

Understudied Relationships

Make notes and download information from the following webpages:

http://www.psychpage.com/gay/library/gay_lesbian_violence/stages_gay_relationships.html

<http://www.gottman.com/research/projects/gaylesbian/>

Suggest two reasons why gay and lesbian relationships may be understudied:

Suggest reasons why there may be problems for homosexual men and women when forming relationships which are not generally present in heterosexual relationships

Suggest reasons why same sex relationships may be more psychologically healthy than some heterosexual relationships

McWhirter and Mattison (1984) identified 6 stages of a healthy gay relationship.

1. **Blending** – men become a pair, there is romantic love
2. **Nesting** – the men develop a more realistic view of each other, and spend time homemaking
3. **Maintaining** – men balance their individual identities against their relationship as a couple
4. **Building** – the men now have a dependable relationship and can make long term plans for themselves and each other
5. **Releasing** – this is based on mutual trust, friendship and goodwill
6. **Renewing** – the couple now has time for each other, and time to think about personal issues such as retirement. They develop a long term view of their relationship and their lives

Research Findings about Gay Relationships

- 40-60% of gay men, and 45-80% of lesbians are in a steady relationship
- Studies of older homosexual people show that gay relationships lasting over 20 years are not uncommon
- In a large sample of couples followed for 18 months the following "break up" statistics were observed: lesbians=22%, gay=16%, cohabiting heterosexuals=17%, married heterosexuals=4%
- Homosexual and heterosexual couples matched on age, etc, tend not to differ in levels of love and satisfaction, nor in their scores on other standardized scales
- Gay/lesbian parents report no greater stress than heterosexuals, and children are not adversely affected by being raised by homosexual families
- Homosexuals are no more promiscuous or predatory than heterosexuals. Some homosexuals do engage in such behaviour but there are heterosexuals that do the same thing.
- Data indicate that gay men may have fewer sexual partners than heterosexuals and are more likely than heterosexual men to be celibate

Exercise

Look at a lonely hearts column from any magazine or newspaper. Compare men looking for men, men looking for women, women looking for women, and women looking for men.

Complete the table by making a tally chart of the number of times each of the characteristics is mentioned about the advertiser and then repeat the exercise to see what is sought. What patterns emerge?

	M + M	M + F	W + W	W + M
Looks				
Wealth				
Interests				