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Invisible Victims: Same-Sex IPV in the National Violence Against Women Survey

Adam M. Messinger[1]

Abstract

With intimate partner violence (IPV) among same-sex couples largely ignored by policy makers and researchers alike, accurately estimating the size of the problem is important in determining whether this minimal response is justified. As such, the present study is a secondary data analysis of the National Violence Against Women Survey and represents the first multiple variable regression analysis of U.S. adult same-sex IPV prevalence using a nationally representative sample ($N = 14,182$). Logistic regressions indicate that, independent of sex, respondents with a history of same-sex relationships are more likely to experience verbal, controlling, physical, and sexual IPV. Behaviorally "bisexual" respondents experience the highest IPV rates and are most likely to be victimized by an opposite-sex partner. Implications for future IPV research regarding sexual orientation and gender are discussed.

Keywords

intimate partner violence, domestic violence, same-sex, sexual orientation, lesbian, gay, and bisexual

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Intimate partner violence (IPV)—verbal abuse, controlling behaviors, physical violence, or sexual violence between romantic partners—occurs mostly between members of the opposite-sex, yet one might conclude from U.S. policy responses that same-sex IPV victims either do not exist or are not worth helping. No shelters have been established for men or nonheterosexual women, and only four U.S. cities have counseling services specialized in same-sex IPV (Jablow, 2000; Potoczniak, Murot, Crosbie-Burnett, & Potoczniak, 2003; Wallace, 2005). Furthermore, same-sex IPV victims in 12 states cannot access protections under domestic relations statutes, like civil protection orders, financial assistance in prosecution, and tort action financial compensation (Jablow, 2000). Encouraging awareness and assistance for victims of same-sex IPV must begin by establishing the extent of the problem with generalizeable data. As such, in utilizing the National Violence Against Women Survey, or NVAWS (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1999), the present study represents the first multiple variable regression analysis of adult same-sex IPV prevalence using a nationally representative sample.

Literature and Hypotheses

Most explorations into the nature of same-sex IPV highlight similarities with opposite-sex IPV. For instance, empirical studies of IPV prevalence have agreed that, regardless of sexual orientation, verbal and controlling IPV occur at greater rates than physical IPV that in turn occurs at greater rates than sexual IPV (see Bryant & Demian, 1994; Freedner, Freed, Yang, & Austin, 2002; Halpern, Oslak, Young, Martin, & Kupper, 2001; Halpern, Young, Waller, Martin, & Kupper, 2004; Lie & Gentlewarrier, 1991; Lockhart, White, Causby, & Isaac, 1994; Renzetti, 1988, 1989; Turrell, 2000). Furthermore, highly violent and controlling unidirectional IPV, often termed "intimate terrorism" (Johnson, 2006), has been documented in same-sex and opposite-sex relationships (Island & Letellier, 1991; Johnson, 2005; Johnson, 2006; Lystad, Rice, & Kaplan, 1996; Merrill, 1998; Potoczniak et al., 2003; Renzetti, 1988, 1992; Walker, 1979; Woodworth, Byrd, Shelton, & Parcel, 2001). Less controlling, less violent, and more bidirectional IPV, known as "situational couple violence" (Johnson, 2006), is well explored in opposite-sex relationships but has yet to spark interest in the same-sex IPV literature.

Beyond these similarities, individuals who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual (GLB) may also experience *minority stress*, stress resulting from experienced and internalized homophobia. Those with abusive personalities may release their stress through violence (Balsam & Szymanski, 2005; Brooks, 1981;

Cano & Vivian, 2001). In addition, an abuser may use the victim's own minority stress as leverage, threatening to out the victim who wishes to leave (Johnson, 2005; Merrill & Wolfe, 2000).

