

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Studies; Human Sexuality and Gender Studies;  
Women's Studies and Feminist Studies

**EXPLORE THE BROAD RANGE OF HEALTHY LESBIAN ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS  
IN LOVE, FRIENDSHIP, SELF-IMAGE, AND SOCIETY!**

**Lesbian Love and Relationships** explores the fascinating love lives of lesbian and bisexual women—from adolescence to old age! This pioneering book, edited by Suzanna M. Rose, Director of Women's Studies at Florida International University, is the perfect introduction to the broad range of lesbian attitudes and behaviors in love, friendship, self-image, and society. Addressing class and race as well as sexual orientation, it shares lesbians' feelings about physical appearance, cross-generational friendships, butch-femme issues, and sexuality. It also looks at such difficult and painful issues as lesbian domestic violence and the impact of homophobia on lesbian couples.

**Lesbian Love and Relationships** addresses real-world questions, including:

- how do young lesbians find each other?
- what makes successful lesbian relationships last?
- how does social class affect African-American lesbian relationships?
- . . . and many more!

"**GROUNDBREAKING** in its emphasis on empirical research as the basis for understanding lesbian dating, courtship, sexual relations, identity, physical appearance, and friendships. **CLEAR AND INFORMATIVE**. . . Should be read by all instructors of human sexuality. Researchers in sexuality and relationships will want to examine this book, and therapists who see lesbians will have to own it."

—Maureen C. McHugh, PhD,  
National Coordinator, Association for Women in Psychology

"Suzanna Rose's collection of 13 essays is well suited to prompting serious contemplation and discussion about lesbian lives and how they are—or are not—different from others. . . . **INTERESTING AND USEFUL** for debunking some myths, confirming others, and reaching out into new territories that were previously unexplored."

—Lisa Keen, BA, MFA,  
Senior Political Correspondent, *Washington Blade*

HARRINGTON PARK PRESS®

An Imprint of The Haworth Press, Inc.  
10 Alice Street, Binghamton, NY 13904-1580

ISBN 1-56023-265-X



9 781560 232650

# Lesbian Love and Relationships

## CONTENTS

Introduction: Lesbian Love and Relationships <i>Suzanna M. Rose</i>	1
“Having a Girlfriend Without Knowing It”: Intimate Friendships Among Adolescent Sexual-Minority Women <i>Lisa M. Diamond</i>	5
Against All Odds: The Dating Experiences of Adolescent Lesbian and Bisexual Women <i>Diane E. Elze</i>	17
The Impact of Group Membership on Lesbians’ Physical Appearance <i>Ilana D. Krakauer</i> <i>Suzanna M. Rose</i>	31
Butch/Femme in the Personal Advertisements of Lesbians <i>Christine A. Smith</i> <i>Shannon Stillman</i>	45
Lesbians in Love: Why Some Relationships Endure and Others End <i>Kristin P. Beals</i> <i>Emily A. Impett</i> <i>Letitia Anne Peplau</i>	53
Not Any One Thing: The Complex Legacy of Social Class on African American Lesbian Relationships <i>Ruth L. Hall</i> <i>Beverly Greene</i>	65

Ø Butch Among the Belles <i>Bonnie R. Strickland</i>	75
Lesbian Dating and Courtship from Young Adulthood to Midlife <i>Suzanna M. Rose</i> <i>Debra Zand</i>	85
Beyond "Lesbian Bed Death": The Passion and Play in Lesbian Relationships <i>Suzanne Iasenza</i>	111
Lesbian Intimate Partner Violence: Prevalence and Dynamics <i>Carolyn M. West</i>	121
Couples Therapy for Lesbians: Understanding Merger and the Impact of Homophobia <i>Maryka Biaggio</i> <i>Suz Coan</i> <i>Wendi Adams</i>	129
Young Sexual Minority Women's Perceptions of Cross-Generational Friendships with Older Lesbians <i>Jeanne L. Stanley</i>	139
Building Bridges: Examining Lesbians' and Heterosexual Women's Close Friendships with Each Other <i>Jacqueline S. Weinstock</i> <i>Lynne A. Bond</i>	149
Index	163

## ABOUT THE EDITOR

**Suzanna M. Rose, PhD**, is Director of Women's Studies and Professor of Psychology at Florida International University. She received her degree in 1979 from the University of Pittsburgh, where she first became involved with feminist psychology by team-teaching a course on the psychology of women. Her research focuses on how gender, sexual orientation, and race affect relationships and sexuality, as well as on general gay and lesbian issues.

