

Interpersonal needs and satisfaction with life among rural lesbians: A Spanish sample study

Sexualities

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journals.sagepub.com/home/sex**Noelia Fernández-Rouco**

University of Cantabria, Spain

Ramona Faith Oswald

University of Illinois, USA

Pablo Cantero

University of Castilla-La Mancha, Spain

Rodrigo J Carcedo

University of Salamanca, Spain

Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate interpersonal needs and life satisfaction among lesbians in rural Spain. Forty in-person interviews were conducted to collect both survey and interview data. The quantitative results show that life satisfaction is inversely associated with romantic-emotional loneliness and positively associated with sexual satisfaction. Qualitative data are used to then elucidate these associations. The findings highlight the importance of romantic relationships in the lives of rural lesbians who live in communities that lack organized support for sexual minorities. Increased visibility might help them to better fulfil some of their interpersonal needs.

Keywords

Lesbians, romantic relationships, rural, satisfaction with life, Spain

Although research on LGBT individuals and same-sex relationships has grown considerably over the past decades, there is minimal knowledge about rural lesbians due to the urban biases of empirical research (National Research Council, 2011). This is especially true in Spain, where there are no published studies on rural lesbian life.

Corresponding author:

Noelia Fernández-Rouco, University of Cantabria, Avda. Los Castros, s/n. Santander, Cantabria 39005, Spain.

Email: fernandezrn@unican.es

Existing research from the United States demonstrates that lesbian invisibility and isolation within rural communities is an ongoing problem. Invisibility stems from the heterosexual ideological system that organizes these communities and promotes sexual stigma (Fejes and Petrich, 1993; Herek, 2007). In Spain, Catholicism is the majority religion and, although there is separation of church and state, the Spanish Catholic hierarchy is vocal in its opposition to lesbian and gay rights (Pérez-Agote, 2016). Churches may be the central institutions in rural communities, and the espoused theology may be strongly anti-lesbian. Strong religious messages may combine with the fact that many local residents are unaware of the lesbian(s) in their midst and ill-informed about lesbian issues (D'Augelli et al., 1987). The result may be lesbian invisibility due to fear of gay bashing and discomfort because of affectional status (Bell and Valentine, 1995; D'Augelli and Hart, 1987). D'Augelli and Vallance (1986) argue that this constant pressure to remain invisible translates to the need to be publicly asexual, to act in a way that's not 'too homosexual'. As a result of this invisibility, lesbians may internalize more of the stigmatizing values of the larger culture (Garnets and D'Augelli, 1994; Kenkel 1995) and lack access to or information on social opportunities to connect with other lesbians (McCarthy, 2000). Without these resources and social ties, lesbian women living in rural communities may feel invisible and isolated, and this may negatively impact their perceived satisfaction with life (McCarthy, 2000).

The purpose of this article is to examine whether the life satisfaction of 40 rural lesbians in Spain is associated with the quality of their interpersonal relationships; both interview and questionnaire data are used.

Interpersonal needs

The Interpersonal Theory of Basic Needs (López, 1997, 2008) posits that humans have three primary emotional and psychological needs: emotional security, a network of social relationships and gratifying physical intimacy. Well-being is said to occur when these needs are met (López, 1995, 2008). However, each need is resolved through a particular type of relationship. Family of origin addresses the need for emotional security, friends address the need for social networks and romantic relationships address the need for sexual intimacy. Thus, each type of relationship is important because they each fulfill different needs (López, 2008).

The *need for emotional security* refers to the bond of attachment that is established through unconditional and lasting relationships. This bond is usually established in early family relationships and then continued in adulthood through couple relationships. Failure to meet this need may lead to emotional loneliness, that is, feelings of insecurity, isolation, emptiness and a lack of protection, and the desire to share life with someone special (Hombrados-Mendieta et al., 2013). Given the two types of relationships that provide emotional security, emotional loneliness was divided into two components: family loneliness and romantic loneliness (DiTommaso et al., 2004).

Lesbians cannot take family acceptance for granted because anti-homosexual stigma may lead to being rejected by parents and/or other relatives. Consistent with the interpersonal theory of basic needs, research has found that family rejection increases the risk of mental health problems among sexual minorities (Ryan et al., 2009).

Family rejection may be particularly harmful if it is reinforced by a conservative kinship-oriented social environment. Although urban Spain may offer support for sexual minorities, rural communities remain patriarchal, conservative and religiously fundamental, and strongly enforce adherence to traditional gender roles, especially in families (Fernández-Rouco et al., 2013; Moses and Buchner, 1980). Thus in this study we hypothesize that higher levels of alienation from family (i.e. 'family loneliness') will be associated with decreased life satisfaction.

