-marginalized relationships, $F(5, 495) = 3.96, p < .05$. Surprisingly, when each of the three marginalized groups were compared to the non-marginalized group, only same-sex couples and age-gap couples were more likely to invest less in the relationship ($p < .05$). Nevertheless, partners in marginalized relationships were significantly more committed to the relationship when compared to those in non-marginalized relationships $F(5, 496) = 4.11, p < .05$. Similar to the results of Kurdek's study (1998), however, there were no

significant differences in relationship satisfaction between marginalized and non-marginalized groups.

This constellation of findings suggest that outside forces (e.g., societal disapproval), may also be important considerations in exploring marginalized relationships. Remarkably, marginalized couples may possess coping strategies to weather some of the negative influences in order to maintain committed and satisfying relationships. One such possible strategy may be the amount of support received by friends and family.

Family and parental support. It is well documented that, when compared to their heterosexual counterparts, lesbian and gay couples receive significantly greater support from friends and significantly less support from family (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Kurdek, 1987, 2004, 2005; 2006a; Murphy, 1989; Rostosky et al., 2004). Research investigating the influence of familial support on same-sex relationship satisfaction/quality is sparse and some results are conflicting. Some research suggests that negative influence from family does significantly and negatively affect lesbian and gay couples' relationship satisfaction (e.g., Rostosky et al., 2004; Meyer, 1990). On the other hand, some research did not find evidence to support the claim that a lack of support affects relationship satisfaction (e.g., Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Kurdek, 2006a; LaSala, 1998; Leslie, Huston & Jonson, 1986; Murphy, 1989; Peplau, Pakesky, & Hamilton, 1982). Murphy's (1989) early research found that negative reactions from parents could enhance the relationship if the individuals learn to cope together. Additionally, despite reactions from parents, participants also reported that their non-supportive parents had strengthened their relationships and provided a sense of validation

just by disclosing their relationship status to their parents (Murphy, 1989). Meyer's (1990) early qualitative research also found that one of the primary differences between opposite and same-sex couples is the lack of support for same-sex couples.

This early research is reviewed because some may assume that the climate for lesbian and gay people has changed and support from parents and other family members may be increasing. Unfortunately, recent research indicates that this may not necessarily be the case (Kurdek, 2004; Rostosky et al., 2004). For instance, Rostosky and colleagues (2004) conducted a qualitative study of 14 same-sex couples and their perceived family support was also sparse. Results from a consensual qualitative research analysis (CQR; Hill, Thompson & Williams, 1997) indicated that support from family, or sometimes the lack thereof, had significant influences on participants' same-sex relationships. Of the 14 couples, six reported that the lack of family support had a negative influence on their relationship. For instance, in a videotape conversation, one individual (Partner A) stated "I don't think it's possible for me to commit to you if I'm constantly anxious about the judgment of others, including my family." Her partner responded, "Your (family's) lack of support makes it harder for you to be committed to me" (p. 50). For almost all of the couples, the consequences from the lack of family support were easily identifiable as a negative influence on their relationship.

Results from Rostosky et al (2004) also suggested that the absence of familial support was a source of pain, hurt, anger, and that sometimes these feelings led to the rejection of himself/herself, her/his partner, and occasional rejection of family members. How the couples coped with their parental relationships also proved to be significant in

their relationships. Such strategies consisted of either hiding aspects of the relationship to their parents or even hiding the existence of their relationship.

Similarly, Kurdek (2004) aimed to explore how lesbian, gay, and heterosexual married couples differed, if at all. A total of 80 gay and 53 lesbian cohabitating couples were compared to 80 heterosexual couples with children on five domains of relationship health (psychological adjustment, personality traits, relationship styles, conflict resolution, and social support). Hierarchical linear modeling suggested that gay and lesbian partners reported significantly less support for their relationships from family (and partner's family) when compared to heterosexual participants, (gay, $X^2 = -1.37$; -1.11 , $p < .01$; lesbian, $X^2 = -1.20$, -1.08 , $p < .01$).

Support provided by friends. Although the above literature clearly emphasizes that lesbian and gay relationships do not receive enough support, one area where this is not necessarily true is with their friendship networks (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Kurdek, 1987, 2004, 2005; 2006a; Murphy, 1989; Peplau & Fingerhut, 2007; Rostosky et al., 2004; Rostosky et al., 2007). In fact, research consistently finds that individuals in the lesbian and gay community may compensate for their lack of familial support by creating close friendship networks that are affectionately referred to as “families of choice” (Carrington, 1999; Oswald, 2002). Many researchers have concluded that due to rejection and negative relations, these self-created families often serve similar functions as biological family members traditionally serve for heterosexual couples (Carrington, 1999; Oswald, 2002).

Rostosky and colleagues (2007) explored minority stress experiences of 40 lesbian and gay couples (20 female, 20 male) to examine the specific stressors same-sex

couples experience in the context of forming and maintaining their relationships. Their sample was predominantly American White/European, were predominately college educated, and had an average age of 34.5 years. Rostosky et al.'s sample also reported a mean relationship length of 5.33 years.

Same-sex couples participated in videotaped conversations guided by researcher-constructed prompts used to guide participants' discussions. Questions ranged in topic from issues of commitment, to pros and cons of being in a committed relationship, to comparing their relationships to heterosexual couples' relationships. In addition, participants were also encouraged to discuss experiences of disapproval as well as support, or lack thereof. Consensual qualitative research methods (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997) were utilized to code the data.

Results yielded several interesting findings. First, all couples reported experiencing stress related to being gay or lesbian. Participants expressed being affected in at least one of the following ways: acts of discrimination, actual or anticipated rejection, concealment and/or disclosure of their relationship, and their beliefs and/or negative feelings of internalized homophobia. These authors also identified how same-sex couples dealt with these minority stress experiences and included strategies such as reframing negative experiences, ignoring these experiences, compartmentalizing, and externalizing. Although Rostosky et al. (2007) explored support from all sources, of particular relevance to the current study is how couples utilized same-sex couples as support. For instance, one participant alluded to the comfort she experienced when she is around other lesbian couples. This participant noted how this comfort is not necessarily experienced when she is around non-lesbian couples. Rostosky and colleagues also

reported that many of these same-sex couples expressed a desire for relationship role models, and how the lack of social support and the invisibility of same-sex couples may facilitate the sense of isolation and possibly feelings of rejection. It appears that having strong support networks also serve as a coping strategy to manage negative societal pressures and views (Rostosky et al., 2007).

Summary of Support for Lesbian and Gay Relationships Literature

Berzon (1990) offers her anecdotal experience from her knowledge and observations as an activist, psychotherapist, and author of several manuscripts that address same-sex relationships. She states that the lack of societal, familial, and legal support and acceptance not only cheats the gay and lesbian couple from basic rights, but also is a continual source of stress to overcome in relationships. Ultimately, Berzon claimed that this lack of support from many sources (e.g., parents, society) serves to delegitimize same-sex couples and sends a strong message that lesbian and gay male relationships are not “real” relationships, and should not be taken seriously (Berzon, 1990). The literature reviewed above supports Berzon’s claim; same-sex relationships do appear to receive less support. Having reviewed the verbal persuasion literature, I now move onto a discussion of the relationship role models literature

Role Models: Vicarious Experiences

Research consistently finds that lesbian and gay individuals receive greater support from friends than from family. Having reviewed the literature on sources of support for same-sex couples, it is evident that the support provided by friends, especially in the absence of support from family, may be indeed invaluable. It logically follows that in these friendship networks, one might find examples of positive same-sex relationship

role models. Unfortunately, qualitative research and anecdotal literature suggest a lack of visible same-sex relationship role models for the lesbian and gay community (e.g., Berzon, 1990; 1996; Connolly, 1999; Piazza, 1995). Although recent research has begun to examine LGBT role models for individuals in the lesbian, gay, and bisexual community (e.g., Grossman & D'Augelli, 2004), no known empirical research to date has examined LGBT *relationship* role models for same-sex couples. Due to the dearth of research, examining information gathered from the heterosexual population may be useful. Therefore, in the next section I will review how heterosexual parental marriages have served as role models for their children's relationships, as well as discuss the small body of literature that does discuss role models in the lesbian and gay community.

Heterosexual Relationship Role Models. Yalom (2005) suggests that we learn about ourselves, our emotional connections, and how to love from other people. Bandura (1986; 1997) also indicates that role models are vital to learning about ourselves and our abilities to accomplish goals. This need to learn from others explains why role models are so important, and research with the heterosexual population suggests that parental relationship role models are very powerful sources of information about relationship. According to Amato and DeBoer (2001) parents serve as the single most important source of information about romantic relationships and behaviors for their children. The literature irrefutably indicates higher rates of divorce in adult children from divorced parents when compared to adult children from intact marriages (Amato, 1996; Amato & DeBoer, 2001; Booth, Amato, Johnson, & Edwards, 1998; McLanahan & Bumpass, 1988).

A 17-year longitudinal study by Amato and DeBoer (2001) did not simply compare divorce rates and their effects on adult children's marriages, but in addition, it examined possible explanations for the increase in divorce rates. This study evaluated two competing theories to explain the increased levels of divorce in offspring from divorced and non-divorced parents. Their first theory (the Transmission of Interpersonal Skills and Behavior) proposes that a socialization process occurs where children learn relationship skills and interpersonal behaviors from their parents and these skills contribute to healthy and long-term relationships. For example, the theory proposes that children from divorced families may not learn the relationship skills (e.g., communication, showing support, compromise, and problem-solving) that are necessary for long-term relationships, whereas children raised with intact parents will learn the skills from their parents who demonstrate them.

Amato and DeBoer's (2001) second theory (the Transmission of Marital Commitment) also assumes that children learn about relationships from their parents; however, the emphasis is not on interpersonal behavior or skills, but instead on the parents' demonstration of commitment. That is, children raised within the context of intact marriages learn that marriage is a commitment that is not broken, whereas children from divorced parents learn that marriage may not stand the test of time and people do not stay in unsatisfying relationships. This theory suggests that people with a strong commitment to marriage assume that marital problems can (and should) be solved, whereas individuals with weak commitments may believe that such problems are too difficult, or cannot be easily solved. Although these theories (Transmission of Interpersonal Skills and Behavior and the Transmission of Marital Commitment) are

vastly different, both imply that children learn about relationships from their parents.

Amato and DeBoer (2001) raised the question: which theory best explains what children learn from their parents' relationships?

Data analysis was based on Booth, Amato, Johnson and Edwards (1998) 17-year longitudinal study of marital instability over the life course. The sample consisted of 2,033 married participants (obtained originally in 1980) and 335 of their offspring (who were currently married or had been). Amato and DeBoer (2001) first explored the influence of parental divorce on offspring's marital instability. Results of logistic regression analysis indicated that individuals from divorced parents were significantly more likely to divorce, $X^2(2, N=2293) = 8.24, p < .05$. Even after controlling for demographic variables and characteristics (age, education, etc), parental divorce was positively associated with their adult offspring's divorce ($X^2(2, N=2293) = 27.46, p < .001$). Interestingly, individuals raised with parents who had high discord in their marriages (but no divorce) were no more likely to divorce themselves when compared to individuals from low discord parental marriages. Results of Amato and DeBoer (2001) suggest that increased levels of divorce were not related to children's lack of learning the interpersonal skills necessary for healthy relationships because children who were raised in high discord families would not have learned healthy interpersonal skills. In other words, the theory of Transmission of Interpersonal Skills and Behavior, as an explanation for offspring divorce, was not supported. Interestingly, Amato and DeBoer found strong support for the second theory, the Transmission of Marital Commitment in that marital termination appeared to affect children's *faith* in the ideology that marriage is permanent. Surprisingly, even when parents had high levels of marital discord and conflict, it was not

linked to offspring divorce, as long as the parents stayed married. Amato and DeBoer's (2001) study concluded that parental divorce does not significantly impact their adult children's marriages by teaching them bad relationship skills, but instead, divorce may show children that marriage is not a life-time commitment where people work through conflict no matter what. It is clear that children from intact families learn that marriage is meant to last, and their parents are clear role models that it is possible.

The literature reviewed above addresses the importance of heterosexual parental role models for their adult children's relationships. How lesbian and gay individuals learn about their relationships, however, has yet to be explored. Three important implications, based on Amato and DeBoer's (2001) study, are especially pertinent to the current study. First, it is unknown if lesbian and gay individuals learn similar lessons about commitment from heterosexual couples, or whether they learn primarily from other same-sex couples. If same-sex couple role models are more effective in teaching commitment, then a second issue arises. That is, due to the stigma and oppression of the lesbian and gay community, other lesbian and gay couples may have difficulty identifying such couples and therefore learning from them. Third, remembering the previously reviewed literature that same-sex relationships have greater dissolution rates when compared to their heterosexual counterparts (Kurdek, 1998; Andersson, Noack, Seierstad, & Weedon-Fekjaer, 2004), it is therefore questionable if the higher dissolution rates in same-sex couples have the same effect on lesbian and gay individuals as heterosexual parents have on their offspring.

I do not contend that parental divorce is the only risk factor in marital stability, nor do I argue that any same-sex relationship can be as influential of a role model as a parent (or very close friend who serves as a role model). I do speculate, based on the

reviewed literature, that positive relationship role models are influential in romantic relationships. Unfortunately, there is a clear lack of research about same-sex relationship role models. Thus, I next review the empirical, anecdotal and theoretical literature regarding same-sex relationship role models literature. I first discuss (a) the anecdotal and theoretical claims provided by mental health care professionals, (b) the available qualitative research and then, (c) review the most complete study, to date, of role models with the lesbian, gay, and bisexual community.

Same-Sex Relationship Role Models. Berzon (1990) asserts that unlike heterosexual individuals, many lesbian and gay individuals do not always expect their relationships to stand the test of time. Berzon stated that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals often enter into relationships with hopes that they will be long-lasting, but due to the strain of stigma and oppression on these relationships, a strong “tradition of failure” develops. Although not always the case, Berzon (1990) posited that LGBT individuals primarily see their relationships dissolve and few appear to thrive (for reviews of relationship dissolution see Kurdek, 1998; 2006a; 2006b). She highlights this “tradition of failure” with an example of when she asked her friend Larry about the relationship status of their heterosexual friends. Larry appeared surprised when Berzon asked if the couple was still together, responding, “They’re *married*.” Berzon described the implicit assumption in his response, “*Of course they are still together, why wouldn’t they be?*” Later when she asked about the relationship status of their lesbian and gay friends, Larry did not respond in the same confused or puzzled manner. The implicit assumption in this response was that Berzon’s question is rational and expected, as if to say, “*Why would they still be together?*”

Berzon's (1990) story is an example of the basic, yet disparate, assumptions people make about heterosexual versus same-sex relationships. Heterosexual people enter into a relationship with an expectation of permanence, while LGBT individuals may not always have such high expectations (Berzon, 1990). Research suggests that both heterosexual (Testa, Kinder, & Ironson, 1987) and gay and lesbian individuals (Diamond & Lucas, 2004) pay heed to such stereotypes. For example Diamond and Lucas' (2004) study indicated that when compared to their heterosexual counterparts, lesbian and gay youth reported greater worries about romantic relationships, and significantly higher fears of never having the type of relationship they desired. It appears that grown gay men and lesbians expected their relationships to dissolve, and it seems as if these feelings may develop at young ages. A clear explanation of such differences is currently unknown, but looking at available qualitative research (no known quantitative research same-sex *relationship* role models exists) may provide insight. Next I review a qualitative study exploring same-sex relationship role models, and then follow with a mixed-design (qualitative and quantitative) study of individual role models for lesbian, gay and bisexual youth.

Available data suggest that role models are important to same-sex couples. For example, in her dissertation, Connolly (1999) interviewed 10 lesbian couples who had been together at least 10 years ($M = 18$ years). The study qualitatively examined the interpersonal sources (e.g., communication, competence, coping skills) and external sources (e.g., family, friends, community, and role models) that aided these couples in their relationships. Participants reported that role models were found to be a significant part of the support system in these long-term relationships, along with family and

community support. Of interest, participants stated that they did have positive same-sex relationship role models, although very few, and these role models assisted in their present relationships because they taught them how to be in a strong relationship. It is noteworthy that Connolly (1999) suggests that older lesbians identified younger lesbians as role models in that they appear to be more strong, verbal, and “out of the closet” with their relationships compared to the older generation. Role models, then, do not have to be older or more experienced to be effective.

To date, the only known study to incorporate quantitative research methods (they also used qualitative methods) to examine LGBT role models is a study conducted by Grossman and D’Augelli (2004). These authors conducted a study which found that of 250 lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) youth surveyed (age range between 16-20 years), approximately 52% were not able to identify a single LGB role model in their life. Surprisingly, of the participants who could identify LGB role models, three-fourths of these youth could only identify one-to-two individuals. Grossman and D’Augelli’s (2004) study also indicated that only 23% of participants reported family members as role models, and no participant chose a parent as a role model. The authors suggested that many of the participants selected staff members from LGBT agencies and friends as personal role models in their life to compensate for the lack of positive role models from family members. Although Grossman and D’Augelli’s study explored individual role models with younger LGB youth and the current study explores relationship role models for adult lesbians, it is clear that if no LGB individuals are available to be modeled after, lesbian and gay individuals are less likely to find LGB relationship role models.

Summary of Role Models Literature

The preceding review of empirical and anecdotal evidence suggests that role models are an important source of information for relationships. In addition, individuals from divorced families are significantly more likely to divorce themselves, and evidence supported the theory that individuals learn the meaning of commitment from their parental relationships (Amato & DeBoer, 2001). Moreover, there is a clear lack of research on role models for the LGB community. Research also indicates that few LGB people actually have role models, and the individuals who can identify models typically report few in quantity (Grossman & D'Augelli, 2004). It is clear that role models are important for both individuals (Grossman & D'Augelli, 2004) and for their relationships (Connolly, 1999), but anecdotal evidence suggests the LGB community is deeply affected by strain of oppression, lack of representation, and the tradition of relationship failure that may be present in same-sex relationships (Berzon, 1990).

Thus far, I have reviewed research that examines gay and lesbian individual's experiences in past relationships (i.e., past performance), the availability and sources of relationship support (i.e., verbal persuasion), as well as the presence (or lack thereof) of role models. One final construct that, based on Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1986; 1997), may contribute to same-sex relationship self-efficacy and relationship satisfaction is an individual's internal experiences, or emotional arousal, surrounding the experience of being lesbian or gay. To that end, I next review the final construct (or source) discussed by Bandura's (1986; 1997) self-efficacy theory, emotional arousal.

Emotional Influences on Lesbian and Gay Relationships: Emotional Arousal

Developmental stage models indicate that many lesbians and gay men experience some form of negative emotion about their sexual orientation in some time in their life

(e.g., Cass 1984; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996; Troiden, 1989). Additionally, engaging in and maintaining relationships may elicit more of these negative emotions because such relationships may emphasize or highlight one's "gayness" and possibly increase an individual's level of "outness" (Jordan & Deluty, 2000). For this reason, looking at an individual's internal processes (i.e., emotions) in relationships may be particularly helpful in exploring same-sex relationship self-efficacy and satisfaction. Therefore, I review research that examines the influence of internalized homophobia in same-sex relationships. Last, I conclude with a study that examines the influence of minority stress (e.g., internalized homophobia and discrimination) on the quality of same-sex romantic relationships.

Internalized Homophobia in Lesbian and Gay Relationships. The self-hatred some members of the lesbian and gay community feel because of their sexual orientation is labeled internalized homophobia (Malyon, 1982; Shidlo, 1994; Troiden, 1989). Internalized homophobia is the lesbian or gay individual's "direction of negative social attitudes toward the self, leading to a devaluation of the self and resultant internal conflicts and poor self-regard" (Dean & Meyer, 1998, p. 161). This internalized negativity (or internalized stereotypes) is so pervasive that it affects multiple aspects of lesbian's and/or gay men's life. In fact, Shidlo (1994) reports that internalized homophobia is an "event experienced to varying degrees by almost all lesbians and gay men raised in a heterosexist and antigay society" (p. 176). Negative attitudes and views toward lesbian and gay individuals affect their psychological well-being, ability to be intimate and overall development as healthy individuals (see Cass 1984; Dean & Meyer, 1998; Meyer & Dean, 1998; Troiden, 1989). In addition, research suggests that

internalized homophobia has been significantly and negatively associated with lesbian and gay couples' relationship satisfaction (Meyer & Dean, 1998; Balsam & Szymanski, 2005a; Szymanski & Chung, 2003).

For example, Meyer and Dean's (1998) multiphase longitudinal study explored issues related to internalized homophobia and gay and bisexual men's relationships. Correlational analyses indicated that coupled men in the first cohort ($n = 332$) who reported greater levels of internalized homophobia reported being in their relationships for shorter periods of time ($r = -.16, p < .05$), reported more problems in their relationships ($r = -.11, p < .05$), thought more frequently of ending the relationship ($r = .11, p < .05$), and were less likely to cohabitate with their partners ($\chi^2 [1, N = 317] = 5.5, p < .05$). These findings provide some indication that a gay man's internal processes (or internalized homophobia) are significantly and negatively related to his romantic relationships (Meyer & Dean, 1998), and how an individual thinks and feels about his/her sexual identity may be related to how an individual operates in such relationships.

Balsam and Szymanski (2005a) explored lesbian relationships and the influence of their level of "outness," internalized homophobia, discrimination, and domestic violence experiences on relationship quality. Participants were 272 women whose ages ranged from 18-years to 34.75-years ($SD = 10.27$), and who identified as either lesbian ($N = 210$), bisexual ($N = 50$), heterosexual ($N = 1$), or "other" ($N = 11$). Balsam and Szymanski tested multiple hypotheses, but most relevant to the current study were their analyses of relationship quality and the influence of internalized homophobia (as assessed with the Lesbian Internalized Homophobia Scale; Szymanski & Chung, 2003). Only

those participants who identified as being in a current relationship ($N = 186$) were entered into the analyses. Analyses suggest that internalized homophobia, although modestly correlated, was significantly and negatively associated with participants' relationship quality ($r = -.26, p < .001$). Similarly, other past research has also suggested that internalized homophobia is associated with lower levels of social support and less satisfaction with social support (Szymanski & Chung, 2003). It may be that how individuals internalize negative societal messages may be related to how feelings about themselves, whether they reach out to others for support, and the levels of satisfaction within their relationships. Information provided from society, which may be internalized by lesbian and gay individuals, originates from a dominant belief held by that society. Often, individuals from oppressed groups frequently feel the stress of dealing with these negative, inaccurate, and harmful beliefs. For these reasons, I next explore the effects of minority stress on the quality of same-sex relationships.

Minority Stress. Otis, Rostosky, Riggle and Hamrin (2006) also examined the effects of minority stress (e.g., internalized homophobia and discrimination) on the quality of relationships for 131 lesbian and gay couples (age $M = 38.7, SD = 10.13$; $M = 37.3, SD = 8.96$ respectively). Participant couples were randomly assigned to be "Partner A" or "Partner B" in the analyses. The relationship between internalized homophobia, perceived discrimination, stress, and perception of relationship quality was examined. First, Pearson's product moment correlations indicated that internalized homophobia was significantly and negatively related to participants' relationship quality for both partners ($r = -.23, -.25, p < .05$). Additionally, path analysis for Partner A was conducted to examine the relationships among all variables, and results indicate that perceived stress

was the strongest predictor of relationship quality ($\beta = -.36, p < .05$); however, internalized homophobia was also significantly and inversely associated with perceived relationship quality ($p < .05$). Interestingly for Partner B, only Partner A's level of reported internalized homophobia contributed significant variance in relationship quality ($F = 2.02, p \leq .05$).

Otis and colleagues' (2006) research has several implications. First, it supports others' similar conclusions (e.g., Meyer & Dean, 1998; Balsam & Szymanski, 2005a; Szymanski & Chung, 2003) that internalized homophobia is associated with lowered levels of relationship quality/satisfaction. Second, Otis et al's (2006) results indicated that internalized homophobia can have direct effects on the relationship quality for the individual experiencing it, but such negative emotions appear to also affect her/his partner's experience in the relationship. These authors argue that internalized homophobia affects couples in many ways including isolating the couple from the lesbian and gay community and bringing into the relationship society's negative views of same-sex relationships as unstable and not long-lasting. Ultimately, Otis and colleagues posit that internalized negative messages about lesbian and gay relationships may lead to a "self-fulfilling prophecy and the demise of the relationship" (p. 93).

In addition to the devaluation of the self, acts of discrimination, prejudice, and lack of support appear to affect lesbian's relational experience. Evidence suggests that lesbians may be affected differently by some of these factors when compared to gay men. For example, Todosijevic, Rothblum and Solomon (2005) found that gay-specific stressors were inversely related to relationship satisfaction for lesbian couples, but not for gay male couples. Moreover, a study on minority stress experiences further supported

the conclusion that, when compared to gay men, lesbians were more likely to experience stress due to negative familial reactions to their partner (Lewis, Derlegay, Berndt, Morris & Rose, 2001). Although it is evident that both gay men and lesbians experience significant minority stress and internalized negative beliefs from society, it appears that gay men and lesbians may be affected differently.

Summary of Emotional Influences on Lesbian and Gay Relationships Literature

In sum, it appears that emotional arousal may also play a significant role in the lives and relationships of lesbian and gay individuals. Meyer and Dean (1998), Otis et al., (2006), Balsam and Szymanski (2005a), and Szymanski and Chung (2003) explored negative emotion via internalized homophobia (and/or minority stress) and found significant inverse relationships with relationship quality and satisfaction. As previously stated, such results have several implications. First, research suggests that individuals with higher levels of internalized homophobia are also less likely to be integrated into a lesbian or gay community (Earle, 2000; Shidlo, 1994; Szymanski, 2003), where they are more likely to find same-sex relationship role models or receive social support for their relationships. The negative emotional arousal an individual experiences appears to be related to her/his ability to manage relationships with others (both romantic relationships and friendships) and have implications for the quality of these relationships.

Limitations of Current Research

The above review of literature highlights three relevant limitations of the available research. First, although self-efficacy has been explored in several disciplines, a

more limited area of research is the role that self-efficacy plays in romantic relationships. Although this is not altogether a limitation, a thorough review of relevant literature should be conducted to assess for the unknown factors that may be related to relationship self-efficacy. Second, no known research has explored whether Bandura's (1986) four *sources* of self-efficacy actually contribute to relationship self-efficacy. The third limitation concerns the state of same-sex relationship research. That is, despite the fact that evidence exists which supports the exploration of Bandura's (1986) four sources of self-efficacy as influential in lesbian relationships, research has not explicitly explored the four sources with lesbians. The present study aims to diminish this gap of knowledge by developing a measure that explores the four sources of relationship self-efficacy with lesbians.

Summary and Rationale

This chapter aimed to integrate the available anecdotal, theoretical, and empirical evidence to support the exploration of Bandura's (1986; 1997) four sources of self-efficacy as a vehicle for investigating lesbian relationships. Since no measure currently exists, the above literature was reviewed to provide corroboration for the development of such as scale. Due to relevant research which indicates that lesbians may be affected differently by some of these four constructs (i.e., Kurdek, 1998; 2003; Lewis, Derlegay, Berndt, Morris & Rose, 2001; Todosijeovic, Rothblum & Solomon, 2005), it was decided to first explore lesbian relationship self-efficacy sources.

The review of Bandura's (1986; 1997) theory posits that there are four sources by which self-efficacy may grow. First, past performance, or successful past experiences in goal attainment, is thought to contribute to one's belief in her/his ability to accomplish

another similar task in the future. Despite the fact that lesbians report the presence of significant positive attributes in their relationships, research suggests that same-sex relationships dissolve at a faster rate when compared to their heterosexual counterparts (Kurdek, 1998). Furthermore, evidence suggests that lesbian relationships actually dissolve more quickly when compared to heterosexual couples (Andersson, Noack, Seierstad, & Weedon-Fekjaer, 2004; Kurdek, 1998; 2006b), and possibly even gay male relationships (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983). That is, lesbian and gay individuals, based on research of relationship dissolution rates, may have more negative past experiences in relationships.

The second source thought to contribute to self-efficacy is encouragement and support provided by others (i.e., verbal persuasion). Research indicates that lesbian and gay couples receive significantly greater support from friends and significantly less support from parents and society when compared to heterosexual couples (Clunis & Green, 2000; Kurdek & Schmitt, 1987; Kurdek, 2005, 2006a; LaSala, 1998; Rostosky et al., 2004).

The third source thought to contribute to self-efficacy is role models (i.e., vicarious experience; Bandura, 1986; 1997), and the empirical research and anecdotal literature suggest that gay men and lesbians have fewer available individual and relationships role models (Berzon, 1990; 1996; Connolly, 1999; Grossman & D'Augelli, 2004).

Finally, Bandura's (1986; 1997) theory states that the fourth contributing source to self-efficacy beliefs is emotional arousal, and negative emotional arousal is thought to be correlated with poor goal outcomes (Bandura, 1986; 1997). An example of negative

emotional experiences, which research suggests affects same-sex relationships, is internalized homophobia (Meyer & Dean, 1998; Otis et al., 2006; Szymanski, 2005a; Balsam & Szymanski, 2005; Szymanski & Chung, 2001). Additionally, evidence suggests that lesbians may be affected differently by these negative emotional arousal experiences (Lewis, Derlegay, Berndt, Morris & Rose, 2001; Todosijevic, Rothblum & Solomon, 2005).

Past research has linked relationship self-efficacy beliefs with relationship satisfaction, commitment, and persistence in heterosexual couples (Lopez & Lent, 1991; Morua & Lopez, 2005). Further, an investigation of the lesbian and gay research suggests that the four constructs (i.e., sources) thought to contribute to self-efficacy are also associated with relationship satisfaction with lesbian and/or gay couples. Despite the literature supporting the exploration of the four sources with same-sex couples, no known research exists. In fact, there is no known measure that assesses the four sources of relationship self-efficacy for either heterosexual or same-sex relationships. The above review of literature also suggests that lesbians may have limited access to the sources of relationship self-efficacy. Based on the aforementioned review of theory and research, I contend that Bandura's self-efficacy theory, and specifically the four contributing sources, may serve as a useful heuristic for understanding factors that affect lesbian relationship satisfaction.

Statement of Research Question

The first goal of this study was to develop a scale that measures the four sources of relationship self-efficacy for lesbians (i.e., the Sources of Lesbian Relationship Self-

Efficacy Scale; SLRSE). The development of this scale was based on self-efficacy theory as proposed by Bandura's (1986) self-efficacy theory. The second goal was to explore the SLRSE's factor structure. The third goal was to confirm the SLRSE's factor structure and investigate its psychometric properties. Due to the multiple analyses required for each goal, I systematically describe each research question and then proceed with a brief description of the proposed statistical methods. Table 1 depicts the SLRSE's expected correlations with validity measures.

1. The first goal of this study was to develop the Sources of Lesbian Relationship Self-Efficacy Scale (SLRSE).

2. The second goal was to investigate the content validity of the SLRSE and perform initial item reduction (Study 2).

Hypothesis 1 (H1): The SLRSE demonstrates content validity.

Analysis of Hypothesis 1: Two groups of expert judges (self-efficacy experts and lesbian relationship experts) provided ratings of each SLRSE item based on the item's clarity and its relevance to the judges' respective areas of expertise. Moreover, self-efficacy experts performed back translation to further aid in establishing content validity.

Analysis of Hypothesis 1: Initial item elimination was performed based, in part, on the expert judge's ratings and qualitative feedback.

3. The third goal was to explore the SLRSE's factor structure (Study 3).

Hypothesis 2: The SLRSE will consist of four subscales that parallel Bandura's (1986) four sources of self-efficacy.

Analysis of Hypothesis 2: An exploratory factor analysis was conducted to identify whether the SLRSE is conceptually parallel with Bandura's (1986) self-efficacy theory.

4. The fourth goal was to explore the internal consistency of the SLRSE (Study 3).

Hypothesis 3 (H3): The SLRSE demonstrates sufficient internal consistency.

Analysis of Hypothesis 3: Item-total correlations and Cronbach's alpha was explored to investigate the internal consistency of the SLRSE and its subscales.

5. The fifth goal was to confirm the SLRSE's factor structure (Study 4).

Hypothesis 4: The SLRSE will consist of four subscales that parallel Bandura's (1986) four sources of self-efficacy. Additionally, the SLRSE will evidence a stable factor structure by confirming that structure identified in Study 3's exploratory factor analysis.

Analysis of Hypothesis 4: A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to establish the stability of the four-factor model.

6. The sixth goal was to investigate the validity of the SLRSE (Study 4).

Hypothesis 5 (H5): The SLRSE demonstrates validity (i.e., construct, criterion, divergent, and known-groups validity).

Analysis of Hypothesis 5: Construct validity was established by moderate correlations and in the appropriate direction with the following theoretically relevant

scales: Social Support Appraisal Scale (SSA: Vaux, Phillips, Holly, Thompson, Williams, & Stewart, 1986), Lesbian Internalized Homophobia Scale- Short Form (LIHS-SF; Szymanski & Chung, 2001), Outness Inventory (OI; Mohr & Fassinger, 2000), Marginalization Scale (MS: Lehmler & Agnew, 2006), Parental Divorce (Amato & DeBoer, 2001), and the Adult Attachment Questionnaire scale (AAQ; Simpson, Rholes, & Phillips, 1996). It is important to note that lower SSA scores represent greater social support, thereby causing negative correlations where one might expect to see positive correlations. Due to the numerous and expected correlations among most subscales with validity measures, below is an outline that highlights which correlations, based on theory and research, that are expected to be highest:

- **Past Performance Subscale:** The PP subscale will evidence negative correlations with the Social Support Appraisal Scale (SSA) and the Adult Attachment Questionnaire scale (AAQ).
- **Vicarious Experience Subscale:** The VE subscale will evidence negative correlations with participants' parental divorce experiences and the Social Support Appraisal Scale (SSA), but will evidence positive correlations with the Outness Inventory (OI).
- **Verbal Persuasion Subscale:** The VP subscale will evidence negative correlations with the Social Support Appraisal Scale (SSA) and the the Marigalization Scale (MS), but will evidence positive correlations with the Outness Inventory (OI).
- **Emotional Arousal Subscale:** The EA subscale will evidence negative correlations with the Lesbian Internalized Homophobia

Scale- Short Form (LIHS-SF), the Marginalization Scale (MS), and the Adult Attachment Questionnaire scale (AAQ). Positive correlations are expected with the Outness Inventory (OI).

Analysis of Hypothesis 5: The criterion-related validity was established by regression analysis to explore whether the four SLRSE subscales contribute unique variance to relationship self-efficacy beliefs (RSE; Morua & Lopez, 2005) and relationship satisfaction (KMSS; Schumm et al., 1986).

