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SOURCES OF COMING OUT SELF-EFFICACY FOR LESBIANS

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ABSTRACT

SOURCES OF
COMING OUT SELF-EFFICACY
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By

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In their daily lives, lesbians must repeatedly make decisions about whether or not to disclose their sexual orientation to others in the face of potential rejection, discrimination, alienation, or violence (Fassinger, 1991). Although the cost of self-disclosure may be high, the benefits may include the development of a positive lesbian identity, psychological adjustment, and enhanced self-esteem and self-acceptance (Cass, 1979; Fassinger, 1991).

Much of the empirical literature on the act of coming out (Cody-Murphy, 1989; Kahn, 1991; Schneider, 1986; Wells & Kline, 1989) has explored the circumstantial and demographic variables related to this process. This exploratory study utilized self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1986) to investigate the extent to which each of the four sources of efficacy information (e.g., performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, or emotional arousal) contributed to coming out self-efficacy. Further, this study sought to establish the relevance of coming out self-efficacy by exploring its relationship to outness and lifestyle satisfaction. Relationships between these same variables and adjustment were also explored.

Participants were 134 lesbians. Each completed a survey packet which included measures of coming-out self-efficacy, the four sources of self-efficacy information, outness, adjustment, and lifestyle satisfaction. Two novel measures were developed for this study. The first, the Sources of Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale (SCOSS), was designed to assess the four sources of efficacy information in relation to coming out. The second, the Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale (COSS), was designed to assess lesbians' confidence in their ability to come out in a variety of ways and circumstances. Results indicated that the COSS was a highly reliable measure; the reliability of the SCOSS was marginal.

Results of the regression analyses indicated that emotional arousal was the most potent predictor of coming out self-efficacy. Verbal persuasion and vicarious experience also were significant. The most theoretically salient source of self-efficacy information, performance accomplishments (Bandura, 1986), was not a significant predictor of coming out self-efficacy for this group of lesbians. Further, significant correlations were found between coming out self-efficacy and outness and life-style satisfaction. The last variable was also significantly correlated to measures of adjustment.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

On a day to day basis lesbians are confronted with the dilemma of whether or not to disclose their sexual orientation. This process of repeated self-disclosure, also known as coming out, is a component of every relationship in which a lesbian participates, from family, to work relationships, to friendships within both the homosexual and heterosexual worlds. Theoretically, this act of self-disclosure has been conceptualized in two ways. First, it has been described as a developmental task; an essential component of the coming out process which may ultimately lead to the acquisition of a lesbian identity (Cass, 1979; Cass, 1984a; Cass, 1990; Coleman, 1982; deMonteflores & Schultz, 1978; Fassinger, 1991; Groves, 1985; Lewis, 1984; Stein, 1993; Troiden, 1989). Second, the act of coming out has also been conceptualized as an identity management or coping technique in which the lesbian has a "secret" over which she controls, to some extent, the flow of information between herself and her world (Groves & Ventura, 1983; Miranda & Storms, 1989; Moses, 1978).

Ultimately, "coming out" is a process comprised of

developmental stages which include self-awareness, self-labeling, self-acceptance, and self-disclosure of sexual orientation on the part of a lesbian woman (Troiden, 1989). This on-going process is also considered by some to be synonymous with the manner in which lesbians come to develop a positive lesbian identity (Coleman, 1982; Troiden, 1989). This process has been theoretically delineated by several authors (Cass, 1979; Chapman & Brannock, 1987; Coleman, 1982; Troiden, 1989). Although it has been conceptualized within a stage framework, the nature of this process is not necessarily linear because individuals move through the stages in idiosyncratic ways (Sophie, 1986). Thus, the act of coming out, or disclosing one's sexual orientation to self and others, is a discrete component of the coming out process. The probable outcome of this process is the development of a positive lesbian identity; one in which one's experience of self as lesbian is congruent with other's perception of self (Stein, 1993).

Quite often the coming out process as well as the act of disclosure occur in the context of few role models, inadequate support systems, lack of legal protection, isolation, and the potential loss of one's primary racial or ethnic community (Fassinger, 1991). Further, in disclosing the fact that one is a lesbian, one faces not only negative societal attitudes, but also one's own internalized homophobia which may be experienced as feelings of guilt, shame, and anxiety (Browning, Reynolds, & Dworkin, 1991).

Although the cost of self-disclosure is high, the benefits may include the development of a positive lesbian identity, psychological adjustment, increased satisfaction with one's lifestyle, enhanced self-esteem and self-acceptance, as well as authentic interpersonal relationships (Cass, 1979; deMonteflores & Schultz, 1978; Fassinger, 1991; Groves, 1985; Miranda & Storms, 1989; Sophie, 1982).

Given that there are numerous risks involved with the disclosure of a homosexual orientation, there are clearly important benefits associated with making that disclosure. Thus, it may be important to understand what information lesbians use to appraise their own abilities to disclose their sexual orientation in various circumstances. One model that may clarify the relative importance of different types of information utilized by lesbians to assess and enhance their own confidence in their ability to disclose their sexual orientation to others is Bandura's theory of self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy refers to beliefs about one's ability to perform specific behaviors in a specific situation (Bandura, 1986). Bandura suggests that self-efficacy beliefs grow out of and are modified by four major sources of information: personal performance accomplishments (e.g., actually coming out to someone), vicarious experience (e.g., listening to the coming out experiences of another lesbian), verbal persuasion (e.g., having a partner, friend, or sibling offer opinions about coming out), and emotional arousal, the

affective and physiological cues associated with coming out and how they are interpreted (e.g., feeling overwhelmed, anxious, or proud in the face of coming out). The influence of each of these sources may serve to enhance or diminish a woman's confidence in her ability to disclose her sexual orientation to others.

Most of the treatment literature on sexual orientation disclosure suggests that there is a cognitive appraisal of self, motivations, and consequences that takes place for a lesbian as she decides whether or not to self-disclose (Browning et al, 1991; Falco, 1990; Fassinger, 1991; Gartrell, 1985). Because the four sources of self-efficacy information are theoretically linked with the development of self-efficacy, understanding how these sources of efficacy information may differentially enable lesbians to disclose their sexual orientation to important others in their lives may be important. Further, understanding what types of information lesbians find useful may also have implications for designing therapeutic interventions which will enhance a lesbian's self-efficacy in relation to disclosing her sexual orientation as well as coping with the repercussions of that disclosure. These applications are consistent with the emphasis within Counseling Psychology on the use of affirmative and empowering counseling strategies, especially in relation to this "hidden minority" (Fassinger, 1991).

Theoretically, personal performance accomplishments are the most salient source of self-efficacy information because

they provide the individual with actual mastery or failure experiences (Bandura, 1986). Vicarious experience provides important efficacy information by allowing an individual to compare herself, in terms of personal attributes and capabilities, to others with whom she identifies and who possess relevant experience within a particular arena. Vicarious experience is hypothesized to be an especially important source of information for someone with little or no experience in a particular domain (Bandura, 1986). The third source of efficacy information is not as potent in promoting enduring changes in self-efficacy as the previous two sources, though theoretically, it can be very helpful in persuading someone to attempt a behavior which can then be used as the basis of her self-efficacy judgments (Bandura, 1986). Finally, the emotional arousal experienced by the individual when facing the specific task affects efficacy judgments. It is not the arousal per se that impacts those judgments, but how the individual interprets her arousal that affects them (Bandura, 1986).

Although the differential contribution of the four sources of efficacy information has been investigated in a number of fields, (Bandura, Adams, & Beyer, 1977; Barling & Snipelisky, 1983; Feltz & Mungo, 1983; Lent, Lopez, & Bieschke, 1991; Lopez & Lent, 1992; Matsui, Matsui, & Ohnishi, 1990; Ozer & Bandura, 1990; Shunk & Gunn, 1985), the relationship between the four sources of self-efficacy and a lesbian's confidence in her ability to disclose her

sexual orientation has not been explored. The purpose of this preliminary study is to explore the extent to which each of the four theoretical sources of self-efficacy information contribute to a lesbian's coming out self-efficacy: her confidence in her ability to disclose her sexual orientation to others. Additionally, this study will examine the relationship between coming out self-efficacy and domain specific adjustment factors such as lifestyle satisfaction and outness, (e.g., breadth of disclosure). Finally, the relationships between outness, lifestyle satisfaction, self-esteem, and affectivity will be explored.

Bandura's theory of self-efficacy suggests several hypotheses regarding the relative contribution of each of these sources to a lesbian's coming out self-efficacy. First, a lesbian who reports a high level of past coming out experiences, positive in nature, is likely to perceive herself as efficacious in disclosing her sexual orientation. Second, a lesbian who reports that she has been exposed to the positive coming out experiences of other lesbians is likely to perceive herself as efficacious in disclosing her sexual orientation. Third, a lesbian who reports that she has received positive verbal support in relation to disclosing her sexual orientation is likely to perceive herself as efficacious in disclosing her sexual orientation. And, finally, a lesbian who reports experiencing low levels of negative emotional and physiological arousal in the face of coming out is likely to perceive herself as efficacious

in disclosing her sexual orientation. In exploring the relationship between coming out self-efficacy and adjustment, higher coming out self-efficacy will be associated with higher levels of expressed lifestyle satisfaction and outness.

Summary

To address these preliminary questions, this study consisted of two phases. In the first phase, two measures, the Sources of Coming Out Self-Efficacy Scale (SCOSS) and the Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale (COSS) were developed. Content validity of these measures was established by a panel of experts who evaluated and rated the theoretical consistency of the scales. Subsequently, the measures were pilot tested on a small sample of lesbians (N=28). The results of the pilot study empirically established the internal consistency of both measures, and the construct validity of the COSS.

In the second phase, the main study investigated the contributions of the four sources of efficacy information, as measured by the Sources of Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale, to coming out self-efficacy as measured by the Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale. The results of this study offer a theoretical framework that clarifies the internal motivational process involved in the act of coming out as well as establishing the relationship between coming out self-efficacy and measures of outness and lifestyle satisfaction. Additionally, this study is a novel

application of self-efficacy theory in terms of the population involved and the behavior of interest; the results may have implications not only for better understanding the act of coming out, but also for better understanding the construct of self-efficacy.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Lesbian Identity Formation

The importance of the act of disclosing one's sexual orientation may best be understood in the context of identity formation. Although confusing, the psychological literature on lesbians suggests that a positive lesbian identity is a likely outcome of the coming out process (Cass, 1979; Falco, 1990; Fassinger, 1991; Lewis, 1984; Stein, 1993; Troiden, 1989). Generally, this process is comprised of developmental stages that include self-awareness, self-acceptance, and self-disclosure of sexual orientation on the part of the lesbian woman (Troiden, 1989). The disclosure of one's sexual orientation is simply one behavioral component of this process. It is nonetheless a significant component because psychological adjustment, authenticity in relationships, and satisfaction with a lesbian lifestyle have been found to be correlated with degree of disclosure (Graham, Rawlings, & Girten, 1985; Kahn, 1991; Miranda & Storms, 1989). The formation of a positive lesbian identity takes place in the face of societal homonegativism that includes: potential discrimination, oppression, disapproval, and stigmatization

across many areas of a woman's life (Brown, 1991; Fassinger, 1991). Concurrently, a lesbian also must deal with her own internalized sense of loss, guilt, and shame about her sexual orientation that result from being socialized in a heterosexist society (Browning et al, 1991).

Several authors have written about the process of developing a positive homosexual identity (Cass, 1979; Chapman & Brannock, 1987; Coleman, 1982; Troiden, 1989), however, for the purpose of this review, the focus will be primarily on two developmental theories of homosexual identity formation, namely Cass's model (1979) and Troiden's model (1989). Cass's model is probably the most widely cited model in the literature (Falco, 1990), whereas Troiden's model synthesizes not only Cass's work, but the theoretical constructs of several others. The particular relevance of these two theories to this study lie in their emphasis upon the cognitive processes involved in identifying oneself as a lesbian. Although both of these models are applicable to lesbians and gay men, differences have been found between men and women in this process (deMonteflores & Schultz, 1978), thus, the focus of this review will be on the formation of lesbian identity only.

Identity. Identity is a cognitive construct, a means of defining the self in relation to a specific social category. A lesbian identity, then, is one in which one's perceptions of self in terms of affection, behavior, or interests, are congruent with what one believes to be

characteristic of a lesbian (Cass, 1979; Cass, 1984a; Falco, 1990; Troiden, 1989). Hence, there is no such thing as a single lesbian identity; the definition of the construct varies across individuals, contexts, and eras. Further, a lesbian identity is not a fixed entity, rather it is always in a state of evolving or "becoming" as the woman more clearly defines herself to self and others over time and experience (Cass, 1984a; Stein, 1993; Troiden, 1989).

Identity is composed not only of one's self-perception, but also of others' perception of the self. How one is perceived by others is based upon how the individual regularly presents the self to them. Thus, a lesbian will have not only a self-perceived identity, but also an identity that she presents to others which may or may not be consistent with her self-identity, as well as an identity as perceived by others (Cass, 1984a). Because the formation of a fully integrated lesbian identity theoretically requires the communication of that identity to others, interpersonal relationships with both heterosexuals and other homosexuals play an important role in that process (Cass, 1979; Cass, 1984a; Cass, 1984b; Coleman, 1982; Falco, 1990; Troiden, 1989). In other words, when one's perception of self as a lesbian is congruent with how one is perceived by others, a lesbian identity has been acquired (Cass, 1984a).

Generally, the models of lesbian identity formation describe how lesbians move toward an integrated identity (Cass, 1979; Cass, 1984a; Coleman, 1982; Troiden, 1989).

The coming out process begins when an individual defines self as lesbian and continues over time. Clinical experience and research (Cass, 1979; Cass, 1984b; Kahn, 1991; Troiden, 1989) suggest that women do experience similar stages and tasks in this process as they increase their contact with other homosexuals and more readily accept the label of "lesbian," though some women do not engage in all the stages or the tasks. Further, this is not to say that the development of these identities is a linear one; people progress through these stages in idiosyncratic ways (Sophie, 1986). Additionally, the growth and expression of these homosexual identities is invariably affected by the atmosphere of stigma in which they develop (Troiden, 1989).

Models of identity. In 1979, Cass proposed a six-stage model of homosexual identity development. Her theory suggests that individual growth takes place when a person attempts to resolve the cognitive dissonance between how one perceives oneself and how one is perceived by others. An additional source of motivation within this process is the need to develop positive feelings about the self and one's sexual orientation. Within Cass's theory, the individual has an active and conscious role in the formation of a lesbian identity, though this does not rule out unconscious change. Yet, Cass suggests that people can and do make decisions and take action at a conscious level. Thus, in the formation of a lesbian identity the individual has the choice of promoting or preventing change via a number of

capabilities (Cass, 1990). These include:

> "...the capacity to choose from a range of alternatives, the capacity to motivate oneself, the ability to recognize consequences and implications, the ability to select from a range of strategies aimed at self-enhancement and self-fulfillment, and the capacity to engage in decision-making processes, to name a few." (p.259)

At each stage of the theory these capabilities are utilized in the formation or foreclosure of one's homosexual identity.

Troiden (1989) considered the process through a slightly different lens. His four-stage theory, based in a sociological perspective, attempts to explain what interactions in particular social contexts make homosexuality personally relevant. The cognitive processes involved in his model are of a socially comparative nature in that the individual evaluates her own behavior in light of the actions of individuals occupying the social category called "lesbians." Features of this process include: the realization that such a category exists and is occupied by others perceived to be similar to the self; identification with others in that group; labeling self as a member of the category; and finally, including that label as part of one's identity over time (Troiden, 1989). Thus, the individual moves from self-identification, to self-labeling, to self-disclosure, to self-identity in the coming out process (Cass, 1979, 1984a, 1984b, 1990; Troiden, 1989).

Stages of identity development. In this section the stages of lesbian identity formation will be reviewed.

Although Cass and Troiden's models consist of different stages, the process that both describe is remarkably similar. For that reason, these developmental models will be discussed concurrently. Table 2.1 provides an overview of the stages for each model.

Table 2.1

Overview of Lesbian Identity Formation Theories.

Cass	Troiden
1. Identity Confusion: Includes a vague sense of difference that leads the woman to question the assumption that she is heterosexual.	**1. Sensitization**: Occurs before puberty and is marked by a sense of differentness from one's same sex peers in both interests and behaviors.
2. Identity Comparison: Characterized by a sense of differentness, the task is to resolve this dissonance by answering the question, "Am I a lesbian?"	**2. Identity Confusion**: Individual experiences dissonance around uncertain sexual status. This is resolved by either denying the possibility of being lesbian, or by accepting the possibility and seeking information and experience with other lesbians.
3. Identity Tolerance: Lesbian identity is accepted but not prized. Additional information and experience is sought with other lesbians.	**3. Identity Assumption**: A lesbian identity has become a self-identity. Presenting that identity to others, initially homosexuals, is central.
4. Identity Acceptance: Disclosure of sexual orientation to others comes to the fore as a means of demonstrating acceptance and legitimization of lesbian identity.	**4. Commitment**: Lesbianism becomes accepted as a way of life. This is reflected behaviorally through participation in a committed relationship and emotionally through satisfaction and happiness with one's life.
5. Identity Pride: Heterosexual lifestyles and values are rejected as the woman immerses herself into the lesbian subculture.	
6. Identity Synthesis: Dichotomized view of the world is relinquished. With total self-acceptance lesbian identity becomes merely one aspect of a more integrated identity.	

The process of forming a lesbian identity begins with the realization that one is somehow different from one's peers. Troiden (1989) describes this awareness in the first stage of his model called "Sensitization." He suggests that this stage takes place before puberty and is marked by a sense of being separate and different from one's same sex peers. It is in looking back on this felt sense, as well as one's non-traditional interests and activities, that lesbians interpret as the first signs of their homosexuality. However, Troiden points out that these early experiences are not sufficient for the formation of homosexual identities, rather, it is the definition assigned to these experiences in retrospect that provide the potential basis for self-definition as lesbian during or after adolescence.

The next phase of the process of developing a lesbian identity is comprised of labeling this sense of differentness. In the first stage of her model, "Identity Confusion," Cass (1990) states that the individual recognizes that there is something about one's thoughts, feelings, or behavior that may be construed as lesbian. Cass's description of this stage is parallel with that of Troiden's second stage, also called "Identity Confusion." The task for the individual at this stage is to resolve the confusion that goes along with this awareness by answering the question, "Am I lesbian?" To do so, women may utilize a number of strategies. They may deny the possibility

altogether, they may avoid anyone or anything having to do with lesbianism, or they may redefine these feelings as "just a phase" or as specific to one relationship in particular. On the other hand, they may accept the possibility of a lesbian identity and pursue further information and experience (Troiden, 1989). According to Cass (1979), this phase ends when the individual acknowledges that she may be a lesbian.

The third stage of Troiden's model, "Identity Assumption," incorporates the second and third stages of Cass's model, "Identity Comparison" and "Identity Tolerance." This developmental phase is characterized by feelings of loss and alienation as the woman realizes that the expectations and assumptions of the heterosexual world no longer are relevant to her (Falco, 1990). The tasks of this phase include defining self as lesbian, presenting that identity primarily to other lesbians, and exploring the lesbian subculture (Troiden, 1989). Typically, women first label themselves as lesbians in the context of a sexual/emotional relationship with another woman, perhaps due to sex role socialization (Browning et al., 1991; deMonteflores & Schultz, 1978). At this stage, lesbian identity is tolerated rather than accepted (Cass, 1979). Working through this identity ambivalence may be facilitated by the tenor of the contacts one has with other lesbians or gay males. Negative experiences may lead to termination of further contacts as well as negative evaluations of self and

other lesbians. On the other hand, positive contacts provide an opportunity for the individual to re-examine her own assumptions about homosexuality while concurrently feeling more positively about her lesbianism. Through contacts with other lesbians, the woman may also learn about her own developing identity in terms of management strategies, (e.g. passing as heterosexual or disclosing one's sexual orientation), how to deal with internalized homophobia, and the range and variety of identities that are acceptable within the lesbian subculture (Troiden, 1989). By the end of this stage, the individual has accepted her lesbianism and has even disclosed it to some others, though disclosure is the exception rather than the rule (Cass, 1979).