A lack of partner relationship is linked to romantic loneliness (DiTommaso et al., 2004). The lesbian dating marketplace may be sparse in rural communities. Furthermore, there may be developmental reasons why lesbians do not have romantic relationships. Specifically, lesbian women may begin to engage in romantic relationships with same-sex partners later than heterosexual women begin their experiences with romantic partners because they may be figuring out their sexuality (Jenkins, 2013). In addition, lesbian youth may also engage in heterosexual dating which may help to avoid coming out and confirm or solidify their sexual preferences (Furman and Shaffer, 1999).

The *need for a network of social relationships* is resolved through the bond of friendship, relationships with friends and acquaintances and community membership. If not resolved properly, the individual will feel social loneliness in the form of feelings of alienation or boredom (López, 1997, 2008). The link between positive social relationships and psychological adjustment throughout the human lifespan has been well established (Cohen and Wills, 1985; Harel and Deimling, 1984; Lewis, 1982; McLaren, 2009; Nestmann and Hurrelmann, 1994; Sarason and Sarason, 1985; Sauer and Coward, 1985; Smith and Baltes, 1993; Weiss, 1974, 1975).

Relationships with other sexual minority women may be especially important for lesbians (Bradford et al., 1994; Corley and Pollack, 1996; McLaren, 2009). One study found that lesbians reported most of their friends to be other lesbians and they socialized with lesbians most of the time (D'Augelli et al., 1987). However, social opportunities for friendship and relationship development are more limited for women in rural areas (D'Augelli et al., 1987; D'Augelli and Hart, 1987; Holman and Oswald, 2016; Kenkel, 1986; Kramer, 1995). D'Augelli and Hart (1987) report fewer opportunities for networking for women than men and the least amount of support for rural women and their families. Additionally, if local networks do exist, they are likely to be very close-knit and secretive (Oswald and Culton, 2003).

The *need for physical contact and intimacy* is resolved through sexual contact associated with the desire, attraction and love for a sexual partner. If this need is not resolved satisfactorily, the individual will feel sexual frustration, tension and/or sexual dissatisfaction (López, 1997, 2008). Previous research has shown that sexual satisfaction is associated with well-being. For example, a greater level of sexual

satisfaction has been found to be associated with a higher life satisfaction (Melin et al., 2003). Among lesbians, sexual satisfaction was found to be an extremely strong predictor of relational well-being, a strong predictor of mental health and a weak to moderately strong predictor of physical health (Holmberg et al., 2010). Thus, in this study we hypothesize that a higher level of sexual satisfaction will be associated with greater life satisfaction.

Beyond sexual satisfaction per se, positive romantic relationships may reinforce well-being (Furman and Shaffer, 2003). Lesbians in a significant partner relationship have reported positive feelings and high satisfaction and closeness (Peplau and Spalding, 2000), thus we hypothesize that lower levels of romantic loneliness will be associated with greater satisfaction with life.

Satisfaction with life

Studies focused on well-being conceptualize it as multifaceted in nature, with both affective and cognitive components (Diener et al., 1999). Life satisfaction has been identified as a construct representing a cognitive and global evaluation of the quality of one's life as a whole (Pavot and Diener, 1993). Very few researchers have studied life satisfaction among lesbians (Dew and Newton, 2005). Using a non-metropolitan sample of LGBTQ adults, Lazarevic et al. (2016) found a significant correlation between proximal family support and life satisfaction. Similarly, a study of gay men in Spain found that higher levels of emotional support from family members were associated with increased life satisfaction (Domínguez-Fuentes et al., 2012). Additionally, a study of Chinese gay men living in Hong Kong found that high levels of life satisfaction were related to higher levels of gay peer support and disclosure of sexual orientation (Wong and Tang, 2003). It is plausible that these links between life satisfaction and family and peer support will be true for the current sample of lesbians.

Regardless of the aforementioned studies on interpersonal needs and satisfaction with life, there remains a need for research that sheds light on these topics and their relationships as regards rural lesbians. A deeper understanding is essential for developing effective interventions to reduce the social exclusion of rural lesbians, and for facilitating prevention by distancing those at-risk individuals from their vulnerable situations.