Dr. Rose has published extensively on love scripts and friendship in professional journals, including the *Journal of Social Issues*, *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, the *Journal of Homosexuality*, *Violence Against Women*, and *American Behavioral Scientist*. She is co-author (with Barbara Winstead and Valerian Derlega) of *Gender and Close Relationships* (1997) and has edited two books on academic women's careers. She is currently on the editorial boards of *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *Sex Roles*, *Women & Therapy*, and the American Psychological Association series *Contemporary Perspectives on Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Psychology*. In addition, she is a member of the grant review committee for the American Psychological Foundation's Wayne Placek Award, which funds research on lesbian and gay issues. In 1992, she received the Cheryl Ladd Frankin Award for contributions to feminist psychology from the Association for Women in Psychology (AWP). She also served as both Chair and Board Member of AWP for several years. Dr. Rose is a Fellow in the Society for the Psychology of Women and Division 44 of the American Psychological Association.

# Introduction: Lesbian Love and Relationships

Suzanna M. Rose

A new era of understanding concerning lesbian love and relationships is beginning. Lesbians now, at least occasionally, are portrayed as “normal” by the media. It might even be said that lesbians have “arrived” in terms of achieving a limited positive visibility within the larger culture. In the past decade or so, Ellen DeGeneres came out as a lesbian on her top-rated television comedy show and lesbians were featured on the covers of national magazines. Documentaries dealt sympathetically with the topics of same-sex marriage, lesbian moms, and violence against lesbians and gays, such as the murders of Teena Brandon and Matthew Shepard. To some extent, lesbians even began to be perceived as having an advantage over heterosexuals in certain areas. For instance, in 2000, two authors published a book called *Lesbian sex secrets for men: What every man wants to know about making love to a woman and never asks* (Goddard & Brungardt, 2000). The book was advertised in men’s fitness magazines and, apparently, sales were brisk.

Positive representations of lesbians, although still not the norm, are a welcome shift away from the mental health model of homosexuality that dominated the twentieth century. The mental health model—or rather, the view that lesbianism was a mental illness—meant that research on lesbians focused primarily on one of two areas, either the causes of sexual orientation, or the psychological abnormality of lesbianism. A strong research tradition launched by Evelyn Hooker in the 1950s debunked the idea that homosexuality was a mental illness (Hooker, 1957). Later research showed that lesbians were quite sim-

---

[Haworth co-indexing entry note]: “Introduction: Lesbian Love and Relationships.” Rose, Suzanna M. Co-published simultaneously in *Journal of Lesbian Studies* (Harrington Park Press, an imprint of The Haworth Press, Inc.) Vol. 6, No. 1, 2002, pp. 1-3; and: *Lesbian Love and Relationships* (ed: Suzanna M. Rose) Harrington Park Press, an imprint of The Haworth Press, Inc., 2002, pp. 1-3. Single or multiple copies of this article are available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service [1-800-HAWORTH, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. (EST). E-mail address: [getinfo@haworthpressinc.com](mailto:getinfo@haworthpressinc.com)].

ilar to heterosexual women in terms of psychological functioning, gender roles, sexual behavior, and relationship priorities (e.g., Thompson, McCandless, & Strickland, 1971; Peplau, 2001; Peplau & Garnets, 2000). This allowed new perspectives on lesbians to flourish. Instead of focusing on "why" a woman was a lesbian, sexual orientation began to be used in research in much the same way as gender. Lesbians, gay men, and heterosexuals alike were studied to see how both gender and sexual orientation affected relationship development and sexual behavior (e.g., Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Kurdek, 1994). These comparative studies sent a message that lesbianism was a sexual variation rather than a pathology.