At this point in the developmental process, the woman has not only accepted her lesbianism, but has developed a positive self-image in relation to this identity and its accoutrements. Cass and Troiden differ in how they explain the final developmental tasks and stages that ultimately lead to a positive and integrated lesbian identity. The act of self-disclosure of one's sexual orientation is an integral component of these final developmental stages.

The final three stages of Cass's model are "Identity Acceptance," "Identity Pride," and "Identity Synthesis." "Identity Acceptance" is characterized by a process in which the woman moves from accepting her lesbian identity to selectively disclosing it, both publicly and privately, as a

means of legitimizing her chosen lifestyle (Fassinger, 1991). There can be some dissonance in this process for the woman as she feels an increasing sense of pride in herself and in her lifestyle, yet both are met with continuous societal sanction. This juncture signals the beginning of "Identity Pride" in which the woman may take a more political stance. This perspective is one in which her lesbian lifestyle is considered to be the only way to live whereas all that is associated with heterosexual lifestyles and values are rejected. In this phase, disclosure of one's sexual orientation is used as a means of confronting society's inequities rather than as a means of developing or enhancing relationships (Cass, 1990). It is through accepting and affirming responses to her disclosure that the woman reconsiders her stance against all heterosexuals. Ultimately, in Cass's final stage, "Identity Synthesis," this dichotomized view of the world is relinquished by the woman. She becomes more confident and secure in disclosing her identity and interacting in both the homosexual and heterosexual worlds. Through this interaction, the public and private aspects of the woman's identity have synthesized; instead of being <u>the</u> identity, her lesbianism has become simply one aspect of her self-identity (Cass, 1979).

The final stage of Troiden's model (1989) is called "Commitment." This stage begins when the woman enters a relationship with another woman. It is comprised of both

internal and external markers of one's commitment to a lesbian identity and lifestyle. However, commitment to a lesbian lifestyle varies from person to person; it also waxes and wanes under the influence of personal, social, and professional factors. Internally, the lesbian perceives lesbianism as a valid lifestyle and feels more satisfaction and happiness in relation to being seriously involved with other women both emotionally and sexually. Externally, commitment to a lesbian lifestyle is reflected by her wider disclosure of sexual orientation to others who are not lesbian or gay. As the identity formation process progresses, the desire to be more open about one's sexual orientation increases and, hence, disclosure is made to an ever-widening audience. That is not to say that disclosure is made in as indiscriminate fashion; rather, openness varies across personal and contextual variables (deMonteflores & Schultz, 1978). In the formation of a lesbian identity, according to Troiden (1989), disclosure brings that identity into existence in a variety of contexts and relationships. And, like Cass's model, when one presents and is perceived as lesbian, identity synthesis has been achieved.

Summary. The coming out process has been conceptualized as a developmental process in which a woman moves from a sense of confusing differentness, to consciously labeling herself as a lesbian, to disclosing her sexual orientation to others. Over the course of this

process, the woman is moving toward integrating her sexual identity into her overall self-identity with a positive lesbian identity being the potential outcome. The act of disclosing her sexual orientation to others is an important aspect of this process because it is one means by which the woman is able to obtain recognition for who she is, rather than for whom people assume her to be. As the woman's self-identity and perceived identity merge, an integrated lesbian identity is said to have formed.

The Act of Coming Out

On a day to day basis lesbians are confronted with the conscious decision of whether or not to disclose their sexual orientation to important others in their families, workplaces, and social networks. Making this disclosure is important for individual and interpersonal reasons. For the lesbian herself, wider disclosure of sexual orientation is associated with self-acceptance and validation (deMonteflores & Schultz, 1978; Fassinger, 1991; Sophie, 1982). In interpersonal relationships, self-disclosure of one's sexual orientation lends authenticity and depth to the relationship as well as being a potential avenue for social support (Fassinger, 1991; Sophie, 1982; Wells & Kline, 1987).

Experiential support for the importance of coming out is evident in The Original Coming Out Stories (1989). In this collection of personal vignettes, lesbian writers recount their own coming out experiences as well as the

impact of those experiences on their developing sense of identity, both as lesbians and as women. In summarizing the contributions of the writers included in the collection, Penelope and Wolfe (1989) state that in the process of developing a lesbian identity, it is the "self-naming" of oneself as a lesbian that is central in self-affirmation. They add that in our heterosexist society where one is assumed to be heterosexual, the repeated act of coming out is a means of claiming an identity. Thus, the process of coming out, identifying oneself as lesbian and sharing that identity with others, is likened to a "coming together" of oneself.

Yet, the act of coming out often takes place in the context of few role models, inadequate support systems, lack of legal protection, isolation, and the potential loss of one's primary racial or ethnic community (Fassinger, 1991). Further, in disclosing the fact that one is a lesbian, one faces not only negative societal attitudes, but also one's own internalized homophobia which may be experienced as feelings of guilt, shame, and anxiety (Browning et al, 1991). Additionally, in coming out to others, women run the risks of rejection by family and friends, discrimination in the workplace and in housing, and even violence (Browning et al., 1991; Fassinger, 1991; Lewis, 1984; Riddle & Sang, 1978; Wells & Kline, 1987).

Although the costs of disclosure seem prohibitive, theoretically it is emotionally and behaviorally taxing for

a lesbian not to disclose her sexual orientation. If one is perpetually worried about being identified as a lesbian, one may become increasingly paranoid and vigilant (Sophie, 1982). Behaviorally, a great deal of energy is required to maintain the appearances of a heterosexual lifestyle when one is, in fact, living as a lesbian (Falco, 1990). A lesbian may avoid certain social situations, may introduce her partner as a "friend," or may be reluctant to discuss anything about her personal life or living situation with others to avoid being identified as a lesbian (Moses, 1978). Under these conditions the woman will not develop a positive lesbian identity, nor will she fully possess a heterosexual identity. Hence, the implications of denying herself and her sexuality may include devaluing of the self and lesbianism, low self-esteem, and increased levels of daily stress (Berger, 1990).

Facilitating the process. Because disclosing one's sexual orientation is so important for personal adjustment and identity development, many writers in both the popular and professional press have written about how to come out (Browning et al., 1991; Eichenberg, 1991; Falco, 1990; Fassinger, 1991; Gartrell, 1984b; Groves, 1985; Hanley-Hackenbruck, 1988; Sophie, 1982; Woodman, 1988). In general, this literature describes a cognitive appraisal and choice process in which the lesbian evaluates the potential costs and benefits of disclosing her sexual orientation within particular relationships and circumstances, as well

as her ability and willingness to cope with the potential repercussions.

For instance, several writers have written about how the coming out process can be facilitated by therapists (Browning et al., 1991; Falco, 1990; Fassinger, 1991; Gartrell, 1984b; Sophie, 1982; Woodman, 1988). Some women may have difficulty identifying themselves as lesbian, others with the act of coming out, and still others with disclosing their sexual orientation in specific life arenas. Thus, before encouraging a woman to disclose her sexual identity, exploring her feelings about her sexuality may be important. Given that lesbians are socialized to be heterosexual, they often experience feelings of guilt, shame, and loss in conjunction with lesbianism. Before coming out to others, the woman may need help working through these feelings, otherwise the rejection and condemnation she may experience after disclosure will confirm her own internalized homophobia (Gartrell, 1984a; Sophie, 1987). In general, for lesbians to disclose their sexual orientation to others from a position of identity strength and pride is optimal (Gartrell, 1984b).

The next phase of the disclosure process involves exploring the risks and benefits of such a disclosure as well as the social and psychological consequences of not coming out (Gartrell, 1984b). Additionally, it can be helpful in this phase to also clarify the woman's hopes and expectations in relation to her disclosure, as well as her

motivation for making the disclosure (Browning et al., 1991; Falco, 1990; Hanley-Hackenbruck, 1988; Woodman, 1988).

Many authors agree that it is important for lesbians to initially come out to others who they believe will be accepting and supportive of their lifestyle especially early on in the process (Coleman, 1982; Falco, 1990; Gartrell, 1984b; Sophie, 1982). In general, lesbians seem to come out to an expanding range of individuals beginning with self, moving to other homosexuals and close heterosexual friends, to family, coworkers and employers, to, ultimately, public identification as a lesbian (Troiden, 1989). Across all of these audiences, the woman may have to deal with rejection, discrimination, alienation, and being judged as different or even deviant (Browning et al., 1991; Fassinger, 1991; Gartrell, 1984b). Hence, it can be helpful to prepare the woman for the potential criticism and reactions that others may have to her disclosure, as well as assisting her in developing some strategies about how to work through those feelings (Fassinger, 1991; Gartrell, 1984b). Because women are socialized to develop and maintain relationships, the conflict associated with the coming out process can be particularly stressful (Fassinger, 1991).

Regardless of the situation in which one comes out, there are many factors which affect that decision. According to Hanley-Hackenbruck (1988), individual variables contribute the most variation in the process. They include: race or ethnic group membership, urban versus rural locale,

societal atmosphere, age of first awareness, family rigidity and religiosity, and overall psychological functioning. Further, in an unpublished study by Ort (cf, Falco, 1990, pp. 103-104), 72 lesbians rank ordered aspects of coming out that either enabled or inhibited the overall process. Summarizing her results, the top 10 enablers included: an accepting audience, the belief that people deserve to be what they want to be, a sense of identity and pride, wanting to be fully known, not wanting to hide, meeting other women who are comfortable being out, feeling good and confident about self as a lesbian, wanting to add depth to a relationship, wanting to be myself, and finally, having previous positive experiences in disclosing lesbianism. Conversely, the top 10 inhibitors included: the fear that disclosure would make self or others feel awkward or uncomfortable, the sense that sexuality was an inappropriate topic within relationship, interacting with others who have limited exposure to other lifestyles, hearing homophobic jokes, fearing repercussions on the job, interacting with close-minded and prejudiced people, wanting approval yet fearing it would be lost if others knew about lesbianism, fear of loss of respect, and fear of rejection.

In summary, the decision to disclose one's sexual orientation is based on many factors. A lesbian consciously appraises her willingness and ability to cope with the potential repercussions of her disclosure. Further, she appraises the tenor of the relationship in which she is

contemplating coming out and the circumstances under which that disclosure will be made. Although the response one receives to the disclosure of one's lesbianism is rarely unequivocally positive, it is through the act of disclosure that one affirms one's lesbianism.

Research on Coming Out

In general, there is a dearth of systematic research surrounding lesbian issues (Buhrke, Ben-Ezra, Hurley, & Ruprecht, 1992). However, there have been a couple of studies that have investigated the factors that contribute to a lesbian's willingness to disclose her sexual orientation (Kahn, 1991; Wells & Kline, 1989), whereas others have investigated coming out in specific arenas like family of origin (Cody-Murphy, 1989) or the workplace (Schneider, 1986). Additionally, the implications of coming out on psychological adjustment and satisfaction with lifestyle have been investigated by Miranda and Storms (1989). These studies will be briefly reviewed in this section.

In a small exploratory study, Wells and Kline (1987) utilized an open-ended questionnaire to investigate how, when, where, why, and to whom gay men and lesbians disclose their sexual orientation as well as the risks they perceive in doing so. Seventeen women and 23 men participated in this study. Responses to the questionnaire were organized into categories based on the literature about coming out in terms of who they told, (e.g., close friends, family, etc.),

why they told them, (e.g., honesty, openness), and how they told them, (e.g., contextual and interpersonal factors).

The results of this study for the lesbians indicated that most of these women disclosed their sexual orientation to others they trusted or who they believed would respond favorably. Further, it was easier for these women to disclose their orientation to other lesbians rather than to straight women. In addition, these women were inclined to disclose their sexual orientation for self-validation and affirmation or to deepen an existing relationship. However, before taking the chance of disclosing their orientation, these women tested the views of their intended audience in relation to lesbianism. They also attempted to give this person some clues about their orientation before they actually made the disclosure. Finally, these women also attempted to select an appropriate time and place to make their disclosure.

Kahn (1991) also explored factors associated with disclosure of lesbianism, specifically those that facilitate the development of a lesbian identity and their relationship to the disclosure of that identity. In a study of 81 lesbians, she examined the relationship between stage of lesbian identity development and the degree of openness about one's sexual orientation. The stage of lesbian identity development was assessed by Cass's Stage Allocation Measure (1984b) whereas, self-disclosure was operationalized on a likert scale indicating how open a response would be

made, expectations about being open, and the importance of openness in domains ranging from the lesbian/gay community, to the workplace, to the woman's family of origin. She also explored the contribution of family dynamics, beliefs about women, and internalized homophobia to both identity development and self-disclosure.

Results of the study indicated that the reported stage of identity development was significantly correlated with the degree of outness reported by the woman. Additionally, the expectations held by the woman about the potential reactions of others and the importance she assigned to coming out in that relationship were significantly correlated with the degree of outness reported. In regression analyses, liberal attitudes towards women's roles and low levels of internalized homophobia were also associated with greater degrees of openness though it was not clear if these attitudes facilitated identity development. Finally, communication patterns from family of origin also contributed to the degree of outness one reported. When women reported feeling intimidated by their parents, levels of openness decreased, as did the likelihood that the woman would be "out" in her family of origin.

Schneider (1986) specifically explored the demographic characteristics and work conditions under which lesbians were willing to self-disclose their sexual orientation. Two-hundred and twenty-eight self-identified lesbians completed a questionnaire that was designed especially for

this study. It included items focusing on demographic information, the woman's perception of her work environment, and her perception of the risks of disclosure within that environment. Disclosure in the workplace was assessed by a single item rated on a scale from "not open at all" to "totally open."

Schneider tested a causal model that was based on the assumption that disclosure is specific to particular situations, and workplace factors create the context in which disclosure may or may not occur. Results of the analysis indicated that disclosure of one's sexual orientation was most likely to occur when women were employed in small, non-bureaucratic organizations, when they worked with adults in human service organizations, and in female dominated settings. Wider disclosure was also associated with income, with women who made less money being more open in the workplace. In general, these factors increased the level of sociability leading to increased intimacy which facilitated disclosure. Schneider (1986) suggested that over the course of developing some level of intimacy with co-workers, a lesbian has the opportunity to assess the political awareness, sensitivity, and trustworthiness of her co-workers before disclosing to them--a process over which she has some control, compared to other's reactions.

Cody-Murphy (1989) also investigated the impact of coming out to parents, specifically in how it affects

lesbians in committed relationships. Twenty lesbians who had been in a committed relationship for at least two years and who had come out to her respective parents participated in the study. Respondents were asked to respond to a forced-choice questionnaire about their perceptions of their parent's feelings about their partners and their lesbianism. Then they were asked to rate how those attitudes affected their relationship. Additionally, demographic and historical information was collected in relation to coming out to parents. Respondents indicated that they came out to parents to be acknowledged as the person they were, even if parents disapproved. Doing so decreased the isolation experienced by these women as well as enhancing the sense of integrity and integration these women felt. However, in some instances even though women came out to their parents, their lesbianism and their relationships were not acknowledged by the parents.

More often than not in this study, women (61%) reported that their parents liked their partner "a lot." However, parental feelings about lesbianism seemed to overshadow their feelings about the partner. In other words, the parents' attitude toward the daughter and her partner were perceived to have changed once it became clear that the two were lovers. Even so, these women reported that being out to parents, even when they did disapprove was more affirming than was denying their lesbian identity.

Miranda and Storms (1989) explored the relationship

between disclosure of one's sexual orientation and satisfaction with gay/lesbian lifestyle, and with psychological adjustment in two samples: an older one from gay/lesbian bars and friendship networks, and a second sample from a college population. For the first study, one's outness, (e.g., breadth of one's disclosure) was assessed in 38 life areas (e.g., family, school, employment) with a questionnaire developed for this project on a three-point scale with 1="not out", 2="partly out", 3="completely out." For the second study, participants rated the extent of their disclosure to significant persons in 15 life areas on a revised questionnaire with a likert scale from 1="not out" to 7="completely out." Satisfaction with gay/lesbian lifestyle was rated by participants on a scale of 1="extremely unhappy and unsatisfied" to 7="extremely happy and satisfied." Psychological adjustment was assessed using the Eysenck Personality Inventory which measures neurotic anxiety and by two items which assessed psychological well-being and strength. These two items asked respondents to rate the degree to which they were pleased or displeased with their current lifestyle, and the degree to which they felt psychologically intact. The responses to these items were averaged to provide an index of ego strength.

Results of the analysis were similar for both studies. Positive gay and lesbian identity was associated with low neurotic anxiety and high level of ego strength. Wider self-disclosure was also associated with positive identity,

though it was not related directly to psychological adjustment. There were no gender differences found. The authors concluded that helping clients develop a positive identity through the use of disclosure may promote further psychological adjustment.

In conclusion, these studies investigated the motivation behind coming out, factors associated with greater openness, and the implications of self-disclosure of one's sexual orientation. It seems that lesbians are motivated to disclose their sexual orientation based on a desire to be themselves and to validate their lifestyle, as well as to establish more authentic interpersonal relationships (cf. Falco, 1991; Wells & Kline, 1987). The benefits associated with making that disclosure include: lesbian identity development (Kahn, 1991) and satisfaction with a lesbian lifestyle which is associated with psychological adjustment (Miranda & Storms, 1989). Other research investigated factors associated with disclosure in social relationships, family of origin, and in the workplace. Among friends, lesbians seem to come out to others in the context of a trusting relationship, especially when they believe that they will receive a positive reaction from the person (Wells & Kline, 1987). In family of origin, intergenerational intimidation plays a role in whether a not a lesbian will disclose her sexual orientation to her family (Kahn, 1991). And finally, in the workplace, disclosure was associated with the type of employment in which a lesbian

engaged, as well as the work environment and her income.

However, in considering the results of these studies, the methodological and theoretical shortcomings are apparent. Generalizability of results is limited in all studies for two main reasons: small sample size (Cody-Murphy, 1989; Kahn, 1991; Wells & Kline, 1987) and bias within the samples, such as the use of a college age sample (Miranda & Storms, 1989) or a highly educated one (Schneider, 1986). Additionally, measurement rigor is lacking in the questionnaire studies (Schneider, 1986; Wells & Kline, 1987), as well as in studies that operationalized constructs such as ego strength (Miranda & Storms, 1989) and homophobia (Kahn, 1991) but failed to assess the validity and reliability of these constructs.

For each of these studies the authors presented a rationale for investigating the variables of interest. However, most of them are loosely based in the extant literature on coming out and homosexual identity formation (Cody-Murphy, 1989; Kahn, 1991; Miranda & Storms, 1989), and consequently lack theoretical rigor. This has resulted in a large literature base that is fragmented and in need of integration. Self-efficacy theory offers a theoretical framework for organizing the internal factors that mediate the act of coming out for lesbians. Thus, understanding the potential contribution that different types of efficacy information, (e.g., past performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional

arousal), may make to a lesbians's confidence in her ability to disclose her sexual orientation may be important.

