Differences in Emotional Intimate Partner Violence and Relationship Satisfaction Among Same-Sex and Different-Sex Couples

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Abstract

How do lesbian, gay and heterosexual couples experience emotional intimate partner violence (IPV) and relationship satisfaction? And how are these associations affected by differences in power, stress and discrimination? This research aims to fill the gap in literature by examining how emotional IPV and relationship satisfaction may be differently shaped by power, stress and discrimination among gay, lesbian and heterosexual couples. To address this research question, I use data from the Health and Relationships Project, in hierarchical linear models to explore the differences between gay (N=248), lesbian (N=342) and straight (N=248) respondents' experiences of emotional intimate partner violence and relationship satisfaction within couples. Using dyadic data, the actor-partner interdependence models also test the mediating roles of stress, discrimination and feelings of equal power. Findings indicate that overall, lesbians experience the least amount of emotional intimate partner violence and the greatest amount of relationship satisfaction, while straight respondents experience the most amount of emotional intimate partner violence and the least amount of relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, feelings of equal power mediate this relationship. These findings contradict past literature, which suggests that same-sex couples would experience more emotional IPV than their heterosexual counterparts. This indicates that more research is needed to explore the numerous variables at play for same-sex and different-sex emotional IPV and relationship satisfaction, as there are unique differences in power, stress and discrimination between these groups.

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INTRODUCTION

When one thinks of intimate partner violence, or domestic violence as it is commonly referred to, often the first image to come to mind is a woman defenseless against her boyfriend or husband, who is physically and emotionally abusive. I argue that this image reaches societally, effectively leaving same-sex partners and heterosexual men out of the lens of victims of intimate partner violence. In recent years, society has taken steps in addressing this common misconception, as men can also be victims of domestic violence, yet the discourse is still heteronormative. The current study brings victims of same-sex intimate partner violence into the conversation, so they can be seen, receive support, and, most importantly, resources.

The present study aims to explore how gay, lesbian and straight relationship types are associated with emotional intimate partner violence and relationship satisfaction. I examine how couples' stress, discrimination, and feelings of equal power in the relationship affect the association of sexually oriented relationship types and these positive and negative relationship quality outcomes.

Prior research suggests that same-sex couples will experience more aspects of minority stress, such as discrimination, than heterosexual respondents (Meyer 1995; 2003). Literature suggests that same-sex couples will experience equal, if not more intimate partner violence than their heterosexual counterparts, which is often attributed to minority stress theory (Messinger 2011; Goldberg and Meyer 2013). Based on past research, I propose that heterosexual couples have greater differences in feelings of

power, which may lower their relationship satisfaction in comparison to same-sex couples.

Primary hypotheses of this study are (H1) that gay and lesbian respondents will experience more stress, discrimination, and feelings of equal power than their heterosexual counterparts. I also hypothesize (H2) that more stress and discrimination will be associated with more emotional intimate partner violence and (H3) less relationship satisfaction. Conversely, I propose (H4) that more feelings of equal power will be associated with lower levels of emotional intimate partner violence and (H5) higher levels of relationship satisfaction. I further argue (H6) that same-sex respondents will experience higher levels of emotional intimate partner violence than their heterosexual counterparts. However, I believe (H7) that same-sex couples will experience higher levels of relationship satisfaction, specifically lesbians. I believe (H8) stress, discrimination, and feelings of equal power will act as actor-partner mediators between both relationship type and emotional intimate partner violence, as well as (H9) relationship type and relationship satisfaction.

Results suggest there are significant differences in emotional intimate partner violence and relationship satisfaction for lesbian, gay and straight respondents. Findings also indicate that feelings of equal power in one's relationship may partially mediate the effect of relationship type on emotional intimate partner violence and relationship satisfaction for some groups. Stress and discrimination did not prove to mediate the effect of relationship type on emotional intimate partner violence or relationship satisfaction.

While some quantitative work has been done to explore intimate partner violence and relationship satisfaction for same-sex couples, this research aims to add to the

growing literature. This research will contribute to the literature by adding to the knowledge of emotional intimate partner violence and relationship satisfaction for same-sex couples in comparison to different-sex couples, while addressing how these outcomes may be differently shaped by stress, discrimination and power. Additionally, this work hopes to bring attention and resources to victims of emotional IPV in same-sex relationships.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate partner violence is undoubtedly an issue that, unfortunately, has many victims, as about 41% of women and 26% of men have fallen victim to some form of intimate partner violence in their life (Center for Disease Control 2022). While this needs to be examined critically, this research aims to focus on same-sex intimate partner violence and relationship satisfaction in comparison to heterosexual IPV and relationship satisfaction, as past research has been glaringly heteronormative. However, the body of literature for same-sex couples' emotional IPV is growing rapidly (Edwards, Sylaska, and Neal 2015), as well as literature on same-sex relationship satisfaction. This is not to take away from heterosexual victims of abuse, but to widen the scope to encompass LBGBTQ individuals, so that they may also receive support and resources.

Messinger's quantitative research (2011) is illustrative of differences in IPV between same-sex and different-sex couples, as he examines same-sex intimate partner violence prevalence in comparisons with heterosexual intimate partner violence across the U.S. Messinger (2011) looks at four different types of IPV (verbal, controlling physical or sexual) and results of these statistical analyses purport that intimate partner violence is more prevalent for LGB individuals. Messinger (2011) also finds that once

sexual orientation is controlled for, gender does not predict any IPV. Furthermore, findings indicate that sexual IPV victims are least likely to be heterosexual men, followed by GBL men, whereas GBL women are the most likely to be victims of sexual IPV, followed by heterosexual women. Yet, bisexual respondents were more likely to experience IPV than heterosexual or gay respondents. Moreover, gay men were more likely than lesbians to experience all forms of IPV (except sexual IPV). Messinger's research (2011) is crucial, as it is the first to utilize a nationally representative sample with multivariate regression analysis on the topic of same-sex intimate partner violence.

West's research (2000) buttresses this argument, as she highlights the rates of lesbian IPV victimization: 30-40% of lesbians experience physical IPV at some point in their relationships, and around 80% of lesbians experience psychological IPV; rates of victimization of sexual IPV for lesbians vary anywhere from 7% to 55%. Furthermore, gay men experience intimate partner violence as well, as Goldberg and Meyer's (2013) results indicate that gay men were the only significant group among men to experience IPV, as they were seen to be 2.5 times more likely to experience lifetime IPV and 1-year IPV.

Concepts specific to same-sex IPV are outing and mutual battering. Outing is also a unique risk for LGBT victims of violence and could be a reason this issue of same-sex IPV remains understudied (Brown and Herman 2015). One could be afraid of 'outing' themselves and be reluctant to seek professional help and confide in family or friends (Brown and Herman 2015); or outing could be a manipulative tool used by an abuser to keep the victim silent (Ard and Makadon 2011; Kulkin et al. 2007). Another concern for LGB individuals is 'mutual battering' (McClennen 2005; Kubicek et al.

2015), which assumes that because the partners are the same gender, the 'fight' is 'fair'—and therefore not abuse, unlike a male partner overpowering a female victim—which much of society would agree is abuse (McClennen 2005). Creating a double standard as to what qualifies as domestic violence, LGBTQ individuals are put at an additional disadvantage, as this concept is critically dismissive of same-sex violence and acts as a barrier for same-sex victims.

Literature highlights several other predictors of IPV, discrimination, stress, gender roles and support (West 2000; McKenry, Servoich, and Mason 2006; Edwards and Sylaska 2013). While discrimination, stress, power and support could all be determinants of heterosexual IPV, I believe that many of these predictors are augmented in same-sex relationships due to minority stressors. For example, internalized homophobia and being the victim of hate crimes or speech is seen to make it more likely for an individual to be the perpetrator of intimate partner violence (Edwards and Sylaska 2013). Additionally, stress is seen to be higher in partners who perpetrate intimate partner violence than those that do not (McKenry et al. 2006). These three predictors: internalized homophobia, discrimination and stress, are considered minority stressors described by Meyer (1995; 2003). Heteronormative gender roles, which are analyzed in more detail below, have implications on the power dynamics, not only in heterosexual relationships, but present in same-sex relationships, which affect intimate partner violence (West 2000; McKenry et al. 2006). Many of these predictors are mirrored in the literature on relationship satisfaction, calling to attention how intertwined these two outcomes are.