Analysis of Hypothesis 5: The divergent validity was established by exploring the correlations, or lackthereof, between the measure of optimism (as measured by the LOT-R: Scheier & Carver, 1985) and the SLRSE.

Analysis of Hypothesis 5: Known-groups validity was established by utilizing an independent t-test to explore whether scores on the SLRSE can differentiate between members of two separate groups that are predicted to differ on levels of SLRSE.

CHAPTER THREE

Methods and Results

This dissertation consisted of four studies focused on the development and testing of psychometric properties for the Sources of Lesbian Relationship Self-Efficacy Scale (SLRSE). Study 1 describes the initial item development of the SLRSE which consisted of focus group research, professional consultation, and a review of literature. The purpose of Study 2 was item reduction as well as establishing the content validity. In study 3, further item reduction was conducted and the SLRSE's factor structure and reliability was assessed. The purpose of Study 4 was to conduct a confirmatory factor analysis and assess the validity of the SLRSE. Content, criterion, divergent, and known-groups validity were explored in Study 4. For each study, the participant recruitment, inclusion criteria, procedures for collecting data, instruments, analysis of data, and a brief discussion of the results is presented.

Study 1: Scale Item Development

The primary purpose of Study 1 was the initial item development of the SLRSE. This task was accomplished utilizing a variety of methods including focus group research, professional consultation, and review of the research literature. I first discuss the focus group research, and follow with the results from these groups. I then explicate how the professional consultation, literature review, and scale development theory aided in the construction of the SLRSE scale. I conclude with a brief discussion of key findings and limitations of Study 1.

Scale Item Development: Focus Group Research

The goal of the focus groups was to allow participants the opportunity to discuss their experiences, emotions, and observations of women's same-sex relationships. Specifically, participants were asked questions that focused on constructs related to Bandura's (1986) four sources of self-efficacy (i.e., past performance, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal). Although participants spoke briefly about various other topics and issues unrelated to Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy (e.g., dating men, favorite LGBT television shows, etc), the main purpose of the focus groups were the development of SLRSE items and, therefore, the primary topics discussed by participants fit within the self-efficacy theory.

Participants

Description of Sample. A total of 14 self-identified lesbians participated in one of three focus groups. The participants ranged in age from 19 - 56 years ($M = 31$ years, $SD = 10.27$). Of these women, 13 (93%) identified as Caucasian, and one (7%) identified as Asian. The average participant had at least some college experience (21.4%) or completed a college degree (50%), with 28.6% of participants having completed a Master's or professional degree. Three women (21.4%) reported being "partnered," two women (14.3%) were in "committed" relationships, two (14.3%) identified their relationship status as "living with partner," two participants (14.3%) were "in a relationship," two participants (14.3%) were "single," one participant (7.1%) was "dating," one participant (7.1%) was "in one [relationship]," and one participant (7.1%) reported that "it's complicated- not sure... it's in flux." The length of participants' relationships ranged from 0 months (i.e., not in a relationship) to over 16 years, and for those in relationships, the average relationship length was three years. Participants

reported their sexual orientation using a scale from 0-6 (“0” = *exclusively heterosexual* to “6” = *exclusively homosexual*). Three participants (21.5%) reported their sexual orientation to be a “4,” eight participants (57%) identified as a “5,” and three participants (21.5%) reported a “6” on the scale.

Recruitment. Self-identified lesbian women were recruited for participation in the current focus group study (for recruitment notice, see Appendix A). The two recruitment methods utilized were networking (i.e., through professional and personal contacts in the local lesbian community) and the snowball method (i.e., asking professional and personal contacts to forward the participant recruitment notice to other lesbian friends; Dawson, Klass, Guy & Edgley, 1991). Such methods may be necessary as the negative climate and attitudes toward LGBT individuals create barriers in identifying this population, and methods such as networking and the snowball method appear to minimize some of these barriers (e.g., Elderidge & Gilbert, 1990; Jordan & Deluty, 2000; Smith & Ingram, 2004).

Inclusion criteria. For the current study, electronic advertisements were distributed requesting that participants be women who self-identify as lesbian and are 18-years-old and older. Participants did not need to be in a committed relationship, nor was anyone excluded based on race/ethnicity, religion, or disability.

Materials

Demographic questionnaire. Participants were asked to complete a Demographic Questionnaire. Information requested included participants’ age, race/ethnicity, level of education, relationship status, length of current relationship, and sexual orientation (see Appendix B for demographic form).

Semi-structured interview protocol. A researcher-constructed semi-structured interview questionnaire was developed to help guide the focus groups (see Appendix C). This questionnaire contained a list of possible questions to explore during the group, and this list focused on possible sources of self-efficacy. For example, one question asked, “Who serve as positive relationship role models for you?” Another question asked, “Sometimes couples have a lot of support for their relationships and sometimes they have very little support. In what specific ways have your relationships been supported or not supported?” Participants were invited to discuss any topic at length.

Procedure

Three focus groups were held at a mid-Atlantic university. Participants attended one of three focus groups consisting of 2-6 participants and two interviewers. Each focus group lasted approximately two hours, no incentives were provided for participation, and small snacks were available throughout the sessions. At the outset of each focus group the interviewers reviewed the limits of confidentiality, the purpose of the research, and participants’ rights to either end participation at any point or only partially engage (i.e., only respond to the questions they wish). Participants were informed that they may be contacted after the focus group if the researchers needed further clarification about their responses, and an opportunity to consent to, or deny, further contact was provided in the consent form (see Appendix D).

Security of responses and protection of participants. Participants were informed that their participation was completely voluntary and they were free to withdraw from the study at anytime and for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the investigator. No personal identifying information was required, and participants were informed that

identifying information would not be linked to any publications or presentations from this study. Should they speak about the contents of the focus group afterwards, participants were explicitly asked not to reveal identifying information about other individuals.

Approval to conduct focus group research involving human subjects was acquired from The Pennsylvania State University's Institutional Review Board of the (IRB # 21282).

Interviewers. Two interviewers were present for each of the focus groups. Interviewer ages were 27 and 45-years-old. Both interviewers were Caucasian and self-identified as lesbian. One interviewer identified her current relationship status as "single" and the other identified as "partnered." Both interviewers had a master's degree in a counseling-related field.

Data collection and analysis. The primary purpose of the focus groups was to identify potential scale items for the SLRSE scale. Because no known research supports the use of self-efficacy theory for lesbian relationships, the focus groups were conducted to (a) explore whether Bandura's (1986; 1997) sources were influential in lesbian relationships and if so, (b) in what ways did the sources affect their relationships and (c) per DeVellis' (2003) suggestion, the focus groups were utilized to identify "natural" language that participants use to discuss the concept. The transcripts were analyzed with the sole purpose of identifying the primary themes, participant language when discussing the topic, and the influences that the sources have on their romantic relationships. To be clear, analysis of the transcripts did not adhere to any of the formal qualitative research methods (e.g., grounded theory, phenomenological, ethnography, etc).

Audiotapes of the focus groups were transcribed by one of the co-researchers, and prior to analysis each transcript was reviewed for accuracy. The data consisted of over

six hours of audiotape as well as reflective notes taken by the primary investigator after each focus group. First, each co-facilitator completed an independent content analysis of each focus group's primary themes, experiences, emotions, reflections, use of language, and/or stated beliefs. Common themes discussed by each individual participant were also identified. Second, the co-facilitators met as a team and discussed their independent findings. As the co-facilitators discussed their separate findings, the themes were revised based upon results from the other co-facilitator's analysis. Once key experiences, emotions, and beliefs were identified and refined, they were compared across focus groups to ensure that they were both representative and inclusive. Special emphasis was paid to participants' language and use of specific words to describe their relationships.

Results

Since the purpose of the focus groups was to develop scale items that assessed the sources of lesbian relationship self-efficacy beliefs, the transcripts were analyzed to identify themes consistent with Bandura's (1986; 1997) theory. Although participants briefly discussed topics unrelated to self-efficacy sources, the current section focuses on those self-efficacy related findings. Furthermore, I discuss findings from the three focus groups within an organizational framework that is also consistent with Bandura's four sources (i.e., past performance, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, emotional arousal).

Past performance. Past performance is largely considered the most salient and influential source of self-efficacy because individuals who performed a specific behavior/action in the past will have strong proof about their abilities to accomplish that task in the future (Bandura, 1986; 1997). Successful past experiences build one's belief

in her/his ability to accomplish future tasks and unsuccessful experiences weaken one's beliefs. Remembering that Bandura (1986; 1997) states that the first source of self-efficacy, and typically the most salient, is past performance accomplishments (Bandura 1986; 1997), I will begin with a description of this source.

Many themes emerged when participants discussed how their past relationship experiences informed their beliefs about current or future relationships. Some participants described learning that they were good partners and did well in long-term relationships. A 56-year-old woman noted that her previous relationships taught her that she “did commitment well.” Others reported that their past relationships taught them important and positive aspects about themselves that they later brought into other relationships. For example, a participant who was 42-years-old described how “she [her first girlfriend] taught me first that I was loveable... which was huge to take into my next relationship.” Other participants expressed fears that they were not “good” in relationships. Upon reflection of her recently dissolved long-term relationship, one woman shared, “I was such a bad girlfriend (nervous laughter)... [we used] all sorts of things against each other instead of being really open and saying ‘This is what I really want.’”

Another common experience that emerged was participants' difficulty navigating a small lesbian community where one must choose both their friends and romantic partners from the same “pool.” The size of the lesbian community, depending on one's geographic location, may create a particularly unique set of obstacles. One younger participant noted:

I went to [a particular] high school and there are like 3000 people... and I knew two other lesbians (laughter). It was kinda sad. I already had a little thing with the other one (laughter)... she was good enough, like, I knew we weren't perfect.

Although not always stated in a linear fashion, some participants described struggling to navigate a small lesbian community and, upon "finding someone," they described strong desires to partner (as opposed to casually dating, for example). This was often identified by participants as the "U-Haul phenomenon." That is, participants described an experience that occurred at the beginning of a romantic relationship in which there were passionate emotions, intense physical desire, and in hindsight, some women felt that the relationships progressed more quickly than they desired (or were aware of at the time).

One participant described this as:

I think that is where a lot of the stereotypes [come from]. Like a lesbian brings a moving truck on the second date... I think a lot of times that can be detrimental because you put all of yourself into something too quick... and you can burn yourself out very quickly, or be very devastated in the end because you know the person, and find you aren't perfect but you have already invested all this energy, and your emotions, and vulnerability into this person and its just really difficult to get out of that.

Due to the perceived negative effect on the relationships, some participants reported fear and/or apprehension about repeating these behaviors in other relationships. Other participants, however, did not reflect upon these experiences with apprehension and instead they reported learning from these opportunities to improve their future relationships. For instance, one woman stated,

The relationship that I just got out of ... we did the whole second date U-haul thing, and pretty much just started living together... and in the end I felt like I didn't really know who she was. So, in a sense I am reluctant to get into something so fast, and I guess that is one way [past] relationships have affected me. For me, it is a very positive thing... I guess now I am more comfortable with just going with the flow, getting to know somebody.

In conclusion, participants' romantic past performance accomplishments appeared to inform their current (and possibly their future) relationships in both positive and negative ways. Results suggested that some women learned that they were loveable and could commit to a long-term relationship. In the examples provided above, it is noteworthy to mention that both of these quotes were from women who were in long-term relationships spanning from 8 to 16 years. On the other hand, a few participants expressed concerns about their ability to be "good" partners because their previous experiences led them to believe otherwise. Another theme that surfaced was that some women shared how they learned that the size of the lesbian community significantly affected their dating options, and how sometimes, they may have "settled" with their partner due to the lack of available options. What these women learned about themselves, and their surrounding lesbian community, appeared to inform their beliefs about their current (or future) relationship.

Vicarious experiences. Bandura (1986; 1997) states that the second source of self-efficacy is *vicarious experience*. He hypothesizes that vicarious experiences contribute to self-efficacy beliefs in that observing and/or listening to the successful experiences of

another similar person increases one's own belief in his/her ability to accomplish similar goals (Bandura, 1986; 1997). Vicarious experiences are also known in the literature as modeling.

Participants reported that relationship models were indeed important in their own relationships; however, there were clear cohort differences in participants' report of *who* were their relationship role models and *why*. Although I was struck by how most participants could not initially identify *any* relationship role models, older participants more easily recognized how their parents, or other heterosexual relationships, served as their relationship role models:

I'd say my parents. I watched them negotiate [their] relationship through difficulty, through fun, through various stages of serious hills and climb.

Watching them really learn about each other over 40 plus years. Knowing that it's not always easy... it's going to be work in many ways.

Another older participant stated, "For me, I would have to say my little brother and his wife ... you can see that they really work in their relationship, and that it shouldn't be all work, but it definitely does take some work."

Conversely, when participants in the younger cohort could identify relationship role models, they were more likely to be same-sex relationships. For instance, a 22-year-old participant stated, "I can't even think of anyone, seriously! Like, I mean, I see couples, you know, from my teammates that have things and qualities that I like about them. But there's been no foundation of a long lasting relationship." Another younger participant described, "Like my parents have a good relationship, but not the best, so I don't know... I can't even really think of factors of role modeldom" [sic].

In addition to *who* served as relationship role models, another important finding was *why* certain couples served as models. There were clear cohort differences with this question as well. Participants in the older cohort often noted general ingredients that contribute to most healthy relationships including respect, equality, and communication. For instance, a 34-year-old woman described:

I don't know if I knew role models had to be two people of the same sex. Communication is communication... To me one of the biggest things is knowing you can have an argument with somebody but still have your relationship be fine. I was so afraid of fighting growing up. I hated it. I covered my ears and it scared me to death. And to learn that you can have that and go to bed still loving the person even though you had that argument and wake up the next day and still have love even with arguments... That was a learning tool.

Younger participants more frequently reported the length of the relationship as a key feature of whether the couple served as a role model for their own relationships. "I equated it to longevity, that's the first thing that I thought of." It appeared that the longer a same-sex couple was together, the more these participants looked up to them. Some women from the younger cohort also stated that they looked for couples who demonstrate characteristic similarities to their own relationships. A 23-year-old participant stated:

The one thing that I thought of was, 'Does the couple look like me?' I was in a relationship with someone who was transgender and so, like, I didn't see that anywhere... I didn't know what to do, or how you were suppose[d] to act, or what I'm suppose to feel.

Interestingly, none of the participants in the older cohort identified the length of the relationship or whether there were relationship similarities as primary characteristics in their relationship role models.

Two themes that emerged which were more universal among both cohorts were related to ideas of individuality and hope. Many women described how their relationship role models must be two individually healthy people who come together. “Two people who are pretty solid in their understanding of themselves may be able to enter into the relationship... [and have an] understanding of what a good partner is and who a good partner might be, versus a really good friend.” A younger participant also described a similar theme:

I think that one thing that I've come across is individuality, like you know, there are so many times that I feel like, people get into this unhealthiness... Like, they dress alike and ...you can't pry them away from each other...if I want to hang out with one, I can't... they other one has to come along. So like, a couple that does their own thing.

The second universal theme expressed by both cohorts was how opposite-sex relationship role models could exhibit general traits that participants wished to demonstrate in their own relationship (e.g., communication). When same-sex relationships prevailed, participants described how it gave them hope for their own relationships. That is, happy couples who are in long-term relationships appear to offer other lesbians hope for their own relationships. For example, one participant stated “Gay and lesbian couples, because we don't see it happen very often, but when you can associate with a couple that actually made it work, it's refreshing... and you begin to have hope.” This sentiment,

that long-lasting same-sex relationships could exist and provide hope for the rest of the community, was echoed several times throughout the focus groups.

In sum, it appears that participants from this study agreed that role models have an effect on their own relationships. Noticeable cohort differences existed in regard to identification of, and reasons for, their choice of role models. Results suggested that identifying tangible role models was difficult for most participants at first. Participants in the older cohort more easily identified heterosexual role models who demonstrated core relationship traits (e.g., respect, communication, etc). In contrast, the younger lesbians appeared to seek same-sex role models who have been together for a long time, and who also demonstrated similar characteristics to their own relationships. Regardless of age, however, when participants observed same-sex couples in happy long-term relationships, participants reported that it gave them hope for their own romances.

Verbal persuasion. Bandura's (1986; 1997) third source of self-efficacy is verbal persuasion. He hypothesizes that verbal persuasion contributes to self-efficacy beliefs in that support from others, and their belief in one's abilities, increases one's confidence in her/his ability to accomplish the task (Bandura 1986; 1997). Focus group participants frequently reported that they valued the experience of support for their relationships, regardless of whether it came from family, friends, or society. One woman described:

I have been really lucky... I grew up with gay friends, and my mom will go out with a t-shirt that says 'I love my lesbian daughter' (laughter). She has always been supportive, she loves [participant's partner], all of [mom's] friends love [participant's partner].

Strong encouragement from family was not the norm for all participants. In fact, support from family members was rare, and negative comments from family about lesbian and gay individuals (and their relationships) were more frequent. One woman shared her experience:

It's been 10 years and no one [in my family] has asked, 'So are you dating someone?' I don't feel supported even though they know I identify as a lesbian. It's never talked about. Never brought it up. Even if it is, it is referred to as 'Your friend.' It's this 'friend' word, and it's like, well, wait a second! No, she is not my friend! That's part of what she is to me, but I think that certain words they say and use can show support. Like 'Somebody's partner' is a lot more supportive than 'Your friend.'

Participants described at length how vigilant they were to signs of support (or disapproval):

My parents were not really supportive at first... but when we started getting Valentine's Day cards to both of us, it was our one-year or two-year anniversary when mom made a card for us, and it was like, mom figured out how to make cards on the computer, and put pictures on it, and she put a little picture of us with a rainbow on it. We thought that was really sweet. And they [participant's family] send her [participant's partner] birthday presents, and Christmas presents and that is a huge step when you have that support.

When family members demonstrated support for participants' relationships the participants tended to express immense appreciation. Participants also noted the importance of support from places such as work or a local business, "One thing, and this

is a good thing... we opened a bank account together and the lady was great. We just walked in there and told them what we wanted and... she didn't even flinch." Another woman expressed her frustration at her job because:

The way I feel validated in my relationship is when people treat my relationship like they would a 'hetero' relationship... at my work they don't offer partner benefits, and if I end up staying there a while, I may end up asking for them.

Interestingly, women in this study rarely spoke about the encouragement and support provided by friends, and instead, they appeared to focus on perceived support (or lack thereof) provided by family and society. Quick references were made to indicate how friends helped them heal from relationship heartaches; however, relationship support provided by friends was not a central theme. One participant, however, did describe her first experience of when friends provided support for her romantic relationships,

I think I have seen a lot of support from my team, and 80% of my teammates are straight... when I first came out I remember I had a date, and I remember all of my friends came out and dressed me up for my date, which was weird because I never had that before because I had always said I was just going out for coffee with a friend, but now I had all of these friends who were great.

In conclusion, women described how verbal persuasion was experienced implicitly or explicitly (Bandura 1986; 1997), and participants identified how it manifested in both ways. Participants expressed a strong desire for approval from family and society, and they also expressed incredible gratitude when they received such

support, even if the support presented itself in unspoken ways. In fact, the gratitude was so immense it appeared that they almost believed they would never receive this level of support and encouragement. Another interesting finding was that support provided by friends was not a central theme in the current study. It may be that participants focused on places/people that did not provide sufficient support. Due to consistent research findings which suggest that lesbian and gay couples tend to report greater support from friends, and significantly less support from parents (e.g., Kurdek & Schmitt, 1987; LaSala, 1998; Rostosky et al., 2004), it is unlikely that this sample did not feel relationship support from their friends. A possible explanation may be that participants were less likely to focus on friendships because they can choose their friends and seek out individuals/communities that will offer approval and support. Ultimately, friendship networks may be so fundamental to their romantic relationships that they presuppose their impact. On the other hand, the degree to which family and society offer support is largely out of one's control. The shared experience of powerlessness that occurs when individuals cannot change how family and society approve of their relationships may be a more emotionally charged subject, and one that lesbians may be more eager to discuss.

Emotional arousal. Bandura's (1986; 1997) fourth source of self-efficacy is emotional arousal. This source is hypothesized to contribute to self-efficacy beliefs in that one's internal emotional state (while thinking about or actually performing a specific task), significantly influences one's belief in her/his ability to accomplish the goal (Bandura 1986; 1997).

Participants, in general, demonstrated some difficulty identifying specific examples of how their emotional states affect their romantic relationships. One common

theme that emerged from participants' discussions included their comfort, or lack thereof, at showing public displays of affection toward their partner. On one hand, some participants expressed indifference at other people's response to their public displays of affection: "I don't feel like people look at me any differently. Like, if I want to hold hands... then I'll hold hands." Conversely, some participants found that they had incredible anxiety and/or fear that somebody would discover their relationship (and their sexual orientation), even with mundane day-to-day life events:

I was living in a very religious community and I was fearful of losing my job because of [being gay]. So we moved ... and when people would call my house it was like, 'Oh [participant's partner] answered the phone, oh no! They are gonna get it and everything is gonna fall apart!

Other times participants discussed their feelings about being out in public with their partner and their worries of being identified as lesbian/gay by bystanders. Interestingly, one participant noted that she experienced significantly less anxiety when showing physical affection toward heterosexual women when compared to lesbians. For instance, a 31-year-old woman shared:

If I do the exact same thing with a straight woman as I do with a gay woman, I don't notice it. For example, in New York City with a friend, she is always very touchy feely, very nice kid, and she always wants to hold hands, and so we hold hands, and I don't really think about it. I am like, okay, we're holding hands. But if I am with a gay woman who wants to hold my hand, even though she may look very much like a straight

woman, I have my internal anxiety. I have this fear and anxiety about it and I don't know why.

Another participant shared:

One of my girlfriends and I always, like, had this joke that we are gonna get gay bashed if we do that [show affection in public]. Because you could be going to just a really nice restaurant as just friends... but I feel like people notice when you are close or you're touching or something.

Conversely, a 23-year-old woman described how she enjoyed people's reactions:

“Rocking the boat, like, I love it! I have had people yell stuff at me out of cars, and on the streets...I was on a date with a girl recently and at a bar and we started kissing.”

In sum, participants appeared to vary in their emotional reactions to romantic relationships, and more specifically, demonstrating affection toward their significant other in public. Some women noted safety concerns and fears of “gay bashing,” while others expressed a sense of freedom in demonstrating their affections publically.

Additionally, some people may experience more discomfort/anxiety if they know they are openly being gay in public (i.e., affectionate toward another lesbian woman), as opposed to just being friendly. The influence of emotional arousal on romantic relationships appeared to be discussed less thoroughly when compared to the other sources. This source was approached last and participants may have been fatigued or had exhausted their contributions.

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the purpose of Study 1 was the initial item development of the SLRSE and this task was accomplished utilizing focus group research, professional consultation, and review of the empirical literature. The

focus group research was the first formal step in item development, however, professional consultation and a review of empirical literature were conducted intermittently throughout the entire first phase of item development. That is, a linear description of these steps is not possible as the process was more fluid. Now that the results of the focus group have been reviewed, a brief description of how the initial item development was influenced by professional consultations and current literature will be discussed.

Scale Item Development: Professional Consultation and Empirical Literature

In addition to the focus group research, other methods were utilized to aid in the initial item development. These methods consisted of utilizing the scale development literature, investigating the same-sex relationship literature, and informal consultation with colleagues and other lesbian and gay professionals in the community. Recommendations provided by DeVellis (2003) served as a primary guide throughout this process. For this reason, the current section is organized using the steps outlined by DeVellis' (2003) recommendations for generating the initial item pool. I first review DeVellis' recommendation and then provide a description of how I adhered to these recommendations.

DeVellis (2003) highlights six general issues to consider during scale item construction. The first consideration is ensuring that items reflect the scale's purpose and measure the specific latent construct intended. The second consideration, "redundancy," describes the importance of creating numerous and seemingly redundant items in an effort to capture the phenomenon of interest in multiple ways. The third consideration is developing a sufficient number of items for your initial item pool. The fourth

consideration involves articulating relevant ideas using alternative expressions (i.e., identifying multiple ways to state the same idea). The fifth issue pertains to identifying “good” and “bad” items by evaluating the items based on (a) length, (b) reading level, and (c) avoiding items that convey more than one idea (i.e., double barreled items). The sixth consideration involves item wording (i.e., negatively and positively worded items) and exploring whether, and how many, negatively worded items one wants to include in their scale. I now review how DeVellis’ (2003) recommendations guided this stage of initial item development.

Review of literature and focus group research. DeVellis (2003) first emphasized the importance of choosing items that reflect the scale’s purpose. That is, a scale should measure a specific latent construct and this should guide the construction of items. This issue was first addressed with the initial exploration of the self-efficacy and same-sex relationship literature (see Chapter Two for a summary of this review). Additionally, consulting the literature offered frequent reminders of the specific purpose of the SLRSE. Moreover, it also provided many opportunities to explore, and exhaust, the various ways that self-efficacy sources could be measured. Another approach to addressing this issue included the use of focus group research (described above). The focus groups allowed women to discuss specific ways that the four sources influence their relationships. Focus group research contributed to this goal because these women were the target sample and identifying the multiple manifestations of the latent variable (relationship self-efficacy sources) with the target sample was crucial in keeping with the SLRSE’s purpose.

Many items were developed based upon the review of literature and focus group research (specific items developed via focus group research are reviewed above). For

example, the third source thought to contribute to self-efficacy is role models (i.e., vicarious experience; Bandura, 1986; 1997), and the literature also suggests that gay men and lesbians have fewer available individual and/or romantic relationship role models (Berzon, 1990; 1996; Connolly, 1999; Grossman & D'Augelli, 2004; Tropiano, 2002). This research influenced the development of the SLRSE role model items, "I do not have any same-sex relationship role models that I admire," and "Most of the same-sex relationships that I know of are relationships depicted on television or are celebrities' relationships."

Another example of how the literature informed item development includes Otis et al.'s (2006) research which examined the effects of minority stress (e.g., internalized homophobia and discrimination) on the quality of relationships. Results of their study (which are reviewed more thoroughly in Chapter 2) suggest that internalized homophobia can have a direct effect on the relationship quality for the individual experiencing it, but such negative emotions also appear to affect an individual's experience in the relationship. These authors argue that internalized homophobia affects couples in many ways, including isolating the couple from the lesbian and gay community, and bringing into the relationship society's negative views of same-sex relationships as fleeting and unstable. In this example, internalized homophobia and discrimination is seen as a negative emotional experience (i.e., emotional arousal). Items examples included, "While in relationships, I feel anxious when people 'detect' or 'suspect' that my girlfriend and I are partners," and "I feel good about being a lesbian."

As previously stated, the initial review of literature and the focus groups resulted in the construction of the first set of SLRSE items; however, item construction

simultaneously followed other recommendations provided by DeVellis (2003). That is, considerable time was spent creating items that (a) expressed the same central concept in various ways (recommendation four) and, (b) making sure to create several items that measured the same concept (redundancy; recommendation two). This included changing the sentence stem, or delineating certain aspects of the sentence. For instance, the item “Most of the same-sex relationships that I know of are relationships depicted in media,” was also considered in conjunction with, “Most of the same-sex relationships that I know of are relationships depicted on television or are celebrities’ relationships.” DeVellis (2003) stresses that in the initial item development phase, it is important to express concepts using multiple approaches and to ensure that numerous items measure the same construct.

Professional consultation. After the initial development of several SLRSE items, I consulted with my adviser, an LGBT research team, and known professionals in the community who have expertise in LGBT issues. First, my adviser and I generated additional items to increase the initial item pool (recommendation three and four; DeVellis, 2003), and we examined the ratio of negatively and positively worded items (recommendation six; DeVellis, 2003). Moreover, we also attempted to improve item clarity, specificity, and improve item brevity (recommendation five; DeVellis, 2003). Based on these changes, the literature was again consulted to explore whether (a) the items were reflective of issues/factors that affect lesbian or same sex relationships (as opposed to sources that might influence relationship self-efficacy beliefs for both same sex and heterosexual romantic relationships) and, (b) whether the items appear to be theoretically consistent with Bandura’s (1986; 1997) theory of self-efficacy.

I then presented the SLRSE items to my LGBT research team, as well as to known professionals in the community. First, research team members evaluated the SLRSE items based upon many of DeVellis' (2003) criteria. This included examining items based upon: (a) item clarity and length, (b) redundancy, (c) relevance to lesbian relationships, and (d) whether the items were double-barreled. Moreover, colleagues also provided personal feedback regarding their own perceived relationship self-efficacy sources. The research team was also asked if there were content areas that were not in the current SLRSE items that they believed should be included.

After consultations with the LGBT research team occurred, I then again consulted with the research literature to explore the consistency of the items with Bandura's theory and same-sex relationship research. Next, numerous informal consultations with known professionals in the community occurred. For instance, I consulted with colleagues at The Pennsylvania State University's Center for Women Students (CWS), as well as an out lesbian psychologist who provides therapy to lesbians and couples. These colleagues either identified as lesbian or gay, and/or have a primary interest in LGBT research and/or psychotherapy issues. In addition to those issues discussed with the LGBT research team, these consultations were conducted to help identify experiences that lesbians from different age cohorts may experience.

Several items were developed through the later stages of professional consultations and literature review. Some item examples include: "I have gay or lesbian friends who have created families with their partner," "My past relationships were negatively affected by our different levels of outness," and "My parents want me to marry a man."

In addition to initial item development, DeVellis' (2003) recommendations regarding measurement format were also followed. For instance, DeVellis discusses the importance of exploring the number of response categories one should use based upon the purpose of the measurement. He also notes the utility of using Likert scaling when measuring beliefs, opinions, and attitudes. Further, he suggests using a rating scale that is worded in such a way as to keep the intervals between responses equal (i.e., have the same number of disagree vs. agree options). Each of these recommendations was heeded with the SLRSE's rating scale.

Based on the aforementioned steps an initial pool of 62 items was generated (see Appendix E), consistent with general guidelines which suggest that the initial scale size should be three-to-four times larger than the anticipated final scale (DeVellis, 2003). SLRSE items were grouped into four categories that are considered to parallel each of Bandura's four self-efficacy sources: past performance (23 items), vicarious experience (10 items), verbal persuasion (17 items), and emotional arousal (12 items). The scale was provided a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly Agree*).

Discussion

As mentioned earlier, the purpose of the focus group research and professional consultations were to develop the initial items for the *Sources of Lesbian Relationship Self-Efficacy Scale* (SLRSE) through the use of focus groups research, review of the literature, and professional consultation. The goal of the focus groups was to allow participants the opportunity to discuss their experiences, emotions, and observations of lesbian relationships. Specifically, participants were asked questions that focused on

constructs related to Bandura's (1986) four sources of self-efficacy (i.e., past performance, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal). Although participants spoke briefly about other topics and issues (e.g., dating men, favorite LGBT television shows, etc), the primary purpose was the development of scale items that fit within the sources of self-efficacy as proposed by Bandura's theory. The second method utilized in this study was professional consultation. How these methods contributed to the development of the SLRSE items is also discussed.

SLRSE Item Development

The focus groups were utilized to explore whether Bandura's (1986; 1997) sources of self-efficacy were relevant and/or influential in women's same-sex relationships. Consistent with DeVellis' (2003) recommendations, focus groups were helpful in developing items that reflect the scale's purpose of measure the specific sources of relationship self-efficacy for lesbians. Although participants differed in how these sources affected their relationships, it appeared that women's relationships were indeed affected by at least one, if not all, of the four sources. A second way these focus groups informed the development of the SLRSE items was the frequency and enthusiasm with which certain topics/issues arose. For instance, when key topics appeared in all three focus groups (e.g., familial support), and endorsed by multiple participants in each group, then they were identified as being a self-efficacy source that is possibly relevant to a greater number of lesbians.

A third way that the focus groups informed the development of SLRSE items was through the use of examples provided by participants. DeVellis (2003) explains that using "natural, everyday language" can be a crucial aspect for sentence structure because

it is more likely to generate more useful “tools” in measuring participants’ perceptions. Many women, for instance, noted the importance of parents giving gifts and cards to their partners as evidence of relationship approval. This information led directly to a verbal persuasion item regarding a tacit demonstration of acceptance by family members. Moreover, the language utilized by the participants was also analyzed and used to inform SLRSE items (e.g., “While in relationships, my parents give gifts and/or cards to my partner”).

In addition to the focus groups, the review of literature and professional consultations also contributed to the development of SLRSE items. This portion of item development was strongly guided by DeVellis’ (2003) recommendations for initial item construction. This included developing/choosing items that reflect the scale’s purpose, creating numerous and seemingly redundant items (redundancy), developing a sufficient number of items for the initial item pool, articulating relevant ideas using alternative expressions, identifying “good” and “bad” based on certain criteria, exploring the item wording and scoring (i.e., negatively and positively worded items). This stage of item development occurred over the course of a year.

Limitations

Limitations of the study included the small sample size and a lack of racially/ethnically diverse participants. As suggested by Creswell (1998), it would have been ideal to have at least 20 individuals; however, due to the time demands required in qualitative research and the lack of anonymity inherent in focus groups, locating willing participants was difficult. It is recommended that future research utilize more focus groups, and possibly conduct individual interviews in an effort to obtain greater

information from participants. Furthermore, greater demographic representation would have also been ideal. The homogeneity of the sample limits this study's ability to safely generalize the results to lesbians-of-color and even to women with varying physical abilities. For instance, identifying positive relationship role models may be particularly more difficult for lesbians-of-color due to the increased level of stigma (Morales, 1989; Fukuyama & Ferguson, 2000), and therefore, the inherent absence of ethnically/racially diverse lesbians present in media. A more thorough investigation of self-efficacy sources specifically aimed toward diverse populations is an important next step.

A limitation of the professional consultations is that the most of my colleagues were lesbian/gay themselves who had LGBT interest areas. Although many of these individuals held prior knowledge of Bandura's (1986; 1997) self-efficacy theory, with the exception of my adviser, none were experts in self-efficacy. This may have affected the amount of time and/or effort devoted to exploring each item based upon Bandura's theory as opposed to same-sex relationship factors.

In conclusion, the primary purpose of Study 1 was the initial item development of the SLRSE. This task was accomplished utilizing a variety of methods including focus group research, professional consultation, and review of the research literature. A 62-item SLRSE scale was created (see Appendix E), and were grouped into four categories that are considered to parallel each of Bandura's four self-efficacy sources: past performance (23 items), vicarious experience (10 items), verbal persuasion (17 items), and emotional arousal (12 items). The scale was provided a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly Agree*).