In the next section, the theoretical construct of self-efficacy will be reviewed as will its empirical applications.

Introduction to Self-efficacy

The construct of self-efficacy has not yet been explored within a lesbian population, nor in relation to the act of disclosing a homosexual orientation. Yet, because not only the act of disclosing a lesbian identity, but also the formation of that identity are based in a conscious and cognitive appraisal process, self-efficacy may be a particularly relevant construct. It may clarify the relationship between a lesbian's confidence in her ability to come out and her previous disclosure behavior, as well as what types of experiential information have contributed to her level of confidence. In this section, the component parts of Bandura's theory of self-efficacy will be reviewed. For this study, the most salient feature of the theory is the theoretical contribution of the four sources of efficacy information to the development of self-efficacy itself.

The construct of self-efficacy is one component of Bandura's Social Cognitive theory (1986). Social Cognitive theory explains human functioning through the "triadic reciprocality" of behavior: cognitive factors, personal factors, and environmental events. Each of these components interacts with every other component to determine an

individual's behavior. At any one time, however, an individual's behavior, thoughts, or environment may be most influential in determining action depending upon which is exerting the most salient influence on the individual at the time.

Within Social Cognitive theory, people are assumed to possess several different capabilities that are the basis of their individual agency (Bandura, 1986). The first of these is the ability to transform experiences into symbols that become internal models that guide subsequent behavior. Second, people have the ability for forethought that guides behavior as people set goals, consider consequences, and are purposive in their behavior. Third, people can acquire important information about how to behave through vicarious experience. Fourth, people are able to self-regulate--they set internal standards for their behaviors that they use to evaluate their own performances. Finally, Bandura states that a uniquely human attribute is the ability to be self-reflective, to ponder one's experiences and own thought processes. It is within this aspect of human nature that self-efficacy lies, being, according to Bandura, central to how individuals judge their abilities to deal effectively with different circumstances, ultimately affecting what one does with the skills that one possesses.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to beliefs about one's ability to perform specific behaviors in a specific situation (Bandura,

1986). It is a form of self-referent thought that reflects an individual's sense of his or her ability to have some control over the events of his or her life (Bandura, 1989). In appraising one's ability to successfully perform in a given circumstance, the relationship between what one knows and the action that is taken is mediated by the person's self-efficacy beliefs. Self-efficacy is not directly concerned with the skills that an individual possesses, but with the judgments the individual makes regarding what she can do with those skills. Thus, self-efficacy is one's belief in one's ability to garner the motivation and cognitive resources requisite to ultimately performing a specific behavior in a specific situation (Bandura, 1986; Ozer & Bandura, 1990).

One's perception of self-efficacy in any given domain is distinguished from outcome expectations by Bandura (1977). An outcome expectation is a person's judgment that a behavior will lead to a likely outcome, whereas self-efficacy is the person's belief in one's ability to perform the behavior that will lead to that outcome. Outcome expectations can be confused with a successfully performed skill or behavior. Effectively performing a skill or task may lead to likely outcomes, but in and of itself, the performance is not an outcome. In other words, self-efficacy concerns one's beliefs about performing an act, whereas outcome expectations are the consequences of the act not the act itself (Bandura, 1984). That is not to say that

outcome expectations do not influence one's behaviors. "It is because people see outcomes as contingent on the adequacy of their performances, and care about those outcomes, that they rely on self-judged efficacy in deciding which courses of action to pursue" (Bandura, 1986, p. 392).

Dimensions of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy varies along three dimensions according to Bandura (1977). First, it varies on level. This reflects an individual's confidence in his or her ability to complete an easy task versus a complex one. Second, self-efficacy varies in terms of strength with stronger self-efficacy associated with perseverance in the face of obstacles and weaker self-efficacy easily disconfirmed by failures. Finally, self-efficacy varies in terms of generality; some individuals may consider themselves efficacious in only certain life domains, but not in others. Therefore, an individual with a high level of self-efficacy is more likely to select challenging tasks, to persevere even in the face of difficulties, and is more likely to perform these tasks successfully.

Sources of self-efficacy. The appraisal that one makes about one's efficacy is based on four sources of efficacy information (Bandura, 1986). For this information to be useful to the individual, a cognitive appraisal process ensues. First, the information must be selected for attention by the individual from all of the possible information available from personal, social, situational,

and temporal sources. Next, it must be weighted by the individual in terms of relative importance and accuracy until finally, it is integrated into personal self-efficacy judgments specific to task and circumstance (Bandura, 1977).

The first source of efficacy information is personal performance accomplishments. For instance, in specific relation to this study, these would include previous experiences of coming out to others. Theoretically, this is the most influential source of efficacy information because it is based on the mastery experiences of the individual (Bandura, 1986). However, like all of the sources of information, the impact, positive or negative, that an actual experience will have on one's self-efficacy judgments depends on how the individual evaluates the experience. Bandura suggests that experiences will be judged on difficulty, the amount of effort expended, the amount of assistance received, the circumstances under which the task was performed, as well as the amount of time between related successes and failures. Thus, self-efficacy is likely to increase if the individual successfully accomplishes a difficult task, whereas it will be adversely affected if the person succeeds only with a great deal of effort under optimal circumstances on an easy task.

Self-efficacy is also affected by how the individual accounts for the success or failure of performances (Bandura, 1977). For example, an individual with high self-efficacy is likely to attribute failure to a lack of effort

and success to ability. Conversely, someone with low self-efficacy is likely to attribute failure to inability and success to circumstances or luck. In general, failures are likely to lower self-efficacy, especially early in one's experience in a specific task domain (Bandura, 1986). Yet, failures that are turned into successes through a great deal of effort will enhance self-efficacy.

The second source of efficacy information is vicarious experience; it would include, for example, hearing the coming out stories of other lesbians. Vicarious experience provides important efficacy information by allowing an individual to compare herself to another person with whom she identifies, and who has accomplished a task that is personally relevant to her (Bandura, 1977). This "model" may also act as a knowledgeable source who may be able to provide better strategies for dealing with difficult or threatening situations. Vicarious information is particularly relevant to an individual who has little experience with a certain task because it provides a basis for evaluating one's own personal competence (Bandura, 1986). In this situation, an individual is likely to judge herself by comparing her capabilities to the performances of someone who is perceived to be similar to self in ability as well as in personal characteristics like age, gender, education, socioeconomic status, and race.

The third source of efficacy information is verbal persuasion. In relation to coming out, this would include

messages from others about the importance of coming out even though it is risky. Although verbal persuasion is not as powerful in promoting enduring changes in one's self-efficacy, it can be used to persuade someone to attempt or to persevere in an activity that will increase her self-efficacy through a personal performance accomplishment (Bandura, 1986). Verbal persuasion has its greatest impact on someone who has some reason to believe that through her actions, especially with more effort, the desired performance can be achieved. The potential impact of verbal persuasion on an individual is also dependent upon who the persuader is, what his or her credibility is in relation to the task, as well as his or her perceived expertness. Lastly, verbal persuasion is more likely to be influential when it is given in a situation in which the task is slightly beyond the reach of the person, but is possible with extra effort.

The final source of efficacy information is emotional arousal. For example, this would include the emotional and physiological arousal experienced by the woman in circumstances when she is or has been coming out. According to Bandura (1986), people often read anxiety and nervousness as signs of inability or incompetence in stressful or taxing situations, whereas they associate low arousal with success. However, it is not arousal itself, but the level of that arousal that impacts self-efficacy judgment. Low arousal often facilitates performance, whereas high arousal is

inhibitory. Thus, it becomes important to understand how an individual appraises the arousal experienced. If arousal is experienced as a normal part of the task, it will have little impact on one's judgment of self-efficacy. However, if arousal is interpreted as a lack of ability it will have a detrimental impact on self-efficacy.

An individual's self-efficacy beliefs impact psychosocial functioning in that they affect the activities and environments in which one chooses to participate (Bandura, 1989). In general, people avoid tasks and situations that they believe exceed their capabilities, whereas they will attempt those that they judge themselves capable of handling (Bandura, 1986). Further, self-efficacy also influences how people appraise themselves and circumstances. People with low self-efficacy tend to dwell on their own shortcomings in relation to a task and appraise the difficulties associated with that task as overwhelming. Although self-efficacy mediates the relationship between knowledge and action, it is important to note that self-efficacy alone is not sufficient to insure successful performance. An individual must possess the requisite subskills associated with the endeavor, as well as having some incentive to perform those skills.

Research on self-efficacy

Although no research has investigated how self-efficacy might be helpful in explaining the act of coming out, understanding what types of efficacy information are most

influential in developing coming out self-efficacy is important for designing interventions to promote and facilitate these disclosures. Lesbians with greater coming out self-efficacy would be more likely to have disclosed their sexual orientations to more people in a variety of domains. Consequently, they would be more likely to feel as if they are themselves in relation to others, to possess a positive sense of self-esteem, and thus, are theoretically likely to have an integrated lesbian identity as well.

Self-efficacy has been shown to be a predictor of behavior in a broad range of areas (Maddux & Stanley, 1986). In the area of adjustment, these include: adjustment to abortion (Major, Cozzarelli, Sciacchitano, Cooper, Testa, & Mueller, 1990; Mueller & Major, 1989), management of chronic pain (Jensen, Turner, & Romano, 1991), and adjustment to aging (Holahan & Holahan, 1987). Self-efficacy has also been used to predict mathematics achievement and math and science career development (Lent & Hackett, 1987; Lent, Larkin, & Brown, 1989; Multon, Brown, & Lent, 1991) and reading and writing achievement (Shell et al., 1989). Finally, self-efficacy has been found to be predictive of behavior in social arenas as well; for instance in self-presentation and social anxiety (Maddux, Norton, & Leary, 1988) and in assertion and social skills (Lee, 1984; Moe & Zeiss, 1982).

Although the construct of self-efficacy has been established as a useful predictor of behavior, few studies

have looked at the mechanisms that contribute to the formation of self-efficacy. In this section, some of the studies that have examined the sources of self-efficacy information, such as modeling or vicarious experience, will be reviewed as they relate to self-efficacy and behavior (Bandura, Adams, & Beyer, 1977; Barling & Snipelisky, 1983; Feltz & Mungo, 1983; Ozer & Bandura, 1990; Shunk & Gunn, 1985). Finally, the three studies that have explored the relationship between all of the sources of efficacy information and the development of math self-efficacy will be reviewed (Lent et al., 1991; Lopez & Lent, 1992; Matsui, Matsui, & Ohnishi, 1990). These last studies are very similar to the study at hand.

In an early treatment study, Bandura, Adams, and Beyer (1977) found that different treatment modalities did, indeed, affect efficacy beliefs and behavioral performance of snake phobics. As predicted by self-efficacy theory, members of the group that received both modeling and mastery components in treatment had the highest levels of self-efficacy expectations. Further, participants assigned to just the modeling treatment had lower self-efficacy than the combination treatment, but greater self-efficacy than those assigned to the control condition. Additionally, the congruence between efficacy and actual performance was 89% for those assigned to the modeling and mastery group, and 86% for those in the vicarious learning group. This study illustrates the significant contributions of personal

performance accomplishments and vicarious experience on self-efficacy beliefs. In addition, it highlights the relationship between self-efficacy and performance as well as its association with behavior change.

The results of this study are similar to the results of another study involving snake phobics (Bandura & Adams, 1977). In assessing the efficacy of desensitized snake phobics, Bandura and Adams found varying levels of self-efficacy; however, these self-efficacy ratings were highly predictive of behavior in a snake approach task. Second, they also found that self-efficacy and performance increased conjointly in a mastery-modeling treatment, but that self-efficacy was still a better predictor of behavior than was past performance.

Feltz and Mungo (1983) used path analysis to examine the influence of perceived and actual (heart rate) autonomic arousal on the self-efficacy beliefs of 80 inexperienced divers on the performance of a modified back dive over four trials. Results of the analysis indicated that self-efficacy was the major predictor of performance on Trial 1, however, performance on the subsequent trials became more influenced by previous attempts. Consistent with Bandura's theory, self-efficacy increased with diving attempts, though its influence on performance decreased. Although the diver's heart rate was not a predictor of self-efficacy, perceived autonomic arousal did significantly predict self-efficacy but not performance of the dive. Thus, both

performance accomplishments and perceived autonomic arousal did act as sources of efficacy information as postulated by Bandura, though only performance accomplishments affected behavior after the first dive.

Barling and Snipelisky (1983) examined the relationship between performance accomplishments, (e.g., grades and a classroom participation score); modeling, (e.g., teacher's self-efficacy), as well as the impact of these same sources of information on student outcome expectations. Participants were 350 children in grades 2-7. Results of multiple regression indicated that consistent with Bandura's theory, performance accomplishments explained more of the variance in self-efficacy beliefs than did modeling, though this relationship was moderated by the child's age and how the child accounted for his or her success. The same relationship was found between performance accomplishments and outcome expectations. Like Bandura's theory, these results reflect the major role that attributions play in developing self-efficacy. That is, in order for past performance accomplishments to influence efficacy beliefs, the success must be attributed to self.

The contribution of vicarious experience has been explored in the academic arena as well. Shunk and Gunn (1985) explored the contribution of modeling to self-efficacy and the development of math skills (division) in a group of 40 elementary school children. The students were assigned to one of four modeling conditions: division-

strategy alone; division strategy with emphasis on the importance of following the strategy; division strategy with the addition of short statements of belief in ability to successfully complete the division problem; and to a group which combined both importance of task strategy and achievement beliefs.

The results of ANCOVA analysis from pretest to posttest revealed that students in the group that received information on both the importance of strategies as well as encouragement about their ability had the highest self-efficacy, though their level of skill at posttest was not significantly different from the group that received just the strategy information. Students in the group that emphasized the importance of following the division strategy enhanced their self-efficacy in relation to solving division problems as well as their skill in actually solving the division problems. A key component of the information provided to this group was that it was socially comparative in nature. For instance, students were told that other students who carefully used these strategies were able to successfully complete the division problems. The authors speculated that this may have motivated students as well as providing them with a sense of self-efficacy for performing well.

The mechanisms contributing to the development of coping and cognitive control self-efficacy were examined by Ozer and Bandura (1990). In this experiment 43 women who

were enrolled in a self-defense program rated their coping capabilities in three major domains at pretest, posttest, and follow-up. Interpersonal Self-efficacy was measured by 8 scales that assessed the woman's confidence in her ability to cope with potential social conflicts, e.g. hassles, coercive encounters, in a variety of social situations like dating, parties, or at work. Activities Self-efficacy gauged a woman's confidence in her ability to deliver a variety of strikes and blows to an assailant under different types of assaultive attacks by strangers or acquaintances. Cognitive Control Self-efficacy was a woman's sense of her ability to dismiss thoughts of sexual assault. Participants also rated the extent to which they were disturbed by thinking patterns, anxiety, or engaged in avoidant behavior. At the end of the class, the physical self-defense skills of the participants were assessed in three standardized ways and then were coded for proficiency.

The self-defense class itself was based on a mastery modeling format. Thus, women in the class experienced performance accomplishments by actually performing the self-defense techniques; they had opportunity for vicarious learning as they witnessed effective coping strategies; they received verbal encouragement for their skills; and finally, they were provided with information about the emotional and physiological arousal they experienced.

Ozer and Bandura (1990) compared self-efficacy ratings across time and found that the mastery modeling self-defense

program enhanced the participants' sense of coping self-efficacy in assaultive situations, it also increased their sense of efficacy for controlling negative and disturbing thoughts. Causality was assessed through path analysis. Self-efficacy beliefs in cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains were beneficial in empowering women in self-defense. Thus, the self-defense training enhanced coping and cognitive control self-efficacy that, in turn, decreased women's sense of vulnerability as well as their negative thinking and anxiety.

These studies illustrate that the most potent source of efficacy information is personal performance accomplishments, as theorized by Bandura (1986). Modeling has also been shown to be a source of efficacy information, particularly when used in conjunction with experience (Ozer & Bandura, 1990). The influence of perceived autonomic arousal was also found to contribute to self-efficacy, though only until the individual had actual experience upon which to base subsequent judgments (Feltz & Mungo, 1985). Furthermore, across all of these studies, self-efficacy was predictive of behavior.

Research on sources of efficacy information

There have been three studies that have examined the hypothesized relationships between the four sources of efficacy information and math self-efficacy. The first study was conducted by Matsui, Matsui, and Ohnishi (1990). They initially explored the relationship between the four

sources of efficacy information based on a student's experiences in high school math and the degree of math self-efficacy possessed by a sample of 163 Japanese college freshmen. They also examined the moderating influences of locus of control on this relationship.

For this study the authors utilized a two-part questionnaire. Part I assessed math self-efficacy and was used as a criterion measure. Part II, administered two weeks later, consisted of four scales designed to assess the four sources of efficacy information. These scales were developed by the authors and were theoretically congruent with Bandura's theory. The performance accomplishment scale reflected students' mastery experiences through the use of self-reports of the highest grade they obtained in high school math. The other three scales, consisting of five items each, assessed students' experiences of modeling, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal during their high school math experiences. Students were asked to rate the degree of congruence between each statement and themselves.

A two-step regression analysis was utilized in this study. In the first step, gender and every source of efficacy information except the one of interest was entered into the regression equation. In the second step, the same four variables plus the efficacy source of interest was entered. The results of this analysis indicated that three of the four sources of efficacy information did make unique contributions to math self-efficacy. Verbal persuasion did

not, perhaps because it was highly correlated with performance accomplishments. Thus, these Japanese students reported higher self-efficacy when they had done well in math, when they saw similar others doing well in math, and when they felt little anxiety in relation to math. Together, the four sources accounted for 29.2 percent of the variance in math self-efficacy in the analysis by Matsui et al. (1990). The authors (Matsui et al., 1990) suggested that the moderate level of explained variance might have resulted from not including other relevant variables in the regression equation, like years of high school math and masculinity.

Additionally, Matsui et al. (1990) found that the relationship between math self-efficacy and modeling, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal was weakly moderated by locus of control. This same variable did not moderate the relationship between performance accomplishments and math self-efficacy; the authors suggested that this supports Bandura's contention that mastery experiences are the most potent source of efficacy information. However, the authors did conclude that people with internal locus of control may make better use of efficacy information than do those with an external locus of control.

The second study was conducted by Lent, Lopez, and Bieschke (1991). They further explored the relationship between the four sources of efficacy information and math self-efficacy; they also investigated the relationship

between math self-efficacy and scientific career choice. The contribution of the four sources of efficacy information to college students' math self-efficacy was assessed with a 40-item questionnaire developed by the authors. For example, past performance accomplishments were assessed on a likert scale by statements like, "I received good grades in my math class." Vicarious experience was assessed with statements like, "My favorite teachers were usually math teachers.", and verbal persuasion with statements like, "My friends have discouraged me from taking math classes." Emotional arousal, however, was assessed with the Fennema-Sherman Math Anxiety Scale. Math self-efficacy was operationalized as the mean rating of each student's confidence in his or her ability to complete each of 15 math courses with a grade of B or better.

Lent et al. (1991) found support for the relationship between the four sources of efficacy information and student's rating of math self-efficacy, especially the influence of prior performance on those percepts. However, in the full regression equation that predicted math self-efficacy, only past performance accomplishments, both actual (Math ACT) and perceived, explained significant variance. The other sources were significant only in terms of bivariate correlations with math self-efficacy.