Relationship satisfaction

After examining the literature on same-sex IPV, one may ask: what does relationship satisfaction differences look like for these groups? Are there differences? In Garcia and Umberson (2019), results indicate that, regardless of if respondents are in same-sex or different-sex relationships, higher levels of both actor and partner martial strain are associated with higher psychological distress. However, the authors did find that the association of martial strain and distress was stronger for heterosexual women compared to lesbian women, which Umberson and Garcia attribute to differences in power for heterosexual couples. Furthermore, I relate this finding from Umberson and Garcia (2019) to this research as an indication that heterosexual couples may have lower relationship satisfaction than same-sex couples, due to higher differences in feelings of power. Worth noting for this research is the use of actor-partner models for the dyadic data, which this current research also aims to do. Similarly, Sommatico, Parello, and De Rosa (2020) find that anxiety and avoidance attachment styles are negatively associated with the gay and lesbian relationship satisfaction scale they utilize, in their Italian based research.

A major difference in same-sex relationship satisfaction and heterosexual relationship satisfaction is internalized stigma, or internalized homophobia. As in Sommatico et al. (2020), they find that the gay and lesbian relationship satisfaction scale is positively associated with the perceived social support measure, and negatively correlated with the internalized sexual stigma scale. Sommatico et al. (2020) find that lesbians have significantly higher relationship satisfaction and significantly lower internalized sexual stigma than gay men. Fleishman, Crane, and Koch (2019) find several

significant correlations in their study on sexual satisfaction in older same-sex adults, as they find that internalized homophobia is significantly negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction. Literature also suggests a strong link between relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction (Byers 2005; Butzer and Campbell 2008; Fleishman, Crane, and Koch 2019). Fleishman et al. (2019) further find that relationship satisfaction is significantly positively correlated with sexual satisfaction, and that relationship satisfaction is a significant predictor of sexual satisfaction.

Several predictors of relationship satisfaction are found in other works. For instance, Knoble and Linville (2012) examine how "outness" affects same-sex relationship satisfaction; while respondents did not necessarily state that one's level of outness directly affects their relationship satisfaction, the authors suggest that disparities in outness levels within couples could lead to relationship dissatisfaction. Moreover, Knoble and Linville (2012) state that respondent's *satisfaction* with both their level of outness and partner's level of outness could be more meaningful than outness per se. Knoble and Linville (2012) surmise that same-sex individuals may choose partners who have similar degrees of outness and values surrounding outness. Furthermore, Frost and Leblanc (2023) find an indirect association between stigma and relationship satisfaction, as they find that increased closeness discrepancies for partners is affected by increased stigma, which in turn lowers relationship satisfaction.

Research suggests a positive correlation between mental health and relationship satisfaction, as Otis, Riggle and Rostosky (2006) find that worse mental health is associated with lower levels of relationship satisfaction, and others find that higher relationship satisfaction is associated with lower levels of depressive symptoms (Mernitz,

Pollitt, and Umberson 2020; Gilmour, Whisman, and Whitton 2022). Research further suggests that access to support and resources is related to relationship satisfaction (Pope, Murray, and Mobley 2010; Sommatico et al. 2020); moreover, support from one's partner and commitment is seen as a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction as well (Kamen, Burns, and Beach 2011). This research contributes to literature by shedding added light on how relationship type is associated with relationship satisfaction by examining how same-sex relationship satisfaction differs from different-sex relationship satisfaction.

Power

A key aspect of intimate partner violence and relationship satisfaction is power. Pollitt, Robinson and Umberson's research (2018) buttresses the argument that shared power is positively associated with marital quality for both same-sex and different-sex relationships. Many are familiar with the power inherent in traditional heteronormative gender roles, but how does this operate in same-sex relationships? Through her qualitative work, Ristock (2003) outlines the need to dissect these power roles and uncover the complexity of power dynamics of abuse within lesbian relationships. West (2000) also describes the differences and similarities of lesbian IPV to heterosexual IPV, highlighting the over-focus of gender roles (i.e. who is 'masculine' and who is 'feminine') in lesbian IPV. However, this over-focus on gender roles can be by LGBTQ individuals themselves as well, which is apparent in Kubicek, McNeely, and Collins (2015). Similarly, Sanger and Lynch's work (2017) highlights these heteronormative roles present in lesbian relationships, as they describe the butch/femme dynamic. The

'butch' lesbian is described to embody masculinity and be the dominant partner, while the femme lesbian is related to the softness of womanhood (Sanger and Lynch 2017);

The pattern of inequitable heteronormative gender roles being perpetuated onto and by same-sex couples is detailed in literature (Sanger and Lynch 2006; Kubicek et al. 2015). Often, these gendered power roles are directly related to sexual positioning, as Kubicek et al. (2015) find that those who receive intercourse in gay sex are often viewed as subordinate and more vulnerable, and thus more 'feminine.' While the 'top' or giver in gay sex, is perceived as dominant and masculine– and often the provider (Kubicek, McNeely, and Collins 2015). Although gay men describe their sexual relationships through these patriarchal and heteronormative terms; it may be that society has not lent vocabulary to describe same-sex gender roles and power dynamics. Thus, respondents still defined their gendered roles in terms of being 'the man' in the relationship with a feminine counterpart (Kubicek et al. 2015); therefore, we see these heteronormative roles implicit in the same-sex community which further complicates their power dynamics.

Supporting the claim of the importance of gender roles in IPV, McKenry, Serovich and Mason's research (2006) is a quantitative approach which examines intimate partner violence in same-sex relationships through the lens of power. In examining same-sex intimate partner violence McKenry et al. (2006) utilize disempowerment theory, which postulates that those with lower self-esteem and insecurities may try to compensate for this by attempting to assert power through violence. Results indicate that gender roles are strongly related to differences between perpetrators and non-perpetrators of violence, as those that act out in violence against their partners had higher masculinity scores than those that do not.

Other predictors of how power can be perceived is through personal income, education, and age (Kubicek et al. Collins 2015) Income and education can be a large source of power inequality in relationships and can lead to one being financially unable to leave a relationship due to the inability to support themselves. Age differentials in relationships can lead to stark power imbalances, as one partner is perceived as more established and secure, which can also be related to the inequalities of income and education as well (Kubicek et. al 2015). In support of this argument, Ristock (2003) finds a trend of abuse in first relationships, as about one-half of respondents identified their first relationship as abusive, most times with older individuals who have been "out" longer. This is echoed in Kubicek et. al (2015), as it is very common for a young gay man to enter the community and begin a relationship with an older man. An older partner who is more established in the gay community could have more influence and connections as well.

I hypothesize that (H1) lesbians will experience the most feelings of equal power, followed by gay respondents, while heterosexual respondents will experience the lowest feelings of equality of power within their relationships. Thus, as feelings of equal power will be highest for lesbians, I believe (H5) this will mediate the effect of relationship type on relationship satisfaction, (H7) leading to lesbians having the highest degree of relationship satisfaction, followed by gay men, and lastly heterosexual respondents. I also believe (H4) more feelings of equal power will be associated with lower levels of emotional intimate partner violence.

Stress Theory

Much of the literature on emotional intimate partner violence, and even relationship satisfaction, attribute part of same-sex IPV to Meyer's minority stress theory (Meyer 1995). While many people focus on the issues that minority groups are subject to, such as overt discrimination and violence, Meyer highlights the more internalized issues that the LGBTQ community faces, such as internalized homophobia and perceived stigmas, both of which can severely affect the mental health of individuals. Minority stress can be described as "to distinguish the excess stress to which individuals from stigmatized social categories are exposed as a result of their social, often a minority, position" (Meyer 2003: 675). Meyer's research (1995) on the impact of minority stress on gay men's mental health was key in establishing this link, as he examines how minority stress—which he splits into three processes: internalized homophobia, expectations of rejection and perceived stigma, and actual homophobic events—affects socioeconomically advantaged gay men.

Meyer finds significant results, such as the direct negative impact of internalized homophobia on the intimate relationships of gay men, as well as the significant relationship between internalized homophobia and sex problems. Consequently, Meyer (1995) finds that minority stress is a significant predictor of mental distress. Implications of Meyer's research (1995) suggest that the minority effect could be augmented in groups of socioeconomically *disadvantaged* gay men, as lower socioeconomic status would likely strengthen this effect. Additionally, Meyer (1995) suggests that this effect could be similar in the lesbian community, although the research is not generalizable to the lesbian community, as lesbians are also subject to discrimination based on gender.

Meyer (2003) further researches prejudice, stress and the mental health of lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals. Meyer's (2003) findings suggest that LGB individuals have higher rates of mental disorders than their heterosexual counterparts, which is attributed to their minority position in a heteronormative society and minority stressors they may face. Similarly, the work of Cochran (2001) also describes the higher risk rate of stress disorders in LGB population.