Study 2: Content Validity and Initial Item Reduction

Study 2 was conducted to establish the content validity of the Sources of Lesbian Relationship Self-Efficacy Scale (SLRSE), and perform initial item reduction. The content validity was established by using nine expert judges' ratings of each SLRSE item based on clarity and relevance. One group of judges also performed a procedure called back translation, which aids in establishing the validity of the SLRSE. Due to the scarcity of research on the sources of self-efficacy beliefs in same-sex relationships, it is difficult to find experts on this specific topic (i.e., sources of self-efficacy beliefs for same-sex relationships). To that end, two separate groups of judges were utilized (i.e., lesbian relationship experts and self-efficacy experts).

Participants

Group one. The first group of participants (Group 1) consisted of five independent judges. These judges were professionals and/or junior or senior scholars who have conducted research or have provided therapy to lesbians or lesbian couples. Participants demonstrated their expertise in lesbian relationships by meeting one of the four inclusion criteria: (1) published a manuscript in a professional journal regarding lesbian relationships, (2) presented a poster and/or paper at a professional conference regarding lesbian relationships (3) completed a thesis or dissertation regarding lesbian relationships, or (4) attained licensure as a psychologist (or licensed professional counselor) and has provided individual or couples counseling to at least three separate lesbian individuals or lesbian couples.

Group 1 participants ranged in age from 33-58 years ($M = 42.6$, $SD = 9.81$), with 100% identifying as female and Caucasian. Participants reported their sexual orientation

using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1-7 (“1” = *exclusively heterosexual* to “7” = *exclusively homosexual*). One participant (20%) reported a “2,” one participant (20%) reported a “5,” two participants (40%) reported a “6,” and one participant (20%) reported a “7.” In regard to education, one participant (20%) had a master’s degree, and four participants (80%) had a post-master’s or professional degree. Regarding their level of expertise in the area of lesbian relationships, three participants (60%) published a manuscript in a professional journal, three participants (60%) presented a poster and/or paper at a professional conference, one participant (20%) wrote a thesis or dissertation, and all five participants (100%) indicated they had worked with at least three lesbian individuals or lesbian couples in therapy.

Group two. The second group of participants (Group 2) consisted of four independent judges. These judges were junior or senior scholars who have conducted research on, or have experience with, Bandura’s (1986; 1997) self-efficacy theory. Participants demonstrated their expertise by meeting one of three criteria including: (1) published at least one manuscript in a professional journal on the topic of self-efficacy, (2) presented a poster and/or paper at a professional conference on the topic of self-efficacy and, (3) completed a thesis and/or dissertation on the subject of self-efficacy theory.

Group 2 participants ranged in age from 35-50 years ($M = 41.25$, $SD = 7.09$), three participants (75%) identified as female, and one participant (25%) identified as male. Participants reported their sexual orientation using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1-7 (“1” = *exclusively heterosexual* to “7” = *exclusively homosexual*). One participant (25%) identified “2,” one participant (25%) identified as “6,” and two

participants (50%) identified as “7.” All of the participants (100%) identified as Caucasian and indicated having a post-master’s or professional degree. Regarding their level of expertise in Bandura’s (1986; 1997) self-efficacy theory, three participant judges (75%) published a manuscript in a professional journal, three participants (75%) presented a poster and/or paper at a professional conference, and one participant (25%) wrote a thesis or dissertation that reviewed/explored Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy.

Inclusion criteria. The participant inclusion criteria required judges to be at least 18 years of age. As noted above, each participant needed to successfully meet at least one criterion to be considered expert judges of the SLRSE items (see respective sections above).

Recruitment. Participants were recruited using networking (i.e., professional and friendship/personal contacts) and the snowball method (i.e., asking professional and personal contacts to forward participants recruitment notices to other professionals; Dawson, Klass, Guy & Edgley, 1991). Friendship networks were initially accessed via email and the Internet allowed the snowball method to occur more quickly.

Security of responses and protection of participants. No personal identifying information was collected and participants were assured they would not be linked to publications or presentations resulting from this study. The Pennsylvania State University’s Internal Review Board (IRB) was contacted and I was informed that approval to collect this information did not necessitate IRB approval due to the consultative nature of the study.

Procedure

Data were collected using an anonymous online survey accessible via psychdata (www.psychdata.com), a web-based company dedicated to hosting social science related research. Due to the need for two separate groups of expert judges (i.e., lesbian relationship judges and self-efficacy judges), a different participant recruitment form was created for each group (Appendix F, Appendix G respectively). Recruitment notices were distributed to perspective judges, and included a description of the research and requirements for participation. Each recruitment form included respective information about each topic (either lesbian relationships or self-efficacy), with a link to one of the two on-line surveys (based on their area of expertise). Upon entering the assigned web-page, participants were provided general instructions about the study. Once participants read and understood the information, they clicked the “continue” button and were transferred to their respective survey web-pages (see Appendix H, Appendix I, respectively).

Group one. Five participant judges in Group 1 used a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 6 to rate each SLRSE item’s clarity (1 = *very unclear*, to 6 = *very clear*), and its relevance to lesbian relationships (1 = *very irrelevant*, to 6 = *very relevant*). Judges were also asked to provide feedback, commentary, and/or suggest additional items or content areas they believe were not represented in current items, but should be included.

Group two. Four participant judges in Group 2 used a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 6 to rate each SLRSE item’s clarity (1 = *very unclear*, to 6 = *very clear*), and its relevance to Bandura’s (1986; 1997) sources of self-efficacy (1 = *very irrelevant*, to 6 = *very relevant*). Judges were also asked to provide feedback, commentary, and/or suggest additional items or content areas they believe were omitted in current items, but should

be included. In addition to rating each item's clarity and relevance, judges in Group 2 were asked to perform back translation of the scale items. Back translation (see Dawis, 1987; Smith & Kendall, 1963) suggest that judges who demonstrate competence in a specific area (e.g., self-efficacy) may assign the scale items back to the hypothesized categories (e.g., past performance, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, emotional arousal). Because the SLRSE scale items were developed to measure Bandura's (1986; 1997) four sources of self-efficacy, back translation with Group 2 provides a viable measure of the SLRSE's content domain.

Instruments

Demographic questionnaire. All participants were asked to complete a Demographic Questionnaire (see Appendix H). Information requested included participants' age, race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and level of education. Participants were also asked to identify which criteria supported their professional expertise in the respective area (e.g., publication in a journal, professional presentation, thesis/dissertation, or therapy experience with lesbians).

Sources of lesbian relationship self-efficacy scale. The Sources of Lesbian Relationship Self-Efficacy Scale (SLRSE; Appendix E) was developed in Study 1, and is a 62-item scale that measures women's sources of self-efficacy to be in romantic relationships with women. The SLRSE scale includes four subscales that parallel each of Bandura's four self-efficacy sources: past performance (PP; 23 items), vicarious experience (VE; 10 items), verbal persuasion (VP; 17 items), and emotional arousal (EA; 12 items). Instructions for the SLRSE include, "A number of events, behaviors, and emotions are described below that you may experience while in a romantic relationship."

Please rate your level of agreement/disagreement to each statement. The term significant other, partner, and girlfriend are used interchangeably in the current survey.” Participants respond to each item using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 6 (1 = *strongly disagree*, to 6= *strongly agree*). It is important to highlight that in the current study, the independent judges were not responding to the SLRSE items, but instead they were responding to the questions posed about the SLRSE items.

Results

Group One: Lesbian Relationship Judges

Five expert judges rated 62 SLRSE items based on their clarity and relevance to lesbian relationships. First, for each item, the number of independent judges who rated the item a 5 or 6 was tallied for each item and the mean was computed. Because each item was evaluated separately, the judges’ overall clarity and relevance scores for the entire SLRSE were less helpful in evaluating each SLRSE item independently. To that end, in an effort to identify the most relevant and clear items, a clarity and relevance score of 5 or 6 (the scale ranged from 1 to 6) was used to assess each item. In the relevance category, 56 of the 62 items had ratings of 5 and 6 (from at least 4 of the 5 raters). For 58 out of 62 items, the average relevance score was 5.0 or above. In the clarity category, 58 items received ratings of 5 and 6 (from at least 4 of the 5 raters). For 59 out of 62 items, the average clarity score was 5.0 or above.

Group 1 participants provided qualitative feedback primarily focused on improving the clarity of the items. For instance, SLRSE item #9 originally read, “I fear that I will be single and lonely as I grow older.” One participant stated “*In item #9, I would change ‘single’ to ‘alone’ because I don’t know that ‘single’ is a word that most*

lesbian women would use while 'alone' is a more evocative word.” Another participant commented on this item’s “awkwardness.” Based upon this feedback, the item was changed to read “I fear that I will be alone as I grow older.” Some participants provided specific feedback to remove extraneous words in an effort to improve clarity. Other participants provided wording suggestions with the intent of improving an item’s ability to be more inclusive of participants’ language regarding romantic relationships. For example, one participant encouraged use of the term “girlfriend” and “partner” simultaneously (e.g., “girlfriend/partner”) because “*some people would not feel comfortable calling their partner of 25 years their 'girlfriend.'*” Finally, a common response from participants was that there were many items assessing support provided from family, and noticeably fewer items regarding support provided by friends. Although the number of friend verbal persuasion items was lower due to the findings of Study 1, the current study’s feedback led to an increase of items that assessed support from friends.

Group Two: Self-Efficacy Judges

Four self-efficacy judges rated 62 SLRSE items based on each item’s clarity and relevance to the sources of self-efficacy. Similar to Group 1, each SLRSE item was evaluated separately, and in an effort to identify the most relevant and clear items, a clarity and relevance score of 5 or 6 (the scale ranged from 1 to 6) was used to assess each item. First, for each item, the number of independent judges who rated the item a 5 or 6 was tallied for each item and the mean was computed. In the relevance category, 53 of the 62 items had ratings of 5 and 6 (from at least 3 of the 4 raters). For 43 out of 62 items, the average relevance score was 5.0 or above. In the clarity category, 52 items

received ratings of 5 and 6 (from at least 3 of the 4 raters). For 42 out of 62 items, the average clarity score was 5.0 or above.

Another analysis included back translation (Dawis, 1987; Smith & Kendall, 1963), which is used to test the frequency by which the expert judges could identify the self-efficacy source to which the item belonged. All of the items in the vicarious experience (10 items) and emotional arousal (12 items) categories were correctly assigned by judges. In the past performance category, however, 3 of 22 items (14%) were not correctly assigned by experts (items 55, 57, and 59). For instance, judges rated item 55, “I reflect upon my past relationships with anger” as an emotional arousal item rather than a past performance item. For verbal persuasion, one item out of 18 total items (6%) was incorrectly assigned by expert judges (item 25). Further, judges rated item 25, “Girlfriends are not given a warm welcome in my parents’ home” as a past performance item. Of the four items that were not successfully back translated, two also had lower clarity and relevance ratings and were therefore removed. The remaining two items were modified based on feedback and retained.

Across participants in both groups, feedback suggested a lack of clarity for question #9. For instance, individuals in both groups struggled with the lack of clarity of question #9 (see above). Additionally, Group 2 participants suggested that the word “comfortable” was too ambiguous a word to serve as an emotional arousal item. This feedback was utilized to alter several items to include stronger emotional language. For instance, item 19 previous stated, “I feel comfortable introducing a partner as ‘my girlfriend/partner’ to new people” was changed to “I feel nervous when introducing a significant other as ‘my girlfriend/partner’ to new people.” Finally, one judge offered

qualitative feedback regarding some of the items' relevancy to self-efficacy, "*Some of the above questions seem to be unrelated to Bandura's theory.*" Unfortunately, beside this judge's quantitative ratings of clarity and relevance, no specific feedback on how to improve the items were offered.

Item Elimination Based on Judge's Feedback

Based upon the results of the expert judges' feedback, 19 items were deleted from the initial pool of 62 items. Table 2 outlines each eliminated item's ratings for clarity, relevance, and back translation scores (from both groups of experts). Most items performed better than the cutoff score. For instance, of the 19 deleted items, seven did not meet the criterion of having ratings of 5 and 6 from the majority of the independent judges. Additionally, 14 of the 19 deleted SLRSE items did not meet the mean cut off score of 5.0 for clarity and/or relevance. Some of these items were, "I reflect upon my past relationships with regret," "Girlfriends are not given a warm welcome in my parents' home," and "My parents want me to marry a man." Based on feedback provided by the expert judges, one new item was added: "Many of the relationships I admire are heterosexual relationships." Revisions based on judges' feedback were made to improve clarity, grammar, and item specificity. For instance, "Religious beliefs have negatively affected my past romantic relationships with women," was changed to "My religious beliefs have negatively affected my past romantic relationships with women." The rationale for this change was to clarify that it was the participant's religious beliefs, not her parents' or friends' religion, that affect the relationship. The SLRSE item, "Currently, or in the past, a partner's parents display(ed) pictures of us in their home," was changed to "Currently, or in the past, a girlfriend/partner's parents have been

significant sources of support for the relationship.” The intention in this change was two-fold. First, the modification was made to include both terms “girlfriend” and “partner” in an effort to be inclusive of participants’ relationship language. The second change was to create a more open statement so participants may apply their specific experience (or lack thereof) of receiving support (i.e., support may be demonstrated through something other than photos).

Based on these results of judges’ feedback, the SLRSE was reduced to a 44-item scale. The 44-item SLRSE scale items are grouped into four categories, or subscales, that parallel each of Bandura’s four self-efficacy sources: past performance (PP; 14 items), vicarious experience (VE; 7 items), verbal persuasion (VP; 14 items), and emotional arousal (EA; 9 items). Instructions for the SLRSE include, “Please rate your level of agreement/disagreement to each statement by choosing the number that best represents your answer. The term significant other, partner, and girlfriend are used interchangeably in the current survey.”

Discussion

The purpose of Study 2 was to establish the content validity of the SLRSE and perform initial item reduction. Content validity of the initial pool of SLRSE items was determined by two separate groups of independent judges who were considered experts in either self-efficacy or lesbian relationships. Lesbian relationship judges (Group 1) rated the SLRSE items based on clarity and relevance to lesbian relationships. Self-efficacy judges (Group 2) rated each item based on its clarity and relevance to Bandura’s (1986; 1997) sources of self-efficacy. Judges from Group 2 were also asked to perform back translation with each item. Nineteen items from the initial SLRSE item pool were

eliminated based on the evaluation by independent judges, and one item was added. The results of Study 2 resulted in a SLRSE scale (see Appendix J) consisting of 44 items (14 PP items; 7 VE items; 14 VP items; 9 EA items). In sum, the initial items were evaluated and either eliminated and/or revised based on feedback. Many items with poor content validity were deleted, and problems with grammar and word choice were addressed.

One limitation of Study 2 is the relatively small number of independent judges who completed the study. Moreover, most of the judges provided little, or vague, qualitative feedback about the items. This may have limited the scope and specificity of the feedback, and therefore, the quality of revisions to the items. For future studies, it might be beneficial to offer compensation for participants in an effort to increase motivation, and therefore participation. Furthermore, reducing the overall number of SLRSE items to which judges respond may decrease attrition.

A second limitation is associated with the scope of the original item pool. Items were developed based on information from previous empirical research and anecdotal literature (see Chapter 2), consultation with professionals in the field, as well as through focus group research (see Study 1). Nevertheless, participants and consultants in each of these steps demonstrated little diversity in regard to their ethnic/racial, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Future studies would benefit from recruiting participants who represent greater diversity, and possibly incorporate face-to-face interview so that judges may be more inclined to offer detailed feedback.

These limitations notwithstanding, the SLRSE scale demonstrates several strengths. First, the methods outlined in this study are strongly recommended by DeVellis (2003) as customary for maximizing item appropriateness and content validity.

Second, the majority of SLRSE items appeared to demonstrate content validity as evidenced by the expert judges' qualitative feedback as well as their overall clarity, relevance, and back translation scores. Items lacking evidence of content validity were removed or adapted. In sum, the goals of Study 2 were accomplished by exploring the content validity of the SLRSE and performing initial item reduction

Study 3: Reliability and Exploratory Factor Analysis

The goals of Study 3 were item reduction and exploration of the factor structure and the internal consistency of the Sources of Lesbian Relationship Self-Efficacy Scale (SLRSE). The SLRSE factor structure was assessed using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and the reliability was investigated by examining means, standard deviations, item-remainder coefficients, and correlation coefficients of items.

Participants

All participant demographic information is outlined below, but due to the extensive demographic information obtained, the key demographic information (e.g., age, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity) is presented in Table 3. The sample of 274 participants ranged in age from 18 to 69 years ($M = 33.5$, $SD = 9.37$). Participants reported gender identity including, "Female" ($n = 267$, 98.2%), "Transgender" ($n = 2$, .7%), "Transsexual" ($n = 2$, .7%), "Other" ($n = 3$, 1.1%). Sexual orientation was assessed using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 7 (1 = *exclusively heterosexual*, to 7 = *exclusively homosexual*). One participant (.4%) did not report her sexual orientation, and one participant (.4%) indicated a "3" on the scale. Fourteen participants (5.1%) reported a "4," 41 participants (15%) indicated a "5," 112 participants (40.9%) indicated a "6," and 105 respondents (38.3%) identified as a "7." Of the 274 respondents, one participant

did not report her race/ethnicity, and 235 participants (85.8%) reported a Caucasian/Euro-American identity. Seven women (2.6%) stated they were Asian or Asian-American/Pacific Islander, two women (.7%) were African or African-American, one woman (.4%) was Native-American/American Indian, 17 women (6.2%) were Latina/Chicano or Latina/Chicano-American, five women (1.8%) identified as biracial or multiracial, and six participants (2.2%) indicated “other” (Hispanic, Arab-American, European- Pacific Islander, African-American and Filipino, and Mexican-Caucasian).

Participants reported their highest level of completed education. Three women indicated they had completed high school (1.1%), 17 women had some college experience (6.2 %) and 11 women (4.0%) completed their associate’s degree. A total of 95 women (34.7%) finished their bachelor’s degree, 94 participants (34.3%) completed their master’s degree, and 54 women (19.7%) were post master’s or had a professional degree. In regard to yearly salary, 22 participants (8.0%) made \$15,000 or less, 27 women (9.9%) made between \$15,001-25,000, and 101 women (36.9%) made between \$25,001-50,000. A total of 69 participants (25.2%) had yearly salaries that ranged between \$50,001-75,000, 28 participants (10.2%) made between \$75,001-100,000, and 20 participants (7.3%) made over \$100,000 a year. In regard to participants’ geographic locations, 62 women (22.6%) indicated they lived in a “non-metropolitan” area (i.e., less than 50,000 people), 143 women (52.2%) lived in a metropolitan area (50,000-1 million), and 68 women (24.9%) lived in a “consolidated metropolitan area” (i.e., more than 1 million people).

In regard to relationship status, 44 women (16.1%) indicated that they were currently single, while 13 participants (4.7%) stated they were dating (non-exclusive),

and 63 women (23%) were dating one person exclusively. Ninety-eight participants (35.8%) identified as “partnered,” and 48 women (17.5%) were in a “committed partnership.” Eight women (2.9%) identified their relationship status as “Other” and included categories such as “Long-distance relationship with an ex- who is cheating on her long-term partner,” “middle of break-up,” “engaged to be married,” and “widowed.” Of the 230 women who were not single, 156 women (67.8%) indicated that they were currently living with their partner. Participants were also asked to report the number of girlfriends/partners with whom they have lived (including their current relationship). Thirty-five women (12.8%) stated that they have never lived with a girlfriend/partner, 98 participants (35.8%) stated that they have lived with one girlfriend, 79 women (28.8%) stated that they have lived with two partners, 44 women (16.1%) stated that they have lived with 3 girlfriends, 11 women (4.0%) stated they have lived with four partners, five women (1.8%) have lived with five separate girlfriends, and one participant has lived with eight girlfriends/partners. One participant did not respond to this item.

Of the 274 participants, 42 women (15.3%) stated that they currently have children. Of these women, three participants (7.1 %) indicated that they adopted, nine women (21%) had invitro-fertilization, 20 women (48%) had children from a previous heterosexual relationship, one participant (2%) had children from a previous same-sex relationship, and 10 women reported conception as “other” and listed “guardian of a family member,” “artificial insemination,” “inter-utero insemination,” and “foster children.” Participants were also asked if they had ever been in a heterosexual marriage. Two women (.7%) did not respond to this question, while 242 participants (88.3%) have never been in a heterosexual marriage, and 30 women (10.9%) had previously been

married to a man. One was to assess for participants' level of involvement in the LGBTQA community was to ask participants to identify whether they belonged to an LGBT organization. Approximately half of the participants (56.2%) reported membership of a LGBTQA organization (local or national).

Procedures

The two recruitment methods utilized were networking (i.e., through professional and personal contacts in the local lesbian community) and the snowball method (i.e., asking professional and personal contacts to forward participant recruitment notice to other lesbian friends; Dawson, Klass, Guy & Edgley, 1991). Such methods may be necessary as the negative climate and attitudes toward LGBT individuals create barriers in identifying this population, and methods such as networking and the snowball method appear to minimize some of these barriers (e.g., Elderidge & Gilbert, 1990; Jordan & Deluty, 2000; Smith & Ingram, 2004). A research recruitment notice (see Appendix K) was dispersed which included a description of the research, requirements for participation in the study, a description of participants' rights, and an electronic link for individuals to begin the study. Friendship networks were initially accessed via email, and the Internet allowed the snowball method to occur more quickly. Approval from The Pennsylvania State University's Internal Review Board was obtained prior to data collection (IRB # 28165).

Data were collected using an anonymous online survey accessible via psychdata (www.psychdata.com), a web-based company dedicated to hosting social science related research. Upon entering the web-page, participants were provided a consent form (Appendix L) that detailed information about the study, the name of the primary

investigator and research assistants, and a list of their rights as participants. Once participants acknowledged that they had read and understood the information and agreed to participate in the study (by clicking the “continue” button at the bottom of the page), they were transferred to the survey web-pages. Only those who indicated their consent (by clicking on the “continue” button) had access to the survey. The survey was comprised of three questionnaires and took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. After completing the study, participants received a debriefing form that included written information about the study, LGBT resources, and the investigator’s contact information (see Appendix M).

Three hundred women entered the survey’s website; however, only 274 participants completed each questionnaire. That is, 91.3% of participants who entered the website completed the surveys. A total of 26 participants (8.67%) discontinued their participation while completing either the: Demographic Form ($n = 0$), SLRSE ($n = 0$), Outness Inventory ($n = 18$), and eight participants logged on to survey’s website but did not respond to any items.

Measures

Demographic questionnaire. A 16-item questionnaire (see Appendix N), was utilized to obtain relevant demographic information about study respondents. In the demographic questionnaire participants were asked to report their age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity/race, education level, yearly income, and geographic location. Participants also reported their relationship status, length of current relationship, cohabitation status, number of partners that respondents had previously cohabitated with, if they had children and how the children were conceived, previous heterosexual

marriages, whether they were members of any LGBTQA organizations, and the method of learning about the study.

Sources of lesbian relationship self-efficacy. The Sources of Lesbian Relationship Self-Efficacy (SLRSE; Appendix J) is a 44-item scale that measures lesbian's sources of relationship self-efficacy beliefs. The version of the SLRSE used for Study 3 was based upon the results of Studies 1 and 2. The SLRSE has four proposed subscales that parallel each of Bandura's four self-efficacy sources: past performance (PP; 14 items), vicarious experience (VE; 7 items), verbal persuasion (VP; 14 items), and emotional arousal (EA; 9 items). Instructions for the SLRSE include, "Please rate your level of agreement/disagreement to each statement by choosing the number that best represents your answer. The terms significant other, partner, and girlfriend are used interchangeably in the current survey." Participants respond to each item using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 6 (1 = *strongly disagree*, to 6 = *strongly agree*). Twenty-four items were negatively worded, and were reversed scored for statistical analyses. SLRSE total scores range from 44 to 264, with higher scores indicating greater relationship self-efficacy sources.

Outness. Participants' level of self-disclosure, or "outness," was measured using the Outness Inventory (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000; Appendix O). The OI is an 11-item scale designed to assess the degree to which lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) individuals are open about their sexual orientation. Responses on the OI indicate the degree to which the respondent's sexual orientation is known by and openly discussed with various individuals. Each item consists of a particular individual (e.g., father) or type of individual (e.g., work peers) that is rated by using a fully anchored 7-point scale that

ranges from 1 to 7 (1=*person definitely does not know about your sexual orientation status*, to 7 = *person definitely knows about your sexual orientation status, and it is openly talked about*). Mohr and Fassinger (2000) found that the OI assessed outness in three different domains including family, everyday life, and religion. An individual's overall outness is considered to be the average of these three domains.

Internal consistency of the three subscales (Out to Family, Out to World, and Out to Religion) has been found to range from .74 to .97 and a total scale Cronbach was .79 (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000). Mohr and Fassinger (2000) provide initial evidence for the validity of the OI scale. For instance, they found that participants who reported greater levels of outness also had significantly greater identification with the lesbian and gay community (r 's=.21, .31, .35, respectively, $p < .003$). Lesbians who were further along in their lesbian identity formation (as measured by Lesbian Identity Scale; Fassinger & McCarn, 1997) were significantly more likely to be out to family members and the world. Those participants who scored high on levels of outness regarding religion were also significantly more likely to be involved with supportive religious organizations (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000).

As noted by Mohr (personal communication, October 26, 2008), individuals are often unable to provide responses to certain items due to the fact that a person or group does not apply (e.g., the person may not have a father or siblings). Mohr recommended taking the average score of all available information to replace the missing value. For instance, if a specific group does not exist in a respondent's life (e.g., religious community), then calculate the person's score for Overall Outness by averaging all of the items for which ratings are available. This recommendation was utilized to score the OI

in the current study, and missing OI items were replaced with the mean from the subscale. For the Overall Outness score, the mean was 5.36 and the standard deviation was 1.20. The three subscales were as follows: Out to Family ($n = 273$, $M = 6.65$, $SD = 9.82$), Outness to World ($n = 272$, $M = 5.91$, $SD = 8.17$), and Out to Religion ($n = 93$, $M = 6.85$, $SD = 13.94$). In the current study, the total scale score was utilized and the internal consistency for the Overall Outness score was .98.

Results

Prior to data analysis, data were examined to check for accuracy of data and missing values. Frequency analyses were conducted on all variables to check for outliers and miscoded data.

Preliminary Analyses: Initial Item Reduction

The first goal of study 3 was to continue the process of identifying and removing SLRSE items that were statistically problematic. In this phase of item reduction, I first looked at item distribution. Then I explored intercorrelations among items, whether participants tended to omit the items, and the overall contribution of the item to the scale. Below is a description of these analyses.

Items were first assessed and initial item reduction was performed based upon each item's distributions and contributions to its respective subscale. For example, Clark and Watsons (1995) recommend that each item's distribution be assessed before item analysis is conducted. Items with unbalanced distributions tend to correlate weakly with other items in the pool and may yield unstable correlations with other items due to their limited variability (Clark & Watson, 1995). Item distribution was explored by examining each item's mean and standard deviation. Those items with a mean below 2 or above 5

(response choices ranged from 1 to 6) were identified and further evaluated. Table 4 presents the mean and standard deviation for all 44 items. Based on these criteria fourteen items were further evaluated. Item examples include “I feel hopeful when I see same-sex couples who have been together for a long time,” “Growing up, I knew happy couples in same-sex relationships,” and “My friends welcome my significant other into their homes” (see Table 4).

In addition to item distributions, all SLRSE items were also evaluated based on (a) intercorrelations among items, (b) whether participants tended to omit certain items, (c) if two items measured the same construct (e.g., support from family) then the item that performed better (based on the abovementioned criteria) was retained. For instance, the item “Currently, or in the past, a girlfriend/partner’s parents have been a significant source of support for the relationship” was removed for several reasons. First, several other items that assess similar constructs (e.g., relationship support from family members) performed equally well, if not better than this item. Although DeVellis (2003) suggests that redundancy with respect to item content is vital in the initial item pool, this does not apply in the latter stages of scale development. Second, this item was more verbose compared to other similar items and DeVellis (2003) recommends item parsimony because the item’s length usually decreases clarity and increases complexity. A third criterion utilized was to examine whether this item was less conceptually consistent with the purpose of the subscale. That is, the above item measured participants’ partner’s familial support as opposed to the participant’s familial support. For this combination of reasons, this item was eliminated. Another example of such evaluation includes the item, “I have lost friendships because a girlfriend/partner and I

separated ourselves from our friends.” This item has a normal distribution ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 1.39$), but it was removed because 16 participants omitted this item and it did not correlate well with other scale items. Essentially, each item was evaluated based upon a constellation of factors and rarely was one single criterion used to eliminate an item.

At this point, 16 items demonstrated skewed means, small standard deviations, low intercorrelations, and/or were conceptually less appropriate for the scale. It is important to note that of the 16 items eliminated, seven items were intended to assess vicarious experiences sources of relationship self-efficacy. Preliminary analysis indicated that most of these items were unevenly distributed (i.e., poor means, standard deviations, and skewness), and/or did not have strong internal consistencies with the overall SLRSE scale or the subscale (see Table 4). The removal of these items eliminated measurement of vicarious experiences, as these seven items represented all of the items purported to measure this construct.

Due to the conceptual importance of the items within this scale, it is important to note that attempts were made to retain some of these items and the vicarious experiences (VE) subscale. To that end, the strongest VE items were included in an exploratory factor analysis to examine their factor structure. Consistent with the original decision to eliminate these items based on item distributions and means, the vicarious experiences items did not load strong enough on any factor to statistically justify their inclusion.

Based on the preliminary analyses and initial item reduction, a total of 16 items were deleted from the first data reduction in Study 3 (see Table 4). These eliminations resulted in a 28-item SLRSE scale. The factor structure of these 28-items was explored next.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Several steps were taken prior to conducting the factor analysis to assess the suitability of the data for such a statistical procedure. First, missing data for the SLRSE items were replaced with the means for each item (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Second, the sample size ($n = 274$) was examined to ensure it met the recommended ratio of 5 to 10 participants per item (Tinsley & Tinsley, 1987), as well as Comrey's (1973) recommendation that an "adequate to good" sample size is between 200-300 participants.

Third, the extent to which the data met the assumption of multivariate normality was examined. Multivariate normality is the assumption that all variables and all linear combinations of variables are normally distributed. Multivariate normality is assumed when statistical inference is used to determine the number of factors (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). The skewness and kurtosis of the items were evaluated to check the normality of the items. Field (2005) states that skewness and kurtosis should be zero in a normal distribution, and the closer to zero, the better. Almost all items demonstrated slight negative distributions, but more than half (15 items) had coefficients below 1. As for kurtosis, 16 items had negative kurtosis and 12 items had positive kurtosis. Approximately half of the 28-items items had absolute coefficients values for kurtosis at or below 1. According to Field (2005) and Tabachnick & Fidell (2001) the absolute value of kurtosis is not as informative, and a more standardized way to examine kurtosis is to convert it into z-scores. For our sample size (over 200), Field states that z-scores should be below an upper threshold of 3.29. Of the original 44-items, eight items were non-normal (above 3.29); however, only two items of the 28-item SLRSE exceeded the upper threshold. These items were "I feel good about being a lesbian" ($z = -4.3$), and "My

relationships are nurtured by my friends” ($z = -3.5$). Despite the skewed nature of these two items, they were not eliminated at this phase.

The factorability of the 28-item SLRSE scale was assessed next. Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) suggest that a factorable matrix should include several sizable correlations that exceed .30. Another measure of sampling adequacy is the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) index which is a ratio of the sum of squared correlations to the sum of squared correlations plus the sum of squared partial correlations. A KMO scale higher than .60 often supports a scale’s factorability. The KMO for the 28-item SLRSE scale was .77, therefore suggesting that factor analysis was considered reasonable for this data set. Principal Axis Functioning (PAF) with oblimin factor rotation was chosen to examine the factor structure of the 28-item scale, and this particular factor rotation was chosen due to the possible intercorrelations among factors (Field, 2005; Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991).

Initially, factors were selected using the following criteria (a) an eigenvalue greater than 1.0, (b) the scree plot, (c) the magnitude and number of the item loading with other factors (i.e., co-loadings), and (d) the conceptual meaningfulness of the factors. Results indicated eight possible factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, which accounted for 39.38% of the variance. After extraction, the first factor accounted for 15.72% of the variance, the second factor 6.42%, the third factor 4.72 %, and the fourth factor accounted for 4.03% of the variance (the remaining four factors accounting for 8.49% of the variance). Kaiser (1960) strongly recommends retaining all factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. Kaiser’s criteria, however, should be followed only if (a) the number of variables is less than 30 and the resulting communalities are all greater than .7, and/or (b) if the sample size exceeds 250 and the average communality is greater than or

equal to .6. The communalities for the current data did not meet either of these criteria. Stevens (1992) suggests that if Kaiser's (1960) criteria are not met then one should also look at a scree plot to explore the factor structure.

Examination of the scree plot supported a one, four, or eight-factor solution (see Figure 1). To that end, each factor solution was explored to investigate the most conceptually meaningful factor structure. Results from the one and eight-solution evidenced a conceptually less meaningful factor structure. On the other hand, the four-factor solution, using Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) with oblimin factor rotation, resulted in a conceptually meaningful scale. The KMO score remained consistent ($KMO = .77$), and the four factors accounted for 30.8% of the variance. Items that produced factor coefficients less than .30 were eliminated, which caused seven items to drop from the model. This resulted in a 21-item, four-factor scale.

Of the remaining 21-items, five items had factor loadings that were between .3 and .4. A factor loading at or above .3 is considered moderately high (Kline, 2002), but higher factor loadings are preferred because loadings are used as a gauge of how important the variable is to the factor (Stevens, 1992). For this reason, a more conservative cut-off of .4 was utilized, and four of the five items were removed to produce a final SLRSE scale of 17-items. One item was retained because its factor loading increased from .39, to .43 once the other four items were eliminated.

A final Principal Axis Factor analyses (PAF) with oblimin factor rotation was conducted with a forced four-factor solution, and all factor loadings less than .4 were suppressed. A Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy of the 17-item SLRSE scale was considered reasonable for this data set ($KMO = .74$), and

produced factor loadings that ranged from .43 to .86, and accounted for 42.26% of the variance. An analysis of this model suggested that past performance and emotional arousal items functioned as hypothesized; however, the verbal persuasion items appeared to be measuring two separate constructs. Closer analysis indicated that verbal persuasion provided by family and friends were split on two separate factors, thereby resulting in a four-factor model. Perhaps not surprisingly, given that all items measuring vicarious experiences were eliminated, this construct was not represented in the scale.