In a subsequent study, Lopez and Lent (1992) explored the relationship between the four theoretical sources of efficacy information and math self-efficacy for a sample of

50 high school students. They also examined the contribution of the students' academic self-concept to math self-efficacy beyond that of the four sources of efficacy information. Further, they investigated the relationship between math self-efficacy and students' perceptions of math/science interest and usefulness in life and work. The 40-item Sources of Math Self-efficacy scale was used to assess the contribution of the four sources of efficacy information. This same instrument was used in the former study (Lent et al., 1991) and was slightly revised for use with a high school population. Math self-efficacy was assessed with a 20-item scale that asked students to rate their confidence in their ability to solve math problems representative of those they would encounter in the Algebra II course in which they were enrolled.

Results of the hierarchical regression indicated that this group of high school students relied primarily on actual (grades) and perceived past performance accomplishments when appraising their ability to solve mathematical problems. Of the remaining sources of efficacy information, only emotional arousal explained significant variance in the prediction of math self-efficacy. Additionally, academic self-concept was not significant in the prediction of math self-efficacy. Finally, in exploring the relationship between math self-efficacy and math interest and usefulness, Lopez and Lent (1992) found a positive relationship between math self-efficacy and math

science interests; math science interests also mediated the relationship between math self-efficacy and perceived usefulness.

The findings of this study (Lopez & Lent, 1992) are consistent with both Bandura's theory of how self-efficacy develops and with the results of their prior study (Lent et al., 1991). In both of these studies, past performance accomplishments, both actual and perceived, were found to be the most salient predictor of math self-efficacy. However, in the latter study, (Lopez & Lent, 1992) emotional arousal was also found to be a significant predictor. These results differ from the results obtained by Matsui et al. (1990) who found that three of the four sources of efficacy information (e.g., all except verbal persuasion), made unique contributions to students' perceptions of math self-efficacy.

Several factors may have accounted for the results obtained by Lent et al., (1991) and Lopez and Lent (1992). First, in the earlier study (Lent et al., 1991), the source variables were highly intercorrelated with each other and with math self-efficacy. This multicollinearity may have lessened the predictive contribution of vicarious learning, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal. Further, the scale measuring vicarious learning in that study had questionable internal consistency. Although there were measurement problems within the study, the high correlation between each of the source variables and math self-efficacy

does support Bandura's (1986) theoretical premise. These authors (Lent et al., 1991) speculated that by the time students reach college they have had a lot of direct academic experience that may be the basis of their self-efficacy judgments. The other sources of information may be more influential for someone who has had less direct experience within a given domain.

In the latter study (Lopez & Lent, 1992), both past performance accomplishments and emotional arousal were significant predictors of math self-efficacy. Like the earlier study, the scale measuring vicarious learning had marginal internal consistency making it difficult to accurately assess the true contribution of vicarious learning to math self-efficacy. However, by using a high school population, Lopez and Lent (1992) were better able to assess the contribution of the four sources of efficacy information to math self-efficacy for students with potentially less math experience than college students.

The results of these studies have several implications for the study at hand. First, it is important to assess the contribution of the four sources of information in a manner congruent with Bandura's (1986) theoretical definition of each. Thus, items within each scale were evaluated by independent experts for face and content validity in relation to the act of coming out as well as being statistically assessed for internal consistency. Next, it was expected that the sources of efficacy should be somewhat

correlated with each other and highly correlated with coming out self-efficacy, while remaining discrete enough to measure the unique contribution of each to coming out self-efficacy. Finally, the theoretical basis of this study, that is, the theoretical potency of each of the four sources of efficacy information, dictated the regression model that was utilized to analyze the data.

Conclusion

Given that a lesbian makes a conscious decision (Browning et al, 1991; Falco, 1990; Fassinger, 1991; Gartrell, 1985) about whether or not to come out in a variety of situations, understanding which sources of efficacy information foster a sense of coming out self-efficacy may have important theoretical and therapeutic implications. Theoretically, the results of this study may clarify the contribution of internal motivation to coming out. Therapeutically, the results may have implications for the design of interventions to facilitate the rite of passage that is coming out, as well as to promote the development of a positive lesbian identity.

In the next chapter, the methodology behind this study will be reviewed.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This study consisted of two phases. The first phase included scale construction and pilot testing of the Sources of Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale (SCOSS) and the Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale (COSS). The second phase consisted of the actual field study and data analysis.

Scale Construction

The first task in this study was to develop two measures. The first, the Sources of Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale (SCOSS), was designed to assess the four sources of efficacy information in relation to coming out. The second measure, the Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale (COSS), was designed to assess lesbians' confidence in their ability to come out in a variety of ways and circumstances in the future. There were two stages in the development of these measures. Stage I was the actual development of the two measures. Stage II involved pilot testing the measures and determining their validity and reliability.

Sources of Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale. Because Bandura (1986) has not provided clear guidelines for the assessment of the four sources of self-efficacy, it was important that the items for SCOSS be written in a manner

consistent with the theory of self-efficacy (Dawis, 1987). Thus, items were developed congruent with Bandura's definition of each of the sources: past performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal. Items were also similar in form to those developed by Lent et al. (1991) to assess the perceived sources of mathematics self-efficacy. The purpose of these items was to assess the extent to which the influence of prior experiences within the realm of each of the four sources of self-efficacy was true for the respondent, and whether that influence was positive or negative. Items for the SCOSS were developed in conjunction with 5 lesbian and 2 gay counselors who possessed not only personal but professional experience (an average of 9 years counseling experience) with the coming out process. The group was provided with Bandura's (1986) theoretical description of self-efficacy and the four sources of efficacy information as well as example items for each measure (Appendix A). The group was then asked to brainstorm coming out experiences and circumstances that might be related to each of the four sources of efficacy information. From their ideas, items were developed for each of the subscales of the Sources of Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale.

Next, the potential items were reviewed by a different group of 4 experts, comprised of two Ph.D. level professionals and two Ph.D. candidates who had previous

experience with research on self-efficacy. At least 15 items were selected for each source subscale. Item selection was based on the congruence between the item and both the self-efficacy and coming out literatures. To insure that these items possessed adequate content validity, a "back translation" method was utilized (Dawis, 1987). The second panel of experts was given the same example items and definitions as those used by the first group with slightly different instructions (Appendix B). They were asked to label which source of efficacy information was being tapped by each item. If the items were written in a fashion consistent with self-efficacy theory, high congruence between judges about what source was being tapped by each item was expected. Items were retained if 3 of the 4 experts agreed about item intent.

Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale. Bandura (1984, 1986) has been more clear about how to assess the construct of self-efficacy. He suggests that a microanalytic approach be taken in assessing the individual's perceptions of his or her confidence to perform a given behavior, in this instance, to come out, under a variety of different situational demands. Like the SCOSS, I provided the first group of counselors with the definition of self-efficacy and some example items (Appendix A). They were asked to generate experiences that tapped different ways in which a lesbian might behaviorally disclose her sexual orientation. From the ideas generated by the counselors, I created 20

items that are theoretically and conceptually consistent with self-efficacy and coming out literature. These items were also reviewed for readability and content validity by the second panel of experts, though the experts were not asked to translate the items back to self-efficacy theory as they had been on the SCOSS. Instead, the experts were asked to rate each item for its accuracy in tapping coming out self-efficacy on a Likert scale of 1=not at all to 5=completely. Items that averaged a three or above across all of the experts were retained on the measure.

The Pilot Study

Recruitment of participants. The sample for the pilot study was obtained through the snowball sampling technique (Schneider, 1987) in which friends, acquaintances, and colleagues were asked to distribute the survey to other lesbians who they thought might be interested in participating in this research study. Fifty surveys were distributed for the pilot study and 28 were returned for a response rate of 56 percent.

Description of the sample. The demographic characteristics of the pilot sample (N=28) are summarized in Table 3.1. The majority of respondents (92.9%) were Caucasian. The mean age for the group was 33 years (SD = 4.26) and ranged from 22 to 41 years of age. This sample was highly educated, with 75% of the respondents possessing a graduate degree, and more than half (68%) working in a professional capacity. Most of the participants in the

pilot study (71%) reported that they were currently living with their partner. Twenty-five percent of the participants in the pilot study reported that they had children who were living with them. And, finally, the vast majority (89%) of pilot study respondents reported being very satisfied with their lifestyle.

Table 3.1

Demographic Information for Pilot Sample

Variable	N	%
Ethnicity		
Caucasian	26	92.9
African American	1	3.6
Hispanic	1	3.6
Education		
Some college	4	14.3
Bachelor's degree	1	3.6
Some grad school	2	7.1
Graduate degree	21	75.0
Income		
Under $9,999	3	10.7
$10,000-19,999	4	14.3
$20,000-29,999	11	39.3
$30,000-39,999	5	17.9
Over $40,000	5	17.9
Occupation		
Major professionals	6	21.4
Professionals	13	46.4
Administrative personnel	2	7.1
Clerical/Technical	2	7.1
Retired, unemployed, students	5	17.9
Relationship Status		
Single, not dating	2	7.1
Dating	1	3.6
Seeing one person	5	17.9
Living with partner	20	71.4
Parenthood Status		
Have children	7	25.0
Children live with you	7	25.0
No children	21	75.0

Table 3.1, continued

	Mean	Range	SD
Age	33.43	22-41	4.26
Age of identification	21.43	14-32	4.86
Lifestyle satisfaction	4.32	2-5	.77

Procedures. For the pilot study, a subject was given or mailed a questionnaire packet. The cover letter (Appendix C) explained that I am a lesbian psychologist who is interested in exploring how lesbians experience coming out. I also assured potential subjects that their responses were anonymous and would be kept completely confidential and that if they had any questions or concerns they could contact me by phone. I also emphasized that the results of this study might be used to develop affirmative ways of assisting lesbians in the process of coming out.

The cover of the questionnaire packet provided a brief summary of this study, as well as informing subjects of their rights. Informed and voluntary consent was assumed when the questionnaire packet was returned. Subjects were asked to complete the enclosed questionnaires (described in the next section): a demographic form, the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale, the Sexual Orientation Disclosure Scale, the Sources of Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale, the Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale, and the Multiple Affect Adjective Checklist--Revised. (The final version of the questionnaire

packet can be found in Appendix D.) Upon completing the packet, respondents were asked to return the packet in the stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Measures

Demographics. All respondents were asked to complete a demographic information form. Information was collected on the following: age, age of first identification as lesbian, current relationship status, ethnicity, education, occupation, income, religious affiliation, and living location (urban or rural area). Additionally, participants' sexual orientation self-label was assessed with the Kinsey Scale (1953), as modified by McDermott, Tyndall, and Lichtenberg (1989). This is a single item, seven point scale that asks respondents to choose one of seven categories that best describes their orientation toward sexual involvement with members of the same sex, opposite sex, or both. Current satisfaction with lesbian lifestyle was assessed with one item on a Likert scale with 1=extremely unhappy and unsatisfied to 5=extremely happy and satisfied (Miranda & Storms, 1989).

Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale. To assess positive and negative feelings toward the self, the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (1965) was utilized. This scale is comprised of 10 Likert-type items that provide a unidimensional measure of self-esteem (e.g., "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself"). The internal consistency of this scale is adequate and has been estimated by previous researchers as

.79 to .88 (Cronbach's alpha). Convergent validity has also been demonstrated with a variety of other self-esteem instruments (Robertson, Shaver, & Wrightsman, 1991).

Sexual Orientation Disclosure Scale. Respondents were asked to rate the extent of their disclosure to others in their lives, their outness, on the Sexual Orientation Disclosure Scale (Miranda & Storms, 1989). This scale is comprised of 15 Likert-type items which range from 1=not out to 7=completely out. The scale was found to be internally consistent by its authors with a Cronbach's alpha of .92. Guttman's scaling criteria was met by 7 of 15 items on the scale. The coefficient of reproducibility was $r(131)=.92$ and the coefficient of scalability was $r(131)=.67$. No validity information was provided.

Multiple Affect Adjective Checklist--Revised. To assess positive and negative affect, the Multiple Affect Adjective Checklist--Revised (MAACL-R) was utilized. This instrument is comprised of 132 adjectives. Respondents are asked to "check" those adjectives that reflect how they "generally" feel. The previously demonstrated internal consistency of the scale is adequate, ranging from .69 to .92. Test-retest reliability was low for the positive affect scale at .49, although it was found to be .89 for the negative affect scale. Convergent validity has also been demonstrated with a variety of affective measures (Zuckerman & Lubin, 1985).

Sources of Coming Out Self-efficacy. To assess the

contribution of the four theoretical sources of self-efficacy, the Sources of Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale (SCOSS) was utilized. It consists of four subscales. For the pilot study, the Performance Accomplishment (PA) subscale (Table 3.2) consisted of 13 items, the Vicarious Experience (VE) subscale (Table 3.3) consisted of 14 items, the Verbal Persuasion (VP) subscale (Table 3.4) consisted of 12 items, and Emotional Arousal (EA) subscale (Table 3.5) consisted of 15 items. The items were randomly ordered within the SCOSS measure and are scored on a scale of 1-5, with 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree with the statement provided. Approximately half of the items for each subscale were positively worded with the other half negatively worded. The negatively worded items were reverse scored. Items were summed and divided by the number of items in the respective scale, creating an average score ranging from 1-5. Thus, higher average scores indicate generally more positive coming out experiences within each of the source areas (e.g., being accepted, feeling proud).

Table 3.2

Performance Accomplishments Subscale

1.	I have lost friends when I told them that I was a lesbian.
5.	I have come out to others only to have them continue to treat me as if I was straight, instead of acknowledging my lesbianism.
6.	In general, coming out to others has been easy for me to do.
16.	I have experienced discrimination after coming out as a lesbian.
17.	I have been rejected by people important to me when I told them that I am a lesbian.
19.	Other people have treated me as if there was something wrong with me after I told them that I was a lesbian.
22.	Others have responded positively to me when I came out to them.
30.	I have been loved and accepted when I came out to others who are important to me.
41.	I have been harassed by others after I told them that I am a lesbian.
45.	Others have responded violently toward me after I told them I am a lesbian.
50.	Important others have been pleased when I shared the fact that I was a lesbian with them.
51.	I have come out to many people.
52.	Coming out to people whose opinions I value has not been easy for me.

Table 3.3

Vicarious Experience Subscale

*7.	Many of my friends have had positive experiences coming out to their families.
*9.	I know many lesbians who believe that it is important to hide their lesbianism from others.
**13.	I have read positive newspaper accounts about lesbians.
*14.	I have seen positive stories about lesbians who have come out on tv or in the movies.
15.	I know of lesbians who have been disowned by their families when they came out to them.
20.	I know of lesbians who lost their jobs after they came out at work.
*23.	Most of the lesbians I know tend to be out to most others.
*28.	I have read books about how to come out as a lesbian.
31.	In the newspaper I have read about women who have been discriminated against because of their sexual orientation.
**33.	I am aware of public figures who are openly and positively lesbian.
*34.	My friends have shared many of their positive coming out experiences with me.
*35.	My lesbian friends have shared many of their negative coming out experiences with me.
37.	I have heard many negative stereotypes about lesbians.
53.	I know of lesbians who have been the victims of violence after they came out.

Note. * Deleted after pilot study.
** Deleted for main study data analysis.

Table 3.4

Verbal Persuasion Subscale

4.	Indirectly, people have encouraged me to come out to them.
8.	My friends have encouraged me not to come out to important people in my life.
10.	I have been encouraged by my family to come out to others.
*11	I have been warned by other lesbians that I could lose my job if I come out.
24.	People I care about have supported my lesbianism by encouraging me to come out to others.
*26.	Co-workers have encouraged me to be more out at my workplace.
27.	Close friends have encouraged me not to tell my parents that I am a lesbian.
38.	My best friend has encouraged me to come out.
40.	Others lesbians have told me that my sexual orientation is nothing to hide from people who love me.
**46.	Family members have encouraged me not to tell others about my lesbianism.
47.	People have often let me know indirectly that they do not want to know that I am a lesbian.
54.	My friends have encouraged me to come out to others.

Note. * Deleted after pilot study.
** Deleted for main study data analysis.

Table 3.5

Emotional Arousal Subscale

2.	I feel happy when I come out to others.
3.	I feel anxious when I think about coming out to important others in my life.
12.	I feel terrified about what might happen if I come out to others in my life.
18.	I am afraid that if I come out I will be rejected by people I care about.
21.	I feel powerful when I think about coming out.
25.	I feel relieved when I disclose my sexual orientation to others.
29.	I often feel sick to my stomach when I think about coming out to others.
32.	I feel vulnerable when I come out to someone.
36.	I feel ashamed to be a lesbian when I think about coming out to other members of my family.
39.	I dread coming out to others.
42.	I feel proud when I come out to others.
43.	I worry that others will make fun of me once they know I am a lesbian.
44.	I feel true to myself when I come out.
48.	It feels self-validating for me to come out to others.
49.	I feel excited when I think about telling others about my lesbianism.

Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale. The Coming Out Self-Efficacy Scale (Table 3.6) was designed to assess participant's confidence in their ability to disclose their sexual orientation in a variety of circumstances. It consists of 14 items, scaled on a 1-5 scale with 1=not at all confident and 5=totally confident. Like the sources subscales, item scores were summed and divided by the total number of items resulting in an average score that could range from 1 to 5. Higher scores represent greater degrees of coming out self-efficacy.

Table 3.6

Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale

*1.	subscribe to a lesbian publication?
*2.	attend a womyn's music festival?
*3.	go to a lesbian/gay bar or restaurant in the town in which you live?
4.	participate in a local lesbian organization?
5.	come out to other members of your family?
6.	come out to your boss at your workplace?
7.	participate in a gay/lesbian pride march in the town in which you live?
8.	speak out as a lesbian for lesbian rights?
9.	openly discuss your lesbian lifestyle with co-workers?
10.	be openly affectionate with a lover in public?
11.	attend a program for lesbians sponsored by a lesbian/gay organization in the town in which you live?
12.	come out to heterosexuals?
13.	come out to others who you believe are lesbian or gay?
*14.	purchase books that are clearly by or about lesbians at a bookstore?

Note. * Deleted for main study data analysis.

Reliability of Novel Scales

The main purpose of the pilot study was to assess the reliability of the scales designed especially for this study. To determine the degree of reliability for each of the scales, the coefficient alpha was calculated for each (N=28). Nunnally (1978) suggested that all newly developed measures should be assessed for internal consistency before other forms of reliability are assessed. A high alpha indicates homogeneous items that are internally consistent. A low alpha indicates heterogeneous items that are not consistent. To enhance the consistency of the scales during the statistical analysis, items that were not statistically consistent with the other items within that scale were dropped (See Tables 3.2-3.6).

The final results of the reliability analyses on the COSS and the four subscales of the SCOSS are reported in Table 3.7. The alpha coefficient obtained for the COSS (.83) indicated a high degree of internal consistency among all of the original items. The alpha coefficients obtained for the four subscales of the SCOSS (PA=.75; VE=.68; VP=.71; EA=.89) were more variable. Although Nunnally (1978) suggests that an alpha of .80 indicates adequate reliability and thus is suitable for research purposes, the alphas obtained for three of the four sources subscales are lower than his criteria. Further, the alpha obtained for the vicarious experience subscale (.68) is indicative of mariginal reliability. However, the alphas that were

obtained are comparable to those obtained by other researchers in the field (Lent et al., 1991; Lopez & Lent, 1992) for similar scales and thus were utilized for the main study.