Longobardi and Badenes-Ribera (2017) further support that minority stress theory is relevant to the issue of same-sex intimate partner violence. As does Edwards and Sylaska's research (2013), which examines same-sex IPV rates through a lens of minority stressors of internalized homophobia, respondent's perception of stigmas regarding their sexual orientation, and respondent's experience of being victims of hate crimes/speech. Some key results of this research indicate that all forms of IPV perpetration are related to one another, meaning that an individual who demonstrates one form of IPV to their partner is likely to engage in other forms of IPV against their partner. Additionally, increased levels of internalized homophobia were related to the perpetration of physical and sexual IPV, whereas hiding of LGBTQ identity was associated with only physical IPV perpetration. Moreover, victims of hate crimes/speech were more likely to commit psychological IPV to their partners (Edwards and Sylaska 2013).

Similarly, Milletich et. al. (2014) examines physical IPV in lesbian relationships through their quantitative study, with focus on childhood socialization of violence, individual factors (such as minority stressors: internalized homophobia) and relationship factors as predictors. Results indicate that women who identified as heterosexual reported perpetrating more violence against same-sex partners. It is possible that this is due to a

deep rejection of one's sexual orientation, as these authors also find internalized homophobia to have a significant indirect effect on physical IPV (Milletich et. al. 2014).

Contrastingly, Pepper and Sand (2015) examine the relationship between intimate partner violence for young adult women in same-sex relationships and internalized homophobia, results indicate that internalized homophobia was significantly related to sexual coercion, however not other forms of IPV. Internalized homonegativity was, however, directly related to being psychologically maladjusted.

As the literature suggests, discrimination is a large part of minority stress theory, as one can think of minority stress theory as stress due to discrimination, either experienced discrimination or fear of experiencing discrimination. Therefore, in addition to testing feelings of equal power as a mediator, I also test stress and discrimination as well, in an attempt to account for minority stress. Additionally, perpetrators of violence were likely to experience more stress than non-violent partners (McKenry et al. 2006), which makes it advantageous to test stress and discrimination as distinct predictors.

Based upon the foundation of the above literature, this research aims to examine how stress and discrimination affects gay and lesbian respondent's relationship satisfaction and IPV experiences in contrast with heterosexual respondents. I hypothesize (H1) that same-sex respondents will experience more stress and discrimination than their heterosexual counterparts. I further suggest (H2) that higher levels of stress and discrimination will result in higher levels of emotional intimate partner violence. This suggests that, in models that include mediators of stress and partner's stress, (H6) same-sex couples will experience more emotional intimate partner violence than heterosexual couples. Similarly, for models that include mediators of discrimination and partner's

discrimination, I hypothesize that same-sex couples will experience more emotional intimate partner violence. However, (H7) I do not hypothesize this to be the case for relationship satisfaction.

The main gap in literature that I will fill is how emotional IPV and relationship satisfaction may be mediated by power, stress and discrimination among gay, lesbian and heterosexual couples. However, it should also be noted that while much of literature focuses on physical intimate partner violence, or several different types of IPV, the present research solely examines emotional intimate partner violence. To highlight the severity of emotional violence, this literature hopes to help fill this gap not only for same-sex victims of emotional violence, but also heterosexual victims, to help society get away from a view of violence being purely physical.

METHODS

Sample

This study uses the cross-sectional dataset from the Health and Relationships Project (Umberson 2015), collected in 2015 through online survey data and daily online diary entries. The online survey asked participants a range of general questions about relationships and health, while the diary portion was more directed towards the respondent's daily stressors, experiences and interpersonal interactions from the past 24 hours (Umberson 2015). Legally married couples in which both partners were aged 35 to 65 and who had cohabitated for a minimum of three years after marriage were eligible to participate. Both partners within each couple were asked to fill out the initial survey and ten-day diary entries independent from their spouses. Diary data is not used in the

statistical analyses of this research, as this research only utilizes the survey data from the Health and Relationships Project dataset.

Same-sex couples were identified through the Massachusetts Registry of Vital Records and were invited to participate in the study via mailed letters. Seventy percent of the same-sex couples were identified this way. Heterosexual couples were identified through public Massachusetts city lists, where cities were selected that matched those of the same-sex couple participants. Forty percent of different-sex couples were identified this way. The remaining 30% of same-sex couples and 60% of different-sex couples were identified from referrals from the already participating couples. While couples residing in Massachusetts were the focal point of recruitment for the study, as it was the first state to legalize same-sex marriage in 2004 and have a registry of same-sex unions– the study did include other couples not residing in Massachusetts due to couples who had moved from Massachusetts or been referred by other couples to the study (Umberson 2015). After the couples completed the survey and diary information, each respondent received an American Express card for $50 each, totaling a $100 dollar incentive for each couple.

Dependent Measures

The two main dependent variables are an emotional IPV scale (EMOTIPV) and total relationship satisfaction scale (TOTRELSATIS).

Emotional IPV. The emotional IPV scale (alpha 0.810) is a scale created by standardizing the following 11 variables, and then averaging them: ‘ how often: does spouse not treat me well’, ‘… spouse too controlling over daily decisions/life’-- responses for these two items are 1 ‘never’ 2 ‘rarely’ 3 ’sometimes’ and 4 ‘often’. For the

variable '…spouse requires too much time and attention'--responses are 1 'very rarely' 2 'rarely' 3 'sometimes' 4 'often' and 5 'very often'. For the following variables: '..explodes and gets out of control,' 'how frequently spouse: reach limit and refuse to talk any further', '…throws insults and digs', '…withdraw, act distant, not interested'-- responses are 1 'never' 2 'rarely' 3 'sometimes' 4 'often' and 5 'always'. And lastly, the responses for these variables: '…make too many demands on you', '…critical of what you do', 'how much does spouse: make you feel loved and cared for' (reverse coded), '…willing to listen when you need to talk about your worries of problems' (reverse coded)-- are 1 'not at all' 2 'a little' 3 'somewhat' 4 'quite a bit' and 5 'a great deal. This scale is coded so that a higher number on the IPV scale represents a higher level of emotional IPV.

Total Relationship Satisfaction. The total relationship satisfaction scale (alpha 0.9278) is created by averaging together the following 5 standardized variables. The first variable in the scale is: 'R's degree of happiness in the relationship'--responses for this item are 1 'extremely unhappy' 2 'fairly unhappy' 3' a little unhappy' 4 'happy' 5 'very happy' 6 'extremely happy' and 7 'perfect'. The second two items in the scale are 'I have a warm and comfortable relationship with my spouse' and 'I feel I can confide in my spouse about virtually anything'--responses for these two items are 1 'not at all true' 2 'a little true' 3 'somewhat true' 4 'mostly true' 5 'almost completely true' and 6 'completely true. The last two items in the scale are: 'How rewarding is your relationship with your spouse' and 'In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship'-- the responses for the items are 1 'not at all' 2 'a little' 3 'somewhat' 4 'mostly' 5 'almost completely' and

6 ‘completely’. The higher the value on the relationship satisfaction scale the more relationship satisfaction one has in their relationship.

Emotional IPV and Relationship satisfaction are negatively correlated with a correlation coefficient of -0.6963.

Independent Measures

Relationship Type. The main independent variable is relationship type, which is categorized into ‘gay’ (men married to men, n=248) ‘lesbian’ (women married to women, n= 342) and ‘straight’ (men married to women; women married to men, n=248), and was obtained through vital records for same-sex couples and through demographic lists for different sex couples. There is also a question on the survey that couples completed that asks them which sexual orientation they feel represents them.

Mediators. Stress, discrimination, and power are each tested for mediating effects. The stress variable is a summative scale (alpha 0.77) constructed from the stress items in the survey, examples of these items are: ‘At present how stressed are your finances’, ‘...your relationship with your spouse’, ‘...your health’, ‘your spouse’s health’. Responses for all the items included in the additive stress scale are: 1 ‘not at all’ 2 ‘slightly’ 3 ‘somewhat’ 4 ‘very’ and 5 ‘extremely’. Similarly, the discrimination variable used in analysis is an additive scale (alpha 0.88) created from the discrimination items in the dataset, examples of these items are: ‘How often in your adult life people have acted disgusted by you’, ‘...people treated your marriage/rel less legitimate than theirs’, ‘...have been called names or insulted’, ‘...treated less than other people’. Possible responses for the discrimination items are: 1 ‘never’, 2 ‘less than once

a year', 3 'a few times a year', 4 ' a few times a month', 5 ' at least once a week', and 6 'almost everyday'. Power is measured by "R agrees/disagrees: My spouse and I have equal power in our relationship.' Responses range from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Correlations of these mediators are relatively low as stress and discrimination correlate at $r = 0.389$, stress and power correlate at $r = -0.353$, and discrimination and power correlate at $r = -0.185$.