Perhaps as a result, studies suggest that both men and women are at an increased risk of IPV if they are GLB. When comparing studies of heterosexual IPV with studies of GLB IPV, prevalence rates are found to be very similar (Cruz & Firestone, 1998; Island & Letellier, 1991; Lobel, 1986; Lockhart et al., 1994; Merrill & Wolfe, 2000; Renzetti, 1989, 1992, 1997; Straus, 1978; Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980). Of course, such cross-study comparisons of rates may be affected by methodological differences. Only a handful of studies have included both heterosexual and GLB men and women. Among those with nonprobability samples, GLBs are found to be at greater risk for verbal, controlling, physical, and sexual IPV (Balsam, Rothblum, & Beauchaine, 2005; Cameron, 2003; Freedner et al., 2002). Research on a probability sample of adolescents found GLBs are at an increased risk of physical IPV and a decreased risk of verbal and controlling IPV (Halpern et al., 2001, 2004). It is unclear whether their adolescent sample will be similar to the present study's adult sample. This literature does not suggest there is an interaction effect between sexual orientation and sex. Many scholars have contended that men are socialized to be more violent than women (see Haraway & O'Neil, 1999; Moore & Stuart, 2005), which would predict that same-sex male relationships would experience the most IPV as they have two men present, followed by opposite-sex relationships, followed by same-sex female relationships where no men are present. Contrary to expectations, as just reviewed, same-sex female IPV appears to be just as prevalent if not more so than opposite-sex IPV.

Same-sex IPV prevalence in the National Violence Against Women Survey, or NVAWS, has been previously explored using bivariate analysis by Tjaden and Thoennes, and Tjaden, Thoennes, and Allison. They concluded that IPV is more prevalent for both men and women with histories of same-sex relationships than those with histories of only opposite-sex relationships. The present study will employ multiple variable regression analysis to determine whether these previous findings are statistically significant when controlling for other key predictors. Notably, the prior two analyses also found both men and women with histories of same-sex relationships were more likely to be victimized by a man (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000; Tjaden et al., 1999). In the bivariate analyses of the present paper, behaviorally gay and bisexual respondents will be distinguished, as the abuser's sex is really only in doubt with regard to bisexuals. One of the only studies conducted on the issue found adolescent bisexuals in a nonprobability sample

were just as likely to be victimized by a same-sex partner as an opposite-sex partner (Freedner et al., 2002). With a paucity of research on the topic, predictions may be premature. If IPV is more prevalent for GLB individuals, perhaps due to minority stress, it is possible that bisexuals will be at greater risk when with a same-sex partner. Conversely, bisexuals may be at a greater risk with an opposite-sex partner who may not relate as well to and, thus, be more homophobic regarding an individual's bisexual status.

In being the first to use a generalizeable sample in a multiple variable analysis of adult same-sex IPV prevalence, to a certain degree this study is exploratory. There is quite simply too small of a literature from which to draw firm predictions. That said, five hypotheses were formed from the existing literature. First, it is hypothesized that, controlling for sex, being GLB will be a significant predictor of IPV victimization. Second, it is hypothesized that, controlling for sexual orientation, sex will have no relationship with IPV victimization. Third, it is hypothesized that the interaction term for sex and sexual orientation will have no relationship with IPV victimization. Fourth, neither logic nor the literature provide firm ground from which to hypothesize whether bisexual respondents will be at a greater risk of IPV victimization when involved with a same-sex or opposite-sex partner. Fifth, it is hypothesized that, for respondents of all sexes and sexual orientations, verbal and controlling IPV will occur at greater rates than physical IPV that will in turn occur at greater rates than sexual IPV.

Method

Secondary data analysis was conducted with a large, nationally representative probability sample from the subsection "Violence and threats of violence against women and men in the United States, 1994-1996" of the National Violence Against Women Survey (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1999). Random digit dialing between November 1995 and May 1996 was utilized to acquire a random sample of 8,000 women and 8,000 men aged 18 years and older from all 50 states plus the District of Columbia. The participation rate was 72.1% for women and 68.9% for men. This study focuses on the 7,257 female and 6,925 male respondents who have, at any point in life, been in a romantic-cohabitating or marital relationship.

Dependent Variables: Four IPV Types

Because the NVAWS only inquires about IPV victimization rather than also perpetration, the dependent variables should be interpreted as the presence of

IPV in the relationship, not necessarily unidirectional abuse where there is only one perpetrator and one victim. Although many respondents experienced multiple forms of IPV, separate variables were constructed for verbal, controlling, physical, and sexual IPV so as to explore how each related to the key predictors. As the ultimate goal of this article was to assess the lifetime prevalence of IPV in the GLB subpopulation, each form of IPV was coded 0 for not experiencing and 1 for experiencing at least 1 item on the given IPV index during a current or past romantic-cohabitating or marital relationship.