Table 3.7

Internal Consistency of Scales--Pilot Study

Scale	Alpha
Coming Out Self Efficacy Scale	.83
Performance Accomplishments Subscale	.75
Vicarious Experience Subscale	.68
Verbal Persuasion Subscale	.71
Emotional Arousal Subscale	.89

Note. N = 28

Additional validity information for the COSS was obtained by calculating the Pearson-Product-Moment correlations between it and outness and satisfaction with lesbian lifestyle. The significant correlations between coming out self-efficacy and outness (r = .63, p < .001) and lifestyle satisfaction (r = .55, p < .001) support the construct validity of the COSS. Results are summarized in Table 3.8.

Table 3.8

Intercorrelations among Variables--Pilot Study

Variable	1	2	3
1. Outness	--		
2. Satisfaction	.56**	--	
3. Efficacy	.63***	.55**	--

Note. N = 28.

Outness = Sexual Orientation Disclosure Scale
Satisfaction = Lifestyle Satisfaction
Efficacy = Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale
* = $p < .05$
** = $p < .01$
*** = $p < .001$

The Main Study

Recruitment of participants. One of the major problems in conducting lesbian and gay research has been obtaining a sample (Burhke et al., 1992). This is due to a variety of reasons with probably the most cogent one being that, in general, lesbians are considered to be an invisible population. Consequently, a number of practices have been utilized to obtain a sample. Many researchers have enlisted the cooperation of lesbian social and political organizations in obtaining participants for their studies; others have obtained participants through lesbian support groups or activities (Chapman & Brannock, 1987; Kahn, 1991; Miranda & Storms, 1989; Shachar & Gilbert, 1983; Wells &

Kline, 1987). On the other hand, some researchers have taken advantage of interpersonal connections within the lesbian community by recruiting subjects through friendship and acquaintance networks (Moses, 1978; Schneider, 1986). Most studies utilize a combination of these techniques to obtain the largest, most representative sample possible (Chapman & Brannock, 1987; Kahn, 1991; Miranda & Storms, 1989; Shachar & Gilbert, 1983; Wells & Kline, 1987). Although researchers have utilized a variety of techniques to obtain participants for research studies, return rates and sample sizes tend to be smaller than more traditional studies due to concern about being identified as lesbian on the part of participants (Buhrke, Ben-Ezra, Hurley, & Ruprecht, 1992).

For the main study, a combination of recruitment methods was utilized. First, in an attempt to use a more conventional sampling strategy, the Michigan Organization for Human Rights (MOHR) randomly selected four-hundred lesbians from their membership list of 5,000 lesbians. These women received the survey packet in the mail and were invited to participate in the study. Only 71 of these women chose to participate for a response rate of 18 percent. However, these women comprised more than half of the participants (53%) for the main study. The response to this more traditional methodology was disappointing, and illustrates the difficulty associated with obtaining a representative sample from this population.

Second, a survey methodology that has been successful in obtaining lesbian participants was used. One-hundred-twenty survey packets were distributed through friendship and acquaintance networks in what is known as a snowball methodology (Moses, 1978; Schneider, 1987). Sixty-three women responded to these surveys for a response rate of 53 percent. These women comprised 47 percent of the sample for the main study. The overall response rate for the main study was 26 percent.

Description of the main study sample. A number of demographic characteristics were collected for the main study sample (N=134) and are summarized in Table 3.9. The vast majority of the participants were Caucasian (95.5%). The mean age of participants was 37.58 (SD=9.27), and ranged between 18 and 67 years. More than half of the participants had completed at least a bachelor's degree if not more (67.4%). Additionally, almost half (46.9%) of the participants reported an annual income of more than $30,000 a year. Participants in the study tended to be involved in a committed relationship with another woman. About half (49.6%) of the participants reported that they were currently living with their lover or partner, whereas about a quarter of the sample (26.3%) described themselves as single, not dating. Less than a quarter (22.9%) of the participants reported that they had children, with children living with more than half (12.3%) of those women who reported having children.

Table 3.9

Demographic Information for Total Sample

Variable	N	%
Ethnicity		
Caucasian	127	95.5
African American	1	.8
Native American	2	1.5
Hispanic	1	.8
Other	2	1.5
Education		
Grade school	1	.8
High school	4	3.0
Some college	38	28.8
Bachelor's degree	29	22.0
Some grad school	13	9.8
Graduate degree	47	35.6
Income		
Under $9,999	25	18.9
$10,000-19,999	20	15.2
$20,000-29,999	25	18.9
$30,000-39,999	23	17.4
Over $40,000	39	29.5
Occupation		
Major professionals	4	3.1
Professionals	48	36.9
Administrative personnel	27	20.8
Clerical/Technical	16	12.3
Skilled labor	7	5.4
Machine operators	8	6.2
Retired, unemployed, students	20	15.4

Table 3.9, continued

Relationship Status			
Single, not dating	35	26.3	
Dating	8	6.0	
Seeing one person	21	15.8	
Living with partner	66	49.6	
Other	3	2.3	
Parenthood Status			
Have children?	30	22.7	
Live with you?	16	12.3	
No children	102	77.3	
	Mean	Range	SD
Age	37.58	18-67	9.27
Age of lesbian awareness	19.67	5-52	7.90
Lifestyle satisfaction	4.38	2-5	.75

To determine if there were differences between the sample obtained through MOHR and the one obtained via the snowball technique, between-group differences were examined statistically. The two groups were compared on demographic characteristics and on responses to the survey scales. The results are summarized in Table 3.10. The only significant demographic difference found between the groups was age ($t=-3.46$, $p<.001$). The average age for the group from the MOHR sample was 40, whereas the average age of the group obtained through the snowball methodology was 35. The two groups did not vary significantly from each other on any other dimension. Consequently, the two samples were combined for the proposed data analysis.

Table 3.10

Demographic Comparison of Sample Groups

Demographic	Snowball	MOHR	Test Statistic
Age	34.76	40.11	$t=-3.46^{***}$ ($df=131$)
Age of Awareness	19.65	19.69	$t=-.03$ ($df=131$)
Income			$x^2=1.36$
<$10,00	22%	16%	($df=4$)
<19,999	14%	16%	
<$29,999	21%	18%	
<$39,999	16%	19%	
>$40,000	27%	31%	
Education			$x^2=.23$
BA or less	52%	57%	*(df=1)*
Some grad or more	48%	43%	
Occupation			$x^2=.23$
Professional	63%	59%	($df=1$)
Clerical, unskilled labor	37%	41%	
Relationship Status			$x^2=.36$
Living with partner	52%	47%	($df=1$)
Uncommitted	48%	53%	

Table 3.10, continued

	Snowball	MOHR	Range	Test Statistic
Lifestyle Satisfaction	4.44	4.34	1-5	t=.87 (*df*=129)
PA	3.50	3.45	1-5	t=.43 (*df*=121)
VE	2.26	2.28	1-5	t=.08 (*df*=125)
VP	3.19	2.91	1-5	t=2.28 (*df*=118)
EA	3.58	3.45	1-5	t=1.16 (*df*=121)
Efficacy	3.88	3.76	1-5	t=.80 (*df*=124)
Outness	4.59	4.29	1-7	t=1.25 (*df*=132)
Positive	18.33	18.39	0-32	t=-.04 (*df*=131)
Negative	5.81	6.79	0-29	t=.97 (*df*=131)
Self-esteem	3.52	3.38	1-4	t=1.52 (*df*=127)

Note. Efficacy = Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale
PA = Performance Accomplishments subscale
VE = Vicarious Experience Subscale
VP = Verbal Persuasion Subscale
EA = Emotional Arousal Subscale
Outness = Sexual Orientation Disclosure Scale
Satisfaction = Lifestyle Satisfaction
Self-esteem = Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale
Positive = Positive Affect as measured by MAACL-R
Negative = Negative Affect as measured by MAACL-R
** = $p < .01$
*** = $p < .001$

Procedures. The procedures for the main study were exactly the same as they were for the pilot study. Participants were either handed or mailed a questionnaire packet which included a cover letter (Appendix C) and a survey packet (Appendix D). Like the pilot study, participants in the main study were asked to complete the demographic information form and the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale, the Sexual Orientation Disclosure Scale, the revised versions of the Sources of Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale and the Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale, and the Multiple Affect Adjective Checklist--Revised. (These measures are described in detail in the Pilot Study section.) Once they had completed the survey, respondents were asked to return it in the stamped, pre-addressed envelope.

Reliability. Before any data analyses were conducted for the main study, the degree of reliability (the coefficient alpha) for each of the novel scales was again calculated this time using the main sample (N=134). Again, to enhance the consistency of the scales for the statistical analyses, items that were not statistically consistent with the other items within the subscale were dropped. (See Tables 3.2-3.6).

The final results of the reliability analyses for the main study on the COSS and the four subscales of the SCOSS are reported in Table 3.11. The alpha coefficient that was obtained for the COSS (.90) indicated a high degree of internal consistency among 10 of the 14 items. Four items

were deleted to enhance scale precision because they were consistently endorsed by respondents as easy to do. The alpha coefficients obtained for the four subscales of the SCOSS (PA=.73; VE=.69; VP=.68; EA=.85) were more variable. Although the alphas obtained for the four sources subscales are lower than Nunnally's (1978) criteria they were comparable to those obtained by other researchers in the field (Lent et al, 1991; Lopez & Lent, 1992) for similar scales.

Table 3.11

Internal Consistency of Scales--Main Study

Scale	Alpha
Coming Out Self Efficacy Scale	.90
Performance Accomplishments Subscale	.73
Vicarious Experience Subscale	.69
Verbal Persuasion Subscale	.68
Emotional Arousal Subscale	.85

Note. N = 115

Additional validity information for the COSS was obtained by calculating the Pearson-Product-Moment correlations between it, outness, and satisfaction with lesbian lifestyle. The significant correlations with the more domain specific constructs of lifestyle satisfaction

(r=.20, $p < .05$) and outness (r=.73, $p < .001$) support the construct validity of the COSS. Results are summarized in Table 3.12.

Table 3.12

Intercorrelations among Variables

Variable	1	2	3
1. Outness	--		
2. Satisfaction	.12*	--	
3. Efficacy	.73***	.20*	--

Note. N = 110
Outness = Sexual Orientation Disclosure Scale
Satisfaction = Lifestyle Satisfaction
Efficacy = Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale
* = $p < .05$
** = $p < .01$
*** = $p < .001$

The descriptive information for each of the scales developed for this study are presented in Table 3.13. The mean score for the performance accomplishment subscale was 3.47 with a potential range of 1-5; the mean for the vicarious experience subscale was 2.27 with a potential range of 1-5; the mean of the verbal persuasion subscale was 3.05 with a potential range of 1-5; and the mean for the emotional arousal subscale was 3.51 with a potential range of 1-5. Descriptive information was also obtained for the COSS; the mean was 3.47 with a potential range of 1-5.

Table 3.13

Novel Scale Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Median	Mode	Potential Range	SD
PA (13 items)	123	3.47	3.46	3.93	1-5	.61
VE (5 items)	127	2.27	2.00	1.80	1-5	.88
VP (9 items)	120	3.05	3.00	2.67	1-5	.68
EA (15 items)	123	3.51	3.47	3.80	1-5	.65
Efficacy (10 items)	126	3.47	3.60	3.70	1-5	.99

Note. PA = Performance Accomplishments Subscale
VE = Vicarious Experience Subscale
VP = Verbal Persuasion Subscale
EA = Emotional Arousal Subscale
Efficacy = Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale

The descriptive information was also obtained for the established scales utilized in this study. The mean score for the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale was 3.45 with a potential range of 1 to 4. The mean for the Outness scale was 4.43 with a potential range of 1 to 7. The mean of the Positive Affect scale was 18.36, with scores ranging from 4 to 32, and finally, the mean for the Negative Affect scale was 6.32 with scores ranging from 0 to 29.

Table 3.14

Scale Descriptive Statistics

	n	Mean	Median	Mode	Potential Range	SD
Self-esteem (10 items)	129	3.45	3.50	4.00	1-4	.50
Outness (15 items)	134	4.43	4.54	4.00	1-7	1.36
Positive (33 items)	133	18.36	19.00	10.00	4-32	7.00
Negative (37 items)	133	6.32	5.00	.00	0-29	5.80

Note. Self-esteem = Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale
Positive = Positive Affect as measured by MAACL-R
Negative = Negative Affect as measured by MAACL-R
Outness = Sexual Orientation Disclosure Scale

Design. The design of both the pilot and the field study can be considered to be Correlational Field Studies (Gelso, 1980). This is because there was little, if any,

experimental control over, or manipulation of, the predictor variables, and the setting for the investigation was the real world. Further, subjects were self-selected on the basis of their acknowledged lesbianism.

Analysis. The first step in analyzing the data from the main study consisted of generating an intercorrelation matrix of all variables under investigation (Appendix E). This was done for two reasons. First, it provided a means for examining relationships among the main variables of interest. Second, it was examined to insure that the predictor variables, the demographic information, and the four sources of efficacy information were not excessively correlated. Lewis-Beck (1980) suggests that coefficients of .8 or above among independent variables signal multicollinearity, which is the major problem with multiple regression.

Next, hierarchical regression analysis was utilized as a vehicle to confirm or disconfirm relationships between the predictor variables of age and the four sources of coming out efficacy information, and the dependent variable of coming out self-efficacy. This is a robust method of analysis when used with an adequate sample size (Lewis-Beck, 1980).

In hierarchical regression, the variables are entered into the regression equation on the basis of their theoretical relevance (Wampold & Freund, 1987). Thus, using self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1986) as a guide, the four

sources of efficacy information were entered in order of their theoretical potency: personal performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal. To test the hypotheses then, the data were entered into the regression model in the following manner. First, the demographic variable of age was entered into the first step of the regression equation because it was significantly correlated with coming out self-efficacy. Next, the score from the personal performance accomplishments subscale of the Sources of Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale was added to the regression equation. Third, the score from the vicarious experience subscale was added to the equation. Similarly, the verbal persuasion and finally the emotional arousal subscales were added to the regression equation. In each step of the regression, it was the amount of change in the coefficient of determination that was of interest.

Hypotheses

1. Significant bivariate relationships will be found between coming out self-efficacy and the demographic variables of age, income, and education. Further, significant positive bivariate relationships will exist between the four sources of coming out self-efficacy subscales, (e.g., performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal), and coming out self-efficacy.

2. A significant amount of the variance in coming out

self-efficacy will be explained by demographic variables.

3. Controlling for those covariates that were significantly correlated with coming out self-efficacy, the personal performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal subscales of the Sources of Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale will each make unique and significant contributions to the prediction of the coming out self-efficacy of lesbians.

Specifically,

a) positive past performance accomplishments will predict a high level of coming out self-efficacy;

b) controlling for past performance accomplishments, positive vicarious experiences will be associated with a high level of coming out self-efficacy;

c) controlling for past performance accomplishment and vicarious experience, positive verbal persuasion will be associated with a high level of coming out self-efficacy; and

d) controlling for all other sources of coming out self-efficacy, a low level of emotional distress will be associated with a high level of coming out self-efficacy.

4. Coming out self-efficacy will be positively associated with lifestyle satisfaction and outness.

5. Lifestyle satisfaction will be positively associated with self-esteem and positive affectivity and inversely related to negative affectivity.

CHAPTER 4

Results

In this chapter, the results of the data analyses conducted to address the research hypotheses posed in this study will be presented. Initially, the correlations between demographic variables and scores for each of the self-efficacy source scales and the Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale will be reviewed. Then the results of the regression analysis which tested the model will be presented. Third, the relationship between coming out self-efficacy and life adjustment measures will be reviewed. Finally, the results of post hoc analyses which explored how the model functioned within four sample cohorts defined by age and outness will be presented.

Testing the Model

The main purpose of this study was to test the relationship between the four sources of coming out self-efficacy information and coming out self-efficacy. The first step in this process was to examine the relationships between the demographic variables, the four sources of efficacy subscales, and coming out self-efficacy. Correlations among demographic characteristics and total scores for each of the scales are presented in Table 4.1.

Significant positive relationships were found among the demographic variables of age and education (r = .31, p < .001) and age and income (r = .53, p < .001). The relationship between these same variables and coming out self-efficacy was also explored. There was a significant inverse relationship between self-efficacy and age (r = -.31, p < .001) and self-efficacy and income (r = -.43, p < .001). The relationship between self-efficacy and education was not significant.

The relationship between coming out self-efficacy and the four self-efficacy sources subscales was also examined. Again, significant relationships were found between self-efficacy and performance accomplishments (r = .31, p < .001); between self-efficacy and vicarious experience (r = -.36, p < .001); between self-efficacy and verbal persuasion (r = .54, p < .001); and between self-efficacy and emotional arousal (r = .59, p < .001).

Table 4.1

Intercorrelations among Variables

	Variable							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Age	--	.31***	.53***	-.23**	.16	-.21*	-.13	-.31***
2. Education		--	.44***	-.02	-.10	-.04	-.07	-.07
3. Income			--	-.09	.22*	-.17*	-.23**	-.43***
4. PA				--	.14	.40***	.49***	.31***
5. VE					--	-.28**	-.17*	-.36***
6. VP						--	.59***	.54***
7. EA							--	.59***
8. Efficacy								--

Note. N = 110.

PA = Performance Accomplishments Subscale
VE = Vicarious Experience Subscale
VP = Verbal Persuasion Subscale
EA = Emotional Arousal Subscale
Efficacy = Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale
* = $p < .05$
** = $p < .01$
*** = $p < .001$

There were significant inverse relationships between self-efficacy and the demographic variables of age and income. There was also a significant positive relationship between age and income (r=.53, p < .001), suggesting that greater income is associated with greater age. Further, the significant inverse relationship of both age and income with coming-out self-efficacy suggests that older lesbians and those with higher incomes report feeling less efficacious than other lesbians. Thus, because these two variables seem to function similarly in relation to coming out self-efficacy, age was used to represent both in the main regression model.

The significant positive relationships between self-efficacy and three of the four sources of efficacy information was expected. Generally, positive perceptions of performance accomplishments, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal were associated with higher levels of perceived self-efficacy. However, the relationship between self-efficacy and vicarious experience was inverse in nature, suggesting that negative perceptions of vicarious experiences were associated with higher levels of coming out self-efficacy.

Prediction of Coming Out Self-efficacy

Hierarchical regression analyses were performed to establish the predictive relationship between the four sources of coming out self-efficacy information and coming out self-efficacy. To test the theoretical model proposed

in this study, the demographic variable of age was entered in the first step of the regression equation. Subsequently, each of the four sources of efficacy information (PA, VE, VP, and EA) was entered into the equation in the order of their theoretical contribution to self-efficacy. To clarify the unique contribution of each of the source variables beyond the effects of the age, each source was entered as a separate step in the regression equation. The results of the hierarchical regression analysis are presented in Table 4.2. The variables were entered in the order in which they are listed in the table. Of interest is the change in the coefficient of determination, R^2, which reflects the unique contribution of each of the variables to the regression model, controlling for each of the variables entered at previous steps.

Table 4.2

Hierarchical Regression Predicting Self-efficacy

Variables	R	R^2	R^2 Change	r	B	F for R^2Change
Age	.32	.10	.10	-.31***	-.17	5.66**
PA	.44	.19	.09	.31***	.05	.36
VE	.56	.31	.12	-.36***	-.19	6.15**
VP	.65	.42	.11	.54***	.22	6.25**
EA	.71	.50	.09	.59***	.40	18.69***

Note. N = 112
PA = Performance Accomplishments Subscale
VE = Vicarious Experience Subscale
VP = Verbal Persuasion Subscale
EA = Emotional Arousal Subscale
* = $p < .05$
** = $p < .01$
*** = $p < .001$

In the regression equation predicting coming out self-efficacy, age accounted for a significant amount of the variance (R^2 Change = .10). Further, vicarious experience (R^2 Change = .12), verbal persuasion (R^2 Change = .11), and emotion arousal (R^2 Change = .09) all accounted for significant amounts of the variance within the regression equation beyond that accounted for by variables entered in earlier steps. Performance accomplishments did not account for a significant amount of the variance within the regression equation. This is contrary to Bandura's theory

in that performance accomplishments are hypothesized to be the most significant source of efficacy information. Although the results of the hierarchical regression are not exactly as expected, three of the four sources of efficacy information were significant in predicting coming out self-efficacy. Additionally, the entire regression model did account for 50% of the total variance in coming out self-efficacy.