Sexual Relationship. Due to the strong connection between relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction seen in the literature, a sexual relationship scale is included as a predictor in this research (Byers 2005; Butzer and Campbell 2008; Fleishman, Crane, and Koch 2019). Respondent's sexual relationship with their partner (SEXREL) is a measure created with 5 standardized variables. The first variable included in the sexual relationship scale is 'During the past 12 months, about how often did you and your spouse have sex'. Responses for this item are 1 'not at all in the past 12 months' 2 'a few times over the past 12 months' 3 'once every few months' 4 'once a month' 5 'two or three times a month' and 6 'once or more a week'. Other items in the scale include: 'Past 12 mos, how often did you have sex: for enjoyment or pleasure'', '… to please your spouse', '… for emotional closeness'. Responses for these items are 1 'never' 2 'rarely' 3 'sometimes' and 4 'often. Lastly, responses for the last item: 'Overall, how satisfied are you with your current sex life with your spouse' are: 1 'not at all', 2 'slightly', 3 'somewhat', 4 'very', and 5 'extremely'. The SEXREL scale has an alpha of 0.8247. The higher the value on the sexual relationship scale, the better sexual relationship one has with their partner.

Demographics. The models control for educational attainment, household income, total years lived together, number of children in the household, couple age, and total number of adverse events in childhood for each individual nested within the couple. Educational attainment is measured ordinally in degree ranges: 'Less than High School', 'Some HS', 'HS or GED', 'Some College', 'College Grad', 'Post-Grad/Prof'; however, due to the low frequency of the first three categories, I recoded this variable into the following three categories: 'Less than Bachelor's, 'College Grad' and 'Post-College Education'. Similarly, household income is represented in dollar ranges, which is also recoded due to the low frequency in the first few categories and is now coded as: '74,999 or less', '75,000 -99,999', '100,000-149,999' and '150,000 or more'. Years lived together is used instead of number of years married, as number of years married may not accurately represent the total years a same-sex couple has been together, due to the recency of legalization of same-sex marriage.

Additionally, the average of respondent age (RAGE) and spousal age (SAGE) is taken to create couple age (CAGE), which is controlled for in the models. The total number of adverse events before the age of 18 (TOTADVRS) is also used as a control variable, ranging from 0 adverse events to 11 adverse events. The adverse events considered in the dataset for this variable are as follows (all prior to age 18): 'family economic hardship', 'parents divorced', 'never knew father', 'death of a parent' , '>=1 parent had mental health problems' , '>=1 parent had an alcohol or drug problem', 'violence in the family' , 'physical or sexual abuse', 'bullied in school', 'suicidal thoughts or attempt', ' kicked out of parent's or guardian's home', 'drug and/or alcohol

problems', 'rape', 'life threatening illness or injury'. All these responses were dummy coded, for either 'not selected' or 'selected.'

Analysis Strategy

First, I checked for missing data and found that the total percent of missing data was 1.3%, and thus used listwise deletion. I then ran descriptive statistics and estimated one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests to compare and contrast the three types of married couple – gay, lesbian, and straight – on all study measures. Second, I examined the effects of relationship type on emotional intimate partner violence and relationship satisfaction using multivariable hierarchical linear models (HLM). These models account for the dependent data structure of this dyadic dataset, where individuals (n = 827) are nested within couples (n =417) and adjust for covariates.

For each of the two outcomes, emotional intimate partner violence and relationship satisfaction, a series of models were tested. First, I tested the direct effect of relationship type on emotional IPV and on total relationship satisfaction, respectively, with all predictors in the model. It should be noted that the same models were run twice to use two different reference categories for relationship type; for example, in Model 1, "straight" was the reference category, and in Model 2, "lesbian" was the reference category. The subsequent models in both tables 2 and 3 introduce mediators of actor stress, partner stress, actor discrimination, partner discrimination, actor's feelings of equal power, and partner's feelings of equal power to the model. Tables 4 and 5 examine the relationship between the mediators and the key independent variable, relationship type, within an HLM context.

A mediating variable is described by Baron and Kenny (1986) as "a third variable, which represents the generative mechanism through which the focal independent variable is able to influence the dependent variable of interest" (1173). It is under this definition that stress, discrimination, and feelings of equal power are examined as potential mediators of the association between relationship type and emotional IPV, as well as the association between relationship type and relationship satisfaction. There are several criteria to examine if a variable is in fact a mediating variable: (1) the independent variable must have a significant effect on the mediating variable, (2) the mediating variable must have a significant effect on the dependent variable, (3) the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable is no longer significant, or greatly reduced (Baron and Kenny 1986). For example, the independent variable, relationship type, should have a significant effect on the dependent variable, emotional IPV. Additionally, there should be a significant effect of relationship type on the mediator, stress. Once a mediator is introduced into the model, the mediator should have a significant effect on the dependent variable, emotional IPV. Additionally, the prior significant effect of relationship type on emotional IPV should no longer be statistically significant. If the effect of relationship type on emotional IPV remains, but is reduced, this could suggest partial mediation.

Due to the dyadic nature of the data, Actor-Partner Interdependence Models (APIMs) of the potential mediating effects of (a) own, and (b) partner's stress, discrimination, and power in the relationship were tested for both emotional intimate partner violence and relationships satisfaction outcomes. Cook and Kenny (2005) describe the benefits of analyzing the pair rather than the individual through APIMs, by

describing its purpose of measuring "interdependence within interpersonal relationships" (101). APIMs can determine the level of interdependence in a relationship through actor effects, how much one's own behaviors or emotions are predicted by his or her own actions, feelings or thoughts, and partner effects, how much one's behaviors or emotions are predicted by a partner's actions, feelings or thoughts (Cook and Kenny 2005). To accurately measure an APIM model, one must control for partner effects when assessing actor effects, and control for actor effects when measuring partner effects to control for correlations within the dyad (Cook and Kenny 2005). The final sample of the models is 827 observations (one respondent's partner in the model did not complete the survey), and due to the low percentage of missing data, it will be handled through listwise deletion.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for gay, lesbian and straight respondents through one-way analysis of variance tests, as well as differences between these groups. Mean and standard deviations are reported for comparisons between groups, with tests of significant differences reported in the far right column.

[Table 1 about here]

In disagreement with H7, straight couples report significantly higher levels of emotional IPV (M =0 .12) compared to gay respondents (M = -0.03, p <0.05) and lesbian respondents (M = -0.07, p <0.001). Similarly, and in agreement with H9, straight respondents also report significantly lower levels of relationship satisfaction (M=0.19) than gay (M=0.08, p<0.01) and lesbian respondents (M=0.08, p<0.001).

Straight respondents report significantly higher levels of sexual satisfaction (M=0.10) than lesbian respondents (M=-0.14, $p<0.001$); and lesbian respondents report significantly lower levels of sexual satisfaction than gay respondents (M=0.09, $p<0.001$). For both actor stress and partner stress, lesbian respondents report significantly higher levels of stress (M=19.51) than gay respondents (M=18.29, $p<0.05$) and gay respondents report significantly lower levels of stress than straight respondents (M= 20.49, $p<0.001$). Moreover, for both actor discrimination and partner discrimination, lesbian respondents report significantly higher levels of discrimination (M=22.20) than straight respondents (M=20.02, $p<0.001$). Both findings support H1, which postulates that same-sex respondents will experience more stress and discrimination than heterosexual respondents.

Lesbian respondents (M=16.36) and straight respondents (M=16.43) report living with their partner for significantly longer than gay respondents (M=13.88, both $p<0.001$). Significantly fewer gay respondents (0.10) report making $74,999 or less compared to lesbian respondents (M=0.20, $p<0.01$) and straight respondents (M=0.35, $p<0.001$), while significantly fewer lesbian respondents report making $74,999 or less compared to straight respondents ($p<0.001$). Significantly fewer gay respondents (0.13, $p<0.001$) and lesbian respondents (0.17, $p<0.05$) report making $75,000-$99,999 compared to straight respondents (M=0.26). Significantly more lesbian respondents (0.31) report making $100,000-$149,999 compared to straight respondents (0.21, $p<0.05$). Gay respondents report making $150,000 or more (M=0.54), compared to lesbian respondents (0.32, $p<0.001$) and straight respondents (0.17, $p<0.001$); however, the significantly more

lesbians also report making $150,000 or more compared to straight respondents ($p<0.001$).