What has not been fully accomplished, however, is an exploration of lesbian experience from the perspective of what lesbians view as important. Most current research on relationships contains embedded heterosexist biases that continue to guide what is asked and, subsequently, what is known about love, attraction, and mating (Rose, 2000). For instance, among heterosexuals, same-sex friendships tend to be defined as platonic relationships and researchers tend to ignore or deny other possibilities by not asking questions about sexual feelings. In contrast, lesbians often report that sexual desire arose within a deeply felt same-sex friendship. Thus, from a lesbian standpoint, the nature of sexuality within same-sex friendship would be an important area of study. The area of sexual signaling also plays out differently among lesbians than heterosexuals, but research on sexual attraction is dominated by justifications and explanations for heterosexual sexual displays (e.g., Buss, 1994; Kenrick & Trost, 1997). Heterosexual women use at least 52 nonverbal flirtation behaviors to signal their interest in men (e.g., skirt hike, hair toss, neck presentation) (Moore, 1985). These exaggerated feminine gestures do not seem to be utilized extensively by most lesbians. How then do lesbians discern sexual interest from another woman? This is an issue that routinely surfaces in commentaries and humorous descriptions of lesbian life, but about which we know little. A second aspect of lesbian experience that has been neglected concerns not what is unique but what is common to both heterosexual and lesbian relations. For instance, lesbians are not immune from problems such as intimate partner violence. Like heterosexuals, lesbians may seek therapy to help their relationships. These issues recently have begun to be addressed.

In this volume, original research explores what are compelling issues for many lesbians, including friendship, dating, butch-femme roles, staying together, sexuality, concerns of African-American lesbians, violence in relationships, and therapy. The assumption that lesbian relationships are natural and normal underlies our approach and reflects the new era of research on lesbians that has begun.

## REFERENCES

- Blumstein, P. W., & Schwartz, P. (1983). *American couples*. New York: William Morrow.
- Buss, D. M. (1994). *The evolution of desire: Strategies of human mating*. New York: Basic Books.
- Goddard, J., & Brungardt, K. (2000). *Lesbian sex secrets for men: What every man wants to know about making love to a woman and never asks*. New York: Plume.
- Hooker, E. (1957). The adjustment of the male overt homosexual. *Journal of Projective Techniques*, 21, 18-31.
- Kenrick, D. T., & Trost, M. R. (1997). Evolutionary approaches to relationships. In *Handbook of Personal Relationships* (2nd edition) (pp. 156-178). New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Kurdek, L. A. (1994). The nature and correlates of relationship quality in gay, lesbian, and heterosexual cohabiting couples: A test of the individual difference, interdependence, and discrepancy models. In B. Greene & G. M. Herek (Eds.), *Psychological perspectives on lesbian and gay issues: Vol. 1. Lesbian and gay psychology: Theory, research, and clinical applications* (133-155). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Moore, M. M. (1985). Nonverbal courtship patterns in women: Context and consequences. *Ethology and Sociobiology*, 6, 237-247.
- Peplau, L. A. (2001). Rethinking women's sexual orientation: An interdisciplinary relationship-focused approach. *Personal Relationships*, 8, 1-20.
- Peplau, L. A., & Garnets, L. D. (Eds.). Women's sexualities: New perspectives on sexual orientation and gender. *Journal of Social Issues*, 56, 181-192.
- Rose, S. (2000). Heterosexism and the study of women's romantic and friend relationships. *Journal of Social Issues*, 56, 315-328.
- Thompson, N.L., McCandless, B.R., & Strickland, B.R. (1971). Personal adjustment of male and female homosexuals and heterosexuals. *Journals of Abnormal Psychology*, 78, 237-240.