Thus, in this article we have tried to answer the following unanswered questions: (1) what are the interpersonal relationships of rural lesbians like? (2) what are the levels of life satisfaction like for rural lesbians? (3) to what extent do these interpersonal needs impact the life satisfaction of this population?

Method

To examine the life satisfaction of lesbian women living in rural areas, an exploratory and descriptive study was conducted. A cross-sectional design was used to gather current data. It is important to note that the retrospective study of these

matters is subject to the specific moment of the person, and the memory and interpretation the person has made of her past.

Participants

The sample consisted of 40 rural lesbian women residing within Extremadura, Spain. The population density of this territory is very low compared to Spain overall (25 people / km²). Participants were recruited in different cities and villages by this article's first author, who made contact by phone or email with people in associations and internet forums.

The mean age of the sample was 33.75 years ($SD = 7.50$, range = 20–47). Most (90%) were employed at the time of data collection, most (63.5%) had a same-sex partner and half were living in their parents' home.

Procedure

The people who responded positively to the recruitment method were given a standard description of the study and were evaluated for their eligibility to participate, which was as follows: individuals had to identify themselves as exclusively lesbian at the time of the interview, and to have lived in a rural place all their life. Eligible participants who expressed an interest in participating in the study were interviewed in person at a location of their choosing (e.g. home, cafeteria, etc.). Individuals participating in the study did so voluntarily.

As agreed during the initial contact, the researchers met with participants in a location that was most convenient for them. Face to face interviews lasting about 90 minutes were conducted with each participant. Interviews commenced only after we had established rapport, assured participants that their participation was confidential and voluntary and then explicitly obtained their informed consent to be interviewed. Upholding these ethical standards is vital for the collection of good quality data.

Measures

Descriptive information for each *Study 1* measure is provided in Table 1.

Criterion variable: Life satisfaction. The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985) was designed to assess global life satisfaction. It addresses the cognitive evaluation of one's own life in terms of ideal life, wish for change and current and past satisfaction. The SWLS consists of five items (e.g. 'In most ways my life is close to my ideal'), with a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = 'strongly disagree' to 7 = 'strongly agree'. The total life satisfaction score is obtained by summing the scores of the five items, with possible scores ranging from 7 to 35. The internal consistency coefficient for this sample is $\alpha = 0.90$.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics (N = 40).

Variable	Range	Mean (Standard Deviation)
Loneliness ^a		
Family	1–7	4.51 (1.13)
Social	1–7	4.13 (0.72)
Partner	1–7	4.20 (1.01)
Satisfaction ^b		
Sexual	1–5	2.68 (0.95)
Life	1–5	3.82 (1.21)

^aRated on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree)

^bRated on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly dissatisfied, 5 = strongly satisfied)

Predictor variables: Social and emotional loneliness. The short version of the Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale for Adults (SELSA-S; DiTommaso et al., 2004) was used to measure two types of loneliness: social and emotional. SELSA-S consists of three subscales labelled (a) social loneliness (e.g. ‘I don’t have any friends who share my views, but I wish I did’), (b) family-emotional loneliness (e.g. ‘I feel alone when I am with my family’) and (c) romantic-emotional loneliness (e.g. ‘I have a romantic partner with whom I share my most intimate thoughts and feelings’). Participants endorsed five items per subscale for a total of 15 items. Each item was rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 = ‘strongly disagree’ to 7 = ‘strongly agree’. The total score of every subscale is obtained by the sum of its items; subscale scores thus range from 7 to 35. Alphas were 0.85, 0.90 and 0.89 for social, family-emotional and romantic-emotional loneliness, respectively. There is no total global score of loneliness because we are interested in distinguishing between types of loneliness.

Predictor variable: Sexual satisfaction. The subscale of sexual satisfaction of the Multidimensional Sexual Self-Concept Questionnaire (MSSCQ; Snell, 1995) was used to measure this construct. A total of five items (e.g. ‘I am satisfied with the way my sexual needs are currently being met’) were each scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 = ‘not at all characteristic of me’ to 5 = ‘very characteristic of me’. The total sexual satisfaction score is obtained by summing the scores of the five items, with possible scores ranging from 5 to 25. Alpha was 0.96.

Descriptive and open questions

In addition to the above measures, interview data were collected. This data were used to interpret and support the quantitative findings. The interview protocol

was as follows:

Partner relationship. Having a partner relationship at the time of the interview was coded (1 = yes, 2 = no).

Number of significant partner relationships. Participants were asked about the number of significant partner relationships.