Significantly fewer lesbian respondents (M=0.14) report having less than a Bachelor's degree than straight respondents (M=29, $p<0.001$). Significantly fewer gay respondents (M=0.19, $p<0.05$) report having less than a Bachelor's degree than straight respondents. Significantly more lesbian respondents (M=0.58) report having a post doctorate education than straight respondents (M=0.42, $p<0.001$). Gay and lesbian respondents report significantly more adverse events (M=2.29, $p<0.001$ and M= 2.26, $p<0.01$, respectively) than straight respondents (M=1.73). Similarly, gay and lesbian couples are significantly older (M= 49.92, $p<0.001$ and M=49.45, $p<0.001$, respectively) than straight couples (M=46.18).

Table 2 examines hierarchical linear models for the emotional intimate partner violence outcome. Models 1 and 2 use relationship type as the key predictor, while also accounting for sexual relationship scale scores and control variables. The difference between models 1 and 2 is the reference category for relationship type, as model 1 uses "straight" as the reference group, and model 2 uses "lesbian" as the reference group. This pattern is seen across all models and following tables as well. These models indicate, in rejection of H7, that lesbian respondents experience significantly less emotional intimate partner violence (b= -0.17, $p<0.05$) than straight respondents; however, no significant difference in levels of emotional IPV is observed between gay respondents and straight respondents. Gay respondents do see significantly more emotional intimate partner violence (b=0.16, $p<0.05$) than their lesbian counterparts. In both models 1 and 2, a one unit increase in sexual relationship is associated with a decrease in emotional intimate

partner violence (b=-0.20, p<0.001). Moreover, an additional child in the household is associated with an increase in emotional intimate partner violence (b= 0.18, p<0.01); and an additional experience of an adverse event prior to the age of 18 is associated with an increase in emotional intimate partner violence (b=0.02, p<0.05).

Models 3 and 4 introduce stress as the actor-partner mediator. These models show that stress and spousal stress are significant predictors of emotional IPV; as, in support of H2, stress increases by one unit, emotional IPV increases significantly by 0.05 units (p<0.001) and as spousal stress increases by one unit emotional IPV significantly increases by 0.01 units (p<0.01). Relationship type is significant while controlling for stress and spousal stress, as gay individuals experience 0.16 units more of emotional IPV than lesbian respondents (p<0.05) and straight respondents experience 0.13 units more emotional IPV than lesbian respondents (p<0.05); however there is no significant difference between straight respondents and gay respondents in levels of emotional IPV for models 3 and 4. For both models 3 and 4, sexual relationship is a significant predictor of emotional IPV, a one unit increase in sexual relationship is associated with a 0.12 unit decrease in emotional IPV (p<0.001). Contrastingly, a one child increase in the number of children in the household is associated with a 0.13 unit increase in emotional IPV (p<0.05). Additionally, those who have a household income in the bracket of $100,000-$149,999 experience more units of emotional IPV, than those that make $74,999 or less for household income.

Models 5 and 6 introduce discrimination as the actor-partner mediator. These models indicate, in support of H2, that respondent discrimination has a significant positive effect on emotional intimate partner violence (b= 0.02, p<0.001). Relationship

type is still a significant predictor in these models, as lesbian respondents experience 0.22 units less of emotional IPV (p<0.001) than straight respondents and gay respondents experience 0.17 units more of emotional IPV (p<0.01) than lesbian respondents. Sexual relationship is also still a significant predictor in these models, as those with one unit higher on the sexual relationship scale experience 0.19 units less of emotional IPV (p<0.001), and number of kids in the household also remains significant in this model, as one additional child is associated with a 0.20 unit increase in emotional IPV (p<0.001).

Models 7 and 8 introduce feelings of equal power as the actor-partner mediator. Both actor and partner feelings of equal power are significant predictors in these models, as actor's feelings of equal power is associated with a 0.24 unit decrease in emotional IPV (p<0.001) and partner's feelings of equal power is associated with 0.09 unit decrease in emotional IPV (p<0.001), which is consistent with H4. Relationship type is no longer significant in these models for any category; however, sexual relationship and number of children in the household remain significant, as those with a better sexual relationship experience 0.15 units less emotional IPV (p<0.001) and an additional child in the household is associated with a 0.16 unit increase in emotional IPV (p<0.01).

[Table 2 about here]

Table 3 examines hierarchical linear models for the relationship satisfaction outcome. Models 1 and 2 use relationship type as the key predictor, while controlling for the sexual relationship scale and control variables. Model 1 supports H7, as it indicates that lesbian respondents experience significantly more relationship satisfaction than straight respondents (b= 0.28, p<0.01), and significantly more relationship satisfaction than gay respondents (b=0.24, p<0.01), while there is no observed significant difference

between gay and straight respondents. The sexual relationship scale is also a significant predictor in these models, as those with one unit higher on the sexual relationship scale experience 0.42 units more of relationship satisfaction ($p<0.001$). Contrastingly, the number of children in the household is also a significant predictor, but negatively related to relationship satisfaction, as those with one additional child in the household experience 0.30 units less of relationship satisfaction ($p<0.001$). Additionally, one additional experience of an adverse event prior to the age of 18 is associated with a 0.03 unit decrease in relationship satisfaction ($p<0.05$). Lastly, models 1 and 2 indicate that those in the income bracket of $150,000 or more experience 0.22 units more relationship satisfaction than others ($p<0.05$).

Models 3 and 4 introduce stress as an actor-partner mediator. While partner stress is not a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction, actor stress is, as those with a one unit increase on the stress scale experience 0.05 unit decrease in relationship satisfaction ($p<0.001$), in support of H3. Relationship type is still a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction in these models, as lesbians experience 0.24 units more relationship satisfaction than straight respondents ($p<0.01$) and 0.23 units more relationship satisfaction than gay respondents ($p<0.01$). The sexual relationship scale is also a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction, as a one unit increase on the sexual relationship scale is associated with a 0.33 unit increase in relationship satisfaction ($p<0.001$). Additionally, the number of kids in the household is negatively related to relationship satisfaction, as one additional child in the household is associated with 0.25 unit decrease in relationship satisfaction ($p<0.01$).

Models 5 and 6 introduce discrimination as an actor-partner mediator. Actor discrimination is a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction, as in support of H3, a one unit increase in actor discrimination is associated with a 0.01 unit decrease in relationship satisfaction ($p<0.01$), while partner discrimination is not a significant predictor. Relationship type remains a significant predictor in these models, as lesbians experience 0.31 units more relationship satisfaction than straight respondents ($p<0.001$) and 0.24 units more relationship satisfaction than gay respondents ($p<0.01$); no significant differences in relationship satisfaction is observed between gay and straight respondents. The sexual relationship scale is significantly associated with relationship satisfaction, as a one unit increase on the sexual relationship scale is associated with a 0.40 unit increase in relationship satisfaction ($p<0.001$). Number of children in the household is also significantly associated with relationship satisfaction, as an additional child is linked to a 0.31 unit decrease in relationship satisfaction ($p<0.001$). Moreover, those in the income bracket of $150,000 or more experience 0.20 units more relationship satisfaction than others ($p<0.05$).

Models 7 and 8 introduce feelings of equal power as an actor-partner mediator. In support of H5, both actor's and partner's feelings of equal power is associated with an increase in relationship satisfaction ($b=0.32$, $p<0.001$ and $b=0.11$, $p<0.001$, respectively). Relationship satisfaction is significantly different between lesbian and straight respondents, as lesbians experience 0.20 units more relationship satisfaction ($p<0.05$) than straight respondents. The sexual relationship scale is also significant in these models, as a one unit increase in the sexual relationship scale is associated with a 0.33 unit increase in relationship satisfaction ($p<0.001$). Contrastingly, both number of

children in the household and the number of adverse events experienced prior to age 18 is negatively linked to relationship satisfaction, as an additional child in the household is associated with a 0.27 unit decrease in relationship satisfaction ($p<0.001$), and one additional experience of an adverse event prior to the age of 18 is associated with a 0.02 unit decrease in relationship satisfaction ($p<0.05$).

[Table 3 about here]

Table 4 presents hierarchical linear models regressing relationship type on the actor mediating variables. Models 1 and 2 regress relationship type on actor stress, models 3 and 4 regress relationship type on actor discrimination and models 5 and 6 regress relationship type on actor's feelings of equal power. These models individually test the relationship between actor mediators and the independent variable of relationship type, to determine if the criterion of mediation is met when there is a significant effect of the independent variable on the mediator (Baron and Kenny 1986). From the regressions in Models 1 and 2, we find that actor stress does not meet the criteria of a mediator, as relationship type does not have a significant effect on actor stress; however, this is not the case for actor discrimination and feelings of equal power.