Relationships Between Self-efficacy and Adjustment Variables

The second purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between coming out self-efficacy and a number of life adjustment variables such as self-esteem, lifestyle satisfaction, positive or negative affectivity, and outness. Theoretically, greater coming out self-efficacy should be positively associated with lifestyle satisfaction and outness. Further, it was hypothesized that lifestyle satisfaction would be positively related to self-esteem and positive affectivity. Thus, to explore these relationships, the average scores for each of the scales was correlated with coming-out self-efficacy. Age was also included in the correlation matrix. (Descriptive information for the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale, the Multiple Affect Adjective Checklist--Revised, and the Sexual Orientation Disclosure Scale are presented in Table 3.14; Descriptive information for the Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale in Table 3.13.) Pearson intercorrelations are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Intercorrelation among Variables

	Variable						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Age	--	-.05	.01	.05	-.05	-.10	-.31***
2. Satisfaction	--		.44***	.37***	-.22*	.12	.20*
3. Self-esteem			--	.63***	-.47***	-.01	.10
4. Positive				--	-.20*	-.04	.06
5. Negative					--	-.08	-.15
6. Outness						--	.73***
7. Efficacy							--

Note. N = 110.

Satisfaction = Satisfaction with lesbian lifestyle
Self-esteem = Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale
Positive = Positive Affect as measured by MAACL-R
Negative = Negative Affect as measured by MAACL-R
Outness = Sexual Orientation Disclosure Scale
Efficacy = Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale
* = $p < .05$
** = $p < .01$
*** = $p < .001$

Results showed a significant inverse relationship between the demographic variable of age and coming out self-efficacy (r = -.31, p < .001). Both lifestyle satisfaction (r = .20, p < .05) and outness (r = .73, p < .001) were also significantly correlated with coming out self-efficacy. Self-esteem, positive and negative affectivity were not significantly correlated with self-efficacy; however, they were correlated with each other and with lifestyle satisfaction.

The significant relationship between coming out self-efficacy and age suggests that older lesbians report feeling less efficacious than do their younger counterparts. However, the significant relationships found between the variables of lifestyle satisfaction and outness, and self-efficacy, suggest that the more efficacious lesbians report feeling, the more satisfied they feel with their lifestyle and the more "out" they tend to be.

Post-hoc Analyses Predicting Coming Out Self-efficacy

In this final section, the results of the post hoc analyses will be reviewed. The relationships between the four sources of efficacy information and coming out self-efficacy were explored for two key variables that were significantly correlated with coming out self-efficacy: age and outness.

Predicting coming out self-efficacy for age cohorts. Because there was a significant negative correlation between age and coming out self-efficacy (-.31, p < .001), the

differences and similarities between older and younger lesbians across demographic characteristics, outness, and self-efficacy were explored. To do so, two age cohorts were formed by splitting the total sample at the median age of 37; thus one group contains all of the information obtained from women younger than 37 and the other group contains the information from the women who are 37 or older.

Initially, between group differences were examined for the two cohorts (Table 4.4). The mean age of the younger cohort was 30.09 and the mean age of the older cohort was 44.74. Women in the younger cohort reported, on average, that they identified themselves as lesbians at 17 years, and the older cohort reported knowing, on average, at 22 years of age. The women in the younger cohort reported making significantly ($t=-5.76$, $p < .001$) less money than the women in the older cohort. Similarly, women in the older cohort were significantly ($x^2=6.96$, $p < .01$) more educated and tended to work in professional capacities, whereas their younger cohorts reported less education and were more likely to worked in less professional capacities or were students. In terms of relationship status, the majority (52.9%) of women in the older cohort reported living with their partner, whereas the majority (53.8%) of women in the younger cohort were either single or dating. The women in the younger cohort also reported a significantly higher degree of coming out self-efficacy ($t= 3.82$, $p < .001$) than their older counterparts.

Table 4.4

Demographic Comparison of Age Cohorts

Demographic	Younger than 37	Older than 37	Test Statistic
Age	30.09	44.74	
Age of Awareness	17.20	22.03	$t=-3.74^{***}$ ($df=131$)
Income			$t=-5.76^{***}$
<$10,00	32.3	5.9%	($df=130$)
<19,999	20.0%	10.3%	
<$29,999	21.5%	16.2%	
<$39,999	12.3%	22.1%	
>$40,000	13.8%	44.1%	
Education			$x^2=6.96^{**}$
BA or less	66.2%	52.2%	($df=1$)
Some grad or more	33.8%	47.8%	
Occupation			$x^2=20.17^{***}$
Professional	41.5%	80%	($df=1$)
Clerical, unskilled labor	58.5%	20%	
Relationship Status			$x^2=.61$
Living with partner	46.2%	52.9%	($df=1$)
Uncommitted	43.8%	47.1%	
Lifestyle Satisfaction	4.52	4.24	$t=2.18$ ($df=129$)
Efficacy	3.78	3.13	$t=3.82^{***}$ ($df=124$)
Outness	4.70	4.18	$t=2.20$ ($df=131$)

Note. ** = $p < .01$
*** = $p < .001$

Then, to further understand the predictive relationship between the four sources of self-efficacy information and coming out self-efficacy for the younger and older cohorts, separate hierarchical regression analyses were performed. Like the main model, the goal of these analyses was to determine the contribution of each of the four sources of self-efficacy to the coming out self-efficacy of younger and older lesbians. Like the test of the model for the full sample, each source of efficacy information was entered on a separate step of the regression equation. The change in the coefficient of determination was examined to determine the unique contribution of each of the variables to the regression equation, controlling for the variables entered on previous steps. The results of these analyses must be interpreted with some caution given the small sample size used for the younger (N=57) and older (N=57) cohorts. With the reduced sample size it is more difficult to accurately assess the relation between variables and the significance of those relationships because power has been diminished (Wampold & Freund, 1987).

For the younger cohort, the results of the hierarchical regression (Table 4.5) indicated that of the four sources of efficacy information, verbal persuasion (R^2 Change = .17) and emotional arousal (R^2 Change = .08) were the two sources which explained a significant amount of the variance in the prediction of coming out self-efficacy.

Table 4.5

Regression Predicting Self-efficacy for Younger than 37

Variables	R	R^2	R^2Change	r	B	F for R^2Change
PA	.24	.05	.05	.24*	-.05	.14
VE	.38	.14	.09	-.27*	-.09	.61
VP	.56	.32	.17	.54***	.28	3.80*
EA	.63	.40	.08	.59***	.40	7.58**

Note. N = 57
PA = Performance Accomplishments Subscale
VE = Vicarious Experience Subscale
VP = Verbal Persuasion Subscale
EA = Emotional Arousal Subscale
* = $p < .05$
** = $p < .01$
*** = $p < .001$

The results of the hierarchical regression for the older cohort differed slightly from that of the younger cohort. The results (Table 4.6) indicated that vicarious experience (R^2 Change = .09) and emotional arousal (R^2 Change = .08) explained a significant amount of the variance in the coming out self-efficacy of this cohort.

Table 4.6

Regression Predicting Self-efficacy for Older than 37

Variables	R	R^2	R^2Change	r	B	F for R^2Change
PA	.39	.15	.15	.29*	.14	1.09
VE	.57	.32	.17	-.39**	-.28	6.59**
VP	.64	.42	.10	.48***	.23	3.64
EA	.72	.52	.09	.58***	.42	10.14*

Note. N = 57
PA = Performance Accomplishments Subscale
VE = Vicarious Experience Subscale
VP = Verbal Persuasion Subscale
EA = Emotional Arousal Subscale
* = $p < .05$
** = $p < .01$
*** = $p < .001$

Predicting coming out self-efficacy for outness cohorts. Because there was a significant correlation between outness and coming out self-efficacy (.73, $p < .001$), the contribution of the four sources of efficacy information to coming out self-efficacy was explored for two additional cohorts: lesbians who reported being more out and those who reported less outness. The two cohorts were formed by splitting the total sample at the median outness score (4.24); thus one group contained women with high outness and the other those with low outness.

The theoretical rationale for this final analysis was that Bandura (1986) posits that the four sources of efficacy information function in relation to the amount of experience one has had in a particular domain. In this instance, then, it would be assumed that for the women who are more out, performance accomplishments would be a salient source of efficacy information. For the women with less experience or outness, Bandura would suggest that the three other sources of efficacy information would take on additional import, until the women have more actual experience upon which to base their efficacy appraisals.

To understand the predictive relationship between the four sources of efficacy information and coming out self-efficacy, separate hierarchical regressions were run for each of the cohorts. The results of the regression run for the high outness lesbians (Table 4.7) indicated that of the four sources of efficacy information, only emotional arousal

(R^2 Change = .07) explained a significant amount of the variance in the prediction of coming out self-efficacy. This finding differs from that suggested by Bandura, but is in accord with the results of the other regression results of this study.

Table 4.7

Regression for Women with High Outness

Variables	R	R^2	R^2Change	r	B	F R^2Change
PA	.28	.08	.08	.28*	.07	.27
VE	.44	.19	.11	-.30**	-.20	2.68
VP	.48	.23	.04	.40***	.14	.34
EA	.54	.30	.07	.47***	.35	6.37*

Note. N = 64
PA = Performance Accomplishments Subscale
VE = Vicarious Experience Subscale
VP = Verbal Persuasion Subscale
EA = Emotional Arousal Subscale
* = $p < .05$
** = $p < .01$
*** = $p < .00$

The results of the hierarchical regression for the low outness cohort indicated that none of the sources of efficacy information were significant predictors of coming out self-efficacy for this group of women. These results are also contrary to Bandura's theory.

Table 4.8

Regression for Women with Low Outness

Variables	R	R^2	R^2Change	r	B	F R^2Change
PA	.42	.17	.17	.28*	.26	3.08
VE	.47	.22	.05	-.20*	-.21	2.64
VP	.54	.29	.07	.28*	.19	1.83
EA	.58	.34	.05	.42**	.27	3.18

Note. N = 59
PA = Performance Accomplishments Subscale
VE = Vicarious Experience Subscale
VP = Verbal Persuasion Subscale
EA = Emotional Arousal Subscale
* = $p < .05$
** = $p < .01$
*** = $p < .001$

The results of the regressions run on the two outness cohorts failed to further clarify the relationships between the four source variables and coming out self-efficacy for lesbians with high or low outness. However, for the high outness group, the emotional arousal variable was a significant predictor. This finding is consonant with the results of the other regression analyses.

Conclusion

Overall, the results of this study were supportive of the five hypotheses that were advanced. Generally, expected relationships were found between predictor variables, although, surprisingly, the relationships between vicarious experience and verbal persuasion, emotional arousal, and coming out self-efficacy were all inverse in nature. The results of the regression analyses were not fully supportive of self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1986), although three of the four sources of efficacy information were significant predictors of coming out self-efficacy. Finally, coming out self-efficacy was significantly related to both outness and lifestyle satisfaction. The last variable was also significantly related to positive affectivity and self-esteem.

In the next chapter, the meaning of the results of this study will be presented.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

In this final chapter, the purpose and method of this study will be summarized. Then the results of the data analyses will be interpreted. Directions for future research will be addressed. Finally, the practical implications of the results will be reviewed.

Summary of the Study

In their daily lives, lesbians must repeatedly make decisions about whether or not to disclose their sexual orientation to others with whom they interact. Much of the extant empirical literature on this process (Cody-Murphy, 1989; Kahn, 1991; Schneider, 1986; Wells & Kline, 1989) has explored the circumstantial and demographic variables related to this process. This study was designed to add to this knowledge base by exploring this same process but through a theoretical lens, specifically that of self-efficacy. Thus, this exploratory study examined what types of information and experience (e.g., performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, or emotional arousal) contribute to a lesbian's confidence in her ability to disclose her sexual orientation to others.

Utilizing Bandura's theory of self-efficacy (1986),

this study investigated the extent to which each of the four sources of efficacy information contributed to coming out self-efficacy. Further, this study sought to establish the relevance of coming out self-efficacy by exploring its relationship to outness and lifestyle satisfaction. Relationships between these same variables and self-esteem and positive and negative affectivity were also explored.

The following sections will discuss the interrelationships between the predictor variables and coming out self-efficacy; the prediction of coming out self-efficacy for the entire sample and then for two cohorts of younger and older lesbians and two cohorts of high and low outness cohorts; and the interrelationships between coming out self-efficacy and outness and life adjustment variables. The last section will discuss the limitations and implications for research and practice of the findings.

Interrelationships Among the Predictor Variables

Several significant correlations were found among coming out self-efficacy, demographic characteristics, and the four sources of coming out self-efficacy. The significant inverse relationships between coming out self-efficacy and both age and income suggests that older lesbians who earn greater incomes report feeling less efficacious than other lesbians. This may be the case for this group of women because they perceive that there are more risks with increased visibility and outness, such as the loss of employment, income, or status. There is also a

potential historical confound between age and coming out self-efficacy within this sample. Writing from a sociological perspective, Herdt and Boxer (1993) suggest that since the turn of the century there have been four distinct historical age cohorts within American homosexual subculture. The individuals within each of the cohorts shared similar sociopolitical contexts and events which shaped their beliefs and behaviors about being homosexual.

According to Herdt and Boxer (1993), there has been a significant shift in the feelings and behaviors of gay men and lesbians who came of age around the time of the Stonewall riots in 1969. Prior to that time, homosexuals tended to stay in the "closet." Since then, a new gay and lesbian culture has emerged which is increasingly visible, and in which gays and lesbians acknowledge their sexual orientation to enter and be supported by this subculture. Consequently, the fact that the older lesbians in this sample feel less confident about their ability to disclose their sexual orientation may reflect the values, beliefs, and behavioral mores of their respective historical age cohort.

It is also possible that these older lesbians developed a number of coping strategies for managing information around their sexual orientation which were appropriate for the sociopolitical zeitgeist in which they grew up and lived. These strategies may have become an established means of protecting self when interacting with

an oppressive and violent world (Fassinger, 1992). Further, it is likely that the heterosexual contemporaries of these older lesbians continue to hold conservative beliefs around homosexuality, making coming out to others of their generation more difficult as well. Consequently, these factors would likely reduce this cohort's confidence in their ability, or more likely their desire, to disclose their sexual orientation in today's world.

Next, the relationships among the four source variables were explored. Self-efficacy theory suggests that each of the four sources of efficacy information should be interrelated. Results of the correlation analyses demonstrated significant relationships among the four sources subscales with the exception of the correlation between performance accomplishments and vicarious experience which was not significant. The relationships between the vicarious experience subscale and the verbal persuasion and emotional arousal subscales were significant though, surprisingly, inverse in nature. Thus, perceptions of negative vicarious experiences were associated with high levels of positive verbal messages and positive emotional arousal.

The inverse nature of the correlations between the vicarious experience subscale and the other source scales is an interesting, albeit counter-intuitive finding. These inverse relationships may be a function of the composition of the vicarious experience subscale itself. Over the

course of the scale development and refinement process, items with positive themes such as, "My friends have shared many of their positive coming out experiences with me," failed to correlate with the subscale in general or more specifically with the items whose content was more negative in focus. Ultimately, because of the lack of internal consistency these positive items were dropped from the main study data analysis. Consequently, the theme of the remaining items was similar in that each item presented a situation in which negative consequences were associated with the act of coming out on the part of other lesbians.

Thus, one potential explanation for the inverse relationships between the vicarious experience subscale and the other source subscales is that these relationships are a function of the constricted thematic content of this subscale. Because the items utilized in the analysis were all negative in focus, the potential impact of more positive coming out stories on lesbians is difficult to ascertain. Thus, the scale may provide a limited picture of the impact of different types of vicarious experience on lesbians.

Yet, the women who participated in this study indicated that they had heard many of these negative coming out stories while at the same time perceiving supportive verbal messages from others and positive feelings within themselves about coming out. It is plausible then, that the negative thematic content of the vicarious experience subscale accurately reflects the nature of the majority of

coming out stories heard by lesbians, specifically, stories of rejection, discrimination, and violence. Further, the vicarious experience subscale may accurately reflect the impact that these stories have on lesbians. If so, the feelings connected with hearing repeated accounts of discrimination and violence may have the same effect of bolstering one's confidence in her ability to disclose her sexual orientation as positive verbal persuasion and emotional arousal. Thus, it makes sense that these negative stories would be correlated with verbal encouragement and positive feelings about coming out.

Finally, self-efficacy theory also suggests that each of the source variables should be positively associated with coming out self-efficacy. Significant positive relationships were found between the performance accomplishments, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal subscales and coming out self-efficacy; additionally, a significant inverse relationship was found between the vicarious experience subscale and coming out self-efficacy. These findings establish the relationship of each of the four source subscales with coming out self-efficacy which is consistent with self-efficacy theory.

Once again, the inverse relationship between vicarious experience and coming out self-efficacy may be a function of the negative item composition of the scale itself. On the other hand, this result suggests that the negative coming out experiences of others is associated with higher levels

of coming out self-efficacy. For this group of lesbians, the impact of hearing numerous stories of rejection and discrimination may ultimately become a source of indignation, power, and inspiration to come out. Fueled by anger and frustration, these women may feel more confident in their ability to come out in spite of the potential reactions of others. Ultimately, coming out may seem like the only means of standing up for one's self and lifestyle in the face of societal oppression and discrimination.

Results of the Regression Analyses

The extent to which each of the four sources of efficacy information predicted coming out self-efficacy was tested with regression analyses. In this section the results of the regression analyses will be summarized. Then plausible explanations for those results will be offered in the next section.

Self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1986) posits that self-efficacy beliefs grow out of or are modified by four major sources of information: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal. However, the regression results did not fully support Bandura's theory. Rather, they indicated that for the entire sample, age, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal accounted for significant variance in the prediction of coming out self-efficacy.

The most theoretically salient source of efficacy information, performance accomplishments (Bandura, 1986),

did not explain a significant amount of the variance in coming out self-efficacy for this sample of lesbians although it was significantly correlated with coming out self-efficacy. To rule out the possibility that performance accomplishments would emerge as a significant predictor of coming out self-efficacy if age were not a part of the regression equation, an additional regression analysis was conducted. Because the performance accomplishments subscale was significantly correlated with age, it was possible that the actual contribution of the performance accomplishments subscale was being accounted for by age. However, the results of the regression analysis indicated that even when age was not controlled for, the performance accomplishments variable was not a significant predictor of coming out self-efficacy, only vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal accounted for significant variance in the prediction of coming out self-efficacy.

Additionally, the results of the original regression for this group of lesbians indicated that emotional arousal was the most potent predictor of coming out self-efficacy, followed by verbal persuasion, vicarious experience, and then age. Additionally, the relationship between vicarious experience and coming out self-efficacy was an inverse one, as it had been in the correlational analyses.