Length of partner relationships. Participants were asked about the length of their partner relationships.

Gender of their first partner relationship. Gender of their first partner relationship was registered (1 = man, 2 = woman).

First partner relationship experience. What about your first partner relationship and what about your first same-sex experience? Tell me about this.

Marriage. Participants were asked whether they were married at the time of the interview (1 = yes, 2 = no).

Coming-out process (identifying publicly about their sexuality) **and partner relationship.** To identify that heterosexuality is most often assumed and thus lesbian identity construction may require a 'coming-out process', participants were asked: How was your coming-out process and your satisfaction with this process?

Current partner relationship. What about your current partner relationship? Tell me about this.

First sexual contact. Participants were asked for type of relationship with their first sexual contact. Answers were coded (1 = significant relationship, 2 = occasional sexual partner, 3 = friend, 4 = one night stand). Also the open question: Tell me about your first sexual contact experience; how was it?

Gender of first sexual contact. Gender of first sexual contact was registered (1 = man, 2 = woman).

Sexual contact. Participants were asked if they had had sexual contact in the last year (1 = yes, 2 = no).

Fantasies. Fantasies about men, women or both were registered (1 = men, 2 = women, 3 = both).

Masturbation. Masturbation nowadays was coded (1 = yes, 2 = no).

Desire for more sexual contact. Desire for more sexual contact was coded (1 = yes, 2 = no).

Satisfaction with sexual life. Participants were asked if they were satisfied with their sexual life (1 = yes, 2 = no). Also, the open question: How is your sexual life satisfaction?

Data analysis

All quantitative procedures were performed using SPSS 20.0. First, descriptive data were examined. Second, bivariate correlations were examined (see Table 2). Then multiple regression using the enter method was used to examine the relative influence of all predictor variables on the criterion variable, life satisfaction (see Table 3).

Regarding the open-ended questions, we were attentive to the ways in which individuals explained their views of the coming-out process and their partner

Table 2. Bivariate correlations between life satisfaction, sexual satisfaction and three types of loneliness.

Variables	LS	SL	FL	PL	SS
Life satisfaction	1	0.165	0.098	0.358*	0.417**
Social loneliness		1	0.658**	0.471**	-0.118
Family loneliness			1	0.111	-0.263
Partner loneliness				1	0.090
Sexual satisfaction					1

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

Table 3. Multiple regression to predict life satisfaction (N = 40).

Variables	B	SE (B)	B	T	p
Constant	0.81	5.98		0.13	0.89
Social loneliness	-0.17	0.36	-0.10	-0.48	0.63
Family loneliness	0.26	0.21	-0.24	10.23	0.22
Romantic loneliness	0.39	0.19	-0.34	2.03*	0.04
Sexual satisfaction	0.56	0.18	0.43	2.99**	0.00

Notes: $R^2 = 0.31$; $F(4, 35) = 3.96$. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

satisfaction. Qualitative questions were coded for thematic analysis of the data (Gibbs, 2012), which involved a thorough exploration of recurrent patterns to create a coding system to organize the data. The comparative analysis of all texts grouped under the same genre code is presented in the results below.

Results

Quantitative

Bivariate correlations of interpersonal variables with life satisfaction are shown in Table 2. Both romantic loneliness and sexual satisfaction were positively and significantly associated with life satisfaction, our criterion variable.

Looking at the multivariate model (see Table 3), both romantic loneliness and sexual satisfaction predict life satisfaction when controlling for the influence of all variables. Indeed, a one standard deviation increase in romantic loneliness leads to a 0.34 standard deviation decrease in life satisfaction when the effects of all variables in the model are held constant. Further, a one standard deviation increase in sexual satisfaction leads to a 0.43 standard deviation increase in life satisfaction when the effects of all variables in the model are held constant. Despite only finding

two significant predictors of life satisfaction, the overall model is significant and explains 31% of the variance in life satisfaction (see Table 3).

Qualitative

To further explore the relationship between life satisfaction and romantic loneliness and sexual satisfaction, relevant qualitative data relevant to these constructs are presented.

Romantic loneliness. On average, the women in this study had had three significant partner relationships. These relationships had lasted from eight months to six years, and almost half had cohabitated with a partner. The below results show support for our quantitative finding that satisfaction with life is associated with having a strong romantic and/or sexual relationship.