Models 1 and 2 illustrate, in disagreement with H1, that there is no significant effect of relationship type on stress; yet there are several significant predictors of actor stress. Sexual relationship is negatively associated with stress, as a one unit increase in the sexual relationship scale indicates a 1.52 unit decrease in stress ($p<0.001$). Number of adverse events before the age of 18 is positively associated with stress, as a one-event increase in the number of adverse events one has experienced prior to the age of 18 is associated with a 0.36 unit increase in stress ($p<0.001$). There are also several

associations between income and stress, as we see that, compared with those whose income is $74,999 or less, those whose income is $75,000-$99,999 experience 1.64 units less of stress ($p<0.01$). Similarly, those who are in the income bracket of $100,000-$149,999 experience 3.02 units less stress ($p<0.01$) than those who make $74,999 or less, and those who make $150,000 or more experience even less stress, 3.94 units less ($p<0.001$) than those who make $74,999 or less. This trend illustrates that lower income individuals experience higher levels of overall stress, which could be related to financial stressors.

Models 3 and 4 show, in agreement with H1, that lesbian respondents experience 1.65 units more of discrimination than straight respondents ($p<0.05$). Additionally, the sexual relationship scale is associated negatively with discrimination, as a one unit increase in sexual relationship is associated with a 0.76 unit decrease in discrimination ($p<0.05$). Furthermore, a one-event increase in the number of adverse events one experiences prior to the age of 18 is associated with a 0.73 unit increase in discrimination ($p<0.001$).

Models 5 and 6 showcase that gay respondents experience 0.56 units less of feelings of equal power than lesbian respondents ($p<0.05$). Moreover, a one unit increase in the sexual relationship scale is associated with a 0.51 unit increase in feelings of equal power ($p<0.001$). Lastly, we see that those who make $150,000 or more experience 0.74 units more of feelings of equal power than those who make $74,999 or less ($p<0.05$).

[Table 4 about here]

Table 5 presents hierarchical linear models regressing relationship type on the partner mediating variables. Similar to Table 4, models 1 and 2 regress relationship type on partner stress, models 3 and 4 regress relationship type on partner discrimination and models 5 and 6 regress relationship type on partner's feelings of equal power. These models individually test the relationship between partner mediators and the independent variable of relationship type, to determine if the criterion of mediation is met when there is a significant effect of the independent variable on the mediator (Baron and Kenny 1986). Again, in models 1 and 2, we find that partner stress does not meet the criteria of a mediator, as relationship type does not have a significant effect on partner stress; however, this is not the case for partner discrimination and feelings of equal power.

Models 1 and 2 show that, while relationship type is not a significant predictor of partner stress, there are several other significant predictors. The sexual relationship scale is negatively associated with partner's stress, as a one unit increase in the sexual relationship scale is associated with a 1.17 unit decrease in partner's stress ($p<0.001$). Conversely, the number of adverse events one has experienced is positively associated with partner's stress, as a one-event increase in the number of adverse events one has experienced is associated with a 0.22 unit increase in partner's stress ($p<0.05$). Household income is negatively associated with partner's stress, as, compared with those whose income is $74,999 or less, those whose income is $75,000-$99,999 experience 1.91 units less of stress ($p<0.001$). Moreover, those who are in the income bracket of $100,000-$149,999 experience 2.69 units less stress ($p<0.001$) than those who make $74,999 or less, and those who make $150,000 or more experience even less stress, 3.92 units less ($p<0.001$) than those who make $74,999 or less.

Moving to models 3 and 4 in table 5, relationship type does have a significant effect on partner's stress. In support of H1, gay respondents experience 1.59 units more of partner's discrimination than straight respondents ($p<0.05$), while lesbians experience 2.02 units more of partner's discrimination than straight respondents ($p<0.01$). The sexual relationship scale is associated with 0.84 units decrease in partner's discrimination ($p<0.05$). Again, there is a trend in household income, as those who make $150,000 or more experience 1.75 units less of partner's discrimination than those who make $74,000 or less.

Lastly, models 5 and 6 look at the outcome of partner's feelings of equal power. Lesbians experience the most partner's feelings of equal power, they experience 0.52 units more than straight respondents ($p<0.05$), and 0.47 units more than gay respondents ($p<0.05$). The sexual relationship scale is associated positively with partner's feelings of equal power, as a one unit increase in sexual relationship scale is associated with a 0.26 unit increase in partner's feelings of equal power ($p<0.05$). Additionally, the number of adverse events one experiences prior to the age of 18 is associated negatively with partner's feelings of equal power, as a one-event increase in the number of events experienced prior to age 18 is linked to a 0.10 unit decrease in partner's feelings of equal power ($p<0.05$).

[Table 5 about here]

DISCUSSION

This research aimed to address the question: How do experiences of emotional intimate partner violence and relationship satisfaction differ among same-sex and

different sex couples, and how are these associations affected by power, stress and discrimination? The results of the analyses indicate that emotional intimate partner violence and relationship satisfaction are inversely related, as one would expect. Not in support of H6, lesbians experience the least amount of emotional intimate partner violence compared to gay and straight individuals. In support of H7, lesbians experience the most relationship satisfaction. Conversely and unaligned with prior research, straight respondents experience the most emotional IPV compared to lesbian and gay respondents (Messinger 2011; Goldberg and Meyer 2013); however, straight respondents experience the least amount of relationship satisfaction. I observe trends in other predictors, such as the sexual relationship scale, which is negatively associated with emotional IPV and positively associated with relationship type. In practical terms, a healthy sexual relationship with one's partner could lead to an increase in relationship satisfaction. The number of kids in the household also was seen to be positively associated with emotional intimate partner violence and negatively associated with relationship satisfaction.

From the models, and with the criteria of mediators in mind, we can ascertain that feelings of equal power and spousal feelings of equal power are significant partial mediators for both outcomes, partially supporting H8 and H9 which states that stress, discrimination and feelings of equal power will mediate the effects of relationship type on emotional IPV and relationship satisfaction, respectively. Stress and partner stress do not meet the criteria of mediators, as relationship type does not have a significant effect on stress or partner's stress. While partner discrimination does meet this criterion, as relationship type does have a significant effect on partner discrimination, partner discrimination does not have a significant effect on either emotional intimate partner

violence or relationship satisfaction; therefore, partner discrimination is not a mediating variable. Although discrimination does meet the two criteria described above, as relationship type has a significant effect on discrimination, and discrimination has a significant effect on both dependent outcomes, it fails to meet the third criteria of mediating variables. The significant effect relationship type has on both emotional IPV and relationship satisfaction remains and is not greatly reduced; thus, discrimination cannot be considered a mediator of the effect of relationship type on either dependent outcome.

Therefore, stress and discrimination as mediating variables in H8 and H9 are not supported by these findings. Even though stress, partner stress, discrimination and partner discrimination are not mediating variables, they are significant predictors. When thinking about this practically, stress and discrimination are indeed positively related to emotional intimate partner violence, and negatively related to relationship satisfaction as literature suggests (Meyer 1995; Meyer 2003; McKenry et al. 2006; Edwards and Sylaska 2013; Longobardi and Badenes-Ribera 2017)

While not presented, I also estimated the same models stratified by gender. In these models, we see several differences in gender. Firstly, we see that straight women experience significantly less relationship satisfaction than lesbian women. Straight women also experience significantly more stress than straight men and lesbian women, and significantly less spousal stress than straight men. However, straight women experience significantly less spousal discrimination than lesbian women. Moreover, feelings of equal power is a significant mediator of both relationship type and emotional IPV and relationship type and relationship satisfaction in these models.

Limitations

Limitations of this research are that it is not generalizable to the population as a whole, as the dataset is restricted to a general area, Massachusetts. Massachusetts is a notoriously liberal area, and thus a sample from a more conservative area, could yield different results. Most importantly, race was not able to be controlled for due to low frequencies in the sample. This hinders the research, as a predominately white sample will face less discrimination and stress than a sample with racial minority groups. Additionally, this data did not support the analyses of other types of intimate partner violence, such as physical or sexual; both of which are critical in looking at mistreatment in relationships. While the literature prominently suggested that minority stress would be a key mediator that could affect the association between relationship type and the opposing outcomes, this research used stress scale of general items and a discrimination scale to attempt to account for minority stress.

Future Research

To further explore how gender impacts the association between relationship type and emotional IPV, as well as between relationship type and relationship satisfaction, it would be interesting to take a deeper dive into models with an interaction of gender. Literature also suggest that examining gender roles and gender conformity could aid this research (West 2000; Sanger and Lynch 2006; McKenry et al. 2006; Kubicek et al. 2015). Furthermore, as I referenced above, a look at how race affects these associations would enrich the literature, as would interactions of race and gender.