To better understand how the four sources of efficacy information might contribute differentially to the coming out self-efficacy possessed by younger and older lesbians,

and to those with high or low outness, additional regression analyses were conducted. Like the regression model for the entire sample, the results of the regressions run on the age and outness cohorts challenged Bandura's theory. As in the results for the main regression, emotional arousal was the most salient predictor for both of the age cohorts. However, only one other source accounted for significant variance in the coming out self-efficacy of these groups. For the older cohort, vicarious experience was significant and for the younger cohort, verbal persuasion was significant. Regression results for the high and low outness cohorts indicated that only emotional arousal explained a significant amount of the variance in the coming out self-efficacy of the high outness cohort. None of the source variables were significant for the low outness group.

Interpretation of Regression Results

This study was a unique application and test of Bandura's theory of self-efficacy. To understand why the results did not fully support this theory, one potential explanation lies in the theoretical formulation of how self-efficacy develops and is enhanced. According to Bandura, (1986), there is a cognitive appraisal process that takes place as one evaluates one's ability to successfully perform a behavior in a specific situation. In making this appraisal, the individual selects, attends to, and emphasizes the information perceived to be most relevant to self. This information becomes the basis of one's self-

efficacy judgments.

In the instance of appraising one's coming out self-efficacy, it seems that even though all of the lesbians who participated in this study had some experience coming out across a variety of contexts, they did not base their efficacy judgments on those experiences. Rather, they attended to their feelings about coming out (emotional arousal), the positive messages they received from others (verbal persuasion), and the negative accounts of other's coming out experiences (vicarious experience) as the basis for their efficacy judgments. This emergent pattern is contrary to self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1986) which suggests that performance accomplishments are the most salient source of information because they are based on the actual mastery experiences of the individual. The remaining sources of efficacy information gain relevance in the appraisal of one's self-efficacy only when the individual has had little or no experience with a specific task.

Consequently, the fact that the performance accomplishments subscale did not explain significant variance in the prediction of coming out self-efficacy is a surprising result. In prior research exploring the contributions of the four sources of efficacy information in relation to math self-efficacy, performance accomplishments, both actual (e.g. Math ACT scores and course grades) and perceived, have proven to be the most salient source of efficacy information (Matsui et al., 1990; Lent et al.,

1991; Lopez & Lent, 1992). Because the findings of this study vary significantly from those of similar studies of the sources of math self-efficacy as well as from Bandura's (1986) theoretical formulation, two plausible explanations will be presented to account for the lack of significance of the performance accomplishments variable in this study.

First, the performance accomplishments subscale demonstrated adequate internal consistency and items were written in a fashion consistent with Bandura's theory and with measures from previous studies. However, those factors do not insure the validity of the performance accomplishments subscale. Thus, it is possible that this subscale did not accurately tap the types of experiences that lesbians would consider to be coming out performance accomplishments. If so, this may explain why the performance accomplishment subscale was not a signigicant predictor of coming out self-efficacy in the regression model.

On the other hand, the act of coming out is a complex one. Therefore, exploring the potential appraisals made on the part of a lesbian before coming out to another and considering some additional nuances of self-efficacy theory may help to explain why lesbians don't attend to performance accomplishments when evaluating their confidence in their ability to come out.

Essentially, one's sexual orientation is disclosed in the context of a relationship. To a certain extent then,

making the disclosure itself is under the control of the woman--she can appraise her ability to make the disclosure. However, unlike other more discrete skills or tasks in which specific outcomes are predictably linked with performance, in the instance of coming out to someone, how the person who is hearing the disclosure will react is unpredictable. A woman's willingness to disclose her sexual orientation may be colored by the potential reaction and consequences she anticipates from her disclosure. These considerations may be likened to outcome expectations. According to Bandura (1986), outcome expectations are the individual's judgment of the likely consequences of an act, but are distinct from the act. Although Bandura (1986) has found that self-efficacy judgments are more salient predictors of behavior, it is plausible that in relation to coming out, outcome expectations, that is, the expected or anticipated reactions or consequences of the disclosure, may be a significant determinant of the woman's willingness to disclose her sexual orientation.

In a similar vein, there is yet another layer within the act of coming out. Even though a woman may anticipate a particular reaction to her disclosure, she has a great deal of latitude in determining how she will feel about or respond to that reaction. In this instance the woman may acknowledge the "threat" inherent in disclosing her sexual orientation, but make the disclosure nonetheless. Bandura (1988) has termed this type of judgment as "coping

efficacy." Like self-efficacy, women with low percepts of coping efficacy in relation to the act of coming out may avoid making the disclosure to avoid a situation that may exceed their perceived coping capabilities, whereas those with high coping efficacy would proceed regardless of the potential outcomes. It seems likely that for the act of disclosing one's sexual orientation, judgments of coming out self-efficacy, coping efficacy, and outcome expectations would be made in each instance in which the woman is considering coming out.

Consequently, it is difficult to ascertain how lesbians interpret their prior coming out experiences, particularly if each instance is considered for its own merits and hazards. It seems likely that like the layers of the act itself there would be several layers involved in assessing these experiences. Perhaps in reflecting upon their coming out experiences, lesbians may feel positively about making the disclosure, but may also feel disappointed with the reaction of another, but proud of self for making the disclosure. Hence the act or performance itself may not be interpreted as a success or failure. If this is the case, perceptions of prior coming out experiences would have very little to contribute to the appraisal of one's coming out self-efficacy.

It is also noteworthy that the results of the regression analyses indicated that for this group of lesbians, emotional arousal was the most potent source of

efficacy information. Hence, in the case of developing coming out self-efficacy, the lesbians who participated in this study seem to base their efficacy judgments on how they feel about coming out, regardless of how old they are. The fact that this sample of lesbians attended to this source of information rather than performance accomplishments may be a function of the nature and complexity of the act of disclosing one's sexual orientation to others.

The theoretical literature written not only on the act of coming out but also on the life long process of coming out, may illuminate the significance of the emotional arousal variable. In its entirety, coming out is a complex and lifelong psychological process in which an individual moves from curiosity to awareness to acknowledgement of lesbian thoughts and feelings. For some, this process results in self-identification as a lesbian (Cass, 1979; Cohen & Stein, 1986; Stein, 1993; Troiden, 1989). Throughout this process, the woman must struggle not only with her own feelings of internalized homophobia as well as those of others who are important to her, but also with the societal values and mores which are discriminatory and prejudiced against lesbianism. Concurrently, the woman is reclaiming parts of herself which have been rejected or devalued because of their association with lesbianism, all in an attempt to feel good about herself (Cohen & Stein, 1986).

One aspect of this on-going process is to disclose her

identity to others. In making the decision about whether or not to disclose her sexual orientation, a cognitive appraisal process ensues in which the lesbian evaluates herself, her motivation, and the potential consequences of her disclosure (Browning et al., 1991; Falco, 1990; Fassinger, 1991; Gartrell, 1985). In the process of thinking about herself in this appraisal, the literature suggests that a lesbian often discloses her sexual orientation to others in an effort to resolve the dissonance between who she is and who she is perceived by others to be--in other words, to be acknowledged and sometimes even affirmed for who she really is--by self and by others (Browning et al., 1991; Cass, 1979; Falco, 1990; Fassinger, 1991; Kahn, 1991). In this process, the question for the lesbian might not be, "Do I have confidence in my ability to come out?", but rather, "Do I have the desire or need to come out?" In the latter example, this type of decision most likely would be based in feelings about self as a lesbian and coming out, rather than in prior experiences. Ultimately, disclosing one's sexual orientation to another is an emotional experience, simply because it is so entwined with one's sense of self (Stein, 1993).

Coming out to self and others is also perceived as a ritual (Herdt & Boxer. 1993), and like the life long process of coming out, the coming out ritual is also seen as a process. The core of this on-going process is the identity transition from one social role and culture to that of the

lesbian subculture. By repeatedly coming out to others, one is proclaiming one's belonging and commitment to one's own lesbianism and to the lesbian subculture. There is an important shift for lesbians between perceiving the act of coming out as "identity management" as it historically has been (deMonteflores, 1986; Groves & Ventura, 1983; Moses, 1978; Schneider, 1986), versus perceiving it as a ritual in which one celebrates one's identity by sharing it with others. The implications of this change in perception is that the feelings associated with coming out shift from shame to pride, both of which are based in the emotional realm as well.

Finally, because the perception of coming out self-efficacy held by this sample of lesbians was strongly influenced by their emotional arousal is not to say that other sources of efficacy information were not utilized. The emotional arousal experienced by this group was augmented by verbal persuasion--messages they have had that are supportive of their being out--and vicarious experience--negative stories they have heard about the coming out experiences of other lesbians. It is additionally noteworthy that in the regressions run for the two age cohorts, vicarious experience was significant for older lesbians. This may suggest that hearing these negative stories over time is an impetus for the development of feelings of confidence and desire in relation to the act of coming out. For younger lesbians, verbal persuasion was a

significant predictor. For this group of lesbians, more importance may be attached to the support and encouragement of others rather than to vicarious experience simply because they have not been exposed to these stories over the same amount of time or within the same sociopolitical zeitgeist. Further, support and encouragement may be more available from others and from components within contemporary society for this younger cohort.

The results of the regressions run on the high and low outness cohorts were less informative. Emotional arousal was the only significant predictor of coming out self-efficacy for the high outness cohort. This result supports the salience of the emotional arousal variable in the prediction of coming out self-efficacy. Conversely, none of the source variables were explanatory in the coming out self-efficacy of the low outness cohort. This is a surprising result because it was expected that since this cohort has had less actual coming out experience, the other sources of efficacy information (VE, VP, EA) would be more salient sources of efficacy information (Bandura, 1986). This finding may suggest that women with less coming out experience may rely more heavily on circumstantial information when appraising their willingness to come out, rather than relying on their own internal motivation. However, because of the small sample sizes utilized for the cohort analyses, it is more difficult to accurately assess the relationships between the variables of interest, thus,

it is plausible that these results do not reflect the nature of the relationships between the four source variables and coming out self-efficacy for this cohort.

In summary, the results of the regression analysis for the entire sample suggest that younger women who feel positively about coming out, who have received positive verbal messages about being out, and who have been exposed to the negative coming out experiences of others tend to feel more confident in their ability to come or be out.

Relationships Between Self-efficacy and Adjustment Variables

Self-efficacy theory suggests that higher levels of coming out self-efficacy should be positively associated with those constructs specifically related to coming out (e.g., lifestyle satisfaction, outness), rather than the more global constructs of adjustment utilized in this study (e.g., self-esteem, positive and negative affectivity). As expected, coming out self-efficacy was significantly correlated with both lifestyle satisfaction and outness, though outness and satisfaction were not significantly related. This finding supports the construct validity of the Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale. Perhaps it is not one's actual outness that is significant in lifestyle satisfaction, but rather one's confidence in one's ability to be out that is more important in providing freedom to chose when or if to come out. Consequently, the unique act of disclosing one's sexual orientation may be related to two separate but interrelated appraisal processes. First, one

may appraise one's confidence and willingness, or one's coming out self-efficacy, to disclose her sexual orientation at a given moment in time. Concurrently, one may also appraise the person and situation variables unique to each instance of coming out before making any disclosure. However, it may be the sense of coming out self-efficacy that empowers one to even consider making such a disclosure.

Finally, like previous research (Miranda & Storms, 1989), it was also hypothesized that greater lesbian lifestyle satisfaction would be positively associated with higher levels of self-esteem and positive affectivity. Correlation analyses supported this hypothesis. Thus, greater satisfaction with a lesbian lifestyle was related to more positive feelings about self.

Limitations of the Study

There are several issues that make the interpretation and application of the results of this study tenuous. First, it is unwieldy to: 1) develop and test novel measures and, 2) test a theory within the same study because the results of the first step strongly influence the second step. In this instance, because the internal consistency of the vicarious experience and the verbal persuasion subscales of the Sources of Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale were marginal the actual contribution of those scales to coming out self-efficacy is difficult to assess. Second, because the design of this study is correlational in nature, the results are descriptive of this sample and no causality can

be implied. For example, whether coming out self-efficacy stems from or contributes to lifestyle satisfaction is not clear.

Third, the generalizability of the results of this study are limited by several factors. The representativeness of the present sample is questionable given the low response rate obtained through the sampling procedures at the Michigan Organization of Human Rights. Further, because it is easier to locate and enlist the participation of lesbians who tend to be more openly lesbian identified, it is likely that this sample is more "out" than the lesbian population in general. Finally, the women who participated in this study tended to be Caucasian, highly educated, and financially successful. Thus, the characteristics of the present sample suggest that these results should not be generalized to lesbians of different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Future Research Directions

In terms of future research, the internal consistency of the verbal persuasion and vicarious experience subscales and the validity of the performance accomplishments subscale of the Sources of Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale need to be refined to more accurately assess the contribution of the four sources of efficacy information to the coming out self-efficacy of lesbians. This refinement might be accomplished by asking a focus group of lesbians to define a variety of experiences which they believe represent the construct of

performance accomplishments in relation to disclosing their sexual orientation. Similarly, to revise the vicarious experience and verbal persuasion subscales, the lesbian focus group could also provide examples of how other individuals have been competent models for their coming out, along with specifying messages they have received from others which have encouraged or discouraged them from coming out. These ideas could be the basis for new items for each of the respective subscales.

Next, replication of this study with different samples, such as minority or college-age women, would be important to better understand the differential contribution of the sources of self-efficacy information for different groups of women. By redesigning this study, the causal relationships between these variables could be assessed statistically. Additionally, because gender may play a role in what source variables are important in predicting coming out self-efficacy, this study could be replicated with a sample of gay men.

The Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale worked very well in this study, and there is some evidence to indicate that this construct may be an important one for lesbians in terms of lifestyle satisfaction and outness. In the future, the relationships between coming out self-efficacy and outness, a better measure of lifestyle satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and perhaps, measures of psychological adjustment or stress should be explored. Additionally, the

relationship between outcome expectations and coming out self-efficacy and outness need to be explored.

Implications and Applications

The findings of the present study suggest that lesbians rely on their feelings about themselves and coming out, the encouragement that they receive, and the negative stories they have heard about others in appraising their own ability to come out in a variety of situations. Further, women who reported higher levels of coming out self-efficacy also reported greater outness and higher levels of lifestyle satisfaction. However, only tentative suggestions for practical applications of these results can be made given the limitations of measurement and generalization inherent in this study.

With those limitations in mind, the results of this study suggest several considerations for treatment planning for therapists working with lesbians around coming out issues. Because emotional arousal was the most salient source of coming out self-efficacy information, to explore the woman's feelings around identifying as a lesbian, being "out" or not, and how she feels about coming out in general would be important. For example, exploring a woman's feelings of internalized homophobia or shame, feelings around myths and stereotypes concerning lesbians and homosexuality, and feelings of pride in relation to being a lesbian would be fruitful. Further, to explore the impact of family, friends, and society upon the way one feels about

one's self is important. Empowerment to make decisions around coming out results from self-understanding and acceptance (Falco, 1990; Fassinger, 1992).

To generate better self-understanding and awareness in relation to the act of disclosing one's sexual orientation, exploring the woman's fears, wishes, and realities may be important. In particular, helping the woman focus on her feelings about coming out rather than on the potential reaction of others may help clarify the woman's motivation and desire to come out in specific relationships. Finally, devising strategies for dealing with the aftermath of coming out, both for the woman and her audience, can also be helpful in enhancing the woman's coming out self-efficacy.

Verbal persuasion and negative vicarious experience were also found to be salient sources of efficacy information for this group of lesbians. Thus, connecting the woman with the coming out experiences of other women through support groups, books of coming out stories, books about coming out in general, and historic readings around the gay/lesbian movement may be helpful. These sources would all serve as vehicles for the woman to learn more about how others have experienced coming out, to gain support from others, and to develop a sense of personal pride and identity.

The results of this study seem to suggest that coming out self-efficacy is a salient construct for lesbians. On a practical level, the results of this study suggest that

understanding how coming out self-efficacy develops and what impact that self-efficacy has on lesbian life satisfaction and adjustment may be significant not only to researchers in this area, but also to practitioners working with lesbian clients who are dealing with outness and identity issues. In essence, coming out self-efficacy may reflect a sense of personal power and control which makes it less intimidating and more satisfying to navigate the realities of being a lesbian in today's world.

Appendix A

Idea Generation Format

The problem: Items are needed for my study that assess the impact of different aspects of previous coming out experiences for lesbians in a variety of domains, particularly social networks, family of origin, and the workplace.

The method: The items need to be written in accord with self-efficacy theory. Toward that end, below you will find the definition of self-efficacy along with the definition of each of four sources of efficacy information. Example items that tap each construct are also provided. Basically, lesbians will be asked to rate the extent to which these experiences are true for her on a scale from 1=not at all true to 5=extremely true.

Your mission (Should you choose to accept it, is): To brainstorm coming out experiences that are congruent with the definition of self-efficacy and each source of efficacy information.

Self-efficacy: Self-efficacy in this study is a lesbian's confidence in her ability to disclose her sexual orientation to others in a behavioral sense. For instance, this includes a variety of behaviors that would reflect one's sexual orientation through action. In this study self-efficacy will be assessed by the degree of confidence indicated by the respondent in her ability to disclose her sexual orientation in a variety of future situations.

The degree of confidence will be assessed on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1=not at all confident to 7=completely confident. Example items for the Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale include:

In the future how confident are you that you could:

1. disclose your sexual orientation to others in your family of origin?
2. participate in a gay/lesbian pride march?

Personal performance accomplishments: This source of efficacy information is comprised of a lesbian's previous experiences coming out to others. The intent of this scale is to assess the impact of these typical coming out experiences on lesbians in their social networks, their families of origin, and in their workplaces. Items should have a behavioral focus in terms of coming out (e.g., disclosing, attending, subscribing, marching, etc). These experiences may be perceived as positive and successful or

negative and failures by the woman.

For example:
1. Coming out to people whose opinions I value has not been easy for me.
2. Among my lesbian friends, I am generally the most out.

Vicarious experience: The second source of efficacy information is vicarious experience. The information obtained through vicarious experience might include hearing the coming out stories of other lesbians or being influenced by women's music or literature. Vicarious experience provides important efficacy information by allowing a lesbian to learn from and to compare herself to other lesbians with whom she identifies, and who have come out in a variety of circumstances that may be relevant to her. This "model" may also act as a knowledgeable source who may be able to provide better strategies for dealing with difficult or threatening situations. Further, a lesbian is likely to judge her capability to come out by comparing her capabilities to the performances of other lesbians who are perceived to be similar to self in ability as well as in personal characteristics like age, gender, education, socioeconomic status, and race.

For example:
1. I have read positive accounts of lesbians who have come out to their families.
2. I know lesbians who lost their jobs after they came out at work.

Verbal persuasion: The third source of efficacy information is verbal persuasion. In relation to coming out, this would include persuasive messages from others about the importance of coming out or the risk involved in coming out. Verbal persuasion can be used to persuade someone to attempt or to persevere in coming out. Verbal persuasion is more likely to influence someone if the persuader is perceived as knowledgeable or credible in relation to the act of coming out or within the domain in which the disclosure may occur. Further, verbal persuasion is more likely to influence behavior when it is given in a situation in which coming out is slightly beyond the reach of the person, but is possible with extra effort.

1. My friends have discouraged me from coming out to important others in my life.
2. Other lesbians have told me that I deserve to be who I am.

Emotional arousal: The final source of efficacy information is emotional arousal. For example, this would include the emotional and physiological arousal experienced by the woman in circumstances when she is or has been coming out. It is important to understand how an individual appraises the arousal she experiences. If arousal is experienced as a normal part of the task, it will have little impact on one's judgment of coming out self-efficacy. However, if arousal is interpreted as a lack of ability it will have a detrimental impact on self-efficacy.

