



PHOTO BY WILLIAM LAURER

English graduate students Melanie Aswell (left), 23, and Jenny Corbett, 22, say schoolwork leaves little time for entertainment outside the house. An occasional movie is the usual recreation.

Homosexual, straight couples share same challenges

From this day forward

By Kimberly Spurlock
Staff Reporter

Melanie Aswell and Jenny Corbett are married — to each other.

Among their friends, this fact is not unusual nor is it startling to hear.

Sitting in the UNL Gay/Lesbian Student Association Resource Center, Corbett and Aswell, both lesbians and UNL graduate students, spoke comfortably about their relationship.

Aswell and Corbett began dating nearly three years ago, after they met while attending college in New York. They were students in the same English class and worked together.

Corbett and Aswell said they knew they were lesbians since high school. Aswell said she knew she was a lesbian because, just as straight men and women are attracted to each other, she was attracted to other women. Corbett was her first lesbian lover, she said.

They didn't need to ask one another if the other was a lesbian, Aswell said.

They knew, Corbett said, because of their class discussions in English and because the two attended a small college where "everyone knew just about everyone."

But ultimately, Aswell said, "We just knew."

They made their wedding vows in April, when they participated in the gay and lesbian wedding in

Washington, D.C. Although most states do not recognize homosexual marriages, Aswell said the couple considered themselves just as married as any heterosexual couple.

Unfortunately, Aswell said, being a homosexual married couple has its problems in today's society.

"We don't get the same positive reinforcement that straight people get," she said.

She and Corbett cannot file their income tax statements jointly as heterosexual married couples can.

"We'd be better off if we could," Aswell said.

But, Corbett said, she and her lover do not have to worry about the gender expectations society burdens upon heterosexual marriages.

Within heterosexual marriages, the woman may be expected to stay home and the man to work. Corbett said gay and lesbian couples were able to go against society's norms.

"We have the freedom to determine what each of us will do," she said. "Our duties are divided on the line of temperament."

Aswell works. Corbett does not. But the couple said that wasn't a problem in their relationship, because at some point in time the roles have been reversed.

"It all evens out," Aswell said.

Being in a lesbian relationship makes it easier to negotiate what their relationship means to one another, Aswell said. Straight couples more or less have expectations of how their relationship is

supposed to be, she added.

But just like all couples, Corbett said, she and Aswell's relationship has its ups and downs, and arguments are commonplace.

"But we generally go with the rule that we don't go to bed mad," Corbett said.

Divorce isn't an option in their relationship, Aswell said. But if it ever came to that, it could be messy.

"Married heterosexuals can go to court and sue for a divorce," she said. "But with gays and lesbians, we just split up."

Aswell said it was harder to prove in court what property should go to whom in gay and lesbian relationships.

"But," Corbett said, "we always operate under the assumption that divorce would be the last thing we'd do. Most married heterosexuals operate under that assumption."

UNL freshman William Schultze is married, too. He and his husband, Chris, had a ceremonial wedding more than a year ago.

"We asked a friend of ours, who was a former preacher, to marry us," Schultze said.

The two met through a gay and lesbian youth support group in Arizona. When Chris asked Schultze out on their first date, Schultze said he felt nervous and afraid.

"He (Chris) was the first man that I ever went out on a date with," he said.

The two arranged to meet at a store, go to dinner and then to a

movie, but Schultze said Chris stood him up.

"I was mad," he said, laughing.

After more than an hour, Schultze went home. The next day Chris called and apologized, explaining to Schultze that the cab he called never picked him up.

They set another date.

"And this time," Schultze said, "I had him pick me up."

The two immediately connected, Schultze said.

"I liked him — I liked the way he looked," Schultze said. "We hit it off right away."

Schultze said he and Chris spent their free time in the company of other gay and lesbian friends or watching movies.

Some common arguments among the two, Schultze said, are that they aren't paying enough attention to one other or spend too much time with their best friends.

He and Chris share everything, he said, including a joint checking account. But because their marriage isn't legal, they must carry individual car and health insurance, which is more expensive.

Schultze said children are in their future, but the couple faces a major problem.

"We both want to be the biological father, and he wants a girl and I want a boy," Schultze said. "And, we only want one."

To them, surviving in a society where homosexuality is not accepted is a lesser worry than finding a solution to this dilemma.

"We don't get the same positive reinforcement that straight people get."