Moreover, I would like to estimate a model that takes religiosity and political views into account, as well as controlling for geographic location (Sommatico et al.

2020). One reason is that this would make it more generalizable to the population and, secondly, could account for aspects that may affect the outcomes, as these could be confounding variables. For instance, a same-sex couple in the rural south may face more stigma and discrimination than in California or Massachusetts, and this could affect outcomes of emotional IPV and relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, the need for inclusivity of transgender and gender non-conforming individuals in research on intimate partner violence and relationship satisfaction should be considered in future works. Continuing this research is critical for the LGBTQ community, as research will bring visibility and resources to this minority population.

Unfortunately, a large reason the topic of LGBT intimate partner violence is understudied is due to the curtain surrounding the issue, which is fabricated by poor access to IPV resources, the concept of mutual battering, fear of further stigmatization, and threats of being outed (Cochran 2001; Ristock 2003; McClennen 2005; Kulkin et al. 2007; Kubicek, McNeely and Collins 2015; Brown and Herman 2015). Literature argues that service providers are not given the tools they need to assist victims of same-sex IPV (Cochran 2001; Ristock 2003, McClennen 2005; Kulkin et al. 2007; Knoble and Linville 2012), highlighting the need for education and research to provide capable care for LGB individuals, who may fear further stigmatization due to poor services, or internalized homophobia. This study contributes to literature not only by bringing added visibility to the LGBTQ community, but also by examining predictors of emotional intimate partner violence and relationships satisfaction for same-sex individuals, and addressing how these relationships may be affected by stress, discrimination, and power.

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TABLES

Table 1. Characteristics of Gay, Lesbian and Straight Respondents

	Gay (*N*=248)	Lesbian (*N*=342)	Straight (*N*=248)	Significant Subgroup Differences	Sample (N=838)
	Mean (Std Dev.)	Mean (Std. Dev.)	Mean (Std. Dev.)		Mean (Std. Dev.)
Emotional Intimate Partner Violence (-0.94 = *never*; 2.41= *always*)	-0.03 (0.66)	-0.07 (0.61)	0.12 (0.71)	gay/str* lsb/str***	-5.59 e-09 (0.66)
Total Relationship Satisfaction (-3.84 = *poor*; 1.01 = *excellent*)	0.08 (0.87)	0.08 (0.80)	-0.19 (0.96)	gay/str** lsb/str***	-0.00 (0.88)
Sexual Relationship (-1.63 = *poor*; 1.21= *excellent*)	0.09 (0.78)	-0.14 (0.78)	0.10 (0.72)	gay/lsb*** lsb/str***	-0.00 (0.77)
Stress Scale (9=*little or no*; 41= *a great deal*)	18.29 (5.21)	19.51 (5.33)	20.49 (5.81)	gay/lsb* gay/str***	19.44 (5.50)
Spouse Stress Scale (9=*little or no*; 41=*a great deal*)	18.29 (5.21)	19.51 (5.33)	20.49 (5.81)	gay/lsb* gay/str***	19.44 (5.50)

Discrimination Scale (8 =*never*; 49 = *all the time*)	21.44 (6.71)	22.20 (6.89)	20.02 (6.49)	lsb/str***	21.33 (6.78)
Spouse Discrimination Scale (8= *never*; 49= *all the time)*	21.44 (6.71)	22.20 (6.89)	20.02 (6.49)	lsb/str***	21.33 (6.78)
R's Feeling of Equal Power *(*1= *strongly disagree;* 5= *strongly Agree)*	4.11 (1.05)	4.18 (1.02)	4.00 (1.04)		4.11 (1.04)
Spouse's Feeling of Equal Power *(*1= *strongly disagree;* 5= *strongly Agree)*	4.11 (1.05)	4.18 (1.02)	4.00 (1.04)		4.11 (1.04)
Years Lived Together	13.88 (7.82)	16.36 (7.89)	16.43 (8.74)	gay/lsb*** lsb/str***	15.36 (8.22)
Socio-demographic Characteristics					
Household Income					
$74,999 or Less	0.10 (0.30)	0.20 (0.40)	0.35 (0.48)	gay/lsb** gay/str*** lsb/str***	0.21 (0.41)
$75,000-$99,999	0.13 (0.33)	0.17 (0.38)	0.26 (0.44)	gay/str*** lsb/str*	0.19 (0.39)

$100,000-$149,999	0.24 (0.43)	0.31 (0.46)	0.21 (0.41)	lsb/str*	0.26 (0.44)
$150,000 or more	0.54 (0.50)	0.32 (0.47)	0.17 (0.38)	gay/lsb*** gay/str*** lsb/str***	0.34 (0.47)
Education					
Less than Bachelor's	0.19 (0.39)	0.14 (0.35)	0.29 (0.45)	gay/str* lsb/str***	1.98 (0.40)
College Grad	0.31 (0.46)	0.27 (0.45)	0.29 (0.45)		0.29 (0.45)
Post-College Educ	0.50 (0.50)	0.58 (0.49)	0.42 (0.50)	lsb/str***	0.51 (0.50
Total Adverse Events Before age 18	2.29 (2.06)	2.26 (2.18)	1.73 (1.90)	gay/str** lsb/str**	2.11 (2.08)
Couple Age (years)	49.92 (7.51)	49.45 (7.90)	46.18 (7.59)	gay/str*** lsb/str***	48.62 (7.85)

Note. One-way ANOVA tests with post-hoc Bonferroni tests were used to evaluate significant differences among the groups. Significant subgroup differences are denoted as follows: gay/lsb = gay, lesbian, gay/str = gay, straight, lsb/str = lesbian, straight. p<= *0.05,**0.01, **0.001

Table 2. Hierarchical Linear Regressions Indicating Associations of Relationship Type on Emotional Intimate Partner Violence

	Emotional IPV							
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
	B (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)
Relationship Type								
Gay	-0.01	0.16*	0.02	0.16**	-0.05	0.17**	-0.02	0.09
	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.08)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.06)
Lesbian	-0.17*		-0.13*		-0.22***		-0.11	
	(0.07)		(0.06)		(0.07)		(0.06)	
Straight		0.17*		0.13*		0.22***		0.11
		(0.07)		(0.06)		(0.07)		(0.06)
Stress Scale			0.05***	0.05***				
			(0.00)	(0.00)				
Spouse Stress Scale			0.01**	0.01**				
			(0.00)	(0.00)				
Discrimination Scale					0.02***	0.02***		
					(0.00)	(0.00)		
Spouse Discrimination Scale					0.01	0.01		
					(0.00)	(0.00)		
R's Feeling of Equal Power							-0.24***	-0.24***
							(0.02)	(0.02)
Spouse's Feeling of Equal Power							-0.09***	-0.09***
							(0.02)	(0.02)

Table 2 cont'd	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
	B (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)
Sexual Relationship Scale	-0.20***	-0.20***	-0.12***	-0.12***	-0.19***	-0.19***	-0.15***	-0.15***
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Couple Age	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.01	-0.01
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Years Lived Together	-0.00	-0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Number of Kids Household	0.18**	0.18**	0.13*	0.13*	0.20***	0.20***	0.16**	0.16**
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Number of Adverse Events Before the Age of 18	0.02*	0.02*	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.02
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Household Income								
$74,999 or Less								
$75,000- $99,999	0.00	0.00	0.10	0.10	0.00	0.00	-0.20	-0.20
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
$100,000-$149,999	-0.03	-0.03	0.15*	0.15*	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)
$150,000 or More	-0.12	-0.12	0.12	0.12	-0.07	-0.07	-0.01	-0.01
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Education								
Less than Bachelor's								
College Grad	-0.08	-0.08	-0.10	-0.10	-0.10	-0.10	-0.05	-0.05
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Post-College Educ	-0.05	-0.05	-0.07	-0.07	-0.05	-0.05	-0.01	-0.01
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Random Components								

Couple-level intercept	0.22	0.22	0.20	0.20	0.21	0.21	0.20	0.20
Respondent-level intercept	0.16	0.16	0.11	0.11	0.15	0.15	0.11	0.11
Deviance; *df*	1,466.84 *12*	1,466.84 *12*	1,341.57 *14*	1,341.57 *14*	1,426.33 *14*	1,426.33 *14*	1,322.76 *14*	1,322.76 *14*

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 3. Hierarchical Linear Regressions Indicating Associations of Relationship Type on Relationship Satisfaction