There were six items on the past performance subscale (which accounted for 20.06% of the variance), three items on the family verbal persuasion subscale (which accounted for 8.98% of the variance), two items on the friend verbal persuasion subscale (which accounted for 7.51% of the variance), and six items on the emotional arousal subscale (which accounted for 5.71% of the variance). Table 6 presents each item and its factor loading.

Reliability

After exploring the SLRSE's item distribution and factor structure, the SLRSE's internal consistency was assessed. Internal consistency describes the intercorrelations that items have with the other items, or rather, it explores whether the scale measures a single phenomenon or underlying construct (Clark & Watson, 1995; DeVellis, 2003). The full scale Cronbach's alpha is only one criterion used to assess the reliability of a scale because internal consistency is affected by several factors, including the number of test items and the average intercorrelations among the items (Cortina, 1993). That is to say, as the number of scale items increases, the internal consistency of a scale will also increase, even if the intercorrelations remain the same. Another important consideration

is how the items relate to other items in their respective subscale. Bandura's (1986; 1997) sources of self-efficacy are thought to be separate but related constructs (e.g., past performance may or may not be related to verbal persuasion) thus, the internal consistency of the subscales was also examined. The final 17-item SLRSE scale can be viewed in Appendix P. The Cronbach alpha for SLRSE total scale was .76, and based on the pattern of these factor loadings, the four factors were labeled Past Performance (PP; 6 items; $\alpha = .68$), Family Verbal Persuasion (FamVP; 3 items; $\alpha = .77$), Friend Verbal Persuasion (FVP; 2 items; $\alpha = .67$), and Emotional Arousal (EA; 6 items; $\alpha = .78$). Table 5 presents the extent to which the subscales are intercorrelated.

Discussion

There were three primary goals in Study 3. The first goal was initial item reduction of the SLRSE scale based on each item's mean, standard deviation, inter-item correlation, and the conceptual meaningfulness of each item. The second goal was to identify the factor structure of the scale, by utilizing exploratory factor analysis. The third goal was to explore the internal consistency of the SLRSE by examining Cronbach's alpha for the total scale as well as the four subscales. Study 3's main findings, implications, and suggestions for future research are reviewed below. Major findings and conclusions that significantly affect the scale's factor structure, validity, and reliability are reviewed more thoroughly in the general discussion section in Chapter Four.

Main Findings

First, each item was analyzed to identify those items that were statistically problematic. Each item was evaluated based on its item distribution, coefficient alpha,

inter-item correlation, and item-total correlation coefficients. These analyses resulted in the removal of 16 SLRSE items. Further, several exploratory factor analyses informed the second item reduction from 28 items to 21 items, and then based on conceptual meaningfulness and factor loadings, four more items were removed. The final SLRSE scale is a four-factor, 17-item scale that accounted for 42.26% of total variance. This scale was deemed acceptable for factor analysis ($KMO = .74$), demonstrated adequate-to-good factor loadings (.43-.86), and good internal consistency for the total scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .76$). The four-factor model also demonstrated conceptual meaningfulness that paralleled three of Bandura's (1986; 1997) four sources of self-efficacy (i.e., past performance, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal).

In regard to the first goal of this study (i.e., item reduction), an interesting result was the elimination of the vicarious experiences subscale due to unbalanced distributions (i.e., means, standard deviations, skewness), and inter-item correlations. The removal of these items may be the result of several contributing factors. First, the overall dearth of research of relationship role models may indicate a lack of understanding of this construct by researchers. Bandura (1997) argues that vicarious experience is a complex concept because many factors contribute to whether someone is a role model and how their role model attributes are processed by each individual. Essentially, this self-efficacy source has many different modes and mediating factors. The complexity of this source may be the reason why no known quantitative research exists that explores role models in the lesbian and gay community.

Another possible explanation for the removal of VE items may rest in the existing anecdotal literature and Study 1's findings from the focus group. Results of the first

study suggested that participants, overall, struggled to identify relationship role models. This is also consistent with the literature (e.g., Berzon, 1990; 1996; Connolly, 1999; Piazza, 1995). This suggests that there may not be readily available same-sex relationship role models by which to evaluate one's own relationship. Schunk, Hanson, and Cox (1987) found that an individual's self-efficacy and competence is significantly improved when exposed to multiple skilled models as opposed to observing one single skilled model. These findings may help explain the results of the current study. First, it is reasonable to expect that lesbians may have some relationship models, or maybe even a few strong relationship role models. Nevertheless, based on information obtained in Study 1, and the evidence that the lesbian and gay community are largely still a hidden minority (Fassinger, 1991), it is difficult to imagine that lesbians have multiple same-sex relationship role models by which to increase their own relationship self-efficacy.

Additionally, due to their hidden minority status it would make sense that their role models are hidden as well. That is to say, it is possible that the dearth of visible role models, and specifically relationship role models, led participants to respond to vicarious experience items in such a manner that represents this scarcity. It is important to note that one might expect the presence and frequency of relationship role models to increase as same-sex couples become more "acceptable" and visible in society. Recent research (Peplau & Fingerhut, 2007) suggested that same-sex couples demonstrate positive attributes and have long-lasting relationships, thereby implying that these couples do exist. The visibility, therefore, may be the key issue which influenced the development of this subscale.

A third possible reason for the elimination of VE items is that the items did not assess traits and/or behaviors that relationship role models may demonstrate (e.g., good communication, affection, etc). Instead, the items simply measured the presence of relationship role models from various people or sources (e.g., heterosexual couples, same-sex couples, television, etc). It may have been more effective to identify relationship behaviors and/or traits that are found in relationship role models. In developing a measure that assesses an individual's self-efficacy (not their sources), Bandura (1997) strongly highlights the importance of developing scale items that assess the *behaviors* necessary to accomplish the task. Although the same guidance is not recommended for assessing the four sources, and other validated sources measure do not appear to simply assess for behaviors (e.g., Anderson & Betz, 2001), it may have proven fruitful to develop more items that identify specific behaviors/traits that relationship role models demonstrate.

In regard to the exploratory factor analysis, results indicated that the past performance and emotional arousal items functioned as hypothesized, but verbal persuasion items appeared to be assessing two separate constructs, thereby creating two different factors. That is to say, analysis of the factor structure suggests that verbal persuasion provided by friends appears to be separate from verbal persuasion provided by family. One explanation for this finding is that support provided from family and from friends is inherently two different constructs. This conclusion is very consistent with the research literature on social support. For example, several studies conducted with same-sex couples found that support provided from family is significantly different from that provided by friends, and oftentimes same-sex couples are less likely to report family

members as significant sources of emotional support (e.g., Kurdek & Schmitt, 1987; Balsam, Beauchaine, Rothblum, & Solomon, 2008). Interestingly, many of the validated measures of support (used with heterosexual and LGBT individuals) also have two separate subscales to assess familial and friendship support (e.g., Procidano & Heller, 1983; Vaux, Phillips, Holly, Thompson, Williams, & Stewart, 1986). Therefore, consistent with previous social support research, the exploratory factor analysis of the 17-item SLRSE scale suggested that support provided from family and from friends are indeed two separate constructs.

Main Findings: Scale Reliability

In regard to the third goal of this study, the SLRSE total scale and four subscales showed adequate-to-good internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the full 17-item scale was .76, and subscale coefficients ranged from .67 - .78. Nunnally (1978) stated that a scale coefficient alpha above .70 is indicative of internal consistency, and Kline (1999) argues that values below .70 is reasonable to expect due to the diversity of a construct being measured and the number of items in a scale. Remembering that there are only two items in the FriendVP subscale, an alpha coefficient of .67 may be reasonable. Additionally, the subscale correlations suggest that the four factors are related, but measuring uniquely different constructs (see Table 5).

Limitations

Similar to Studies 1 and 2, some limitations of the current study include the lack of racially/ethnically diverse participants. The homogeneity of the sample limits this study's ability to blindly generalize the results to lesbians who possess less education, are lesbians-of-color, or possibly lesbians with different faith beliefs (which was not assessed

in the current study). This limitation was pervasive throughout each study, and is therefore explored more thoroughly in Chapter Four.

Although not all together a limitation, one interesting finding was the removal of the vicarious experience items and how this affects the scale's ability to measure each of the four self-efficacy sources as outlined in Bandura's (1986) theory. The elimination of this subscale clearly affects the overall findings of this dissertation study and future research should focus on a more thorough exploration of this construct to aid in the better understanding of relationship role models. Ultimately, a more comprehensive understanding would hopefully lead to the development of a psychometrically sound subscale.

Conclusion

Despite these limitations, the goals for Study 3 were met. The SLRSE appears to possess a conceptually meaningful factor structure that is consistent with three of Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy. The scale was reduced from a 44-item scale to a 17-item scale which evidences adequate-to-good internal consistency.

Study 4: Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Validity

The goal of Study 4 was to confirm the factor structure of the Sources of Lesbian Relationship Self-Efficacy Scale (SLRSE), as well as provide initial validity evidence for the SLRSE. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to determine (a) whether the SLRSE factor structure parallels that suggested by Bandura's (1986; 1997) self-efficacy theory, and (b) to determine whether the CFA supports the factor structure that emerged from the exploratory factor analysis in Study 3. The validity of the SLRSE

was also assessed by exploring the relationship of the SLRSE, and the four subscales, with theoretically relevant measures.

Participants

Five hundred and twenty four participants entered the survey's website; however, 35 participants were eliminated because they did not respond to any survey items. Additionally, 23 participants were not considered in the main analyses due to their reported sexual orientation (i.e., a score of 3 or below on the 1-7 scale). There were three primary reasons for their elimination. First, due to the scale's main purpose of identifying sources of relationship self-efficacy for women's same-sex relationships, these participants' relationship patterns were not immediately relevant to this study. Second, by eliminating participants based on reported sexual orientation, this kept the sample demographic (regarding sexual orientation) consistent across Study 1- 4. Third, additional analyses (described in the results section) found statistically significant differences in participants' SLRSE scores when compared to participants who reported a sexual orientation more consistent with a lesbian identity.

The following information is based on the remaining 466 participants. All participant demographic information is outlined below, but due to the exhaustive demographic information obtained from participants, the key information (e.g., age, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity) is presented in Table 7. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 80 years ($M = 37.52$, $SD = 12.52$). Participants' reported gender identity included "Female" ($n = 448$, 96%), "Transgender" ($n = 4$, 1%), "Transsexual" ($n = 0$), "Other" ($n = 12$, 2.6%), and two participants did not report their gender. Other gender identities reported by participants were "queer," "butch," "gender queer," "gender

queer/androgynous,” and “mixed.” Sexual orientation was assessed using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 7 (1 = *exclusively heterosexual*, to 7 = *exclusively homosexual*). Fifty one participants (10.9%) reported a “4” on the scale, 58 participants (12.4%) reported a “5,” 142 participants (30.5%) indicated a “6,” and 215 participants (46.1%) identified as a “7” on the scale. Of the 466 respondents, 395 (84.8%) reported a Caucasian/Euro-American identity, 14 women (3.0%) stated they were Asian or Asian-American/Pacific Islander, ten women (2.1%) were African or African-American, five women (1.1%) were Native-American/American Indian, 22 women (4.7%) were Latina/Chicano or Latina/Chicano-American, 13 women (2.8%) identified as biracial or multiracial, two women (.4%) identified as a “non-U.S. National,” and five participants (1.1%) indicated “other” (Ashkenazy, Middle- Eastern, Genesee, and Armenian-American, etc).

Twenty-two women indicated they had completed high school (4.7%), 84 women (18%) had some college experience and 13 women (2.8%) completed their associate’s degree. A total of 130 women (27.9%) finished their bachelor’s degree, 138 participants (29.6%) completed their master’s degree, and 79 women (17%) were post-master’s or had a professional degree. In regard to geographic location, participants resided in 41 different U.S. States in addition to the District of Columbia.

In regard to relationship status, seven women (1.5%) reported that they were currently separated from their significant other, 93 women (20%) indicated that they were currently single while 36 participants (7.7%) stated they were dating (non-exclusive), and 107 women (23%) were dating one person exclusively. A total of 110 women (23.6%) identified as “partnered but we have NOT had a ceremony” and 54 women (11.6%)

indicated that they were “Partnered, we HAVE had a ceremony (not legally recognized).” Three participants (.3%) identified as widowed, 16 women (3.4%) reported being engaged to be married, and 20 participants (4.3%) were legally married. Twenty women (4.3%) identified their relationship status as “Other” and included categories such as “polyamorous,” “semi-monogamous,” “in the process of getting legally divorced, currently dating other women (non-exclusive, non-monogamous), “shaking up,” and “the recognition of our legal marriage is currently under consideration by our state’s Supreme Court.” Of the 466 women who participated, 231 (49.6%) were currently cohabitating with their partner. Women’s relationship length, as measured in months, ranged from ½ month -to- 336 months (28 years; $M = 68.46$, $SD = 74.10$).

Of the 466 participants, 87 women (18.7%) stated that they currently have children, 372 respondents (79.8%) reported not having any children and seven women (1.5%) did not respond to this item. Approximately half of the participants (201; 43%) reported membership of a LGBTQA organization (local or nation), and five participants did not respond to this question. When asked about their relationship desires, twenty-three women (4.9%) stated that they currently prefer short-term, monogamous relationships, 13 women (2.8%) prefer short-term, non-monogamous relationships, 385 women (82.6%) prefer long-term monogamous relationships, 38 participants (8.2%) reported that they wanted a long-term non-monogamous relationship, and 7 (1.5%) women did not respond to this item.

As previously stated, participants who reported their sexual orientation as a “3” or below (using a 1-7 scale), were excluded from the primary analyses. Nevertheless, the number a participant chooses from a 1-7 scale does not always determine how they

identify. That is, someone who identifies as a “5” may, reasonably, identify as lesbian or bisexual. Due to the fact that some participants may have identified as bisexual, these participants were asked to respond to two additional questions to assess for participants’ dating/partnering experiences. First, they were asked whether they primarily partner with women, men, or an equal proportion of women and men. Of the 466 participants who responded to the current study, 143 women (31%) responded to the last two items. Ninety-seven women (67.8%, or 20.8% of total sample) reported primarily partnering with women, 16 participants (11.2%, or 3.4% of total sample) primarily partner with men, and 30 women (21%, or 6.4% of total sample) reported dating an equal proportion of men and women. These participants were also asked to identify the gender of their current partner. A total of 101 women (21.7%) responded to this item. Seventy-six women (16.3%) reported having a female partner, 17 participants (3.6%) reported having a male partner, and two (.4%) participants reported having a transgender or transsexual partner. One participant reported her partner’s gender was “other.”

Procedures

Three recruitment methods were utilized in the current study. Participant recruitment materials were dispersed via listservs, networking (i.e., emailing professional and personal contacts in the local lesbian community) and the snowball method (i.e., asking professional and personal contacts to forward participant recruitment notice to other lesbian friends; Dawson, Klass, Guy & Edgley, 1991). Such methods may be necessary as the negative climate and attitudes toward LGBT individuals create barriers in identifying this population, and methods such as networking and the snowball method appear to minimize some of these barriers (e.g., Elderidge & Gilbert, 1990; Jordan &

Deluty, 2000; Smith & Ingram, 2004). A research recruitment notice (Appendix Q) was dispersed and included a description of the research, requirements for participation in the study, a description of participants' rights, and an electronic link for participants to begin the study. Friendship networks were initially accessed via email, and the Internet allowed the snowball method to occur more quickly. Approval from The Pennsylvania State University's Internal Review Board was obtained prior to data collection (IRB # 29637).

Data were collected using an anonymous online survey accessible via psychdata (www.psychdata.com), a web-based company dedicated to hosting social science related research. Upon entering the web-page, participants were provided a consent form (Appendix R) that detailed information about the study, the name of the primary investigator and research advisor, and a list of their rights as participants. Once participants acknowledged that they had read and understood the information and agreed to participate in the study (by clicking the "continue" button at the bottom of the page), they were transferred to the survey web-pages. Only those who indicated their consent (by clicking on the "continue" button) had access to the survey.

All participants responded to the first eight measures, including a Demographic Questionnaire, Sources of Lesbian Relationship Self-Efficacy Scale (SLRSE), Social Support Appraisal Scale (SSA: Vaux, Phillips, Holly, Thompson, Williams, & Stewart, 1986), Lesbian Internalized Homophobia Scale- Short Form (LIHS-SF; Szyanski & Chung, 2001), Parental Divorce measure (Amato & DeBoer, 2001), Outness Inventory (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000), the Adult Attachment Questionnaire scale (AAQ; Simpson, Rholes, & Phillips, 1996), and the Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R; Scheier &

Carver, 1985). Intercorrelations among all validation measures can be viewed in Table 12.

Upon completion of these surveys participants who identified as single were directed to the end of the survey where they received a debriefing form that included written information about the study as well as contact information. Participants who were not single and currently dating a woman ($n = 331$) were presented with three additional measures, including the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMS; Schumm et al., 1986), Relationship Self-Efficacy Scale (RSE; Morua & Lopez, 2005), and the Marginalization Scale (Lehmiller & Agnew, 2006). After completing these additional surveys, non-single participants also received a debriefing form (see Appendix S).

Measures

Demographic Questionnaire. A 15-item demographic questionnaire (Appendix T), was utilized to obtain information about participants' age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity/race, education level, state of residence, relationship status, length of current relationship, and LGBT activities frequently participated in.

Sources of lesbian relationship self-efficacy. The Sources of Lesbian Relationship Self-Efficacy (SLRSE; Appendix U) is a 17-item scale that measures lesbian women sources of relationship self-efficacy. Scale development, content validity, and internal consistency were assessed in studies 1-3. Results of Study 3 suggest that the 17-item SLRSE scale evidences good internal reliability ($\alpha = .76$), and is grouped into four subscales that parallel three of Bandura's (1986; 1997) four self-efficacy sources: past performance (PP; 6 items; $\alpha = .68$), emotional arousal (EA: 6 items; $\alpha = .78$), family verbal persuasion (FAMVP; 3 items; $\alpha = .77$), and friend verbal persuasion (FVP; 2

items; $\alpha = .67$). Instructions for the SLRSE include, “Please rate your level of agreement/disagreement to each statement by choosing the number that best represents your answer. The term significant other, partner, and girlfriend are used interchangeably in the current survey.” Participants respond to each item using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 6 (1 = *strongly disagree*, to 6 = *strongly agree*). Eight items are negatively worded, and these items are reversed scored for statistical analyses. Higher scores indicate participants’ greater sources of relationship self-efficacy. The current study’s Cronbach’s alpha for the full 17-item SLRSE ($\alpha = .76$), and the four subscales were: past performance (PP; 6 items; $\alpha = .65$), emotional arousal (EA; 6 items; $\alpha = .79$), family verbal persuasion (FAMVP; 3 items; $\alpha = .78$), and friend verbal persuasion (FVP; 2 items; $\alpha = .70$). Each subscale demonstrated significant correlations with the other subscales (.13 to .33, $p < .01$).

Parental divorce. Participants’ experience with parental divorce was measured using two items that Amato and DeBoer (2001; Appendix V) constructed to examine parents’ marriage disruption experiences. This measure was originally chosen to explore the construct validity of the vicarious experiences subscale, but due to the removal of the subscale, it is only used for demographic information. This questionnaire asks participants, “Did your parents divorce or separate permanently” (1 = *no disruption*, 2 = *divorce or permanent separation*), and “If yes, how old were you when your parents divorced or separated?” Amato and DeBoer’s (2001) research found that the age when parents divorced served as mediating variable for their own divorce experiences. For the purpose of the current study, only participants’ reports of parental divorce (a score of 1 or 2) will be used for the primary analyses, and the age of parental divorce may be used for

future analyses. Of the 466 participants, 290 (62%) reported no disruption in parental relationship, 172 (37%) participants reported a parental divorce or permanent separation, and four participants (< 1%) did not respond to this item.

Adult attachment. The Adult Attachment Questionnaire (AAQ; Simpson, Rholes, & Phillips, 1996) is a 17- item instrument that assesses an individual's avoidance and ambivalent attachment (Appendix W). Based on relevant literature, I hypothesized that the AAQ will assist in the validation of the emotional arousal (EA) and past performance (PP) subscales. Participants respond to items on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). There are a total of eight avoidance items, and an item example includes, "I do not like people getting too close to me." Subscale scores range from 8 to 56 ($M = 26.57$, $SD = 7.99$ for men, and $M = 25.52$, $SD = 7.10$ for women; Simpson, Rholes & Phillips, 1996). There were a total of nine ambivalent items, and an item example includes "Others often are reluctant to get as close as I would like." Subscale scores range from 9 to 63 ($M = 26.49$, $SD = 8.34$ for men, and $M = 26.43$, $SD = 8.35$ for women; Simpson, Rholes & Phillips, 1996). The AAQ is significantly correlated (in appropriate directions) with other validated measures of attachment (e.g., Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), as well as with studies of attachment with lesbian and gay individuals (Kurdek, 2002). Cronbach's alpha coefficients for heterosexual men range from .74 (ambivalence) to .77 (avoidance), and .76 (ambivalence) to .69 (avoidance) for heterosexual women. Kurdek's study with the lesbian and gay community suggested comparable consistency with Cronbach's alpha ranging from .77 (avoidance) to .83 (ambivalence). Cronbach's alpha for the sample used in this study were .82 (avoidance), and .84 (ambivalence).

Internalized homophobia. Internalized homophobia was assessed using Szymanski and Chung's (2001) Lesbian Internalized Homophobia Scale – Short Form (LIHS-SF; see Appendix X) which is a 39-item measure that assesses lesbian's negative and internalized attitudes about a lesbian. Based on relevant literature, I hypothesize that the LIHS-SF will assist in the validation of the emotional arousal (EA) subscale. The LIHS-SF consists of five subscales, and includes outward or public identification as a lesbian, religious and/or moral attitudes, personal feelings, connection with a lesbian community, and attitudes toward other lesbians. Participants respond to a 7-point Likert-type scale (1= *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). Internal consistency was strong for all subscales (coefficient alpha = .74 - .92; Szymanski & Chung, 2001), and the validity of LIHS-SF is supported by correlations with measures of loneliness, self-esteem, depression, and social support (Szymanski & Chung, 2001). A later study conducted by Szymanski (2006) found that the LIHS (and perceived heterosexist harassment) uniquely predicted participants' psychological distress ($R^2=.256$, $F(5, 132) = 9.099$, $p < .005$). For the purposes of this study, the total scale score was utilized in the current analyses. Cronbach's alpha for the sample used in this study was .92.

Outness. Participant's level of self-disclosure, or "outness" was measured using the Outness Inventory (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000: Appendix Y). More detailed information regarding this measure was discussed in the Measures section in Study 3. Based on relevant literature, I hypothesized that the OI will assist in the validation of the emotional arousal (EA) and verbal persuasion (VP) subscales. This measure is an 11-item scale designed to assess the degree to which lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) individuals are open about their sexual orientation. Responses on the OI scale indicate the degree to

which the respondent's sexual orientation is known by and openly discussed with various individuals. Each item consists of a particular individual (e.g., father) or type of individual (e.g., work peers) that is rated by using a fully anchored 7-point scale that ranges from 1 to 7 (1=*person definitely does not know about your sexual orientation status*, to 7 = *person definitely knows about your sexual orientation status, and it is openly talked about*). Mohr and Fassinger (2000) found that the OI assessed outness in three different domains including family, everyday life, and religion. An individual's overall outness is considered to be the average of these three domains. During analysis of the OI scale, a mistake was found in that two items were accidentally omitted and therefore not responded to by participants. The first item was one of two items that measured outness regarding religion (i.e., "leaders of my religious community"). The second omitted was one of four items that measured outness to world (i.e., "strangers, new acquaintances"). Due to the fact that Mohr and Fassinger (2000) highlight the scale's utility and validity despite missing data and domains, these two missing items were treated as missing values. Despite the missing items, the internal consistency is comparable to previous research as Cronbach's alpha for the sample used in this study was .88, which is lower than the alpha reported in Study 3, but is closer to Mohr and Fassinger's (2000) reported Cronbach's alpha (.79).

Social Support. Participants' level of social support was measured using The Social Support Appraisals (SSA) Scale (Vaux, Phillips, Holly, Thomson, Williams, & Steward, 1986; Appendix Z). The SSA is a 23-item scale where in participants indicate their level of agreement using a 4-point Likert-type Scale (1 = *Strongly Agree*, to 2 = *Strongly Disagree*). Based on relevant research, I hypothesized that the SSA will assist

in the validation of the verbal persuasion and past performance subscale. More specifically, the verbal persuasion subscale will correlate more with this scale than with any other validation measure. Item examples include, “I can rely on my friends,” “I can’t rely on my family for support,” and “My friends and I are really important to each other.” The SSA has been significantly correlated with other validated measures of support (e.g., Perceived Social Support PSS: Procidano & Heller, 1979, 1983), psychological distress measures (e.g., Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale; Radloff, 1977), as well as personality measures (see Vaux et al., 1986). Cronbach alphas have ranged from .8 - .9 (Vaux et al., 1986). Cronbach’s alpha for the sample used in this study was .94.

Optimism. Participants’ level of optimism was measured using the Life Orientation Test- Revised (LOT-R; Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 1994; Appendix AA), which is a six-item measure (with four filler items, totaling ten total items) that assesses optimism or the generalized expectation for positive outcomes in life. Optimism a construct relatively close and often confused with self-efficacy, was utilized to assess divergent validity (Bandura, 1997). Based on relevant literature that emphasizes the difference between optimism and self-efficacy (for review see Bandura, 1997), I hypothesized that the LOT-R would demonstrate insignificant, or possibly, trivial correlations with the SLRSE. It is imperative to underscore that although Bandura (1997) emphasizes the difference between optimism and self-efficacy beliefs, the SLRSE is a measure of those sources thought to contribute to self-efficacy. Nonetheless, due to the dearth of research available regarding relationship self-efficacy sources, this measure was thought to be a sufficient measure because of its difference from self-efficacy. Sample items include, “I am optimistic about my future,” and “In uncertain times, I usually

expect the best.” Participants respond using a 5-point scale (1= *strongly agree*, 5= *strongly disagree*). Cronbach’s alpha was .78, and test-retest reliabilities (taken at 4, 12, 24, and 28 months) indicate fairly stable scores across time (.68, .60, .56, .79, respectively). The LOT-R also demonstrated convergent and discriminant validity with theoretically relevant scales including trait anxiety (-.53), neuroticism (-.36), and self-esteem (.50). Cronbach’s alpha for the sample used in this study was .89.

Satisfaction. Participants reported their level of relationship satisfaction using the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS; Schumm et al., 1986; Appendix BB), which is a three-item questionnaire. The KMSS was utilized to explore the criterion-related validity of the SLRSE. Although originally developed with heterosexual couples, the KMSS has been adapted and used repeatedly with lesbian and gay populations with excellent Cronbach’s alphas ($\alpha = .97 - .99$; see Kurdek, 1996; 2000). An item example includes, “How satisfied are you with your partner?” Participants respond to items on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1= *Extremely Dissatisfied*, 7= *Extremely Satisfied*), and scores range from 3 to 21, with higher scores indicating greater relationship satisfaction. Mohr and Daly (2008) found that the KMSS was significantly and negatively correlated with internalized homonegativity (as measured by the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual identity Scale; Mohr & Fassinger, 2003), and positively correlated with relationship attractions (as measured by the Multidimensional Determinants of Relationship Commitment Inventory (MDRCI; Kurdek, 1995). Kurdek (2000) also provides additional evidence of the reliability and validity of the KMSS scale with lesbian and gay participants. Cronbach’s alpha for the sample used in this study was .98.

Marginalization. The degree to which participants feel that their relationships are marginalized was measured by Lehmler and Agnew's (2006; Appendix CC) Marginalization Scale (MS). Based on relevant literature, I hypothesized that the MS will assist in the validation of past performance (PP), emotional arousal (EA) and verbal persuasion (VP). The MS is a four-item scale that explores feelings of disapproval from society as well as from family and friends. Two items are negatively worded to indicate disapproval for relationships, and two items are written to suggest approval. Item examples include, "My relationship has general societal acceptance," and "My family and/or friends are not accepting of this relationship." Participants rate items on a 9-point scale (0 = *Not true of my relationship at all* to 8 = *Very true of my relationship*). The Marginalization scale (total scale $\alpha = .81$) consists of two distinct subscales measuring societal and social network marginalization ($\alpha = .78$, $\alpha = .76$, respectively). Modest correlations between the subscales ($r = .49$; $p < .001$) suggests that the subscales are related but not to such an extent as to be redundant. Subscale scores were derived by summing participants' responses to relevant items, and a total scale score for marginalization was obtained by summing the scores for all items (after the negatively worded items are reversed scored). Cronbach's alpha for the sample used in this study was .68. This current study's alpha is noticeably lower than that reported by Lehmler and Agnew's (2006) study.

Relationship Self-Efficacy. Participants' relationship self-efficacy was measured using the 35- item Relationship Self-Efficacy scale (RSE; Morua & Lopez, 2005). Based on Bandura's (1986; 1997) self-efficacy theory, the four sources are thought to contribute to self-efficacy beliefs, and self-efficacy beliefs are thought to contribute to the

attainment of goals. Consistent with theory, the SLRSE was expected to contribute to relationship self-efficacy beliefs for lesbians. For this reason, the RSE was utilized to explore the criterion-related validity of the SLRSE and its subscales. The RSE assesses participants' confidence in her/his own abilities to demonstrate specific relationship maintenance behaviors. Further, it assesses participants' self-efficacy to demonstrate a broad range of relationship behaviors including communication, conflict-resolution, decision-making, physical intimacy, and "more complex, reciprocal, and pre-emptive behaviors" (p. 2). Participants are posed the question, "Within your present relationship, how confident are YOU in YOUR ability to do each of the following?" Item examples include: "accept your partner's desire to spend time with other people," "show respect to your partner when you disagree with his or her opinions," and "accept your partner's support when you are 'down' or depressed." Respondents indicated their current level of confidence in engaging in each behavior on a 9-point rating scale (1 = *not at all sure*, to 9 = *completely sure*). Cronbach's alpha for the 35-item RSE scale was .94 (Morua & Lopez, 2005). The RSE has two subscales including the (i.e., Caring Self-Efficacy scale and the Boundary Regulation Self-Efficacy subscale). The CSE and BRSE subscales were moderately correlated ($r = .33, p < .01$) to each other suggesting that these subscales are not redundant and are indeed distinct constructs. Additionally, both the CSE and the BRSE were significantly related to relationship satisfaction ($r = .52, .27, p < .01$, respectively). Cronbach's alpha for the 35-item RSE scale was .94 and the two subscales demonstrated Cronbach's alphas of .83 (CSE) and .81 (BRSE). For the current sample, Cronbach's alpha for RSE total scale score was .96., and the subscales alphas were .81 (CSE) and .86 (BRSE).

Results

As in the previous studies, data were examined prior to analyses to check for accuracy of data and missing values. Frequency analyses were conducted on all variables to check for outliers and miscoded data. Missing data were replaced with the mean of each item.

In this section I first describe confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), which CFA indexes to examine, how I evaluated the results of a CFA (i.e., reflecting on the indexes) with the SLRSE, and the steps I took based on these recommendations. I then describe how the fit to the data changed based on these recommended steps. I conclude the CFA results section by identifying the final indexes. The validity of the SLRSE is then explored at length.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed on the 17-item SLRSE scale using the AMOS 17.0 computer program. Byrne (2001) and Kahn (2006) describe the benefits of comparing the hypothesized model (i.e., the four-factor model) to an independence model. An independence model assumes no common factors, is independent of all variables in the model (i.e., all correlations among the variables are zero), and is often compared with the model of interest as a null model in an effort to address the inherent difficulties that occur with CFA and sample size (Khattab & Hocevar, 1982). Several indexes assessing the degree to which the model fits the data were computed for the competing models. Bentler and Bonett (1980) and Byrne (2001) report that the chi-square statistic is often affected by large sample sizes, numerous

variables, and high degrees of freedom. These factors almost always cause significant chi-square statistics despite reasonable fit to the data.

To address this issue, Byrne (2001) suggests using alternative indexes of fit as adjuncts to the chi-square statistic. These indexes include the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Goodness of Fit index (GFI), the Root-Mean-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and the Parsimony-based Goodness of Fit (PGFI). First, the CFI ranges from 0 to 1, and the number is based on the comparison between the independence model and hypothesized model. Values approaching .90 are acceptable (Bentler, 1992), and values of .95 are excellent (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) varies from 0 to 1, with values close to 1.00 indicating excellent fit, but values between than .90 and 1.0 have been suggested to demonstrate a fairly good fit (Bryne, 2001). The Comparative Fit Index varies from 0 to 1, with values close to 1.00 indicating excellent fit. Values greater than .90 are considered acceptable (Bentler, 1990); a more conservative .95 or greater value currently represents good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1995). Third, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was used as an additional fit statistic, with values at .06 or smaller representing good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Fourth, the parsimony-based goodness of fit (PGFI) has lower threshold levels that have acceptable levels ranging from as low as .50 to .90. Therefore, parameter estimates resulting from these models were used to inform interpretations of findings. Each of these indexes, therefore, was utilized in the current study goodness-of-fit indicators.

The CFA analysis resulted in significant chi-square statistics for both models (i.e., the independence model and the hypothesized model). Figure 3 shows standardized parameter estimates for this model. The hypothesized model approached a good fit:

GFI=.91, CFI=.87, RMSEA=.07, PGFI =.67 (See Figure 1). The independence model, on the other hand, did not approach fit: GFI = .57, CFI = .00, RMSEA = .18, PGFI = .51. As one can see, the goodness-of-fit indexes approached recommended values for the hypothesized model, but not for the independence model. These findings suggest that the four-factor model provides the best fit to the data and that the independence model does not improve the fit. To be clear, the hypothesized model only approached the standards to be considered a “fit to the data.” The next task was to identify any areas of misfit in the model (Byrne, 2001).

For instance, the RMSEA value (.07) was slightly above the suggested value of .06, which may be an indication of potential model misspecification (Byrne, 2001). Model misspecification, standardized residual covariances, and modification indexes (provided by AMOS 17.0) were analyzed next. Standardized residuals are similar to z scores and are preferable to unstandardized residuals in the interpretation of model misspecification. A total of 12 standardized residual covariances fell above the expected range (2.58) from among the 136 covariances in the output (9% of the residuals). Half of the residual covariances that fell outside the expected range were associated with two items (“At least one of my parents has given gifts or cards to a significant other” and “During phone conversations, family members ask how a girlfriend/partner is doing”).