1. I feel strong when I come out to others at work.
2. I have nightmares about what might happen if I came out to someone.

Appendix B

Item Evaluation Format

PART I:
Directions: Below you will find the definition coming out self-efficacy as well as two example items. Please read the items on the Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale and rate the level of congruence between each item and this definition with the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5
not at all congruent				**totally congruent**

Please place the your rating to the left of the item number. I would appreciate it if you would explain the reasoning behind any rating of less than 3. Additionally, I would appreciate any feedback in terms of item construction or content.

Self-efficacy: Self-efficacy in this study is a lesbian's confidence in her ability to disclose her sexual orientation to others in a behavioral sense. For instance, this includes a variety of behaviors that would reflect one's sexual orientation through action. In this study self-efficacy will be assessed by the degree of confidence indicated by the respondent in her ability to disclose her sexual orientation in a variety of future situations.

The degree of confidence will be assessed on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1=not at all confident to 7=completely confident. Example items for the Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale include:

In the future how confident are you that you could:

1. disclose your sexual orientation to others in your family of origin?
2. participate in a gay/lesbian pride march?

PART II:
Directions: Below you will find the definitions of the four sources of efficacy information being assessed on the Sources of Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale. Please read each of the items on this measure and indicate which source of efficacy information you believe is being tapped by writing the initials for that source next to the item number:

PA=personal performance accomplishments
VE=vicarious experience
VP= verbal persuasion
EA=emotional arousal

For example:

PA 1. Among my lesbian friends, generally, I am the most out.

Additionally, I would appreciate any feedback about item construction or content.

Personal performance accomplishments: This source of efficacy information is comprised of a lesbian's previous experiences coming out to others. The intent of this scale is to assess the impact of these typical coming out experiences on lesbians in their social networks, their families of origin, and in their workplaces. Items should have a behavioral focus in terms of coming out (e.g., disclosing, attending, subscribing, marching, etc). These experiences may be perceived as positive and successful or negative and failures by the woman.

For example:

1. Coming out to people whose opinions I value has not been easy for me.
2. Among my lesbian friends, I am generally the most out.

Vicarious experience: The second source of efficacy information is vicarious experience. The information obtained through vicarious experience might include hearing the coming out stories of other lesbians or being influenced by women's music or literature. Vicarious experience provides important efficacy information by allowing a lesbian to learn from and to compare herself to other lesbians with whom she identifies, and who have come out in a variety of circumstances that may be relevant to her. This "model" may also act as a knowledgeable source who may be able to provide better strategies for dealing with difficult or threatening situations. Further, a lesbian is likely to judge her capability to come out by comparing her capabilities to the performances of other lesbians who are perceived to be similar to self in ability as well as in personal characteristics like age, gender, education, socioeconomic status, and race.

For example:

1. I have read positive accounts of lesbians who have come out to their families.
2. I know lesbians who lost their jobs after they came out at work.

Verbal persuasion: The third source of efficacy information is verbal persuasion. In relation to coming out, this would include persuasive messages from others about the importance of coming out or the risk involved in coming out. Verbal persuasion can be used to persuade

someone to attempt or to persevere in coming out. Verbal persuasion is more likely to influence someone if the persuader is perceived as knowledgeable or credible in relation to the act of coming out or within the domain in which the disclosure may occur. Further, verbal persuasion is more likely to influence behavior when it is given in a situation in which coming out is slightly beyond the reach of the person, but is possible with extra effort.

For example:
1. My friends have discouraged me from coming out to important others in my life.
2. Other lesbians have told me that I deserve to be who I am.

Emotional arousal: The final source of efficacy information is emotional arousal. For example, this would include the emotional and physiological arousal experienced by the woman in circumstances when she is or has been coming out. It is important to understand how an individual appraises the arousal she experiences. If arousal is experienced as a normal part of the task, it will have little impact on one's judgment of coming out self-efficacy. However, if arousal is interpreted as a lack of ability it will have a detrimental impact on self-efficacy.

For example:
1. I feel strong when I come out to others at work.
2. I have nightmares about what might happen if I came out to someone.

Appendix C

Survey Cover Letter

October 21, 1992

Greetings;

As you are well aware, lesbians must decide whether or not to disclose their sexual orientation on a daily basis. Psychologists know very little about how lesbians make this decision. This limited information may affect the quality of services available to lesbians. As a lesbian psychologist, I am committed to expanding what is currently known about the lesbian experience of coming out.

In order to accurately understand this on-going process, information about a wide range of coming out experiences in necessary. Thus, your perspective on coming out is especially important. By completing the enclosed questionnaire you will provide important insights into the complex issue of coming out.

It should take no longer than 20 minutes for you to totally complete this survey. It is important that all of the questions be completed and returned to me in the enclosed envelope by November 6, 1992. As a participant, your anonymity is assured; you don't need to provide your name although general demographic information is requested.

The results of this research will be made available to psychologists. However, you may receive a summary of results by writing "copy of results requested" on the back of the return envelope and printing your address below it. Please do not put this information on the questionnaires themselves.

I would be glad to answer any questions you might have. Please feel free to call me at (517)355-2310.

Thank you very much for your help!

Sincerely,

Mary K. Anderson, M.A.

Appendix D

Final Survey Packet

The Act of Coming Out

for Lesbians

Thank you for taking the time and effort necessary to complete this survey. This study explores how lesbians interpret their experiences of coming out in today's world. The information gained through this research will be used to better understand the act of coming out for lesbians.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate at all or to end your involvement at any time. You have the right to refuse to answer any question. However, the information provided by each answer is important in gaining a full understanding of lesbians and coming out.

It should take you about 20 minutes to complete the entire survey. To insure your anonymity, please do not put your name anywhere on this survey. If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact me at (517)355-2310.

Please return you completed survey in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope by November 6, 1992.

Thanks again for your help!

The return of the completed survey reflects your informed and voluntary consent to participate in this study.

Part I.
Below are listed 15 different types of relationships in which a lesbian may or may not be "out" to others. Please circle the number that reflects the degree to which you are out in each relationship area. The scale ranges from 1 (not out--nobody in the area knows you are a lesbian) to 7 (completely out--everybody in the area knows you are a lesbian).
If one of the relationship areas is not applicable, just circle "NA" and go on to the next area.

	AREA		NOT OUT		PARTIALLY OUT				COMPLETELY OUT
1.	To other gay people	NA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	To your boss	NA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	To your co-workers	NA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	To your fellow students	NA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	To your doctor, lawyer, therapist, or other professionals	NA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	To your mother	NA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	To your father	NA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	To your siblings	NA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.	To members of your extended family	NA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10.	To friends you have met since you acknowledged that you were a lesbian	NA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11.	To friends you had before you acknowledged you were gay	NA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12.	To casual acquaintances	NA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13.	To your pastor, priest, etc.	NA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14.	To your fellow religious friends	NA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15.	To people involved with your housing	NA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Part II.

Directions: Using the scale below, please circle the number which represents how confident you are that you could do the following...

IN THE FUTURE, HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU THAT YOU COULD...

		NOT AT ALL CONFIDENT				TOTALLY CONFIDENT
1.	subscribe to a lesbian publication?	1	2	3	4	5
2.	attend a womyn's music festival?	1	2	3	4	5
3.	go to a lesbian/gay bar or restaurant in the town in which you live?	1	2	3	4	5
4.	participate in a local lesbian organization?	1	2	3	4	5
5.	come out to other members of your family?	1	2	3	4	5
6.	come out to your boss at your workplace?	1	2	3	4	5
7.	participate in a gay/lesbian pride march in the town in which you live?	1	2	3	4	5
8.	speak out as a lesbian for lesbian rights?	1	2	3	4	5
9.	openly discuss your lesbian lifestyle with co-workers?	1	2	3	4	5
10.	be openly affectionate with a lover in public?	1	2	3	4	5
11.	attend a program for lesbians sponsored by a lesbian/gay organization in the town in which you live?	1	2	3	4	5
12.	come out to heterosexuals?	1	2	3	4	5
13.	come out to others who you believe are lesbian or gay?	1	2	3	4	5
14.	purchase books that are clearly by or about lesbians at a bookstore?	1	2	3	4	5

Directions: From the list of activities above, please write the item numbers of the four activities that you believe would be easiest for you to do in the first set of boxes. Then write the item numbers of the four most challenging activities in the second set of boxes.

EASIEST ACTIVITIES FOR ME...

MOST CHALLENGING ACTIVITIES FOR ME...

Part III.

Directions: Please circle the number that reflects how true the following statements are in relation to your experiences of coming out.

		NOT AT ALL TRUE				EXTREMELY TRUE
1.	I have lost friends when I told them that I was a lesbian.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I feel happy when I come out to others.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I feel anxious when I think about coming out to important others in my life.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Indirectly, people have encouraged me to come out to them.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I have come out to others only to have them continue to treat me as if I was straight.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	In general, coming out to others has been easy for me to do.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	My friends have encouraged me not to come out to important people in my life.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I have been encouraged by my family to come out to others.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I feel terrified about what might happen if I come out to others in my life.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I have read positive newspaper accounts about lesbians.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I know of lesbians who have been disowned by their families when they came out to them.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	I have experienced discrimination after coming out as a lesbian.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	I have been rejected by people important to me when I came out to them.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	I am afraid that if I come out I will be rejected by people I care about.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	Other people have treated me as if there was something wrong with me after I told them that I was a lesbian.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	I know of lesbians who lost their jobs after they came out at work.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	I feel powerful when I think of coming out.	1	2	3	4	5
18.	Others have responded positively to me when I came out to them.	1	2	3	4	5

		NOT AT ALL TRUE				EXTREMELY TRUE
19.	People I care about have supported my lesbianism by encouraging me to come out to others.	1	2	3	4	5
20.	I feel relieved when I disclose my sexual orientation to others.	1	2	3	4	5
21.	Close friends have encouraged me not to tell my parents that I am a lesbian.	1	2	3	4	5
22.	I often feel sick to my stomach when I think about coming out to others.	1	2	3	4	5
23.	I have been loved and accepted when I came out to others important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
24.	I have read about women who have been discriminated against because of their sexual orientation.	1	2	3	4	5
25.	I feel vulnerable when I come out.	1	2	3	4	5
26.	I am aware of public figures who are openly and positively lesbian.	1	2	3	4	5
27.	I feel ashamed to be a lesbian when I think about coming out to other members of my family.	1	2	3	4	5
28.	I have heard many negative stereotypes about lesbians.	1	2	3	4	5
29.	My best friend has encouraged me to be out.	1	2	3	4	5
30.	I dread coming out to others.	1	2	3	4	5
31.	Other lesbians have told me that my sexual orientation is nothing to hide from people who love me.	1	2	3	4	5
32.	I have been harassed by others after I told them that I am a lesbian.	1	2	3	4	5
33.	I feel proud when I come out to others.	1	2	3	4	5
34.	I worry that others will make fun of me once they know I am a lesbian.	1	2	3	4	5
35.	I feel true to myself when I come out.	1	2	3	4	5
36.	Others have responded violently toward me after I told them I am a lesbian.	1	2	3	4	5
37.	Family members have encouraged me not to tell others about my lesbianism.	1	2	3	4	5

		NOT AT ALL TRUE				EXTREMELY TRUE
38.	People have often let me know indirectly that they do not want to know that I am a lesbian.	1	2	3	4	5
39.	It feels self-validating for me to come out to others.	1	2	3	4	5
40.	I feel excited when I think about telling others about my lesbianism.	1	2	3	4	5
41.	Important others have been pleased when I shared the fact that I was a lesbian with them.	1	2	3	4	5
42.	I have come out to many people.	1	2	3	4	5
43.	Coming out to people whose opinions I value has not been easy for me.	1	2	3	4	5
44.	I know of lesbians who have been the victims of violence after they came out.	1	2	3	4	5
45.	My friends have encouraged me to come out to others.	1	2	3	4	5

Part IV.

Instructions: In answering the following set of questions, indicate the extent to which each statement describes your current feelings about yourself. Use the scale below to indicate your agreement.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
1	2	3	4

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others. _____
2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities. _____
3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure. _____
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people. _____
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of. _____
6. I take a positive attitude toward myself. _____
7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself. _____
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself. _____
9. I certainly feel useless at times. _____
10. At times I think I am no good at all. _____

Part VI.

Directions: Please provide the following information. In order to insure your anonymity, please do not write your name anywhere on this form.

1. In what year were you born?

_____

2. What is your ethnic background? (Circle number)
   1. Caucasian
   2. African-American
   3. Native American
   4. Hispanic
   5. Asian American
   6. Other, please specify. _____

3. Which is the highest level of education you have completed? (Circle number)
   1. Grade school graduate
   2. High school graduate
   3. Some college
   4. Completed college, specify degree_____
   5. Some graduate school
   6. Graduate degree, please specify_____

4. What is your current occupation?

_____

5. What is your current income, before taxes, per year? (Circle number)
   1. Under $10,000
   2. 10,000 to 19,999
   3. 20,000 to 29,999
   4. 30,000 to 39,999
   5. over 40,000

6. At what age did you first know that you were a lesbian?

_____

7. What is your current relationship status? (Circle number)
   1. Single, not dating
   2. Dating
   3. Seeing one woman on a regular basis
   4. Living with lover/partner
   5. Other, please specify_____

8. How long have you been in the above relationship status?

_____

9. Do you have any children? (Circle number)
   1. Yes
   2. No

Part V.

Directions: On this sheet you will find words which describe different kinds of moods and feelings. Mark an "X" in the boxes beside the words which describe how you generally feel. Some of the words may sound alike, but you should check all of the words that describe your feelings. Work rapidly.

1 ☐ active
2 ☐ adventurous
3 ☐ affectionate
4 ☐ afraid
5 ☐ agitated
6 ☐ agreeable
7 ☐ aggressive
8 ☐ alive
9 ☐ alone
10 ☐ amiable
11 ☐ amused
12 ☐ angry
13 ☐ annoyed
14 ☐ awful
15 ☐ bashful
16 ☐ bitter
17 ☐ blue
18 ☐ bored
19 ☐ calm
20 ☐ cautious
21 ☐ cheerful
22 ☐ clean
23 ☐ complaining
24 ☐ contented
25 ☐ contrary
26 ☐ cool
27 ☐ cooperative
28 ☐ critical
29 ☐ cross
30 ☐ cruel
31 ☐ daring
32 ☐ desperate
33 ☐ destroyed
34 ☐ devoted
35 ☐ disagreeable
36 ☐ discontented
37 ☐ discouraged
38 ☐ disgusted
39 ☐ displeased
40 ☐ energetic
41 ☐ enraged
42 ☐ enthusiastic
43 ☐ fearful
44 ☐ fine
45 ☐ fit
46 ☐ forlorn
47 ☐ frank
48 ☐ free
49 ☐ friendly
50 ☐ frightened
51 ☐ furious
52 ☐ lively
53 ☐ gentle
54 ☐ glad
55 ☐ gloomy
56 ☐ good
57 ☐ good-natured
58 ☐ grim
59 ☐ happy
60 ☐ healthy
61 ☐ hopeless
62 ☐ hostile
63 ☐ impatient
64 ☐ incensed
65 ☐ indignant
66 ☐ inspired
67 ☐ interested
68 ☐ irritated
69 ☐ jealous
70 ☐ joyful
71 ☐ kindly
72 ☐ lonely
73 ☐ lost
74 ☐ loving
75 ☐ low
76 ☐ lucky
77 ☐ mad
78 ☐ mean
79 ☐ meek
80 ☐ merry
81 ☐ mild
82 ☐ miserable
83 ☐ nervous
84 ☐ obliging
85 ☐ offended
86 ☐ outraged
87 ☐ panicky
88 ☐ patient
89 ☐ peaceful
90 ☐ pleased
91 ☐ pleasant
92 ☐ polite
93 ☐ powerful
94 ☐ quiet
95 ☐ reckless
96 ☐ rejected
97 ☐ rough
98 ☐ sad
99 ☐ safe
100 ☐ satisfied
101 ☐ secure
102 ☐ shaky
103 ☐ shy
104 ☐ soothed
105 ☐ steady
106 ☐ stubborn
107 ☐ stormy
108 ☐ strong
109 ☐ suffering
110 ☐ sullen
111 ☐ sunk
112 ☐ sympathetic
113 ☐ tame
114 ☐ tender
115 ☐ tense
116 ☐ terrible
117 ☐ terrified
118 ☐ thoughtful
119 ☐ timid
120 ☐ tormented
121 ☐ understanding
122 ☐ unhappy
123 ☐ unsociable
124 ☐ upset
125 ☐ vexed
126 ☐ warm
127 ☐ whole
128 ☐ wild
129 ☐ willful
130 ☐ wilted
131 ☐ worrying
132 ☐ young

10. Do they live with you? (Circle number)
    1. Yes
    2. No
    3. Not applicable

11. Current religious affiliation?
    1. Catholic
    2. Protestant
    3. Jewish
    4. Atheist
    5. Womyn's Spirituality
    6. Other, please specify_____
    7. Not applicable

12. How would you describe the area in which you live? (Circle number)
    1. Urban
    2. Suburban
    3. Rural

13. Circle the number of the category which best describes your sexual orientation.

    6. Exclusive orientation toward sexual relations with members of the same sex, and no interest in sexual relations with members of the opposite sex

    5. Predominant orientation for sexual relations with members of the same sex, with only incidental interest in sexual relations with members of the opposite sex

    4. Clear preference for same-sex sexual relations, with a lesser but still active interest in sexual relations with members of the opposite sex

    3. Approximately equal interest in sexual relations with members of the opposite sex and members of the same sex

    2. Clear preference for opposite-sex sexual relations, with a lesser but still active interest in sexual relations with members of the same sex

    1. Predominant orientation for opposite-sex sexual relations, with only incidental interest in sexual relations with members of the same sex

    0. Exclusive orientation for sexual relations with members of the opposite sex and no interest in sexual relations with members of the same sex

14. To what degree are you satisfied with being a lesbian? (Circle number)

1	2	3	4	5
extremely unhappy and unsatisfied				extremely happy and satisfied

Appendix E

Correlation Matrix of All Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. PA	--	.14	.40c	.49c	.31c	.14	.20	.13	-.18	.30c	-.23b	-.10	-.02
2. VE		--	-.28b	-.17	-.36c	-.34c	.02	-.07	-.02	-.11	.16	.22a	-.10
3. VP			--	.59c	.54c	.53c	.18a	.14	-.23b	.26b	-.21a	-.17	-.04
4. EA				--	.59c	.51c	.33c	.22b	-.33c	.41c	-.13	-.23b	-.07
5. Efficacy					--	.73c	.15	.06	-.15	.20a	-.31c	-.43c	-.07
6. Outness						--	-.01	-.04	-.08	.12	-.10	-.20a	.03
7. Self-esteem							--	.63c	-.47c	.44c	.01	.09	.10
8. Positive								--	-.20a	.37c	.05	.07	.06
9. Negative									--	-.22	-.05-	-.08	-.12
10. Satisfaction										--	-.05	-.13	-.14
11. Age											--	.53c	.31c
12. Income												--	.23b
13. Education													--

Note. N = 110.
a = $p < .05$
b = $p < .01$
c = $p < .001$
Self-esteem = Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale
Positive = Positive Affect as measured by MAACL-R
Negative = Negative Affect as measured by MAACL-R
Outness = Sexual Orientation Disclosure Scale
PA = Performance Accomplishments Subscale
VE = Vicarious Experience Subscale
VP = Verbal Persuasion Subscale
EA = Emotional Arousal Subscale
Efficacy = Coming Out Self-efficacy Scale

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