	Relationship Satisfaction							
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
	B (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)
Relationship Type								
Gay	0.04	-0.24**	0.01	-0.23**	0.07	-0.24**	0.05	-0.15
	(0.11)	(0.09)	(0.10)	(0.08)	(0.11)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.08)
Lesbian	0.28**		0.24**		0.31***		0.20*	
	(0.09)		(0.09)		(0.09)		(0.08)	
Straight		-0.28**		-0.24**		-0.31***		-0.20*
		(0.09)		(0.09)		(0.09)		(0.08)
Stress Scale			-0.05***	-0.05***				
			(0.01)	(0.01)				
Spouse Stress Scale			-0.01	-0.01				
			(0.01)	(0.01)				
Discrimination Scale					-0.01**	-0.01**		
					(0.00)	(0.00)		
Spouse Discrimination Scale					-0.00	-0.00		
					(0.00)	(0.00)		
R's Feeling of Equal Power							0.32***	0.32***
							(0.02)	(0.02)
Spouse's Feeling of Equal Power							0.11***	0.11***
							(0.02)	(0.02)

Table 3 cont'd	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
	B (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)
Sexual Relationship Scale	0.42***	0.42**	0.33***	0.33***	0.40***	0.40***	0.33***	0.33***
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Couple Age	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Years Lived Together	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Number of Kids Household	-0.30***	-0.30***	-0.25**	-0.25**	-0.31***	-0.31***	-0.27***	-0.27***
	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Number of Adverse Events Before the Age of 18	-0.03*	-0.03*	-0.01	-0.01	-0.02	-0.02	-0.02*	-0.02*
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Household Income								
$74,999 or Less								
$75,000- $99,999	-0.02	-0.02	-0.12	-0.12	-0.02	-0.02	-0.01	-0.01
	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.08)
$100,000-$149,999	0.08	0.08	-0.10	-0.10	0.06	0.06	0.03	0.03
	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.08)
$150,000 or More	0.22*	0.22*	-0.01	-0.01	0.20*	0.20*	0.09	0.09
	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.09)
Education								
Less than Bachelor's								
College Grad	-0.01	-0.01	0.00	0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.05	-0.05
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Post-College Educ	-0.02	-0.02	-0.01	-0.01	-0.02	-0.02	-0.08	-0.08
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)

Random Components								
Couple-level intercept	0.29	0.29	0.27	0.27	0.28	0.28	0.25	0.25
Respondent-level intercept	0.34	0.34	0.29	0.29	0.34	0.34	0.25	0.25
Deviance; *df*	1,818.05 *12*	1,818.05 *12*	1,730.63 *14*	1,730.63 *14*	1,808.56 *14*	1,808.56 *14*	1,659.76 *14*	1,659.76 *14*

*** p <0 .001, ** p <0 .01, * p <0 .05

Table 4. Hierarchical Linear Regressions Testing Effects of Relationship Type on Actor Perceptions of Stress, Discrimination, and Feelings of Equal Power

	Actor: Stress		Actor: Discrimination		Actor: R's Feeling of Equal Power	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	B (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)
Relationship Type						
Gay	-0.60	0.12	1.27	-0.38	-0.11	-0.56*
	(0.62)	(0.52)	(0.75)	(0.63)	(0.28)	(0.24)
Lesbian	-0.71		1.65*		0.45	
	(0.54)		(0.66)		(0.24)	
Straight		0.71		-1.65*		-0.45
		(0.54)		(0.66)		(0.24)
Sexual Relationship Scale	-1.52***	-1.52***	-0.76*	-0.76*	0.51***	0.51***
	(0.26)	(0.26)	(0.33)	(0.33)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Years Lived Together	-0.03	-0.03	-0.06	-0.06	0.02	0.02
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Number of Kids Household	0.95	0.95	-0.55	-0.55	-0.28	-0.28
	(0.51)	(0.51)	(0.61)	(0.61)	(0.23)	(0.23)
Number of Adverse Events Before the Age of 18	0.36***	0.36***	0.73***	0.73***	-0.02	-0.02
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Couple Age	-0.01	-0.01	-0.05	-0.05	-0.01	-0.01
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.02)	(0.02)

Table 4 cont'd	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	B (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)
Household Income						
$74,999 or Less						
$75,000- $99,999	-1.64**	-1.64**	0.24	0.24	-0.12	-0.12
	(0.58)	(0.58)	(0.75)	(0.75)	(0.27)	(0.27)
$100,000-$149,999	-3.02**	-3.02**	-1.21	-1.21	0.22	0.22
	(0.56)	(0.56)	(0.71)	(0.71)	(0.26)	(0.26)
$150,000 or More	-3.94***	-3.94***	-1.12	-1.12	0.74**	0.74**
	(0.58)	(0.58)	(0.73)	(0.73)	(0.27)	(0.27)
Education						
Less than Bachelor's						
College Grad	0.24	0.24	0.88	0.88	0.31	0.31
	(0.48)	(0.48)	(0.66)	(0.66)	(0.24)	(0.24)
Post-College Educ	0.35	0.35	-0.05	-0.05	0.39	0.39
	(0.46)	(0.46)	(0.63)	(0.63)	(0.23)	(0.23)
Random Components						
Couple-level intercept	13.70	13.70	32.61	32.61		
/cut1					-4.41	-4.86
/cut2					-2.27	-2.72
/cut3					-1.31	-1.76
/cut4					0.74	0.29
Respondent-level intercept	9.76	9.76	7.55	7.55	1.29	1.29
Deviance; *df*	4,878.53	4,878.53	5,386.26	5,386.26	1,983.32	1,983.32
	12	*12*	*12*	*12*	*12*	*12*

*** p <0 .001, ** p < 0.01, * p <0 .05

Table 5. Hierarchical Linear Regressions Testing Effects of Relationship Type on Partner Perceptions of Stress, Discrimination, and Feelings of Equal Power

	Partner: Stress		Partner: Discrimination		Partner: Feeling of Equal Power	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	B (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)
Relationship Type						
Gay	-0.07	-0.12	1.59*	-0.43	0.05	-0.47*
	(0.64)	(0.53)	(0.78)	(0.65)	(0.27)	(0.23)
Lesbian	-0.63		2.02**		0.52*	
	(0.56)		(0.68)		(0.24)	
Straight		0.63		-2.02**		-0.52*
		(0.56)		(0.68)		(0.24)
Sexual Relationship Scale	-1.17***	-1.17***	-0.84*	-0.84*	0.26*	0.26*
	(0.26)	(0.26)	(0.34)	(0.34)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Years Lived Together	-0.02	-0.02	-0.05	-0.05	0.01	0.01
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Number of Kids Household	0.70	0.70	-0.90	-0.90	-0.21	-0.21
	(0.52)	(0.52)	(0.63)	(0.63)	(0.22)	(0.22)
Number of Adverse Events Before the Age of 18	0.22**	0.22**	0.13	0.13	-0.10*	-0.10*
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Couple Age	-0.01	-0.01	-0.07	-0.07	-0.01	-0.01
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.02)	(0.02)

Table 5 cont'd	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	B (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)
Household Income						
$74,999 or Less						
$75,000- $99,999	-1.91***	-1.91***	-0.43	-0.43	-0.26	-0.26
	(0.59)	(0.59)	(0.77)	(0.77)	(0.26)	(0.26)
$100,000-$149,999	-2.69***	-2.69***	-1.21	-1.21	0.18	0.18
	(0.58)	(0.58)	(0.74)	(0.74)	(0.25)	(0.25)
$150,000 or More	-3.92***	-3.92***	-1.75*	-1.75*	0.51	0.51
	(0.60)	(0.60)	(0.76)	(0.76)	(0.26)	(0.26)
Education						
Less than Bachelor's						
College Grad	0.15	0.15	-0.53	-0.53	-0.01	-0.01
	(0.49)	(0.49)	(0.68)	(0.68)	(0.23)	(0.23)
Post-College Educ	0.01	0.01	-0.37	-0.37	-0.10	-0.10
	(0.48)	(0.48)	(0.65)	(0.65)	(0.22)	(0.22)
Random Components						
Couple-level intercept	14.81	14.81	34.82	34.82		
/cut1					-4.83	-5.35
/cut2					-2.76	-3.29
/cut3					-1.85	-2.38
/cut4					0.11	-0.41
Respondent-level intercept	10.01	10.01	8.32	8.32	1.07	1.07
Deviance; *df*	4,930.03	4,930.03	5,444.63	5,444.63	1,998.35	1,998.35
	12	*12*	*12*	*12*	*12*	*12*

*** p <0 .001, ** p <0 .01, * p <0 .05