In addition to examining the standardized residual covariances, exploring the modification indexes is another way of identifying misspecification. The modification indexes (MI) reflects the extent to which the hypothesized model appropriately described the data (Byrne, 2001). AMOS provides a parameter that specifies the value of the overall chi-square value if the parameter were to be freely estimated in a subsequent run.

Moreover, the expected parameter change (EPC) value, which is associated with each MI, represents the estimated change for each fixed parameter in the model. The EPC essentially describes the sensitivity of the evaluation of fit to any reparameterization of the model (Byrne, 2001). In the current analysis, there were only a few parameters that made substantive and theoretical sense, which also produced larger MIs and EPCs. These items were: “When my relationships experience difficulty, a family member provides support to help sustain the relationship,” and “When my relationships experience difficulty, a friend provides support to help sustain the relationship.” The other two items that produced larger EPC values were: “Many of my work colleagues do not know that I date/partner with women” and “I do not worry about my colleagues’ reactions when I bring a significant other to work/school functions.” Due to the theoretical support of these covariances, the reparameterization of the model was conducted. Posthoc respecifications resulted in an overall improvement of indices for this model ($\chi^2 = 317.08$, $df = 111$; CFI = .90, GFI = .92, RMSEA = .06, RMR = .15, PGFI = .67). In conclusion, the four-factor model in Figure 3 represents an adequate description of relationship self-efficacy sources for lesbians.

As predicted, the SLRSE maintained a four-factor structure and the scale items loaded as expected based upon Bandura’s (1986) self-efficacy theory and the exploratory factor analysis conducted in Study 3. An unexpected finding, however, was the covariance between items on the scale. Closer analysis of these items, as well as their conceptual meaning and their sentence structure (i.e., the sentence stem) provides support for their co-variance. Implications are discussed in Study 4’s Discussion section.

Validity of the SLRSE

Construct validity. Construct validity is a measure of how “people’s scores on a measure reflect their true scores on a hypothetical construct” (Whitley, 2002, p. 131). Construct validity may be assessed in multiple ways. One approach is to examine the degree that one measure is correlated with other validated measures of similar constructs (Whitley, 2002). As previously stated, no known scale to date exists that measures sources of self-efficacy in romantic relationships (for heterosexual or lesbian/gay individuals). For this reason, I have identified measures that assess similar constructs to explore the construct validity of the SLRSE. I note, however, that because efficacy beliefs are multidimensional and multifaceted, these sources may possess construct similarities. In fact, previous research indicates that validation measures used in constructing sources of self-efficacy scales often find that validation measures are correlated with more than one source of self-efficacy (e.g., Anderson & Betz, 2001). To that end, I do not hypothesize that these scales will *only* be associated with one specific self-efficacy source. Instead, I anticipate that some measures may correlate highly on some scales and more modestly on others based upon the similarity in constructs. These hypotheses are made clear in the Measure section above and are reiterated in their respective sections below.

The following scales were used to assess construct validity: Social Support Appraisal Scale (SSA: Vaux, Phillips, Holly, Thompson, Williams, & Stewart, 1986), Lesbian Internalized Homophobia Scale- Short Form (LIHS-SF; Szyanski & Chung, 2001), Outness Inventory (OI; Mohr & Fassinger, 2000), Marginalization Scale (MS: Lehmler & Agnew, 2006), and the Adult Attachment Questionnaire scale (AAQ;

Simpson, Rholes, & Phillips, 1996). The means and standard deviations for the SSA, MS, AAQ, OI, and the LIHS-SF were calculated and results can be seen in Table 11. Furthermore, listwise deletion of missing values was used in all correlational analyses, which is recommended when large sample sizes are used (Field, 2005).

SLRSE full scale correlations. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between the total score of the SLRSE and scores from the SSA, MS, AAQ, OI, and the LIHS measures were calculated. The correlation coefficients between the SLRSE and the SSA, MS, AAQ, OI, and LIHS-SF are in Table 9. The SLRSE total scale score was significantly correlated in appropriate directions with scores of the SSA ($r = -.39, p < .001$), MS ($r = -.47, p < .001$), Avoidance AAQ ($r = -.39, p < .001$), Ambivalence AAQ ($r = -.34, p < .001$), OI ($r = .58, p < .001$), and the LIHS-SF ($r = -.65, p < .001$).

A partial correlation was conducted to explore the relationship between the SLRSE with validity measures, while controlling for the effects of participants' age. Results indicated that the SLRSE was significantly correlated in appropriate directions with scores from the SSA ($r = -.40, p < .001$), MS ($r = -.47, p < .001$), Avoidance AAQ ($r = -.38, p < .001$), Ambivalence AAQ ($r = -.33, p < .001$), OI ($r = .58, p < .001$), and the LIHS-SF ($r = -.64, p < 0.01$).

It is important to again note that lower SSA scores represent greater social support, thereby causing negative correlations where one might expect to see positive correlations. Further, it appears that the full scale SLRSE has moderate -to-large correlations with each construct validity measure, with the two highest correlations being with the Lesbian Internalized Homophobia Scale (LIHS-SF; $r = -.65$) and Outness Inventory (OI; $r = .58$). When controlling for participants' age, the full scale SLRSE was

still significantly correlated with each validity measure, and only trivial variance was accounted for by participants' age (LIHS-SF; $r = -.64$) and (OI; $r = .58$), respectively.

SLRSE subscale correlation with validity measures. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between the SLRSE subscales (PP, FamVP, FriendVP, and EA) and the scores of the SSA, MS, AAQ, OI, and the LIHS-SF measures were calculated. Due to the numerous correlation coefficients, all values are also presented in Table 9. Furthermore, partial correlations were conducted between the SLRSE's subscales and the validity measure while controlling for participants' age. Due to the trivial variance that participants' age accounted for in these correlations, these values are not discussed here and are listed in Table 10.

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between the SLRSE's past performance subscale (PP) score and scores from the SSA, MS, AAQ, OI, and the LIHS measures were calculated. Analyses suggested that the past performance subscale was significantly correlated with scores of the SSA ($r = -.28, p < .001$), MS ($r = -.17, p < .01$), LIHS-SF ($r = -.21, p < .001$), Avoidance AAQ ($r = -.44, p < .001$), and the Ambivalence AAQ ($r = -.42, p < .001$). The past performance subscale was not significantly correlated with outness (OI; $r = .93, p < .06$); however, the past performance subscale demonstrated the highest correlations with the measures of Avoidance and Ambivalence.

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between the SLRSE's family verbal persuasion subscale (FamVP) score and scores from the SSA, MS, AAQ, OI, and the LIHS measures were calculated. Analyses suggested that the past performance subscale was significantly correlated with scores of the SSA ($r = -.28, p < .001$), MS ($r =$

$-0.39, p < .001$), LIHS-SF ($r = -0.38, p < .001$), OI ($r = 0.47, p < .06$), Avoidance AAQ ($r = -0.11, p < .05$), and the Ambivalence AAQ ($r = -0.21, p < .001$).

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between the SLRSE's friend verbal persuasion subscale (FVP) score and scores from the SSA, MS, AAQ, OI, and the LIHS measures were calculated. Analyses suggested that the past performance subscale was significantly correlated with scores of the SSA ($r = -0.24, p < .001$), MS ($r = -0.18, p < .01$), LIHS-SF ($r = -0.38, p < .001$), OI ($r = 0.26, p < .001$), Avoidance AAQ ($r = -0.30, p < .05$), and the Ambivalence AAQ ($r = -0.18, p < .01$).

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between the SLRSE's emotional arousal subscale (EVP) score and scores from the SSA, MS, AAQ, OI, and the LIHS measures were calculated. Analyses suggested that the past performance subscale was significantly correlated with scores of the SSA ($r = -0.16, p < .01$), MS ($r = -0.42, p < .001$), LIHS-SF ($r = -0.66, p < .001$), OI ($r = 0.59, p < .001$), and Avoidance AAQ ($r = -0.16, p < .05$). The emotional arousal subscale was not significantly correlated with the Ambivalence AAQ ($r = -0.06, p = .16$).

In summary, most subscales demonstrated moderate correlations with the measures of construct validity. As expected, the measure of social support (SSA) demonstrated higher correlations with the past performance and the two verbal persuasion subscales when compared to emotional arousal. Consistent with my predictions, the emotional arousal subscale (EA) was most highly correlated with measures of outness (OI) and internalized homophobia (LIHS-SF; $.59, -0.66$, respectively). Contrary to predictions, the emotional arousal subscale demonstrated trivial correlations with the AAQ Avoidance subscale, and was not significantly correlated with the AAQ

Ambivalence subscale. Another unexpected finding was that the past performance subscale (PP) demonstrated higher correlations with the AAQ Ambivalence and Avoidance measures when compared to the emotional arousal (EA) subscale. The implications of these findings are discussed more thoroughly in Study 4's Discussion section.

Criterion-related validity. Criterion-related validity occurs when the results of one instrument are associated, or highly correlated with, one or more outcomes (Whitley, 2002). If the sources of self-efficacy are contributing factors in lesbian's romantic relationships, then the SLRSE scale should be associated with measures that assess positive relationship qualities such as relationship satisfaction (as measured by the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale; KMSS; Schumm et al, 1986), and relationship self-efficacy (as measured by the RSE; Morua & Lopez, 2005).

The means and the standard deviations of the KMSS and the RSE were calculated and can be viewed in Table 9. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between the total score of the SLRSE and the total score of the KMSS and the RSE were calculated. The correlation coefficients between the total score of the SLRSE and the SSA, MS, AAQ, and LIHS-SF are in Table 9. The total score of the SLRSE was significantly correlated with the total scores of the KMSS ($r = .30, p < .001$) and the RSE ($r = .39, p < .001$). Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between the SLRSE subscales (PP, FamVP, FriendVP, and EA) and the total scores of the relationship satisfaction (KMSS; Schumm, 1986) and the relationship self-efficacy beliefs (RSE; Morua & Lopez, 2005) were calculated.

Relationship self-efficacy beliefs (RSE; Morua & Lopez, 2005) were significantly related to past performance (PP; $r = .57, p < .001$), family verbal persuasion (FamVP; $r = .16, p < .01$), friend verbal persuasion (FVP; $r = .16, p < .01$), and emotional arousal (EA; $r = .15, p < .01$).

Relationship satisfaction (KMSS, Schumm et al., 1986) was significantly related to past performance (PP; $r = .49, p < .001$), family verbal persuasion (FamVP; $r = .12, p < .05$), friend verbal persuasion ($r = .14, p = .01$), but was not significantly related to emotional arousal ($r = .08, p = .08, ns$). It is evident that most of these correlations are statistically significant; however, due to their modest values, some of these correlations do not suggest practical significance.

Results of multiple regression suggested that the four SLRSE subscales significantly accounted for 34% ($R^2 = .34$) of the variance in relationship self-efficacy, $F(4, 287) = 37.27, p < .01$. Additionally, the four SLRSE subscales significantly accounted for 23% ($R^2 = .23$) of the variance in relationship satisfaction, $F(4, 318) = 23.39, p < .01$. The average VIF was explored to evaluate collinearity. Several authors state that if the VIF score is greater than 1 then collinearity may affect the regression (Bowerman & O'Connell, 1990; Field, 2005). VIF factors were close to 1 (1.03 -1.13) and this suggests that slight collinearity exists. Furthermore, an investigation of the assumption of independent errors was explored using the Durban-Watson statistic. Field (2005) states that this value should be between 1 and 3, and the closer the value is to 2, the better. Based upon the Durban-Watson statistic for the two analyses (2.05, 1.89, respectively), the assumption of independent errors was met.

As expected, the SLRSE and its four subscales were significantly related to measures of relationship self-efficacy and relationship satisfaction. Additionally, the four SLRSE subscales accounted for a significant proportion of variance in participants' relationship self-efficacy (34%), and relationship satisfaction (23%).

Divergent Validity. Divergent validity concerns a measure's ability to not assess a construct that it is not supposed to assess (Whitley, 2002). Optimism, a construct theoretically similar to and often confused with self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986; 1997), was utilized to assess divergent validity. Evidence suggests that optimism and self-efficacy are related; however, they should not be highly correlated. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between the SLRSE total scale and the four subscales (PP, FamVP, FriendVP, and EA) were calculated. Unexpectedly, the LOT-R demonstrated significant correlations with the SLRSE's total score ($r's = .23, p < .001$) and the four subscales: past performance ($r's = .27, p < .001$), family verbal persuasion ($r's = .12, p < .05$), and friend verbal persuasion ($r's = .17, p < .01$). The LOT-R was not significantly correlated with the emotional arousal subscale ($r's = .04, p = .27$). The LOT-R demonstrated slightly higher correlations with the total SLRSE scale and three of the subscales than expected. Results of correlational analysis suggest that divergent validity was not established in the current study.

Known-Groups Validation. Known-groups validation concerns a scale's ability to differentiate members of one group from another group based on their scores on a measure (DeVellis, 2003). Known-groups validation was assessed in two separate analyses. First, participants who were in committed relationships were grouped together and compared to participants who were not in committed relationships. Participants who

described their relationship status as “other” or “widowed” were not included in the analyses ($n = 24$). Participants were considered to be in a “committed relationship” if they described their relationship status as engaged, partnered (with ceremony), or married. The rationale behind this decision was the speculation that individuals who are in committed relationships would inherently have greater sources of relationship self-efficacy than those who have not committed in their relationship. That is, these individuals have, in some way, have both expressed their intent to be in a committed partnership, whereas participants in other categories may or may not have expressed this intention. Participants were considered not to be in “committed relationships” if they were separated, single, dating (exclusive and non-exclusive) and partnered. The emphasis in this distinction is that participants in committed relationships needed to have explicitly demonstrated their commitment through a ceremony, legal marriage, or their plans to do so (i.e., engaged to be married).

A non-significant Levene’s test ($p = .573$) indicates that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met and the results of the t-test can be explored. On average, participants in committed relationships ($n = 145$) reported greater sources of self-efficacy ($n = 145$, $M = 4.53$, $SD = .72$) when compared to non-committed participants ($n = 297$, $M = 4.23$, $SD = .70$). This difference was significant $t(440) = 4.14$, $p < .001$, and it had a medium-size effect ($r = .37$).

The second analysis used to establish known-groups validity was a comparison of SLRSE scores between bisexual women (as defined by women who reported a 4 or below on the 1-7 sexual orientation scale), and lesbians (as defined by women who reported a 5 or above on a 1-7 scale). A non-significant Levene’s test ($p = .335$) indicates that the

assumption of homogeneity of variances was met the results of the t-test could be explored. On average, bisexual-identified women reported significantly lower sources of relationship self-efficacy ($n = 68, M = 4.00, SD = .74$) when compared to lesbian-identified participants ($n = 414, M = 4.39, SD = .71$). This difference was significant $t(463) = -4.23, p < .01$, and it had a small sized effect $r = .19$.

Consistent with the hypotheses, the SLRSE was able to differentiate members who are in committed relationships from participants who are not in committed relationships. Further, the SLRSE is also able to differentiate participants who identify as lesbian when compared to participants who identify as bisexual.

Discussion

The goal of Study 4 was to confirm the factor structure and provide initial validity evidence for the SLRSE. A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to determine whether the SLRSE's factor structure parallels that suggested by Bandura's (1986) theory of self-efficacy and those results from Study 3. The validity of the SLRSE was assessed by exploring the relationship of the SLRSE subscales with theoretically relevant measures empirically supported in the research literature.

Due to the numerous analyses conducted in the current study, I first review the key findings of the CFA, and then I outline the SLRSE validity evidence for the total scale and the four subscales. I then conclude with the limitations for Study 4.

Main Findings: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

There were several important findings from Study 4. First, the results of CFA suggested that the four-factor model was the best fit for the data, even when compared to an independence model. Information provided by the standardized residual covariances

and the modification indexes recommended a parameter change due to slight multicollinearity. Respecifications of the parameter were conducted because the covariances made conceptual and theoretical sense. That is to say, based on these two indices and the conceptual meaningfulness of the covariances, two separate items were allowed to co-load with two other items. The co-loadings included the items “When my relationships experience difficulty, a family member provides support to help sustain the relationship” and “When my relationships experience difficulty, a friend provides support to help sustain the relationship.” These two items load on the separate factors, however, they appear to be related due to their ability to measure participants’ support from family and friends during difficult relationship hurdles. Furthermore, both items have similar sentence stems, which may also have contributed to their covariance (DeVellis, 2003). The other items that co-loaded were “Many of my work colleagues do not know that I date/partner with women” and “I do not worry about my colleagues' reactions when I bring a significant other to work/school functions.” These items loaded on the same factor, and they appear to covary due to their ability to measure the emotional experiences of navigating work-related obstacles that same-sex couples may face while in relationships. Upon respecifications, the goodness-of-fit indices evidenced a better fit of the data to the model ($\chi^2 = 317.08$, $df = 111$; CFI = .90, GFI = .92, RMSEA = .06, RMR = .15, PGFI = .67).

The findings of the confirmatory factor analysis were generally consistent with the hypotheses. First, the results continue to support a four-factor model that demonstrates conceptual meaningfulness parallel to three of Bandura’s (1986; 1997) four sources of self-efficacy (i.e., past performance, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal).

CFA also confirmed that verbal persuasion provided by friends and that provided by family are two separate factors. A third key finding is that the SLRSE appears to assess four unique constructs that, although correlated, appear to be measuring uniquely different constructs (see Table 8).

An unexpected finding was that an evaluation of the standard residuals and the modification indexes suggested that slight multicollinearity existed in the data and, to account for the covariances, respecification was necessary to improve the fit. Despite the multicollinearity, the fit indexes (after respecifications) suggest an adequate fit to the data. It is important to note that two items from two separate factors did co-vary; however, as described in Chapter Four, this is not entirely unusual and as long as it is accounted for in the model, it does not affect the functioning of the scale (see Byrne, 2001).

Main Findings: Validity

Evidence for the validity of the SLRSE was supported by the significant correlations with several measures. Due to the numerous analyses conducted to assess the validity of the SLRSE and its four subscales, I first outline the key findings for each separate subscale and the evidence for its construct validity separately. Next, I review the criterion-related, divergent, and known-groups validity. I conclude with a brief explanation of the findings within the context of the literature. Interestingly, partial correlations (to control for participants' age) were conducted between the SLRSE's subscales and the validity measure, however; due to the trivial variance that participants' age accounted for, these values are not discussed here, but are listed in Table 10.

A more thorough theoretical explanation for the key findings of Study 4 is provided in Chapter Four.

Construct validity of the SLRSE was established by exploring the correlations with theoretically relevant measures including: Social Support Appraisal Scale (SSA: Vaux, Phillips, Holly, Thompson, Williams, & Stewart, 1986), Lesbian Internalized Homophobia Scale- Short Form (LIHS-SF; Szyanski & Chung, 2001), Outness Inventory (OI; Mohr & Fassinger, 2000), Marginalization Scale (MS: Lehmler & Agnew, 2006), and the Adult Attachment Questionnaire scale (AAQ; Simpson, Rholes, & Phillips, 1996).

Past performance. Analyses suggested that the past performance subscale was significantly correlated with scores of the SSA, MS, LIHS-SF, and both AAQ measures (Avoidance and Ambivalence). The past performance subscale was not significantly related to the outness measure (OI). An unexpected finding was that the past performance subscale demonstrated higher correlations with the AAQ measures (Avoidance and Ambivalence) than almost any other measure. More remarkable was that past performance was even more highly correlated with the AAQ measures (i.e., Avoidance and Ambivalence) when compared to the emotional arousal subscale. In addition, the past performance subscale demonstrated the lowest correlation with the overall SLRSE scale. Nevertheless, consistent with Bandura's (1986; 1997) theory, past performance was most highly correlated with relationship self-efficacy beliefs (RSE; Morua & Lopez, 2005). The results of this study provide corroboration that past performance experiences may be the most salient source for lesbians' relationship self-efficacy beliefs.

Family and friend verbal persuasion. Analyses suggested that the verbal persuasion subscales were both significantly correlated with scores of the SSA, MS, OI, LIHS-SF, and AAQ measures. As expected, the measure of social support (SSA) was significantly correlated with the two verbal persuasion subscales. An interesting and unpredicted finding was in the differences between the family verbal persuasion and friend verbal persuasion. For example, when compared to the friend verbal persuasion subscale, the family verbal persuasion subscale had noticeably higher correlations with the Marginalization Scale (MS; r 's $-.40, -.18$, respectively) and the Outness Inventory (OI; r 's $.47, .26$, respectively). These findings suggest that as participants experience greater support from their family, they also tend to report that their relationships are less marginalized. Similarly, the more support participants experience from family, the more out with their sexual orientation they tend to be. A key observation also includes how family support appears to be more highly related to these two constructs (i.e., outness and marginalization) when compared to friend support. As described more fully in Chapter Four, this trend may be capturing the strong influence that family plays in lesbians' lives. In particular, participants' level of outness and their experience of being in a marginalized relationship were significantly correlated with the support they experienced by their family. These findings are not inconsistent with the existing literature (e.g., Beals, Impett & Peplau, 2002; Jordan & Deluty, 2000; Peplau, Pakesky & Hamilton, 1982; Lehmler & Agnew, 2006). These findings provide support for the importance of family support, both in women's level of outness but also in their experiences of feeling marginalized.

Emotional arousal. Analyses suggested that the emotional arousal subscale significantly correlated with scores of the SSA, MS, OI, LIHS-SF, and the AAQ Avoidance measure. The emotional arousal subscale did not correlate with the AAQ Ambivalence subscale. Consistent with my predictions, the emotional arousal subscale was most highly correlated with measures of outness (OI) and internalized homophobia (LIHS-SF; .60, -.66, respectively). This suggests that as participants' outness increases, their positive emotional and physiological arousal experiences regarding relationships also increase. Similarly, as participants' internalized homophobia increases, their positive emotional and physiological arousal experiences regarding relationships decrease. Although previous research has not explored emotional arousal as measured in the current study, the impact of internalized homophobia on one's experience in romantic relationships (i.e., relationship satisfaction) has been examined. For example, evidence suggests that internalized homophobia is significantly and negatively associated with lesbian and gay couples' relationship satisfaction (Meyer & Dean, 1998; Balsam & Szymanski, 2005a; Szymanski & Chung, 2003).

Criterion-related validity. Criterion-related validity was established by the moderate correlations between the SLRSE total score to the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS) and the Relationship Self-Efficacy Scale (RSE). More specifically, the participants who reported greater *sources* of relationship self-efficacy were significantly more likely to report greater relationship satisfaction and relationship self-efficacy. Further, regression analyses indicated that the four SLRSE subscales also accounted for a significant proportion of variance in participants' relationship self-efficacy (34%), and relationship satisfaction (23%). This is consistent with Bandura's (1986; 1997) self-

efficacy theory in two specific ways. First, Bandura posits that the four sources should contribute to relationship self-efficacy. Second, it also makes sense that the SLRSE was not as highly correlated with relationship satisfaction when compared to relationship self-efficacy. That is, because the sources are hypothesized to contribute to relationship self-efficacy beliefs, and these self-efficacy beliefs are thought to contribute more directly to satisfaction, it makes theoretical sense for the SLRSE to demonstrate lower correlations with relationship satisfaction.

Divergent validity. The divergent validity of the SLRSE was not supported due to the significant, yet small, correlations between the SLRSE and the Optimism scale (LOT-R; Scheier, Carver & Bridges, 1994). Although a correlation was not altogether unexpected between these two measures, a more trivial relationship was predicted. Therefore, the extent to which the LOT-R served as an assessment of divergent validity is doubtful. The optimism scale was chosen because of its strong correlation to relationship satisfaction, and Bandura's (1997) clear emphasis that it is distinctly different from self-efficacy. That is, optimism was seen to be important to relationships, but not necessarily related to self-efficacy. For this reason, it was deemed a good measure to test the SLRSE's divergent validity. Based on the results of the current study, however, it appears that optimism was not an appropriate construct to utilize. One explanation may be that optimism is distinguishable from self-efficacy beliefs, but not necessarily from the four sources. That is, when each of the four sources is explored separately, it seems that optimism is related to most of these constructs. For instance, optimism has been shown to be correlated with longer lasting friendships (Geers, Reilly, & Dember, 1998), reduced likelihood of relationship dissolution (Helgeson, 1994; Holmes, 1997), and even social

support (Sarason, Sarason, & Shearin, 1986) as well as perceived support from a partner (e.g., Srivastava, McGonigal, Richards, Butler & Gross, 2006).

Another explanation may be that optimism serves as a latent or mediating variable in romantic relationships. For example, Assad, Donnellan, and Conger (2007) found that optimism was both directly related to relationship satisfaction, but optimism also appears to influence satisfaction indirectly through its influence on other important relationship behaviors, such as problem solving. Put differently, Assad and colleagues found that optimists report greater satisfaction with their relationships and a significant proportion of this association was mediated by participants' ability to demonstrate cooperative problem solving. Moreover, longitudinal evidence suggested that optimism was predictive of increased relationship satisfaction. The LOT-R's significant correlations with the SLRSE, and its subscales, may have occurred due to the direct or mediating role that optimism plays in relationship behaviors (e.g., problem solving; Assad, Donnellan, & Conger, 2007), as well as support (Sarason, Sarason, & Shearin, 1986; Srivastava, McGonigal, Richards, Butler & Gross, 2006). Given this information, it is clear that optimism affects several aspects of romantic relationships, and therefore, may not be an ideal measure to assess the divergent validity of the SLRSE.

Known-Groups Validity. Known-groups validation was assessed in two separate analyses. First, participants who were in committed relationships were grouped together and compared to participants who were not in committed relationships. The second analysis used to establish known-groups validity was a comparison of SLRSE scores between bisexual women (as defined by women who reported a 4 or below on the 1-7 sexual orientation scale), and lesbian women (as defined by women who reported a 5 or

above on a 1-7 scale). Consistent with the hypotheses, the SLRSE was able to differentiate members who are in committed partnerships from participants who are not in committed relationships. Further, the SLRSE was also able to differentiate participants who identify as lesbian when compared to participants who identify as bisexual.

Implications: Validity

There are several interesting and unexpected findings and implications from the aforementioned analyses. First, the SLRSE subscales were significantly related in appropriate directions with validity measures which indicate that the SLRSE is an effective measure of relationship self-efficacy sources for women's same-sex relationships. Nevertheless, there were some unexpected correlations. For instance, the past performance (PP) subscale had the strongest correlation with attachment measures (i.e., avoidance and ambivalence). Although correlations between the two scales were not all together unexpected, it was interesting that the past performance subscale was more strongly correlated with the avoidance and ambivalence than with the emotional arousal subscale. It may be that participants who have less avoidance and ambivalence in their attachment styles are significantly more likely to have better past experiences in romantic relationships. This would, in turn, contribute to greater past performance experiences. In fact, Crowell, Treboux, and Brockmeyer (2009) suggest similar conclusions in that heterosexual adults who have a secure attachment were less likely to divorce in the early years of their marriage when compared to insecure participants. Bandura (1997) suggests that "mood-biased" reflections of memories affect participants' self-efficacy judgments in that past experiences (both successes and failures) are stored as memories with the affective component. Taken together, it appears that attachment styles

may influence one's actual experiences in relationships, and reflection of past experiences may have an emotional component that ultimately informs an individual's current relationship self-efficacy.

Another interesting finding was the high correlation between the emotional arousal subscale and the internalized homophobia measure. These results suggest that participants who have greater levels of internalized homophobia are more likely to report fewer sources of emotional arousal experiences. That is to say, the greater negative social attitudes that an individual directs toward her/himself, the less positive emotional and physiological experiences they have regarding their romantic relationships. A high correlation between the EA subscale and the LIHS-SF may be due, in part, by some of the scale's shared items. For instance, one LIHS-SF item "I am proud to be a lesbian" is very similar to the SLRSE item, "I feel good about being a lesbian." Another similarity between the LIHS-SF and the SLRSE includes the items "I wouldn't mind if my boss knew that I was a lesbian" and "I do not worry about my colleagues' reactions when I bring a significant other to work/school functions." These measures appear to be assessing similar constructs thereby causing the high correlations (DeVellis, 2003).

Limitations

Similar to studies 1-3, some limitations of the current study include the lack of racially/ethnically diverse participants. The homogeneity of the sample limits this study's ability to safely generalize the results to lesbians who possess less education, are lesbians-of-color, or possibly lesbians with different faith beliefs (which was not assessed in the current study). Recommendations for future research to address this issue are also highlighted in Chapter Four.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the SLRSE is a 17-item scale that appears to be a psychometrically sound measure that evidences sufficient reliability, validity, and factor stability. In sum, the goal of Study 4 was accomplished by testing the stability of the SLRSE's factor structure. Additionally, different types of validity for the SLRSE were established including construct validity, criterion-related validity, and known-groups validity. Overall, the goals of Study 4 were met.

Table 1

Expected Correlations of Validation Measures

	SLRSE	SLRSE	PP	VE	VP	EA
1.	SSA	NP	Neg (-)	Neg (-)	Neg (-)	NP
2.	LIHS-SF	NP	NP	NP	NP	Neg (-)
3.	OI	NP	NP	Pos (+)	Pos (+)	Pos (+)
4.	MS	NP	NP	NP	Neg (-)	Neg (-)
5.	AVOID	NP	Neg (-)	NP	NP	Neg (-)
6.	AMB	NP	Neg (-)	NP	NP	Neg (-)
7.	KMSS	Pos (+)	NP	NP	NP	NP
8.	RSE	Pos (+)	NP	NP	NP	NP
9.	LOT-R	NON	NP	NP	NP	NP
10.	DIV	NP	NP	Neg (-)	NP	NP

Note. SLRSE = Sources of Lesbian Relationship Self-Efficacy Scale; PP= Past Performance; VE = Vicarious Experience; FamVP = Family Verbal Persuasion; FVP = Friend Verbal Persuasion; EA= Emotional Arousal; SSA = Social Support Appraisal Scale; LIHS-SF = Lesbian Internalized Homophobia Scale-Short Form; OI= Outness Inventory; MS = Marginalization Scale; AVOID = Adult Attachment Questionnaire, Avoidance Subscale; AMB = Adult Attachment Questionnaire, Ambivalence Subscale; KMSS = Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale; RSE = Relationship Self-Efficacy; LOT-R = Life Orientation Test-Revised; DIV = Parental Divorce; Neg (-) = Expected Negative Correlation; Pos (+) = Expected Positive Correlation; NP = No Prediction; NON = Non-Significant Correlation

Table 2

Study 2: Eliminated SLRSE Items with Clarity (C) and Relevance(R) Scores by Lesbian Relationship Experts (n = 5)

SLRSE Item	LR-R	LR-C
1. My past relationships were negatively affected by our different views about creating families	5.67	4.83
2. I have learned a lot from my past relationships which has positively affected me in later relationships	5.33	4.83
3. I reflect upon my past relationships with anger.	5.25	5.75
4. I reflect upon my past relationships with regret.	5.2	5.6
5. Previous relationships with women were affected by negative influences/pressures from family	5.4	5.6
6. At least one of my parents is in a same-sex relationship.	3.67	6.0
7. Most of the same-sex relationships that I know of are fictional relationships depicted on television.	5.0	5.8
8. Many of the relationships I admire are same-sex relationships.	5.4	6.0
9. Most of the same-sex relationships that I know of are gay and/or lesbian celebrity relationships (e.g., Ellen DeGeneres and Portia DeRossi; Rosie O'Donnell and Kelli Carpenter).	4.8	5.2

Table 2 (continued)

Study 2: Eliminated SLRSE Items with Clarity (C) and Relevance(R) Scores by Lesbian Relationship Experts (n = 5)

SLRSE Item	LR-R	LR-C
10. Girlfriends are not given a warm welcome in my parent's home.	5.6	5.8
11. My state government offers equal opportunities/benefits for my partnerships.	5.2	6.0
12. My parents refer to girlfriends/partners as my "friend" or "roommate."	5.25	5.75
13. My parents want me to marry a man.	5.8	6.0
14. My family is ashamed, or would be ashamed if they knew, that I am a lesbian.	5.8	5.8
15. My heterosexual friends refer to my significant others as "friends" or "roommates."	5.25	5.75
16. My parents currently, or in the past, have displayed pictures of me and a girlfriend in their home	5.0	6.0
17. Should I ask, my parents would offer good advice to me about relationships.	5.0	5.67
18. I am comfortable dating women who have previously dated my friends	5.0	5.83
19. I feel comfortable in public with a girlfriend/partner.	5.8	5.8

Table 2 (continued)

Study 2: Eliminated SLRSE Items with Clarity (C), Relevance(R), and Back-Translation (BT) Scores by Self-Efficacy Experts (n = 4)

SLRSE Item	SE-R	SE-C	BT
1. My past relationships were negatively affected by our different views about creating families	4.5	5.0	1
2. I have learned a lot from my past relationships which has positively affected me in later relationships	5.17	5.17	1
3. I reflect upon my past relationships with anger.	4.5	5.0	4
4. I reflect upon my past relationships with regret.	4.75	5.25	4
5. Previous relationships with women were affected by negative influences/pressures from family	5.25	5.5	1
6. At least one of my parents is in a same-sex relationship.	4.67	5.33	2
7. Most of the same-sex relationships that I know of are fictional relationships depicted on television.	4.75	4.75	2
8. Many of the relationships I admire are same-sex relationships.	5.5	5.25	2
9. Most of the same-sex relationships that I know of are gay and/or lesbian celebrity relationships (e.g., Ellen DeGeneres and Portia DeRossi; Rosie O'Donnell and Kelli Carpenter).	5.0	5.0	2

Table 2 (continued)

Study 2: Eliminated SLRSE Items with Clarity (C), Relevance(R), and Back-Translation (BT) Scores by Self-Efficacy Experts (n = 4)

SLRSE Item	SE-R	SE-C	BT
10. Girlfriends are not given a warm welcome in my parent's home.	5.25	4.5	1
11. My state government offers equal opportunities/benefits for my partnerships.	4.75	5	3
12. My parents refer to girlfriends/partners As my "friend" or "roommate."	4.5	4.75	3
13. My parents want me to marry a man.	4.75	5.25	3
14. My family is ashamed, or would be ashamed if they knew, that I am a lesbian.	5.25	5.25	3
15. My heterosexual friends refer to my significant others as "friends" or "roommates."	4.5	3	3
16. My parents currently, or in the past, have displayed pictures of me and a girlfriend in their home	4.33	5	3
17. Should I ask, my parents would offer Good advice to me about relationships.	5.17	5.17	3
18. I am comfortable dating women who have previously dated my friends	4.6	5.4	4
19. I feel comfortable in public with a girlfriend/partner.	5	5.25	4

Table 3

Study 3: Participants' Demographic Information (N = 274)