There appear to be two relationship formation trajectories among the women in our sample: First, an early heterosexual romantic relationship followed by coming out as a lesbian and partnering with a woman, and second, no heterosexual romantic relationship history and later-age coming out as a lesbian and/or partnering with a woman. These patterns are similar to what Moore (2011) found in her study of African American lesbians.

The 17 women whose first romantic relationship was with a man tended to have identified themselves as heterosexual during the beginning of that relationship (65% of the 17). In western cultures, heterosexuality is assumed and thus lesbian identity construction may require a 'coming-out process' where over time lesbian desire is recognized and identified with (Soriano, 1999) but silence is maintained for a long time due to social pressure (Rich, 2003). Regarding the first aspect, one participant said:

... I had my first relationship at 17, with a boy from town, we were together for seven years... and well, I felt that something was missing. It was fine for him because we got on well, but I wasn't fulfilled...

Regarding the second aspect, another participant said: '...I spent a lot of time trying to live as a heterosexual woman, hiding my real sexuality, although I always knew I was a lesbian...'.

The 23 women who had their first relationship with a woman noted that this relationship began later in life:

... It took me many years to accept that I liked women, and of course I didn't like men and didn't want anything to do with them. When I tried to start something with a man, it didn't come to anything and I felt terrible, so I didn't have a relationship until I was 24 years old, which was with a girl...

The women's own internalized homophobia and community hostility may have delayed their establishment of a same-sex relationship (Gaines et al., 2005).

Regarding this, one participant stated:

It was so difficult for me to have a partner; it took me a long time, because I live in a small and very conservative village, where homosexual people are rejected and humiliated. Also in my family I always heard bad words about gays and lesbians, so I increasingly hated myself for being a lesbian.

Taking this into account, lesbians whose first relationship was with a woman described their romance as more satisfying than did lesbians whose first relationship was with a man. Thus, although it took them longer to find love, their extended coming-out process seems overall to have been beneficial.

At the time of this research, more than half (65%) of the women interviewed were in a romantic relationship. The majority of these relationships were with women (88.5%). Finally, a minority (7.5%) of the women had married their female partner; same-sex marriage rights in Spain were established in 2005. Overall, the lesbians in this study reported that they were satisfied with their current relationships (80%). For example: '... I'm really happy now... of course we have disagreements but I feel good being able to express myself as I am and feeling accepted...'.

Sexual satisfaction. Sexuality is an important component of life satisfaction, and lesbians may struggle to find satisfaction given the lack of same-sex models in society (López, 1997). Indeed, the first sexual contact for most of the women in our sample (57.5%) was with a man rather than a woman. Whether same-sex or different-sex, the first sexual contact occurred during adolescence or young adulthood (13 to 24 years). Half (50%) experienced their first sexual encounter within a relationship, almost half (42.5%) with an occasional sexual partner, 2.5% with a friend and the remaining 5% during a one night stand. One participant said the following about her first sexual contact, which was within a relationship: 'I had my first sexual contact with my partner. It would have been very difficult for me to have sex without a trusting relationship... it was so hard for me to find someone with whom I could feel comfortable sexually...'. In terms of current sexual contact, most women had had sexual contact within the last year (92.5%), and the majority of this contact had been with female partners. Also, most women currently only fantasized about sex with women (65%), although 15% reported frequent sexual fantasies including men. Most women (55%) reported masturbation. It is important to note that even though their sexual histories are diverse, all women in this study identify themselves as lesbians.

Even though they were sexually active and generally satisfied with their sexual lives (78%), many women in this study would have liked to have had more sexual contact (45%), as illustrated in the next paragraph: 'I amuse myself with my sexual encounters, but the truth is that I don't have as much sexual contact as I need, and sometimes I don't know how to meet people and have more sexual encounters...'.

The invisibility of lesbians in this rural region, and the out-migration of many lesbians to more urban areas (Conn, 2014), means that it is difficult to approach other lesbians and therefore establish contacts, in this case sex contacts.

It seems that the women interviewed are satisfied with their sexual encounters when they have them, but would like to have them more frequently. Still, they feel that their current sexual life is better than in the past. This supports our quantitative finding that sexual satisfaction is associated with life satisfaction.

Finally, 45% of participants had used the internet at least once to find romantic or sexual partners, but almost 90% of them reported not feeling satisfied by it, especially for establishing a romantic relationship:

I spoke with women through the internet for a short time, and I had sexual contact twice, but I'd like to have a partner, and I think it isn't a good way, because most of the people don't want commitment, just sex.

Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate the importance of romantic relationships and sexual satisfaction for the overall life satisfaction of lesbians living in rural Spain. These significant findings, that life satisfaction is associated with romantic connection and sexual satisfaction, are consistent with findings in previous studies (e.g. Furman and Shaffer, 2003; Melin *et al.*, 2003; Myers, 1993). Further, our analysis of interview data supports the extant research on rural sexual minorities by showing that social isolation and community hostility towards lesbians are salient in rural Spain, and create barriers to the formation of romantic relationships (e.g. Cody and Welch, 1997; Cohn and Hastings, 2010; Corley and Pollack, 1996; Sampedro, 2000).

Rurality in Spain is not defined by the absence of running water or electricity, but by the distance between villages, the absence of public amenities and the size of companies that have set up in business, usually family businesses. Regarding these aspects, internal cohesion and identity are the most prominent characteristics of rural life (Ocaña-Riola and Sánchez-Cantalejo, 2005), where the institution of religion and conservative values have the highest importance (D'Augelli *et al.*, 1987). According to this, non- heteronormative experience challenges the sexuality norms and determines the coming-out process, interpersonal relationships and life satisfaction. Despite the recent tendency for exodus from villages to cities, all of our participants have lived all their life in rural regions. Some studies have pointed out how small cities can be a good place for lesbian experiences due to the familiarity and possibility of being part of the community (Muller, 2013), but in Spain they are considered a part of religious and conservative values, and people born and raised in small cities find it harder to leave and more serious if their homosexuality is found out by others in the community. It seems that mobile phones and ICT can allow people to establish sexual and romantic relationships (Döring, 2009), but the participants in our study didn't feel comfortable or confident about these types of contacts, as other studies have noted (Couch and Liamputtong, 2008).

Given their isolated social context, it is vital for these women to find a romantic partner who can meet both their emotional and sexual needs. Clinical and education practitioners need to understand the needs and challenges facing lesbians in rural Spain. This knowledge will help them develop more effective programs and interventions. For example, the women in our study would benefit from social networking opportunities where they can meet other lesbians. They would also benefit from efforts to improve the overall social climate in rural areas to be more supportive of sexual minorities. These are micro and macro practice strategies that flow from the results of this study.

This study was modest in scope and design, and yet our results show a high association between selected variables. Future research should replicate our inquiry with larger samples. It should be noted, however, that identifying and recruiting rural lesbians is not an easy task. The current research is a first effort towards building knowledge about rural sexual minorities within Spain. In addition, this work would have been enriched if it had been compared with a sample of urban lesbian women in order to find common and differentiating elements. This was not possible, although it would be interesting for future studies. In addition, making an initial approach and exploring reality in the rural world was the essential objective of this work. It was designed to explore an inaccessible reality in a specific context which has been under-explored in Spain.

Despite the limitations, this project is significant for several reasons. First of all, it sheds light on the lives of an important yet understudied population, rural lesbians, through the exploration of several areas for which limited research exists: aspects of being a lesbian in a rural context and interpersonal relationships and life satisfaction. Secondly, many of the studies that have been conducted use extant literature or theories which were not developed on these populations. Finally, it highlights the experienced consequences of living isolated. Further, the findings identify specific areas of intervention that may be used by practitioners, both educative and clinical, who seek to support sexual minority women. Sexuality and romantic relationships are still a hidden topic, a situation especially complicated in the case of rural lesbians. These results facilitate professionals to work on lesbian self-confidence and to encourage rural lesbians to feel safe in establishing relationships, both romantic and sexual ones. In addition, they can support women in generating women's networks, and thus make it easier to have relationships and sexual contacts. This is especially important in a sparsely populated rural setting with large distances between villages. Finally, practitioners could train life-satisfied women to become mediators for women experiencing difficulties.

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Noelia Fernández-Rouco is a lecturer in the Department of Education at the University of Cantabria, Spain. Her main research topics are related to welfare and sexuality, especially with excluded people. She is currently working on LGTB sexuality and welfare.

Ramona Faith Oswald is a professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at the University of Illinois, USA. Her main research topics are related to diverse families, poverty and inequality, social justice and health and well-being across the lifespan.

Pablo Cantero is an adjunct professor in the Faculty of Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy and Nursing at the University of Castilla-La Mancha, Spain. His research interests include occupation and social exclusion, mental health and identity and sexual orientation.

Rodrigo J Carcedo is an associate professor in the Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology at the University of Salamanca, Spain. His most recent publications are related to wellbeing and sexuality in prison inmates and transgender people.