Characteristics	n	%
Age		
18-25	35	12.8
26-35	161	58.8
36- 45	38	13.8
46-55	30	10.9
56+	7	2.6
Missing	3	1.1
Sexual Orientation		
3	1	< 1%
4	14	5.1
5	41	14.9
6	112	40.8
7	105	38.5

Table 3 (continued)

Study 3: Participants' Demographic Information (N = 274)

Characteristics	n	%
Ethnicity		
Caucasian/Euro-American	235	85.8
African or African-American	2	.7
Asian or Asian- American/Pacific Islander	7	2.6
Native-American/American Indian	1	.4
Latina/Chicano or Latina/Chicano-American	17	6.2
Biracial or multiracial	5	1.8
Other	6	2.2
Missing	1	<1%
Relationship Status		
Single	44	16.1
Dating (non-monogamous)	13	4.7
Dating (monogamous)	63	23.0
Partnered	98	35.8
Committed partnership	48	17.5
Other	8	2.9

Table 4

*Study 3: 44 item SLRSE
Item Distributions (N = 274)*

SLRSE Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	ITC
1. I have had frequently fights with significant others about whether or not to create and/or raise children.	5.14	1.15	.27*
2. Despite my desire to do so, I have difficulty maintaining long-term relationships with women.	4.89	1.25	.29
3. My relationships have been negatively affected by us moving in together too soon.	4.56	1.34	.23
4. I frequently pursue relationships with women who are not suitable dating options (e.g., heterosexual women, friends, women in relationships, etc).	5.01	1.16	.26
5. I am able to be friendly with a significant other's friends, even though they are ex-girlfriends.	4.55	1.15	.29
6. My relationships have been negatively affected by our different levels of outness.	3.94	1.40	.34
7. I have stayed in an unhappy relationship because I believed that nobody better existed in my lesbian community.	4.46	1.40	.29

Note. *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation; ITC = Corrected Item-Total Correlation
* = Items that were deleted during the first item elimination (N = 16 items)

Table 4 (continued)

*Study 3: 44 item SLRSE
Item Distributions (N = 274)*

SLRSE Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>ITC</i>
8. When my past relationships experience difficulty, I "threw in the towel" too easily.	5.19	1.06	.25
9. My religious beliefs have negatively affected my past romantic relationships with women.	5.19	1.11	.31*
10. My relationships have experienced significant distress due to our inability to communicate.	3.95	1.26	.37
11. I have cheated on a girlfriend/partner with a mutual friend.	5.09	1.37	.14
12. I have lost friendships because a girlfriend/partner and I separated ourselves from our friends.	4.18	1.34	.27
13. Different levels of sexual desire have created conflicts in my relationships.	3.19	1.12	.22
14. I would change very little about my past relationship experiences with women.	3.68	1.41	.32
15. Most of my lesbian friends are in closeted relationships.	5.16	.96	.29*
16. I see positive examples of same-sex relationships in the media (e.g., television, movies).	3.68	1.19	.22*

Note. *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation; *ITC* = Corrected Item-Total Correlation
* = Items that were deleted during the first item elimination (N = 16 items)

Table 4 (continued)

Study 3: 44 item SLRSE
Item Distributions (N = 274)

SLRSE Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	ITC
17. I have at least one relative who is in a same-sex relationship that I admire.	2.00	1.50	.02*
18. I do not have any same-sex relationship role models that I admire.	4.74	1.16	.18*
19. Growing up, I knew happy couples in same-sex relationships.	1.92	1.42	.06*
20. I have gay or lesbian friends who have created families with their partner.	4.54	1.54	.19*
21. Many of the relationships I admire are heterosexual relationships	3.87	1.35	.07*
22. Growing up, I knew couples in positive heterosexual relationships.	4.92	1.15	.07*
23. When my relationships experience difficulty, a family member provides support to help sustain the relationship.	3.22	1.58	.33
24. Currently, or in the past, a girlfriend/partner's parents have been a significant source of support for the relationship.	3.48	1.69	.21*

Note. *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation; ITC = Corrected Item-Total Correlation
 * = Items that were deleted during the first item elimination (N = 16 items)

Table 4 (continued)

*Study 3: 44 item SLRSE**Item Distributions (N = 274)*

SLRSE Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	ITC
25. My work/school offers same-sex partner benefits.	3.73	2.03	.17
26. At least one of my parents shows subtle signs of disapproval toward my relationships.	4.21	1.36	.33
27. At least one of my parents has given gifts or cards to a significant other.	4.84	1.72	.37
28. Many of my work colleagues do not know that I date/partner with women.	4.92	1.32	.28
29. During phone conversations, family members ask how a girlfriend/partner is doing.	4.71	1.54	.44
30. My relationships have been affected by acts of discrimination and/or prejudice.	4.00	1.30	.21
31. My friends welcome my significant other into their homes.	5.67	.73	.43*
32. When a girlfriend/partner goes with me to visit my family, they prepare separate beds for us.	4.97	1.19	.30

Note. *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation; ITC = Corrected Item-Total Correlation

* = Items that were deleted during the first item elimination (N = 16 items)

Table 4 (continued)

Study 3: 44 item SLRSE
Item Distributions (N = 274)

SLRSE Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>ITC</i>
33. When my relationships experience difficulty, a friend provides support to help sustain the relationship.	4.69	1.30	.17
34. My heterosexual friends refer to my significant others as "friends" or "roommates."	5.05	1.15	.41
35. My relationships are nurtured by my friends.	4.91	1.11	.30
36. I feel good about being a lesbian.	5.20	.98	.50
37. I feel nervous when introducing a significant other as 'my girlfriend/partner to new people.	4.13	1.30	.54
38. I feel anxious when people "detect" that a girlfriend/partner and I are in a relationship.	4.82	1.21	.55
39. I do not worry about my colleagues' reactions when I bring a significant other to work/school functions.	4.06	1.66	.45

Note. *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation; *ITC* = Corrected Item-Total Correlation
 * = Items that were deleted during the first item elimination (N = 16 items)

Table 4 (continued)

*Study 3: 44 item SLRSE
Item Distributions (N = 274)*

SLRSE Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>ITC</i>
40. I feel comfortable going out to eat for a romantic dinner with a girlfriend/partner.	5.27	1.01	.39*
41. I sometimes feel guilty about my attraction toward women.	5.30	1.05	.41*
42. I feel highly anxious showing a girlfriend/partner affection in public.	4.23	1.27	.42
43. I feel hopeful when I see same-sex couples who have been together for a long time.	5.53	.72	.19*
44. Should I desire to do so, I would feel comfortable having a commitment ceremony and/or wedding.	5.12	1.14	.38

Note. *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation; *ITC* = Corrected Item-Total Correlation

* = Items that were deleted during the first item elimination (N = 16 items)

Table 5

Study 3: Intercorrelations between 17-item SLRSE Subscales (N = 274)

SLRSE Subscale	1	2	3	4
1. PP	-	.15**	.03 <i>ns</i>	.19**
2. FamVP		-	.19**	.31**
3. FVP			-	.16**
4. EA				-

Note. PP = Past Performance; FamVP = Family Verbal Persuasion; FVP = Friend Verbal Persuasion; EA= Emotional Arousal.

* $p < .01$ (2 tailed)

** $p = .001$ (2 tailed)

Table 6

Study 3: Final SLRSE Factor Structure (N = 274)
Principle Axis Functioning, Oblimin Rotation, Forced 4-Factor Model, Suppress < .4

SLRSE Item	Factor			
	EA	PP	FamVP	FVP
1. Despite my desire to do so, I have difficulty maintaining long-term relationships with women.	-	.59	-	-
2. My relationships have been negatively affected by us moving in together too soon.	-	.47	-	-
3. I have stayed in an unhappy relationship because I believed that nobody better existed in my lesbian community.	-	.58	-	-
4. When my past relationships experienced difficulty, I "threw in the towel" too easily.	-	.48	-	-
5. My relationships have experienced significant distress due to our inability to communicate.	-	.54	-	-
6. I would change very little about my past relationship experiences with women.	-	.42	-	-
7. When my relationships experience difficulty, a family member provides support to help sustain the relationship.	-	-	.48	-
8. At least one of my parents has given gifts or cards to a significant other.	-	-	.82	-
9. During phone conversations, family members ask how a girlfriend/partner is doing.	-	-	.86	-
10. When my relationships experience difficulty, a friend provides support to help sustain the relationship.	-	-	-	.75

11. My relationships are nurtured by my friends.	-	-	-	.68
12. Many of my work colleagues do not know that I date/partner with women.	.46	-	-	-
13. I feel good about being a lesbian.	.50	-	-	-
14. I feel nervous when introducing a significant other as 'my girlfriend/partner' to new people.	.74	-	-	-
15. I feel anxious when people "detect" that a girlfriend/partner and I are in a relationship.	.76	-	-	-
16. I do not worry about my colleagues' reactions when I bring a significant other to work/school functions.	.68	-	-	-
17. I feel highly anxious showing a girlfriend/partner affection in public.	.53	-	-	-

Note. PP= Past Performance; FamVP = Family Verbal Persuasion; FVP = Friend Verbal Persuasion; EA= Emotional Arousal.

** $p < .01$ (2 tailed)

Table 7

Study 4: Participant Demographic Information (N = 466)

Characteristics	n	%
Age		
18-25	66	14.2
26-35	177	37.9
36- 45	102	21.9
46-55	75	16.1
56+	45	9.7
Missing	1	< 1
Sexual Orientation		
4	51	10.9
5	58	12.5
6	142	30.5
7	215	46.1
Ethnicity		
Caucasian/Euro-American	395	84.8
African or African-American	10	2.1
Asian or Asian- American/Pacific Islander	14	3.0
Native-American/American Indian	5	1.1
Latina/Chicano or Latina/Chicano-American	22	4.7
Biracial or multiracial	13	2.8
Non US-National	2	< 1
Other	5	1.1

Table 7 (continued)

Study 4: Participant Demographic Information (N = 466)

Characteristics	n	%
Relationship Status		
Separated	7	1.5
Single	93	20.0
Dating (non-monogamous)	36	7.7
Dating (monogamous)	107	23.0
Engaged to be married/partnered	16	3.4
Partnered (no ceremony)	110	23.6
Married (legal)	20	4.3
Partnered (with ceremony)	54	11.6
Widowed	3	< 1
Other	20	4.3

Table 8

Study 4: SLRSE Subscale Internal Consistency (N = 461)

SLRSE Subscale	1	2	3	4	
1. SLRSE	-				
2. SLRSE: PP	.49**	-			
3. SLRSE:FamVP	.73**	.15*	-		
4. SLRSE: FVP	.62**	.13*	.16**	-	
5. SLRSE:EA	.65**	.14*	.33**	.23**	-

Note. PP= Past Performance; FamVP = Family Verbal Persuasion; FVP = Friend Verbal Persuasion; EA= Emotional Arousal. Cases listwise deletion.

* $p < .01$ (2 tailed)

** $p < .001$ (2 tailed)

Table 9

Study 4: Bivariate Scale Correlations (N= 461)

	SLRSE	SLRSE	PP	FamVP	FVP	EA
1. SSA		-.39**	-.28**	-.28**	-.24**	-.16*
2. LIHS-SF		-.65**	-.21**	-.38**	-.36**	-.66**
3. OI		.58**	.09ns	.47**	.26**	-.59**
4. MS		-.47**	-.17*	-.40**	-.18**	-.42**
5. AVOID		-.39**	-.44**	-.11*	-.30**	.16**
6. AMB		-.34**	-.42**	-.21**	-.18**	-.60
7. KMSS		.30**	.49**	.12*	.14*	-.08ns
8. RSE		.39**	.57**	.16**	.16*	-.15*
9. LOT-R		.20**	.27**	.12**	.17*	-.04ns

Note. PP= Past Performance; FamVP = Family Verbal Persuasion; FVP = Friend Verbal Persuasion; EA= Emotional Arousal; SLRSE = Sources of Lesbian Relationship Self-Efficacy; SSA = Social Support Appraisal Scale; LIHS-SF = Lesbian Internalized Homophobia Scale-Short Form; OI= Outness Inventory; MS = Marginalization Scale; AAQ AVOID = Adult Attachment Questionnaire, Avoidance Subscale; AAQ AMB = Adult Attachment Questionnaire, Ambivalence Subscale; KMSS = Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale; RSE = Relationship Self-Efficacy; LOT-R = Life Orientation Test-Revised

* $p < .01$ (1 tailed)

** $p \leq .001$ (1 tailed)

Table 10

Study 4: Partial Correlations Controlling for Age (N = 281)

	SLRSE	SLRSE	PP	FamVP	FVP	EA
1. SSA		-.40***	-.29**	-.29**	-.24**	-.16**
2. LIHS-SF		-.64***	-.19**	-.38**	-.35**	-.66**
3. OI		.58***	.08ns	.47**	.26**	-.58**
4. MS		-.47***	-.17**	-.39**	-.17**	-.42**
5. AVOID		-.38***	-.44**	-.10*	-.29**	.16**
6. AMB		-.33***	-.41**	-.20**	-.17**	-.05 ns
7. KMSS		.32***	.50**	.12*	.14**	-.09ns
8. RSE		.36***	.51**	.16*	.15**	-.15**
9. LOT-R		.20***	.25**	.10*	.15**	-.02ns

Note. PP= Past Performance; FamVP = Family Verbal Persuasion; FVP = Friend Verbal Persuasion; EA= Emotional Arousal; SLRSE = Sources of Lesbian Relationship Self-Efficacy; SSA = Social Support Appraisal Scale; LIHS-SF = Lesbian Internalized Homophobia Scale-Short Form; OI= Outness Inventory; MS = Marginalization Scale; AVOID = Adult Attachment Questionnaire, Avoidance Subscale; AMB = Adult Attachment Questionnaire, Ambivalence Subscale; KMSS = Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale; RSE = Relationship Self-Efficacy; LOT-R = Life Orientation Test-Revised.

* $p < .05$ (1 tailed)

** $p < .01$ (1 tailed)

*** $p \leq .001$ (1 tailed)

Table 11

Study 4: Means and Standard Deviations

Scale	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. SLRSE	4.34	.72
2. SLRSE: PP	4.38	.88
3. SLRSE: FamVP	4.14	1.43
4. SLRSE: FVP	4.23	1.21
5. SLRSE:EA	4.64	1.00
6. SSA	38.16	10.90
7. LIHS-SF	2.09	.75
8. OI	5.49	1.32
9. MS	13.58	6.08
10. AVOID	26.33	8.80
11. AMB	30.00	10.79
12. KMSS	17.68	3.74
13. RSE	261.00	39.18
14. LOT-R	23.31	5.61

Note. PP= Past Performance; FamVP = Family Verbal Persuasion; FVP = Friend Verbal Persuasion; EA= Emotional Arousal; SLRSE = Sources of Lesbian Relationship Self-Efficacy; SSA = Social Support Appraisal Scale; LIHS-SF = Lesbian Internalized Homophobia Scale-Short Form; OI= Outness Inventory; MS = Marginalization Scale; AVOID = Adult Attachment Questionnaire, Avoidance Subscale; AMB = Adult Attachment Questionnaire, Ambivalence Subscale; KMSS = Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale; RSE = Relationship Self-Efficacy; LOT-R = Life Orientation Test-Revised

Table 12

Study 4: Correlations of Validation Measures (N= 281)

SLRSE	SSA	LIHS-SF	OI	MS	AVOID	AMB	KMSS	RSE	LOT-R
10. SSA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
11. LIHS-SF	.29**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
12. OI	-.24**	-.58**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
13. MS	.28**	-.40**	-.48**	-	-	-	-	-	-
14. AVOID	.42**	.23**	-.12**	.15**	-	-	-	-	-
15. AMB	.42**	.28**	-.18**	.29**	.24**	-	-	-	-
16. KMSS	-.24**	-.18**	.14**	-.32**	.18*	-.44**	-	-	-
17. RSE	-.42**	-.29**	.17**	-.30**	-.32**	-.50**	.57**	-	-
18. LOT-R	-.47**	-.27**	.14*	-.18*	-.33**	-.43	.25**	.35**	-

Note. PP= Past Performance; FamVP = Family Verbal Persuasion; FVP = Friend Verbal Persuasion; EA= Emotional Arousal; SLRSE = Sources of Lesbian Relationship Self-Efficacy; SSA = Social Support Appraisal Scale; LIHS-SF = Lesbian Internalized Homophobia Scale-Short Form; OI= Outness Inventory; MS = Marginalization Scale; AVOID = Adult Attachment Questionnaire, Avoidance Subscale; AMB = Adult Attachment Questionnaire, Ambivalence Subscale; KMSS = Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale; RSE = Relationship Self-Efficacy; LOT-R = Life Orientation Test-Revised

* $p < .01$ (1 tailed)

** $p < .001$ (1 tailed)

Figure 1

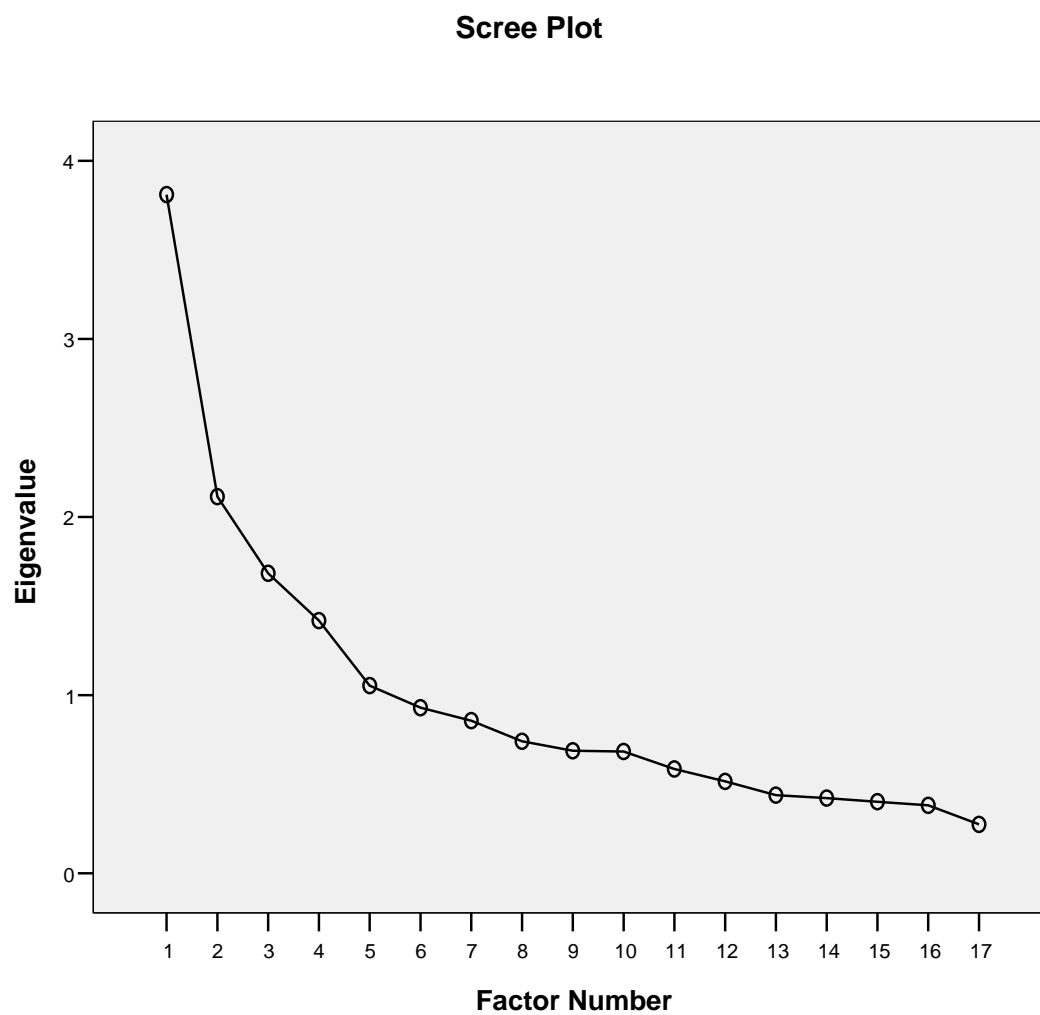


Figure 1: Study 3 Scree Plot for 17- Item SLRSE Scale

Figure 2.

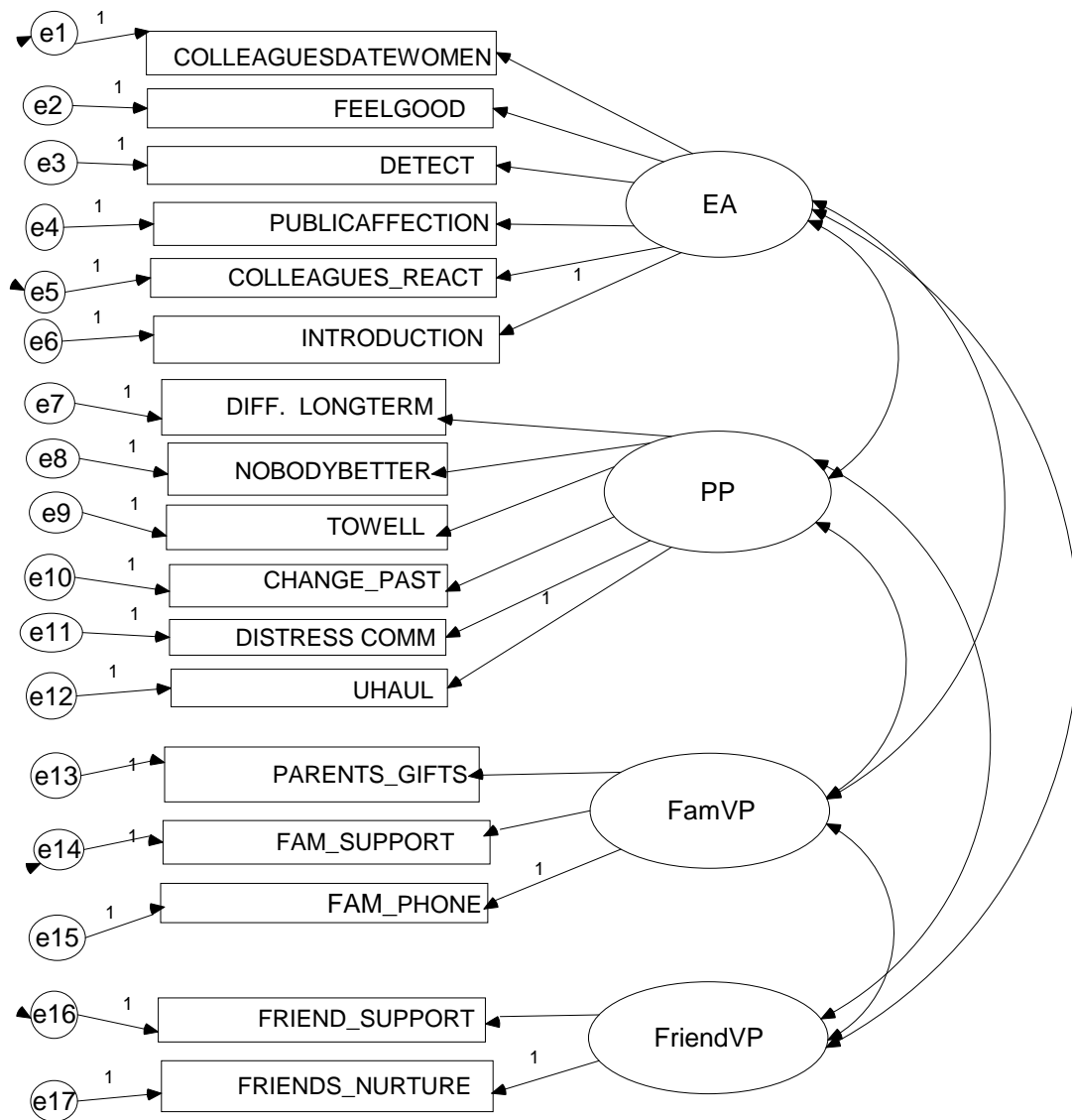


Figure 2. CFA without Respecifications

Figure 3.

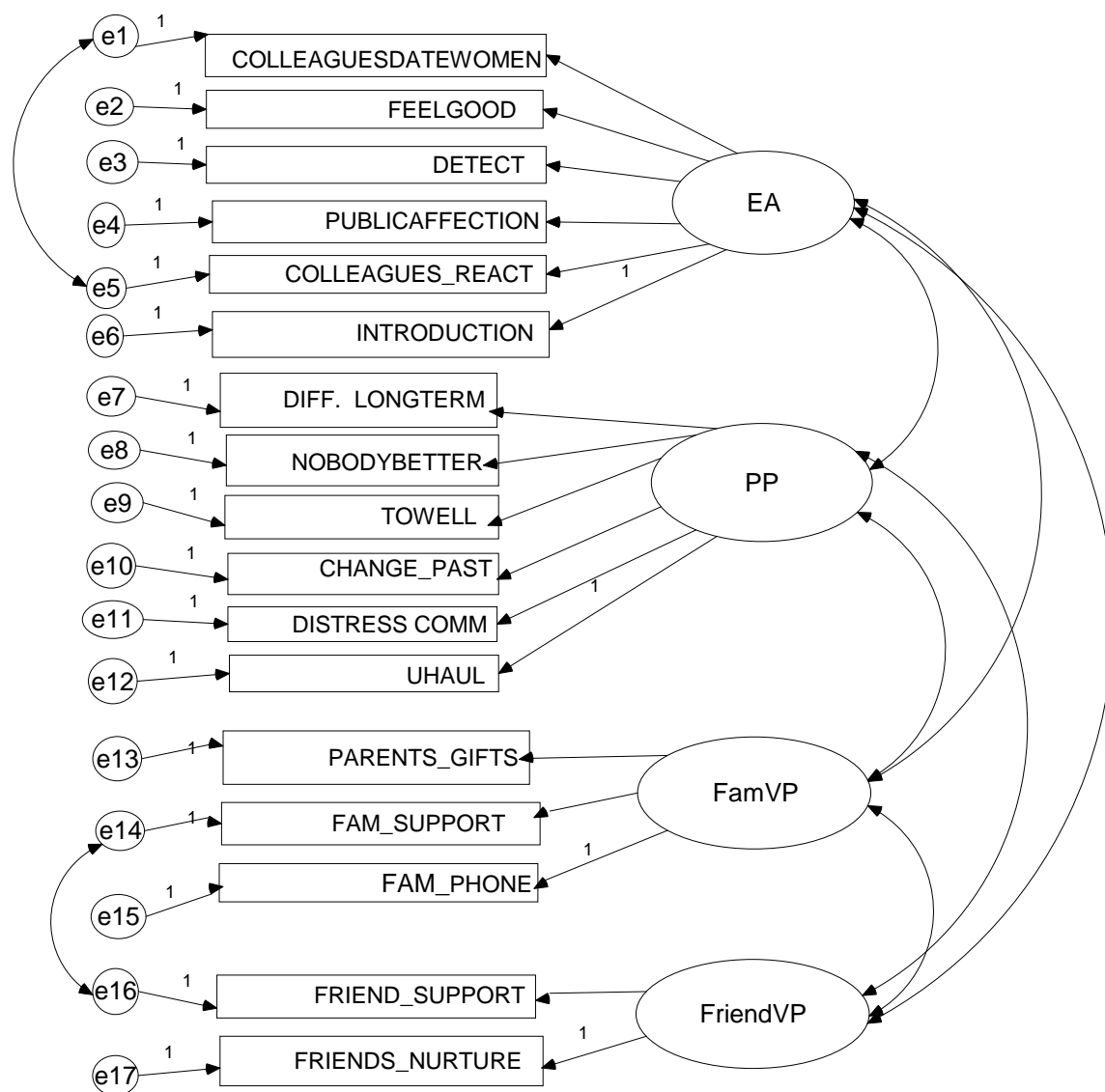


Figure 3. CFA with Respecifications

CHAPTER FOUR

General Discussion

This chapter reviews the key findings, implications, and limitations, as well as offer recommendations for future research based on the current findings. First, an outline of each study with a brief description of the overall results is provided. Next, a discussion of the limitations of the four studies is discussed. Third, the key findings of this research are reviewed and are explained within the context of the literature. Finally, a discussion of the implications for theory, research, and clinical practice is provided. Please note that a review of the results and a discussion is also provided for each study in their respective sections. The current chapter aims to highlight key issues as they pertain to the overall development of the Sources of Lesbian Relationship Self-Efficacy Scale (SLRSE).

Review of Studies 1-4

This dissertation consisted of four studies that had two primary purposes including (1) development of a scale that measures lesbians' sources of relationship self-efficacy and, (2) exploration of the factor structure and the psychometric properties of the SLRSE.

In Study 1, an initial item pool of 62 SLRSE items was generated via focus group research, a review of the literature, and professional consultation. Focus group participants discussed their experiences and observations of lesbian relationships and, more specifically, the extent to which Bandura's (1986; 1997) four sources of self-efficacy (i.e., past performance, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, emotional arousal) influenced their relationships. That is, participants were asked open-ended

questions which allowed them to speak freely about their experiences and observations of the four constructs (i.e., past performance, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, emotional arousal) thought to contribute to relationship self-efficacy beliefs. The first self-efficacy source is personal performance accomplishments (i.e., past successful experiences performing the actual task). The second source is vicarious experience (i.e., observing and/or listening to the successful experiences of another similar person). The third source is verbal persuasion (i.e., peers, family, or friends offering advice, support, and encouragement). The final source is emotional arousal (i.e., the physiological or emotional cues that are associated with the idea of the future act).

The focus groups were utilized to explore whether Bandura's (1986; 1997) sources of self-efficacy were relevant and/or influential in women's same-sex relationships. First, focus groups were utilized to identify potential items that contribute to relationship self-efficacy beliefs for lesbians. Although participants differed in how these sources affected their relationships, it appeared that these women's relationships were indeed affected by at least one, if not all, of the four sources. A second way these focus groups informed the development of the SLRSE items was the frequency and enthusiasm with which certain topics/issues arose. For instance, when key topics appeared in all three focus groups (e.g., familial support), and endorsed by multiple participants in each group, then they were identified as being a self-efficacy source that is possibly relevant to a greater number of lesbians. A third way that the focus groups informed the development of SLRSE items was through the use of examples provided by participants. DeVellis (2003) explains that using "everyday language" can be a crucial aspect for sentence structure because it is more likely to generate more useful "tools" in

measuring participants' perceptions. Many women, for instance, noted the importance of parents giving gifts and cards to their partners as evidence of relationship approval. This information led directly to a verbal persuasion item regarding a tacit demonstration of acceptance by family members. Moreover, the language utilized by the participants was also analyzed and used to inform SLRSE items (e.g., "While in relationships, my parents give gifts and/or cards to my partner").

Next, the available research literature and professional consultations aided in the initial construction of the SLRSE items. First, the lesbian and gay research literature was explored to assess whether the constructs identified in Bandura's (1986; 1997) self-efficacy theory appeared to affect same-sex couples and, if so, in what specific ways (as outlined in Chapter Two). Based upon this conclusion, the research literature was utilized to guide the development of SLRSE items (examples provided in Chapters Three and Four). Additionally, informal professional consultations with colleagues also occurred during this stage of item development. For instance, while in theoretical discussions of Bandura's (1986; 1997) self-efficacy theory with members of a research team, colleagues provided feedback regarding unique obstacles that they perceived to be influential to their relationship self-efficacy sources. Additionally, in an effort to identify experiences that lesbians from different cohorts may experience, I consulted on two occasions with therapists who work with lesbians and same-sex couples (examples provided in Chapters Three and Four).

Based upon the results of Study 1, the SLRSE was a 62-item scale that was grouped into four categories considered to parallel each of Bandura's four self-efficacy

sources: past performance (23 items), vicarious experience (10 items), verbal persuasion (17 items), and emotional arousal (12 items).

In Study 2 the content validity of the SLRSE was assessed by two separate groups of independent judges (self-efficacy experts and lesbian relationships experts) who rated each SLRSE item based on its clarity and relevance. Self-efficacy judges were also asked to perform back translation for each SLRSE item. Back translation (see Dawis, 1987; Smith & Kendall, 1963) suggest that judges who demonstrate competence in a specific area (e.g., self-efficacy) may assign the scale items back to the hypothesized categories (e.g., past performance, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, emotional arousal). Because the SLRSE scale items were developed to measure Bandura's (1986; 1997) four sources of self-efficacy, back translation with self-efficacy experts provides a viable measure of the SLRSE's content domain. As a result of Study 2, several items were improved based on the judges' qualitative feedback; a total of 19 SLRSE items were eliminated; and one item was added. The analyses of Study 2 resulted in a SLRSE scale that consisted of 44 items and included 14 past performance (PP) items, seven vicarious experience (VE) items, 14 verbal persuasion (VP) items, and nine emotional arousal (EA) items.

Study 3 aimed to continue item reduction, to explore the SLRSE's factor structure, and to investigate the scale's internal consistency. For the initial item reduction, the SLRSE items were evaluated based upon their (a) item distribution, (b) intercorrelations among items, (c) whether participants tended to omit certain items, (d) redundancy (i.e., items measuring the same construct, and/or (e) how an item contributed to the conceptual meaningfulness of the subscale. A total of 16 items were eliminated in

this initial process, resulting in a 28-item SLRSE scale. Unfortunately, the removal of these items eliminated measurement of vicarious experiences. Attempts were made to retain these items and the vicarious experiences (VE) subscales, however, these endeavors were unsuccessful.

An exploratory factor analysis (Principal Axis Functioning with oblimin factor rotation) was conducted with the remaining 28 items (factor loadings less than .3 were suppressed). Based on eigenvalues and the scree plot, a one, four, and eight factor model was investigated to assess the conceptual meaningfulness of each structure. Undoubtedly, the most conceptually meaningful structure was the four-factor model. In an attempt to improve the SLRSE scale, items with loadings less than .4 were suppressed. This resulted in a 17-item, four-factor SLRSE scale. An interesting finding of Study 3 was that the verbal persuasion items split and loaded on two separate factors. It was clear that one factor assessed verbal persuasion provided by friends and the other measured verbal persuasion provided by family. Results of Study 3 also suggested adequate-to-good internal consistencies for the full scale (.76) and the four subscales (.67- .78). Three of the four subscales were significantly correlated and ranged from .15 - .31; however, a surprising finding of Study 3 was that the past performance subscale did not significantly correlate with friend verbal persuasion ($r = .03, p = .30$). Interestingly, as reviewed below, the subscales did all evidence significant correlations in Study 4.

In Study 4, I aimed to confirm the factor structure of the SLRSE and provide initial validity evidence. First, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to determine whether the SLRSE's factor structure parallels Bandura's (1986; 1997) self-efficacy sources and the factor structure identified in Study 3. Results of CFA suggested that the

four-factor model was the best fit for the data, even when compared to an independence model. Information provided by the standardized residual covariances and the modification indexes recommended a parameter change due to slight multicollinearity. Respecifications of the parameter were performed because the co-loadings made conceptual and theoretical sense. The original hypothesized model approached significance in its fit to the data; however, the model fit was significantly improved with the respecifications.

The construct, criterion, divergent, and known-groups validity was also assessed in Study 4. First, the SLRSE's construct validity was assessed by exploring the relationship of the SLRSE subscales with theoretically relevant constructs supported in the research literature. These scales included the Social Support Appraisal Scale (SSA; Vaux, Phillips, Holly, Thompson, Williams, & Stewart, 1986), Lesbian Internalized Homophobia Scale- Short Form (LIHS-SF; Szyanski & Chung, 2001), Outness Inventory (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000), and the Adult Attachment Questionnaire scale (AAQ; Simpson, Rholes, & Phillips, 1996). A more exhaustive review of these findings can be found in Study 4's Discussion Section.

Criterion-related validity was explored by examining the amount of variance that the four SLRSE subscales accounted for in participants' relationship satisfaction (as measured by the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale; KMSS; Schumm et al, 1986), and relationship self-efficacy (as measured by the RSE; Morua & Lopez, 2005). Results suggest that the SLRSE subscales accounted for unique variance in participants' relationship self-efficacy ($R^2 = .34; p < .01$) and satisfaction ($R^2 = .23; p < .01$).

Known-groups validity was assessed in two separate analyses. First, participants who were in committed relationships were grouped together and compared to participants who were not in committed relationships (see Study 4 for description). The second analysis used to establish known-groups validity was a comparison of SLRSE scores between women based upon their reported sexual orientation. Consistent with the hypotheses, the SLRSE evidenced known-groups validity in that it was able to differentiate members who are in committed relationships from participants who are not in committed relationships. Moreover, the SLRSE was able to differentiate women based upon their reported sexual orientation score (i.e., bisexual vs. lesbian).

Divergent validity was assessed by exploring the relationship between the SLRSE with a measure of optimism (LOT-R; Scheier & Carver, 1985), which is a construct relatively close to and often confused with self-efficacy. Results of a correlational analysis suggested that divergent validity of the SLRSE was not supported due to the unexpected correlations between the SLRSE and the LOT-R.

In sum, the results of these four studies provide preliminary support for the reliability, validity, and factor structure of the SLRSE. The final version of the SLRSE is a 17-item scale (17 items; $\alpha = .70$) that includes four factors: past performance experiences (6 items; $\alpha = .65$), family verbal persuasion (3 items; $\alpha = .78$), friend verbal persuasion (2 items; $\alpha = .70$), and emotional arousal (6 items; $\alpha = .79$). Currently, the appropriate use of the SLRSE is to utilize the total scale score. Although the SLRSE was developed in such a manner that the subscales can be utilized independently, additional modifications to and research of these subscales is suggested before the independent use of the subscales is recommended. Future research may include: (1) developing the

vicarious experiences (VE) subscale, (2) increasing the number of items in the family verbal persuasion (FamVP) and friend verbal persuasion (FVP) subscales, and (3) better exploring divergent validity for each subscale. A more thorough discussion of these recommendations was provided in Study 4's Discussion as well as below in the Future Research section.

Limitations

As with all research, this study has several limitations that will be highlighted. As with previous sections of this chapter, limitations that are specific to each study were also addressed in their respective discussion section. In this section, I review the broad limitations that were present in most of the studies and those that significantly affected the scale's generalizability.

First, although the sample size for each phase of the study was adequate-to-good, the population was not a random sample of lesbians. It is clear that the sample for the current studies tended to be Caucasian, educated, partnered in a romantic relationship, and in Study 4 participants tended to prefer long-term monogamous relationships. Because the demographic information did not drastically differ between Study 3 and Study 4, it is safe to say that the generalizability of these results from all four studies is limited. For instance, the current study focused on women whose sexual orientation ranged from 4 to 7 (on a 1-7 scale), therefore, these findings most likely do not apply to those women who identify as 1 to 3 (on the 1-7 scale). Religious affiliation was also not assessed in any study, and might have been helpful to explore its correlations with the SLRSE subscales (particularly emotional arousal subscale and/or verbal persuasion).

Ultimately, the extent to which these findings generalize to individuals who are less educated, non-Caucasian, and/or single is currently unknown.

A second potential limitation is the historical confound that surrounded the data collection of these studies. Study 1 took place in spring 2006 and Study 4 took place in spring 2009. Levitt and colleagues (2009) highlight the fact that over 26 states have altered their state constitutions to define marriage as between a man and a woman. In 2006 alone, there were eight states that passed constitutional amendments that prevented same-sex marriages and these efforts have been fervently pursued at the federal level as well (e.g., The Defense of Marriage Act, 1996). Most recently, California's ruling in support of Proposition 8 was announced, thereby stripping same-sex couples of their short-lived right to marry in that state. These historical events most likely influence the findings of most sexual minority research conducted during this interesting climate as it captures the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender experiences during a politically and socially volatile period. These turbulent times may have affected the current study in a few ways. For instance, Levitt et al.'s (2009) findings suggest that many participants perceive the government's oppressive actions as catalysts for their feelings of being misunderstood, misrepresented, and being more isolated due to fear of discrimination and prejudice. This increased emotional and psychological distress of being a minority, and being seen as "less than," is a poignant experience which often requires greater support from sources such as friends, family, and possibly religious organizations (Levitt et al., 2009). It is reasonable to expect that participants' reports of internalized homophobia, marginalization, and social support may have been affected by these historical events. Moreover, in Study 4, several participants noted their relationship status as "other" and

described how the recent Proposition 8 amendment in California has left their previously legalized marriage in limbo. Due to the fact that only a few participants provided such qualitative information, I did not explore how their responses on the surveys compared to participants who were not affected. Suffice it to say that the political, social, and legal changes occurring throughout the course of this study's data collection may have significantly affected the results in a number of ways and should be interpreted within this context.

A third consideration, and possible limitation, was the use of the internet to collect data. The current dissertation research consisted of four studies and three were conducted online. This type of data collection has many benefits (Whitely, 2002), but it is also known to affect the representation of the participant sample. Nevertheless, due to the lesbian and gay community's experience of being a hidden minority, many argue that internet research is a useful tool to address the barriers that would inherently exist, thereby producing a more representative sample (e.g., Elderidge & Gilbert, 1990; Jordan & Deluty, 2000; Smith & Ingram, 2004). Current research investigating this limitation suggests that, in many ways, since the advancement of technology and its wide-spread use, web-based research is similar to traditional methods and may be more helpful with minority individuals (Gosling, Vazire & Srivastava, 2004). Therefore, the extent to which web-based research is a limitation is still unknown.

Main Findings

I now review four key finding regarding the primary purposes of this scale development study. Due to the numerous analyses conducted throughout the four separate studies, a finding was considered key if it significantly affected the psychometric

properties or factor structure of the SLRSE. The first main finding was that the SLRSE demonstrates a stable four-factor structure that is reliable and valid. The second key finding was that the SLRSE consists of four factors that appear to measure four unique constructs. Additionally, these four factors parallel three of Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy. The third main finding was that the verbal persuasion subscale separated and loaded on two factors measuring support provided by family and support provided by friends. The fourth noteworthy finding was that the vicarious experiences subscale was eliminated.

In regard to the first key finding, which is also the most significant finding, the current research suggests that the SLRSE evidences sufficient internal consistency, factor structure stability, and various forms of validity (e.g., construct, criterion, and known-groups validity). Furthermore, results from the factor analysis and correlational analysis suggest that the SLRSE is consistent with three of four sources of self-efficacy (i.e., past performance, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal; Bandura; 1986).

Another key finding is that the SLRSE appears to measure four unique sources that appear to be measuring uniquely different constructs. Subscale correlations were trivial to medium (r 's = .14- .33). Spector (1992) notes that an individual's attitudes (or, sources of self-efficacy for example) can contain many components and sufficiently measuring these complex constructs may require multiple subscales. DeVellis (2003) also describes this as having "families" of related [sub] scales in order to create a multidimensional assessment of a broader latent variable. It appears that the SLRSE measures three of Bandura's (1986; 1997) four self-efficacy sources including past performance, verbal persuasion (family and friends), and emotional arousal.

A third key finding of this dissertation research regards the splitting of the verbal persuasion items onto two different factors. It was clear that these two factors measure the distinctly different types of support provided by family and friends. The split in the verbal persuasion subscale, although not predicted, is very consistent with the research literature on social support. For example, when compared to their heterosexual counterparts, same-sex couples are less likely to report family members as significant sources of emotional support (Balsam, Beauchaine, Rothblum, & Solomon, 2008; Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Kurdek, 1987, 2004, 2005; 2006; Murphy, 1989; Rostosky et al., 2004). These difference may manifest in scale development as many of the validated measures of support (used with heterosexual and LGBT individuals) also have two separate subscales to assess familial and friendship support (e.g., Procidano & Heller, 1983; Vaux, Phillips, Holly, Thompson, Williams, & Stewart, 1986). As described in Chapter Three, a possible explanation for this factor split may be that participants were less likely to focus on friendships because they can choose their friends and seek out individuals/communities that will offer approval and support. Ultimately, friendship networks may be so fundamental to their romantic relationships that they presuppose their impact. On the other hand, the degree to which family and society offer support is largely out of one's control. The shared experience of powerlessness that occurs when individuals cannot change how family and society approve of their relationships may be a more emotionally charged subject, and one that lesbians may be more eager to discuss.

A fourth key finding of this dissertation research regards the removal of the items intending to assess vicarious experiences on relationship self-efficacy. Due to the vicarious experience items' distribution and non-significant factor loadings, each of these

items was eliminated. There are several possible reasons for these results. Although qualitative research has begun to examine LGBT role models for individuals (e.g., Grossman & D'Augelli, 2004), no known quantitative research to date has examined *relationship* role models for the lesbian and gay community. Even an analysis of a more developed literature (i.e., heterosexual relationships; Amato, 1996; Amato & DeBoer, 2001; Booth, Amato, Johnson, & Edwards, 1998; McLanahan & Bumpass, 1988) indicated a lack of empirical investigation of relationship role models. It may be that identifying relationship role models is a complex process and the use of a quantitative scale with Likert-type responses is too simplistic. That is, the complexity of this source may be the reason why no known quantitative research exists that explores role models (either in heterosexual or same-sex relationships). Specific to same-sex relationships is the issue of visibility. As previously discussed, the lesbian and gay community is a hidden minority who continue to experience discrimination and prejudice at alarming rates (Herek, Gillis & Cogan, 1999). Due to these factors, same-sex couples may be (a) less visible to others as role models because they may not be easily recognizable as a couple (i.e., hidden minority status) and (b) may refrain from making themselves visible due to fear of prejudice and discrimination. There are several other plausible reasons for this subscale's elimination and these are described in greater detail in Study 3's Discussion section.

Implications for Theory, Research, and Clinical Practice

The results of this dissertation study have theoretical, research, and clinical implications. The following section discusses potential ways that the current study

clarifies or extends the current understanding of self-efficacy theory, same-sex relationship research, and potentially, clinical practice.

Theory Implications. One of the primary goals was to develop a scale which measures the four sources thought to contribute to relationship self-efficacy. Past research has linked relationship self-efficacy beliefs with relationship satisfaction and commitment for heterosexual participants (Lopez & Lent, 1991; Morua & Lopez, 2005), yet little was known about how/whether relationship self-efficacy beliefs develop in lesbians or how/whether they contribute to their romantic relationships. Further, no known research explored how/whether the *sources* actually contribute to an efficacious belief system in romantic relationships (for either heterosexual or same-sex couples). The current dissertation study extends the previous self-efficacy literature by the development of a psychometrically sound scale that measures the relationship self-efficacy sources for lesbians. Moreover, the current research bridges a gap of knowledge regarding the utility of the sources in relationship self-efficacy. That is to say, results of a multiple regression provided evidence that the SLRSE's four sources accounted for significant variance in participants' relationship self-efficacy (as measured by the RSE; Morua & Lopez, 2005) and relationship satisfaction (as measured by the KMS; Schumm et al., 1986).

Although the SLRSE subscales contributed unique variance to relationship self-efficacy, it clearly did not account for all of the possible variance. This finding presents three interesting theoretical implications for Bandura's (1986) self-efficacy theory. First, it is reasonable to expect that due to the abovementioned limitations, the SLRSE may not be as robust a scale of relationship sources as possible, and further refinement of the scale

may improve its utility. Second, the SLRSE was developed to explore the sources that uniquely affect lesbian relationships, and one might assume that there are also general relationship self-efficacy sources that apply to all types of couples (i.e., heterosexual and same-sex). That is, a scale measuring all of the general relationship self-efficacy sources may contribute more variance to relationship self-efficacy than the SLRSE alone.

Nevertheless, a third interesting implication is that these results also raise the question of whether there are additional self-efficacy sources which may contribute to self-efficacy beliefs. Other studies that explored Bandura's self-efficacy sources also found that the four sources did not contribute all the variance to self-efficacy beliefs or sometimes not all the sources contribute unique variance (Anderson & Mavis, 1996). For instance, Anderson and Mavis (1997) explored the sources of coming out self-efficacy and found that past performance did not contribute significant variance to coming out self-efficacy. Further, their study also suggested that the three other sources only contributed to 31% of the coming out self-efficacy. This research suggests that the sources do not always perform identically across tasks and/or there may be additional sources that contribute to an individual's self-efficacy. Ultimately, further exploration of Bandura's (1986; 1997) four sources and how these sources contribute to self-efficacy beliefs is warranted. The findings of the current study, nevertheless, are fairly consistent with the current line of existing research.

Research Implications and Future Research. The findings of this study also have implications for same-sex relationship research. An obvious research contribution is that it adds to same-sex relationship research by creating and validating a measure based on the experiences of lesbians and their unique experiences in romantic relationships.

Further, it utilizes a conceptual model provided by Bandura's (1986; 1997) self-efficacy theory to explore four constructs (i.e., sources) that have been supported in the lesbian and gay literature to be associated with relationship satisfaction. The current study broadens the understanding of lesbian's experiences in romantic relationships to include four constructs (i.e., the four subscales) that had not been previously investigated in concert. In an effort to contribute to the burgeoning line of self-efficacy research, the proceeding offers recommendations for future research.

The first recommendation is to continue to refine the SLRSE scale. There are three primary suggestions for the improvement of the SLRSE scale. First, due to the elimination of the vicarious experience subscale it is suggested that future research explore the issue of relationship role models within the lesbian and gay community. It may be important to first perform a qualitative research study that focuses specifically on role models: the presence of models, who they are, and what makes them such. Although this was a feature of the focus groups conducted in Study 1, a more comprehensive study is warranted. In a related manner, a second recommendation is to more exhaustively explore the age cohort effects on lesbians' sources of relationship self-efficacy. This may first contribute to a better understanding of the elimination of the VE subscale, but it may also reveal how the changes in the political, legal, and social landscapes over the past forty years have shaped the experiences of lesbian relationships. That is, due to these monumental advances, lesbians in older cohorts may gather relationship self-efficacy sources in uniquely different ways (or from different places/people) when compared to lesbians in younger cohorts. The third recommendation addresses the length of the verbal persuasion subscales (friend verbal persuasion and family verbal persuasion). These

subscales contain two and three items respectively, and despite the fact that they both evidence sufficient internal consistency and factor loadings, this is not an ideal number for a subscale (DeVellis, 2003). Increasing the number of verbal persuasion items may improve the overall psychometric properties of the SLRSE as well as the two subscales.

A second recommendation for future research is to continue testing the validity of the SLRSE. For example, the divergent validity of the SLRSE was not sufficiently supported in the current study due to the SLRSE and the LOT-R's (Scheier & Carver, 1992) unexpectedly high correlations. The optimism scale, which was chosen because of its strong correlation to relationship satisfaction, distinctly differs from Bandura's (1997) construct of self-efficacy. That is, optimism was seen to be important to relationships (Scheier & Carver, 1992), but not necessarily related to self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). For this reason, it was deemed a good measure to test divergent validity. Based on the results of the current study, however, an optimism measure appears not be an appropriate construct to explore the divergent validity of the SLRSE. It may be that optimism is not distinguished enough from the sources of self-efficacy (as opposed to just self-efficacy). That is, when each of the four sources is explored separately, it seems that optimism is related to most of these constructs. For instance, optimism has been shown to be correlated with longer lasting friendships (Geers, Reilley, & Dember, 1998), reduced likelihood of relationship dissolution (Helgeson, 1994; Holmes, 1997), and even social support (Sarason, Sarason, & Shearin, 1986). Given this information, it is clear that optimism was not an ideal measure to explore the divergent validity of the SLRSE. A measure of self-esteem or possibly neuroticism may have been a better choice. Bandura (1997) repeatedly states that evaluation of one's self-worth is a completely different

phenomenon than one's personal efficacy. Therefore, it is first recommended to explore additional measures to assess the divergent validity of the SLRSE.

A third general recommendation is to begin exploring Bandura's (1986) theory with other sexual minority populations. Due to some shared oppressive experiences, members from the gay male, bisexual, and transgender community may also be affected by the four sources measured in the SLRSE. Adapting the SLRSE and exploring its utility with other sexual minority individuals may also prove beneficial.

Clinical Implications. An obvious clinical implication of the current findings is that lesbians may benefit from learning how to increase their self-efficacy via focusing on bolstering the sources. This might be a particularly helpful issue for therapists to address in psychotherapy. For example, a common stereotype of gay and lesbian individuals is that they are incapable of intimate relationships and are destined to die alone (Carter, 1996; Peplau, 1993). According to Cohen and Stein (1986), such stereotypes about relationships can be internalized and lead to the belief that same-sex relationships are unattainable or prohibited for the gay and lesbian community. In this example, one might benefit from exploring these beliefs and emotional experience in psychotherapy. That is, learning how to raise one's relationship self-efficacy beliefs, via bolstering of the sources, may potentially supersede societal stigma and stereotypes and give an individual hope for the future. Individuals who believe in her/his ability to accomplish a goal are more likely to be able to accomplish that goal (see Bandura 1986; 1997), then lesbians who have higher self-efficacy in their ability to be in satisfying relationships should be more able to do so. Therefore, one implication for lesbians (and others in same-sex relationships) may

be that if they focused on increasing their sources, they may have greater relationship self-efficacy, and potentially greater relationship satisfaction.

Summary

In conclusion, the results of this study provide initial support for the psychometric properties and factor structure of the SLRSE. Additionally, analyses indicate that the sources of relationship self-efficacy (as measured by the SLRSE) appear to be a useful heuristic in exploring lesbian romantic relationships. Finally, initial evidence also suggests that this scale might hold empirical, theoretical and/or clinical practice implications. In sum, the goals of this dissertation study were met.

Appendix A

Study 1: Recruitment Notice/Email

My name is Shanti Pepper and I am a doctoral student at Penn State University. Currently, I am conducting research on lesbian relationships and factors that influence them. Although research with the lesbian community is growing, there is still much unknown. It is through the support of people like you that information about lesbian women and their relationships will be further explored and improved. To better explore these relationships, I am conducting focus groups that would consist of a 4-9 lesbian women discussing issues that are specific to lesbian relationships. The focus group will last 1-2 hours and light refreshments will be provided. You do not have to be in a relationship to participate, all are welcome! If you are 18 years of age or older, self-identify as lesbian, and are interested in participating, contact Shanti Pepper at Penn State University at szp122@psu.edu or 765-760-2358. Also, if you know of any other lesbian women who are 18 years of age or older, identify as lesbian, and who would also like to participate, please forward this email to them.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at anytime and you do not have to answer any question you do not wish. No personal identifying information is required and therefore you will not be linked to any publications or presentations from this study. Furthermore, if you speak about the contents of the focus group outside the group, it is expected that you will not reveal to other people what individual participants said.

This study was reviewed and approved by the Social Science Institutional Review Board at the Pennsylvania State University (#21282, phone 814-865-1775). This study is voluntary for research purposes. If you have any questions or comments, you can contact me, Shanti Pepper at Penn State University (see contact information above), or my advisor, Dr. Kathy Bieschke at kbiescke@psu.edu (814-865-3296). Please do not hit “reply” because that may reply to a list-serve.

Appendix B
Study 1: Demographic Information

1. What is your age? _____

2. Please check your highest level of completed education

High School Diploma/ GED

Some College

Bachelor's

Master's

Post-master's
or professional degree

3. Please specify your race/ ethnicity _____

4. What is your current relationship status? _____

5. Please specify the length of your current relationship in months and years (e.g., 2 years and 5 months). _____

6. Sexual Orientation.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Exclusively Heterosexual			Bisexual			Exclusively Homosexual

Appendix C
Study 1: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. Who have been positive relationship role models for you?
2. How have past relationships influenced current relationships... For example, when you look back on past relationships how has it affected your beliefs/confidence to be in current relationships (or relationships in the future).
3. In past relationships, what are some of the aspects that you thought were your own strengths and what were areas you knew you needed to improve upon?
4. Sometimes same-sex couples have a lot of support for their relationships and sometimes they have very little support. In what specific ways have your relationships been supported or not supported (in your family, work, LGB community, religious community, and even friends).
5. In same-sex relationships there are good and difficult feelings. I'm hoping we can explore these feelings, when you noticed these feelings, and the situations where they occurred. For example, some same-sex couples feel nervous while holding hands in public.

Appendix D

Study 1: Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH
IRB #21282

ORP USE ONLY: IRB# 21282
The Pennsylvania State University
Office for Research Protections
Approval Date:
Expiration Date:
Social Science Institutional Review
Board

Title of Project: Focus Group: Lesbian Relationships

Principle Investigator: Shanti M. Pepper, Graduate Student
 327 CEDAR Building
 University Park, PA 16802
 765-760-2358, email: szp122@psu.edu

Advisor: Dr. Kathleen Bieschke
 327 CEDAR Building
 University Park, PA 16802
 814-865-3296, email: kbieschke@psu.edu

Other Investigator: Kelly Blasko

Purpose of the study: The purpose of this project is to explore factors that affect lesbian relationships. More specifically, the purpose is to discuss specific issues lesbian women deal with in romantic relationships.

Procedure to be followed: For this project, you will be asked to attend one focus group that will have 4-9 other lesbian women. The focus groups are audio recorded and will last 1-2 hours. The focus group will consist of sitting in a small circle with other participants and discussing issues that are important in lesbian relationships. You are invited to respond to any or all of the questions, and are welcome to discuss any question at length. Nevertheless, you do not have to answer any question that you do not want. You may be contacted by one of the investigators after the focus group for clarification of a response given during the group. If you agree to be contacted, please indicate your consent by placing a check mark in the box below. If you do not agree, simply leave the box empty. Additionally, if you consent to having the focus groups audio taped, please indicate your consent by placing a check mark in the box below.

Discomforts or risk: There are minimal foreseeable risks and ill effects from participating in this study. Some of the experiences are personal and may cause slight discomfort.

Benefits: You may learn more about yourself and/ or your beliefs about relationships. Furthermore, this research may benefit society in that more information about lesbian relationships and factors that affect these relationships may be better understood.

Duration: It will take you approximately 1-2 hours to participate in the focus group.

Statement of Confidentiality: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at anytime and for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the investigator. No personal identifying information is required and therefore you will not be linked to any publications or presentations from this study. Furthermore, if you speak about the contents of the focus group outside the group, it is expected that you will not reveal to other people what individual participants said.

Right to ask questions: You can ask questions about this research. Contact Shanti M. Pepper at szp122@psu.edu or (765) 760- 2358 with questions. If you have any questions about your rights as research participants, please contact The Pennsylvania State University's Office for Research Protections at (814) 865- 1775.

Voluntary Participation: Your decision to participate is voluntary and you may stop at any time. You do not have to respond to any questions that you do not wish. You must be 18-years of age or older and self-identify as a lesbian to participate. If you agree to take part in the study and the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

Please check this box if it is ok for the investigators to contact you after the focus group for clarification purposes. Also provide the contact information (i.e., email, phone number) you wish the investigators to use in contacting you.

Please check this box if you consent to the audiotaping of the focus group. The audiotapes will be utilized to ensure that the most accurate information from the focus group is obtained. These tapes will be stored in a locked file cabinet and will be destroyed by August 1, 2007.

Participant's signature

Date

Primary Investigator's signature

Date

Appendix E

Study 1: Final Version of Sources of Lesbian Relationship Self-Efficacy Scale (SLRSE)

Instructions: A number of behaviors and emotions are described below that you may encounter in a romantic relationship. On the items below please, please rate your level of agreement/disagreement to each statement. The term *significant other, partner, and girlfriend* are used interchangeably as well as *romantic relationships* and *intimate relationships* in the current survey.

Some questions ask about your current relationships, but if you are not currently in a relationship, rate your level of agreement/disagreement to each statement based on your overall experiences in past relationships.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree

Emotional Arousal

1. I am scared that I will be single and lonely as I grow older
2. I feel comfortable in almost all social situations with my girlfriend/partner
3. I feel excited when I think about being in a life-long partnership
4. I feel anxious when people “detect” or “suspect” that my girlfriend and I are partners when I am trying to “pass” as heterosexual.
5. I feel comfortable bringing my partner to work functions
6. I feel comfortable going out to eat at a romantic restaurant with my partner
7. My religious faith sometimes makes me feel guilty/ashamed of being attracted to women
8. I frequently worry about how my parents feel if they knew I am in a relationship with a woman
9. I worry what might happen to my children if other people knew they had two mommies (if you don’t have children, think about how you might feel)
10. I would feel comfortable having my immediate family members (i.e., mother, father, siblings) at a commitment ceremony or wedding between myself and my partner
11. I feel good about being a lesbian
12. I feel comfortable introducing my partner to new people
13. I feel anxious when my partner and I check-in together at hotels and/or bed and breakfasts.
14. I feel safe living openly (i.e., “out”) with my partner in my town/city.
15. I feel anxious and/or fearful when I think about having a commitment ceremony (or wedding) with a woman

16. I feel hopeful when I see older same-sex couples who have been together for a long time

Verbal Persuasion

1. My parents have pictures of me and my partner around the house.
2. Most of my female friends are in relationships with women
3. Most of my female friends are in closeted relationships with women
4. My partner's parents have pictures of us around their house
5. My work offers same-sex partner benefits
6. My parents give gifts and/or cards to my partner
7. The majority of my work colleagues do not know about relationship
8. My friends make negative comments or jokes about lesbian and gay relationships
9. My friends welcome my significant other into their homes
10. My parents (implicitly or explicit) want me to marry a man
11. Society is supportive of my romantic relationships with women
12. My family is ashamed of my relationship with my partner (or past partner)
13. My parents offer good advice to me about my relationships when they experience difficulty
14. My partner is not welcome in my parent's home (or they would not be welcome if my parents knew about our relationship).
15. My parents' friends know that I date women (or are partnered with a women)
16. My siblings are supportive of my romantic relationships
17. The state government offers equal opportunities and benefits for my partnerships
18. The federal government offers equal opportunities and benefits for my partnerships
19. My family shows subtle signs of disapproval toward my relationships
20. If we visit my family, they prepare separate beds for me and my partner
21. Although my parents know we are a couple, they refer to my significant other as my "friend" or "roommate"
22. During phone conversations, my family asks how my girlfriend/partner is doing.

Vicarious Experience

1. My favorite manager/boss/professor is lesbian or gay
2. Many of the people I admire are in same-sex relationships
3. The majority of my work colleagues are heterosexual
4. My parent(s) is (are) in a same-sex relationship
5. Most of my friends are gay or lesbian
6. I know few people in long-term same-sex relationships (i.e., over 5 years)
7. I see positive examples of gay male relationships on television that I would like to mirror my relationships after
8. I see positive examples of lesbian relationships on television that I would like to mirror my relationships after
9. I have gay or lesbian friends who have created families with their partner
10. I do not have any same-sex relationships that I admire
11. I see positive/affirming images of same-sex relationships in television and movies

12. I see and read positive/affirming character/images of lesbian and gay relationships in novels and magazines
13. I had a lot of positive same-sex relationships present while growing up
14. Most of the same-sex relationships that I know of are relationships depicted on television (or are celebrities' relationships)

Past Performance

1. I typically date women who are “no good for me”
2. In past relationships, I have been able to have productive conversations with my partners about being “out” at work
3. In past relationships, I have not been able to have productive conversations with my partners about being “out” to my family.
4. I had trouble being in relationships with women because of the negative influence/pressures from my family
5. I have been able to co-exist and/or be friendly with my partner’s ex-girlfriends (who had become her friends)
6. I have not been able to maintain long-term relationships with women
7. Strong religious beliefs have negatively affected my past romantic relationships with women.
8. I dated less women when compared to most of my friends
9. I have been able to have productive conversations with my partners about whether or not we want to have a family.
10. Because the lesbian community felt small, I have stayed in unhappy relationships because I worried that nobody “better” existed.
11. When my past relationships experienced difficulty, I work at it until it gets better
12. I sometimes worry that my partner will cheat on me with a female friend.
13. I sometimes worry that I will cheat on my partner with a female friend.
14. I would change nothing about my past relationship experiences with women
15. I reflect upon my past relationships with negative feelings
16. My past relationships have been negatively affected by discrimination or prejudice
17. I have been able to navigate the different levels of “outness” that my partner and I have had in our lives.

Appendix F
Study 2: Recruitment Notice:
Lesbian Relationship Experts (Study 2, Group 1)

Dear _____:

Greetings! My name is Shanti Pepper and I am a doctoral student working with Kathy Bieschke at The Pennsylvania State University. I am currently conducting research that explores lesbian relationships and factors that influence them. To better explore women's relationships, I am developing a scale that intends to measure lesbian women's relationship self-efficacy beliefs.

As a part of the **preliminary** phase of scale development, I am looking for 10 junior or senior scholars and/or clinicians (i.e., academicians, graduate students, or therapists) to provide feedback on the initial items of the Sources of Lesbian Relationship Self-Efficacy scale (SLRSE). **I am looking for professionals who are knowledgeable about lesbian relationships to review my scale and rate each item based on various dimensions.** You **do not** need to have professional knowledge about self-efficacy beliefs.

You must successfully fulfill at least one of the following criteria:

1. **Published** at least one manuscript in a professional journal exploring any aspect of lesbian women's relationships.
2. **Presented** a poster and/or paper at a professional conference exploring any aspect of lesbian women's relationships.
3. **Licensed psychologist** (or licensed professional counselor) who has provided counseling to at least 3 lesbian women or 3 lesbian couples (any combination of individual/couples counseling is sufficient).
4. **Wrote a thesis or dissertation** that explored any aspect of lesbian relationships.

I am confident that this will take no longer than 20-25 minutes to rate each item. If you are willing to serve as a judge, please click on the link below and you will be transferred to a web-based survey.

Also, if you know other individuals who fit the criteria above, I would genuinely appreciate if you forwarded this email to them!

<https://www.psychdata.com/s.asp?SID=123901>

Your feedback is confidential. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me (szp122@psu.edu) or Kathy Bieschke at (kbieschke@psu.edu).

Shanti M. Pepper, M.A.
 The Pennsylvania State University
 Counseling Psychology

Appendix G
Study 2: Recruitment Notice:
Self-Efficacy Experts (Study 2, Group 2)

Dear _____:

Greetings! My name is Shanti Pepper and I am a doctoral student working with Kathy Bieschke at The Pennsylvania State University. I am currently conducting research that explores self-efficacy beliefs in lesbian relationships. **Specifically, I am developing a scale that intends to measure the four sources thought to contribute to lesbian women's relationship self-efficacy beliefs.**

As a part of the **preliminary** phase of scale development, I am looking for 10 junior or senior scholars (i.e., academicians, graduate students) to provide feedback on the initial items of the Sources of Lesbian Relationship Self-Efficacy scale (SLRSE). **I am looking for professionals, who are knowledgeable about Bandura's (1986) theory of self-efficacy, to review my scale and rate each item based on various dimensions.** You **do not** need to have professional knowledge about same-sex relationships.

You must successfully fulfill at least one of the following criteria:

5. **Published** at least one manuscript in a professional journal exploring Bandura's (1986) theory of self-efficacy.
6. **Presented** a poster and/or paper at a professional conference about Bandura's (1986) theory of self-efficacy.
7. **Wrote a thesis or dissertation** that explored Bandura's (1986) theory of self-efficacy.

I am confident that this will take no longer than 25-30 minutes to rate each item. If you are willing to serve as a judge, please click on the link below and you will be transferred to a web-based survey.

Also, if you know other individuals who fit the criteria above, I would genuinely appreciate if you forwarded this email to them!

<https://www.psychdata.com/s.asp?SID=123977>

Your feedback is confidential. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me (szp122@psu.edu) or Kathy Bieschke at (kbieschke@psu.edu).

Shanti M. Pepper, M.A.
 The Pennsylvania State University
 Counseling Psychology

Appendix H
Study 2: Packet for Lesbian Relationship Experts (Group 1)

GENERAL INFORMATION:

The following is an initial item pool of the **Sources of Lesbian Relationship Self-Efficacy Scale (SLRSE)**. Among other goals, this scale intends to measure lesbian women's various experiences in romantic relationships.

In this questionnaire, you are asked to provide basic demographic information as well as feedback on the clarity and relevance of the SLRSE items. At the end of this questionnaire you are given additional space for general feedback, questions, and any concerns you may have.

Please keep in mind that you are not responding to the actual survey, but instead assessing the items based on the questions posed. Your responses will be used to further refine the items of the scale, so your feedback is highly valued!

Directions on psych data

Please read each statement carefully and indicate the extent to which the item is relevant to the events, behaviors, and/or emotions that lesbian women may encounter/experience while in a romantic relationship. Next, rate each item based on the clarity of the question being asked. That is, rate each item based on how clear (or understandable) the question is.

CLARITY

Please read the below statements carefully and rate each item based on the clarity of the question being asked. That is, rate each item based on how clear (or understandable) the question is.

1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Very Unclear</i>	<i>Unclear</i>	<i>Somewhat Unclear</i>	<i>Somewhat Clear</i>	<i>Clear</i>	<i>Very Clear</i>

****EACH ITEM WAS PRESENTED BELOW****

Appendix H (cont)
Study 2: Packet for Lesbian Relationship Experts (Group 1)

RELEVANCE

We recognize that each individual and romantic relationship is unique and often evolve over time. However, in this process, lesbian women may have many shared experiences. Please read each statement carefully and indicate, in the space to the left of the item, the extent to which the item is relevant to the events, behaviors, and/or emotions that a lesbian woman may encounter/experience.

Please use the following scale to make your responses.

1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Very Irrelevant</i>	<i>Irrelevant</i>	<i>Somewhat Irrelevant</i>	<i>Somewhat Relevant</i>	<i>Relevant</i>	<i>Very Relevant</i>

EACH ITEM WAS PRESENTED BELOW

GENERAL FEEDBACK

Please make suggestions for any additional items or content areas.

Were there any events, behaviors, emotions that you felt that the scale did not assess?

Thank you very much for your time!

Appendix I
Study 2: Packet for Self-Efficacy Experts (Group 2)

GENERAL INFORMATION:

Purpose of the Sources of Lesbian Relationship Self-Efficacy Scale (SLRSE): The following is an initial item pool of the SLRSE scale items. This scale is based on Bandura's (1986; 1997) self-efficacy theory and intends to measure the four sources thought to contribute to one's self-efficacy beliefs (i.e., past performance, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, emotional arousal). This scale DOES NOT intent to measure one's self-efficacy beliefs, but instead it aims to measure the four sources thought to contribute to self-efficacy. For the purposes of the scale, Bandura's (1986; 1997) definitions are provided below.

Self-Efficacy: People's belief that they possess the capabilities to achieve a specific goal. One's belief in her/his own ability to accomplish as task. According to Bandura (1986; 1997) there are four sources from which self-efficacy may grow.

1. **Past Performance:** Also known as *Enactive Mastery Experiences* and includes information obtained about one's ability to accomplish a goal through her/his previous experiences. Successes typically raise self-efficacy beliefs and failures typically lower one's efficacy.
2. **Vicarious Experience:** Observing or witnessing others successfully perform a similar goal.
3. **Verbal Persuasion:** Social support and/or encouragement provided from important others.
4. **Physiological/Emotional Arousal:** This may include physical and/or physiological information (e.g., fatigue, aches, pains, pounding heart, sweating) or emotional states (e.g., anxiety, joy, depression) experienced during a task (or thought of approaching task).

Please keep in mind that you are not responding to the actual survey, but instead assessing the items based on the questions posed. The results of this study will be used to further refine the items of the scale, so your feedback is highly valued!

BACK TRANSLATION

Please read each statement carefully and indicate which of Bandura's four sources you believe the item represents. That is, after you read an item, specify in the space provided to the left of the item, whether the item belongs in the Past Performance (#1), Vicarious Experience (#2), Verbal Persuasions (#3), or Physiological/Emotional Arousal (#4) category.

****EACH ITEM WAS PRESENTED BELOW****

Appendix I (cont)

RELEVANCE

Please read each statement carefully and indicate, in the space to the left of the item, the extent to which it is relevant to construct of Bandura's **four sources** of self-efficacy. DO NOT assign each item to a specific source, but instead, rate the degree of relevance that each item has to the theory of self-efficacy.

1. **Past Performance:** Also known as *Enactive Mastery Experiences* and includes information obtained about one's ability to accomplish a goal through her/his previous experiences. Successes typically raise self-efficacy beliefs, whereas failures lower one's efficacy.
2. **Vicarious Experience:** Observing or witnessing others in similar situations/goal.
3. **Verbal Persuasion:** Social support and/or encouragement provided from significant others. Expression or appraisal beliefs about one's ability to accomplish a goal.
4. **Physiological/Emotional Arousal:** This may include physical and/or physiological information (e.g., fatigue, aches, pains, pounding heart, sweating) or emotional states (e.g., anxiety, joy, depression) experienced during a task (or thought of task).

Please use the following scale to make your responses.

1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Very Irrelevant</i>	<i>Irrelevant</i>	<i>Somewhat Irrelevant</i>	<i>Somewhat Relevant</i>	<i>Relevant</i>	<i>Very Relevant</i>

****EACH ITEM WAS PRESENTED BELOW****

Appendix I (cont)

CLARITY

Please read each statement carefully and rate each item based on the clarity of the question being asked. That is, rate each item based on how clear (or understandable) the question is.

1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Very Unclear</i>	<i>Unclear</i>	<i>Somewhat Unclear</i>	<i>Somewhat Clear</i>	<i>Clear</i>	<i>Very Clear</i>

****EACH ITEM WAS PRESENTED BELOW****

GENERAL FEEDBACK

Please make suggestions for any addition items or content areas.

Thank you very much for your time!

Appendix J

Study 2: Final Version of the 44-item The Sources of Lesbian Relationship Self-Efficacy Scale (SLRSE)

Sources of Lesbian Relationship Self-Efficacy Scale (SLRSE):

Instructions: Please rate your level of agreement/disagreement to each statement by choosing the number that best represents your answer. The term *significant other*, *partner*, and *girlfriend* are used interchangeably in the current survey.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. When my relationships experience difficulty, a family member provides support to help sustain the relationship.
2. Most of my lesbian friends are in closeted relationships.
3. Many of the relationships I admire are heterosexual relationships.
4. I feel good about being a lesbian.
5. During phone conversations, family members ask how a partner/girlfriend is doing.
6. I feel hopeful when I see same-sex couples who have been together for a long time.
7. I feel anxious when people "detect" that a girlfriend/partner and I are in a relationship.
8. My friends welcome my significant other into their homes.
9. My relationships have been affected by acts of discrimination and/or prejudice.
10. At least one of my parents has given gifts or cards to a partner/girlfriend.
11. My relationships have been negatively affected by us moving in together too soon.
12. Growing up, I knew happy couples in same-sex relationships.
13. I do not have any same-sex relationship role models that I admire.
14. I frequently pursue relationships with women who are not suitable dating options (e.g., heterosexual women, friends, women in relationships, etc).
15. At least one of my parents shows subtle signs of disapproval toward my relationships.
16. I have at least one relative who is in a same-sex relationship that I admire.
17. I am able to be friendly with a significant other's friends, even though they are her ex-girlfriends.
18. My relationships have been negatively affected by our different levels of outness.

19. Should I desire to do so, I would feel comfortable having a commitment ceremony and/or wedding.
20. I see positive examples of same-sex relationships in the media (e.g., television, movies).
21. Currently, or in the past, a girlfriend/partner's parents have been a significant source of support for the relationship.
22. I do not worry about my colleagues' reactions when I bring a significant other to work/school functions.
23. Different levels of sexual desire have created conflicts in my relationships.
24. I have stayed in an unhappy relationship because I believed that nobody better existed in my lesbian community.
25. I feel nervous when introducing a significant other as 'my girlfriend/partner' to new people.
26. Growing up, I knew couples in positive heterosexual relationships.
27. My work/school offers same-sex partner benefits.
28. I sometimes feel guilty about my attraction toward women.
29. I have had frequently fights with significant other(s) about whether or not to create and/or raise children.
30. I have gay or lesbian friends who have created families with their partner.
31. I have cheated on a partner/girlfriend with a mutual friend.
32. When my relationships experience difficulty, I "throw in the towel" too easily.
33. Many of my work colleagues do not know that I date/partner with women.
34. When my relationships experience difficulty, a friend provides support to help sustain the relationship.
35. I feel comfortable going out to eat for a romantic dinner with a partner/girlfriend.
36. My religious beliefs have negatively affected my romantic relationships with women.
37. My relationships are nurtured by my friends.
38. Despite my desire to do so, I have difficulty maintaining long-term relationships with women.
39. My relationships have experienced significant distress due to our inability to communicate.
40. I would change very little about my past relationship experiences with women.
41. I have lost friendships because a girlfriend/partner and I separated ourselves from our friends.
42. I feel highly anxious showing a partner/girlfriend affection in public.
43. When a girlfriend/partner goes with me to visit my family, they prepare separate beds for us.
44. My heterosexual friends refer to my significant others as "friends" or "roommates."

Appendix K

Study 3: Participant Recruitment

Greetings! My name is Shanti Pepper and I am a doctoral student working with Dr. Kathy Bieschke at The Pennsylvania State University. I am currently conducting research that explores lesbian relationships and factors that influence them. To better understand lesbian relationships, I am conducting a series of studies that explore women's beliefs, emotions, and experiences in relationships. Currently, I am looking for lesbian women to respond to my study, and I need your help.

To participate, you must meet all of the following criteria:

1. **You must be 18-years-old or older.**
2. **Self-identify as lesbian.**
3. **Have been in at least one same-sex relationship with a woman (you DO NOT need to currently be in a relationship).**

If you agree to participate, you will respond to three questionnaires that will take 15-20 minutes to complete. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at anytime. No personal identifying information is required and therefore you will not be linked to any publications or presentations from this study.

If you are interested in participating then click on the link below:

<https://www.psychdata.com/s.asp?SID=124685>

Also, if you personally know other individuals who fit the criteria above, I would genuinely appreciate if you forwarded this email to them!

This study is voluntary for research purposes. If you have any questions or comments, you can contact me, Shanti Pepper at The Pennsylvania State University (contact information below) or my advisor, Dr. Kathy Bieschke at kbieschke@psu.edu (814-865-3296). Please do not hit "reply" because that may reply to a list-serve.

Shanti Pepper, M.A.
325 CEDAR Building
The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, PA. 16802
Email: szp122@psu.edu

Appendix L Study 3: Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH
IRB #28165

Title of Project: **Exploring Lesbian Women's Experiences in Romantic Relationships**

Principle Investigator: Shanti M. Pepper, M.A.
Graduate Student, Counseling Psychology
327 CEDAR Building
University Park, PA 16802
765-760-2358, email: szp122@psu.edu

Advisor: Dr. Kathleen Bieschke
327 CEDAR Building
University Park, PA 16802
814-865-3296, email: kbieschke@psu.edu

Other Investigator: Alyssa Spicher

Purpose of the study: The purpose of this project is to explore factors that affect lesbian relationships. Specifically, the objective is to investigate lesbian women's beliefs, emotions, and events experienced in romantic relationships.

Procedure to be followed: For this study, you are asked to respond to 3 on-line questionnaires. You will be asked to answer questions about your experiences as a lesbian woman as well as your current or past experiences, beliefs, and/or feelings in intimate relationships. You can choose not to answer certain questions.

Benefits: You may learn more about yourself and/ or your beliefs about relationships. Furthermore, this research may benefit society in that more information about lesbian relationships and factors that affect these relationships may be better understood.

Duration: It will take you approximately 15-20 minutes to participate in this study.

Statement of Confidentiality: Your participation in this research is confidential. The survey does not ask for any information that would identify who the responses belong to. In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared because your name is in no way linked to your

responses. Your confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology used. No guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by any third parties.

Right to ask questions: You can ask questions about this research. If you have any questions about the results of this study or your rights as research participants, you may contact Shanti Pepper at szp122@psu.edu or 765-760- 2358 with questions.

Voluntary Participation: Your decision to participate is voluntary and you may stop at any time.

To participate, you must be 18-years of age or older, self-identify as a lesbian, and have been in at least one romantic relationship with a woman. You do not need to currently be in a relationship to participate. Completion and submission of the survey implies your consent to participate in this research.

**** PLEASE PRINT THIS CONSENT FORM FOR YOUR RECORDS****

If you have read and understand the above statements, please click on the "Continue" button below to indicate your consent to participate in this study."

[CONTINUE BUTTON HERE]

Appendix M
Study 3: Debriefing Form

Debriefing form

For this study, all participants were asked to complete a number of brief questionnaires concerning their personal experiences in relationships. Specifically, the goal was to validate a scale that explores lesbian women's experiences in relationships and investigate whether specific factors affect these relationships.

If you are interested in the results of this study, you may contact Shanti Pepper at the completion of this study (December 2008). Please note that only global results, not individual results, will be disclosed. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me (see information below). In addition, there is a list of on-line support resources in the event that you experienced any discomfort as a result of completing these surveys. You may print this form for your future reference or for your personal records. Thank you for your participation!

Shanti Pepper
szp122@psu.edu

Online Support

1. Gay Resource Linx: http://members.tripod.com/Mwoody_/linx.html
2. !Out Proud!: <http://www.outproud.org/>
3. Queer Resources Directory: <http://www.qrd.org/qrd>

Appendix N
Study 3: Demographic Form

1. What is your age? _____
2. How do you identify your gender identity?
 - a. Female
 - b. Transgender
 - c. Transsexual Mtf (male-to-female)
3. Please indicate the number that best describes how you identify your sexual orientation from the scale below: _____

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Exclusively Heterosexual			Bisexual			Exclusively Homosexual

4. Please specify your race/ ethnicity
 - a. Caucasian or Euro American
 - b. African or African American
 - c. Asian or Asian American/ Pacific Islander
 - d. Native American/American Indian
 - e. Latina/Chicano or Latina/Chicano American
 - f. Biracial or multiracial:
 - g. Non US-National
5. Please check your highest level of completed education
 - a. Some high school education
 - b. High School Diploma/ GED
 - c. Associates Degree
 - d. Some college
 - e. Bachelor's
 - f. Master's
 - g. Post-master's or Professional degree
6. What is your yearly income (just you, not your household)?
 - a. Under 15,000
 - b. 15,000-25,000
 - c. 25,001-50,000
 - d. 50,001-75,000
 - e. 75,001-100,000
 - f. Over 100,000
7. What would best describe your home area? (Definitions obtained from U.S. Consensus)
 - a. Nonmetropolitan- less than 50,000

- b. Metropolitan- city/town with population of 50,000 – 1 million
 - c. Consolidated Metropolitan- area with more than 1 million people.
8. What is your current relationship status?
- a. Single (**if single, skip to question 11**)
 - b. Dating (non-exclusive/non-monogamous)
 - c. Dating (exclusive/monogamous)
 - d. Partnered
 - e. Committed Partnership (e.g., civil union or wedding/commitment ceremony)
9. Please specify the length of your current relationship in months and years (e.g., 3 months, or 2 years and 5 months). _____
10. Do you and your partner live together? ___ yes ___ no
11. How many female girlfriends/partners have you lived with (include current relationship) _____?
12. Do you currently have children? ___ no (**skip to question 14**) ___ yes.
13. If yes, identify the best choice that describes how your children were conceived:
- a. From my previous heterosexual marriage
 - b. From my partner's previous heterosexual marriage
 - c. Adoption
 - d. In vitro-fertilization
 - e. Surrogate mother
 - f. Other _____
14. Have you ever been in a heterosexual marriage? ___ yes ___ no
15. Are you a member of any LGBTQA organizations (local or national)?
 ___ yes ___ no
16. How did you hear about this study?
- a. Email from list-serv
 - b. From a friend
 - c. From my partner
 - d. other

Appendix O
Study 3: Outness Inventory (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000)

Use the following rating scale to indicate how open you are about your sexual orientation to the people listed below. Try to respond to all of the items, but leave items blank if they do not apply to you.

- 1 = person definitely does NOT know about your sexual orientation status
 2 = person might know about your sexual orientation status, but it is NEVER talked about
 3 = person probably knows about your sexual orientation status, but it is NEVER talked about
 4 = person probably knows about your sexual orientation status, but it is RARELY talked about
 5 = person definitely knows about your sexual orientation status, but it is RARELY talked about
 6 = person definitely knows about your sexual orientation status, and it is SOMETIMES talked about
 7 = person definitely knows about your sexual orientation status, and it is OPENLY talked about
 0 = not applicable to your situation; there is no such person or group of people in your life

1. mother	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
2. father	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
3. siblings (sisters, brothers)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
4. extended family/relatives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
5. my <u>new</u> straight friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
6. my work peers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
7. my work supervisor(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
8. members of my religious community (e.g., church, temple)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
9. leaders of my religious community (e.g., church, temple)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
10. strangers, new acquaintances	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
11. my <u>old</u> heterosexual friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0

Appendix P
Study 3: 17-item
Sources of Lesbian Relationship Self-Efficacy Scale (SLRSE):

Instructions: Please rate your level of agreement/disagreement to each statement by choosing the number that best represents your answer. The term *significant other*, *partner*, and *girlfriend* are used interchangeably in the current survey.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. Despite my desire to do so, I have difficulty maintaining long-term relationships with women.
2. My relationships have been negatively affected by us moving in together too soon.
3. I have stayed in an unhappy relationship because I believed that nobody better existed in my lesbian community.
4. When my past relationships experienced difficulty, I "threw in the towel" too easily.
5. My relationships have experienced significant distress due to our inability to communicate.
6. I would change very little about my past relationship experiences with women.
7. When my relationships experience difficulty, a family member provides support to help sustain the relationship.
8. At least one of my parents has given gifts or cards to a significant other.
9. During phone conversations, family members ask how a girlfriend/partner is doing.
10. When my relationships experience difficulty, a friend provides support to help sustain the relationship.
11. My relationships are nurtured by my friends.
12. Many of my work colleagues do not know that I date/partner with women.
13. I feel good about being a lesbian.
14. I feel nervous when introducing a significant other as 'my girlfriend/partner' to new people.
15. I feel anxious when people "detect" that a girlfriend/partner and I are in a relationship.
16. I do not worry about my colleagues' reactions when I bring a significant other to work/school functions.
17. I feel highly anxious showing a girlfriend/partner affection in public.

Appendix Q

Study 4: Participant Recruitment

Hello! My name is Shanti Pepper and I am a doctoral candidate in Counseling Psychology at The Pennsylvania State University. I am currently conducting research that explores lesbian and bisexual women's relationships and factors that influence them. That is, I aim to explore women's beliefs, emotions, and experiences in same-sex relationships. Currently, I am looking for women to respond to my study and I need your help!

To participate, you must meet all of the following criteria:

4. **Women who identify as lesbian, bisexual, and/or queer (any orientation other than heterosexual).**
5. **You must be 18-years-old or older.**
6. **Have been in at least one same-sex relationship with a woman (you DO NOT need to currently be in a relationship).**

If you agree to participate, you will respond to questionnaires that will take approximately 35 minutes to complete. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at anytime. No personal identifying information is required and therefore you will not be linked to any publications or presentations from this study.

If you are interested in participating then click on the link below:

<https://www.psychdata.com/s.asp?SID=127463>

Also, if you personally know other individuals who fit the criteria above, I would genuinely appreciate if you forwarded this email to them!

This study is voluntary for research purposes. If you have any questions or comments, you can contact me, Shanti Pepper at The Pennsylvania State University (contact information below) or my advisor, Dr. Kathy Bieschke at kbieschke@psu.edu (814-865-3296). Please do not hit "reply" because that may reply to a list-serve.

Shanti Pepper, M.A.
327 CEDAR Building
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IRB # 29637

Appendix R
Study 4: Consent Form

PENNSSTATE



INFORMED CONSENT FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH
IRB # 29637

Title of Project: **Women's Experiences in Same-Sex Romantic Relationships**

Principle Investigator: Shanti M. Pepper, M.A.
Graduate Student, Counseling Psychology
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Advisor: Dr. Kathleen Bieschke
327 CEDAR Building
University Park, PA 16802
email: kbieschke@psu.edu

Purpose of the study: The purpose of this project is to explore factors that affect women's relationships. Specifically, the objective is to investigate women's beliefs, emotions, and events experienced in same-sex romantic relationships.

Procedure to be followed: For this study, you are asked to respond to on-line questionnaires. You will be asked to answer questions about your experiences as a lesbian woman as well as your current or past experiences, beliefs, and/or feelings in intimate relationships. You can choose not to answer certain questions.

Benefits: You may learn more about yourself and/ or your beliefs about relationships. Furthermore, this research may benefit society in that more information about lesbian relationships and factors that affect these relationships may be better understood.

Duration: It will take you approximately 35 minutes to participate in this study.

Statement of Confidentiality: Your participation in this research is confidential. The survey does not ask for any information that would identify who the responses belong to. In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared because your name is in no way linked to your responses. Your confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology

used. No guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by any third parties.

Right to ask questions: You can ask questions about this research. If you have any questions about the results of this study or your rights as research participants, you may contact Shanti Pepper at szp122@psu.edu with questions.

Voluntary Participation: Your decision to participate is voluntary and you may stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. **To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older, self-identify as either lesbian, bisexual, or queer and have been in at least one romantic relationship with a woman.** You do not need to currently be in a relationship to participate. Completion and submission of the survey implies your consent to participate in this research.

**** PLEASE PRINT THIS CONSENT FORM FOR YOUR RECORDS****

If you have read and understand the above statements, please click on the "Continue" button below to indicate your consent to participate in this study.

[CONTINUE BUTTON HERE]

Appendix S
Study 4: Debriefing Form

Debriefing form: IRB 29637

For this study, all participants were asked to complete a number of brief questionnaires concerning their personal experiences in relationships. Specifically, the goal was to validate a scale that explores women's experiences in same-sex relationships and investigate whether specific factors affect these relationships.

If you are interested in the results of this study, you may contact Shanti Pepper at the completion of this study (December 2009). Please note that only global results, not individual results, will be disclosed. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me (see information below). In addition, there is a list of on-line support resources in the event that you experienced any discomfort as a result of completing these surveys. You may print this form for your future reference or for your personal records. Thank you for your participation!

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Online Support

1. Gay Resource Linx: http://members.tripod.com/Mwoody_/linx.html
2. !Out Proud!: <http://www.outproud.org/>
3. Queer Resources Directory: <http://www.qrd.org/qrd>

Appendix T

Study 4: Demographic Form

1. What is your age? _____
 2. What is your gender identity?
 - a. Female
 - b. Transgender
 - c. Transsexual MtF (male-to-female)
 - d. Other _____
 3. Please specify your race/ ethnicity
 - a. Caucasian or Euro American
 - b. African or African American
 - c. Asian or Asian American/ Pacific Islander
 - d. Native American/American Indian
 - e. Latina/Chicano or Latina/Chicano American
 - f. Biracial or multiracial:
 - g. Non US-National
 4. Please check your highest level of completed education
 - a. Some high school education
 - b. High school diploma/ GED
 - c. Associates degree
 - d. Some college
 - e. Bachelor's degree
 - f. Master's degree
 - g. Post-master's or Professional degree
 5. In what state do you currently reside? _____
 6. Please indicate the number that best describes how you identify your sexual orientation from the scale below: _____
- | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---|----------|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| Exclusively
Heterosexual | | | | Bisexual | | | Exclusively
Lesbian (Homosexual) |
7. What is your current relationship status?
 - a. Separated
 - b. Single
 - c. Dating (non-exclusive/non-monogamous)
 - d. Dating (exclusive/monogamous)
 - e. Engaged to be married/partnered
 - f. Partnered, but we have not had a ceremony
 - g. Married (legally recognized)
 - h. Partnered in a formal ceremony (not legally recognized)
 - i. Widowed
 - j. Other
 8. If you are **not** single, please specify the length of your current relationship in months and years (e.g., 3 months, or 2 years and 5 months). _____

9. If you are **not** single, do you and your partner live together? ___ yes ___ no
10. Do you currently have children? ___ yes ___ no.
11. Are you a member of any local or national LGBT organizations (e.g., HRC, PFLAG, GSA, etc)?
 ___ yes ___ no
12. Choose all places and activities that you *commonly* participate in and/or visit:
- Pride parades or other LGBT rallies
 - LGBT bars/restaurants
 - Local or national rallies for equal rights
 - Read LGBT magazines/newspapers/blogs
 - Visit LGBT bookstores
 - Contribute to local or national LGBT organizations
 - Volunteer for local or national LGBT organizations
 - Organize any LGBT related events
 - Visit LGBT friendly vacation spots
 - Attend concerts or art shows that are created by either LGBT or affirmative artists

13. Individuals change in their desire to be single or coupled in romantic relationships. Given the choices below, what are your current desires?

- ___ Short-term, monogamous (i.e., one person at a given time)
- ___ Short-term, non-monogamous
- ___ Long-term, monogamous
- ___ Long-term, non-monogamous

If you identify as lesbian, click on the *continue* button at the bottom of this page. **If you identify as bisexual, please answer the questions below.**

14. Would you say that you **primarily** date/partner with women?
- a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) Equal proportion (men and women)
15. If you are **not** single, please identify the gender of your current partner:
- a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Transgender
 - d. Transsexual MtF (male-to-female)

Appendix U
Study 4: Final Version of the 17-item
Sources of Lesbian Relationship Self-Efficacy Scale (SLRSE):

Instructions: Please rate your level of agreement/disagreement to each statement by choosing the number that best represents your answer. The term *significant other*, *partner*, and *girlfriend* are used interchangeably in the current survey.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

18. Despite my desire to do so, I have difficulty maintaining long-term relationships with women.
19. My relationships have been negatively affected by us moving in together too soon.
20. I have stayed in an unhappy relationship because I believed that nobody better existed in my lesbian community.
21. When my past relationships experienced difficulty, I "threw in the towel" too easily.
22. My relationships have experienced significant distress due to our inability to communicate.
23. I would change very little about my past relationship experiences with women.
24. When my relationships experience difficulty, a family member provides support to help sustain the relationship.
25. At least one of my parents has given gifts or cards to a significant other.
26. During phone conversations, family members ask how a girlfriend/partner is doing.
27. When my relationships experience difficulty, a friend provides support to help sustain the relationship.
28. My relationships are nurtured by my friends.
29. Many of my work colleagues do not know that I date/partner with women.
30. I feel good about being a lesbian.
31. I feel nervous when introducing a significant other as 'my girlfriend/partner' to new people.
32. I feel anxious when people "detect" that a girlfriend/partner and I are in a relationship.
33. I do not worry about my colleagues' reactions when I bring a significant other to work/school functions.
34. I feel highly anxious showing a girlfriend/partner affection in public.

Appendix V

Parental Divorce Measure (Amato & DeBoer, 2001)

1. Did your parents divorce or separate permanently?
 - a. Yes. (parents did divorce or permanently separate)
 - b. No. (no disruption)

2. If yes, how old were you when your parents divorced or separated _____

Appendix W
Study 4: The Adult Attachment Questionnaire
(AAQ; Simpson, Rholes, & Phillips, 1996)

Directions: Below is a list of statements about how you relate to romantic partners in general. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement being true.

Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. I find it relatively easy to get close to others.
2. I'm not very comfortable having to depend on other people.
3. I'm comfortable having others depend on me.
4. I rarely worry about being abandoned by others.
5. I don't like people getting too close to me.
6. I'm somewhat uncomfortable being too close to others.
7. I find it difficult to trust others completely.
8. I'm nervous whenever anyone gets too close to me.
9. Others often want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being.
10. Others often are reluctant to get as close as I would like.
11. I often worry that my partner(s) don't really love me.
12. I rarely worry about my partner(s) leaving me.
13. I often want to merge completely with others, and this desire sometimes scares them away.
14. I'm confident others would never hurt me by suddenly ending our relationship.
15. I usually want more closeness and intimacy than others do.
16. The thought of being left by others rarely enters my mind.
17. I'm confident that my partner(s) love me just as much as I love them.

Appendix X
Lesbian Internalized Homophobia Scale- Short Form (LIHS-SF)
(Szymanski & Chung, 2001)

Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements by writing in the appropriate number from the scale below. There are no right or wrong answers; however, for the data to be meaningful, you must answer each statement given below as honestly as possible. Your responses are completely anonymous. Please do not leave a statement unmarked. Some statements may depict situations that you have not experienced; please imagine yourself in those situations when answering those statements.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. I try not to give signs that I am a lesbian. I am careful about the way I dress, the jewelry I wear, the places, people and events I talk about.
2. I can't stand lesbians who are too "butch". They make lesbians as a group look bad.
3. Attending lesbian events and organizations is important to me.
4. I hate myself for being attracted to other women.
5. I believe female homosexuality is a sin.
6. I am comfortable being an "out" lesbian. I want others to know and see me as a lesbian.
7. I have respect and admiration for other lesbians.
8. I wouldn't mind if my boss knew that I was a lesbian.
9. If some lesbians would change and be more acceptable to the larger society, lesbians as a group would not have to deal with so much negativity and discrimination.
10. I am proud to be a lesbian.
11. I am not worried about anyone finding out that I am a lesbian.
12. When interacting with members of the lesbian community, I often feel different and alone, like I don't fit in.
13. I feel bad for acting on my lesbian desires.
14. I feel comfortable talking to my heterosexual friends about my everyday home life with my lesbian partner/lover or my everyday activities with my lesbian friends.
15. Having lesbian friends is important to me.
16. I am familiar with lesbian books and/or magazines.
17. Being a part of the lesbian community is important to me.
18. It is important for me to conceal the fact that I am a lesbian from my family.
19. I feel comfortable talking about homosexuality in public.
20. I live in fear that someone will find out I am a lesbian.

21. If I could change my sexual orientation and become heterosexual, I would.
22. I do not feel the need to be on guard, lie, or hide my lesbianism to others.
23. I feel comfortable joining a lesbian social group, lesbian sports team, or lesbian organization.
24. When speaking of my lesbian lover/partner to a straight person I change pronouns so that others will think I'm involved with a man rather than a woman.
25. Being a lesbian makes my future look bleak and hopeless.
26. If my peers knew of my lesbianism, I am afraid that many would not want to be friends with me.
27. Social situations with other lesbians make me feel uncomfortable.
28. I wish some lesbians wouldn't "flaunt" their lesbianism. They only do it for shock value and it doesn't accomplish anything positive.
29. I don't feel disappointment in myself for being a lesbian.
30. I am familiar with lesbian movies and/or music.
31. I am aware of the history concerning the development of lesbian communities and/or the lesbian/gay rights movement.
32. I act as if my lesbian lovers are merely friends.
33. I feel comfortable discussing my lesbianism with my family.
34. I could not confront a straight friend or acquaintance if she or he made a homophobic or heterosexist statement to me.
35. I am familiar with lesbian music festivals and conferences.
36. When speaking of my lesbian lover/partner to a straight person, I often use neutral pronouns so the sex of the person is vague.
37. Lesbians are too aggressive.
38. I frequently make negative comments about other lesbians.
39. I am familiar with community resources for lesbians (i.e., bookstores, support groups, bars, etc.).

Appendix Y
Study 4: Outness Inventory (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000)

Use the following rating scale to indicate how open you are about your sexual orientation to the people listed below. Try to respond to all of the items, but leave items blank if they do not apply to you.

- 1 = person definitely does NOT know about your sexual orientation status
 2 = person might know about your sexual orientation status, but it is NEVER talked about
 3 = person probably knows about your sexual orientation status, but it is NEVER talked about
 4 = person probably knows about your sexual orientation status, but it is RARELY talked about
 5 = person definitely knows about your sexual orientation status, but it is RARELY talked about
 6 = person definitely knows about your sexual orientation status, and it is SOMETIMES talked about
 7 = person definitely knows about your sexual orientation status, and it is OPENLY talked about
 0 = not applicable to your situation; there is no such person or group of people in your life

1. mother	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
2. father	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
3. siblings (sisters, brothers)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
4. extended family/relatives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
5. my <u>new</u> straight friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
6. my work peers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
7. my work supervisor(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
8. members of my religious community (e.g., church, temple)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
9. leaders of my religious community (e.g., church, temple)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
10. strangers, new acquaintances	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
11. my <u>old</u> heterosexual friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0

Appendix AA
LOT-R (Scheier & Carver, 1992).

Please be as honest and accurate as you can throughout. Try not to let your response to one statement influence your responses to other statements. There are no "correct" or "incorrect" answers. Answer according to your own feelings, rather than how you think "most people" would answer.

A = I agree a lot
B = I agree a little
C = I neither agree nor disagree
D = I DISagree a little
E = I DISagree a lot

1. In uncertain times, I usually expect the best.
- [2. It's easy for me to relax.]
3. If something can go wrong for me, it will.
4. I'm always optimistic about my future.
- [5. I enjoy my friends a lot.]
- [6. It's important for me to keep busy.]
7. I hardly ever expect things to go my way.
- [8. I don't get upset too easily.]
9. I rarely count on good things happening to me.
10. Overall, I expect more good things to happen to me than bad.

Appendix BB
Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale
(KMS; created by Schumm et al., 1986)
(Adapted for lesbian and gay populations by Kurdek, 1996)

Not at all true										Extremely true
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	

1. I am satisfied with my relationship.
2. I am satisfied with my partner in her role as my partner.
3. I am satisfied with my relationship with my partner.

Appendix CC

Marginalization Scale (Lehmiller & Agnew, 2006)

Directions: Below is a list of statements about your relationship. Please indicate how much each question is true or not true of your relationship.

Not at all true of							Very true my	
relationships at all							of my relationships	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

1. My relationship has general societal acceptance.
2. My family and friends approve of my relationship.
3. I believe that most other persons (whom I do not know) would generally disapprove of my relationship.
4. My family and/or friends are not accepting of this relationship.

Appendix DD
Relationship Self-Efficacy
(Morua & Lopez, 2005)

Instructions: Carefully read the question below and then respond to each item using the rating scale on the right side of this page. Circle only one number per item.

Question: "Within your present relationship, how confident are **YOU** in **YOUR** ability to do each of the following?"

How confident are you that you can....

1. Deal with important disagreements openly and directly
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
2. Openly express your wishes and needs
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
3. Share equally with your partner in planning activities
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
4. Tell your partner when you feel hurt or upset with him or her
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
5. Be a good sex partner
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
6. Express openly to your partner your hopes for the future of the relationship
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
7. Let your partner take care of you when you are ill
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
8. Admit your personal mistakes to your partner when they occur
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
9. Deal with your partner when he or she is angry or upset with you
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
10. Comfort your partner when he or she is angry or upset with someone else
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
11. Tell your partner when you would prefer to be alone
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

12. Express affection with your partner freely and comfortably
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
13. Accept your partner's affection freely and comfortably
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
14. Express your views and preferences regarding sex to your partner
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
15. Offer criticism to your partner without hurting her feelings
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
16. Accept criticism from your partner without attacking/challenging her
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
17. Tell your partner when you would prefer to spend time with other friends
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
18. Comfort your partner when she is "down" or depressed
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
19. Put time into developing shared interest with your partner
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
20. Be available to your partner when he or she needs you
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
21. Control your temper when angry or frustrated with your partner
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
22. Settle any moral or religious differences you may have with your partner
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
23. Avoid temptations to "cheat" on your partner
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
24. Control feelings of jealousy you may have about your partner
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
25. Find ways to work out "everyday" problems with your partner
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
26. Anticipate when your partner needs your support
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

27. Accept your partners support when you are “down” or depressed
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
28. Avoid criticizing your partner when he or she makes mistakes
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
29. Allow your partner to “take charge” of things when you are feeling upset or confused
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
30. Accept your partners desire to do things his or her way
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
31. Tell your partner when you are unable to solve a personal problem
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
32. Accept your partners desire to spend time with other people
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
33. Stay calm when you and your partner are having a serious argument
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
34. Show respect you your partner when you disagree with his or her opinions
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
35. Allow your partner to calm you down when you are stressed
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

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