Respondents with missing data on any of these four variables were removed from analysis out of concern that missing answers cannot with accuracy be interpreted as hiding abuse or not being abused. As a diagnostic, a variable was coded 1 for having at least one missing answer on any of the dependent variables and 0 for no missing answers. Only small positive correlations were found between the missing data variable and verbal IPV (.10), controlling IPV (.11), physical IPV (.05), and sexual IPV (.02). Alternate 0 coding (such as allowing for all missing answers or requiring only at least one "no" answer) were similarly correlated with the missing data variable, and, in regressions, the pseudo R^2, correlation strengths, and significance were generally unaffected by which 0 coding was used. In what follows, at the end of each item, the percentage of respondents who experienced it is noted in parentheses.

Verbal and controlling IPV items in the NVAWS were adopted from the 1993 Canadian Violence Against Women Survey. Verbal IPV is conceptually defined for this study as verbal tactics that hurt, humiliate, or isolate one's partner. It was measured by binary yes-no items inquiring whether any of the respondent's partners had ever "tried to provoke arguments" (23.63%), "called you names or put you down in front of others" (15.79%), "made you feel inadequate" (18.28%), or "shouted or swore at you" (27.43%). Listwise deletion was used on the 267 missing cases. The 4-item index has a Cronbach's alpha of .8895.

Controlling IPV is defined as attempts to control a partner's thoughts and actions. Binary items inquire whether the respondent's partners have ever been "jealous or possessive" (22.90%), "tried to limit your contact with family or friends" (17.90%), "insisted on knowing who you were with at all times" (23.38%), "frightened you" (12.37%), "prevented you from knowing about or having access to the family income" (9.66%), "prevented you from working outside the home" (5.11%), or "insisted on changing residences even when you didn't need or want to" (7.54%). Listwise deletion was used for the 316 missing cases. The 7-item index has a Cronbach's alpha of .9387.

Physical IPV items in the NVAWS were adapted from the Conflict Tactics Scales (Straus, 1979). Physical IPV is defined as physical attacks or threats

of physical attacks against one's partner. It was measured by binary items asking whether the respondent has ever had a partner "throw something at you that could hurt you" (6.51%); "push, grab or shove you" (11.39%); "pull your hair" (5.68%); "slap or hit you" (10.96%); "kick or bite you" (4.19%); "choke or attempt to drown you" (3.32%); "hit you with some object" (4.88%); "beat you up" (5.42%); "threaten you with a gun" (2.70%); "threaten you with a knife or other weapon besides a gun" (2.93%); "use a gun on you" (1.17%); or "use a knife or other weapon on you besides a gun" (1.80%). Listwise deletion was used with the 406 missing cases. The 12-item index has a Cronbach's alpha of .9063.

Sexual IPV is defined as when one completes or attempts to complete oral, anal, or vaginal penetration through force or threat of force. This was measured by binary items inquiring if, through "force or threat of harm," the respondent had ever received from a partner anal sex (0.66%); vaginal sex (1.87%); anal or vaginal penetration by fingers or objects (0.72%); an attempt of vaginal, anal, or oral sex without penetration (1.09%); or oral sex via the perpetrator's penis to the respondent's mouth or the perpetrator's mouth to the respondent's vagina or anus (0.90%). It is possible that the percentage of the sample that experienced sexual IPV, 2%, is low due to aspects not included in the NVAWS, such as attempted anal sex, nonpenile penetration, and sexual activities with a victim incapacitated by alcohol or drugs. Listwise, deletion addressed the 236 missing values. The 5-item index has a Cronbach's alpha of .8107.

Key Independent Variables: Sex and Sexual Orientation

Sex is a binary variable, coded 1 for male (n = 6,925) and 0 for female (n = 7,257). There were zero missing cases for this variable. Although sexual orientation is often defined by a combination of identity, attraction, and behavior, the NVAWS only permits a behaviorally based definition with regard to romantic cohabitation and marriage. The variable is coded 1, heterosexual, if the respondent only has an opposite-sex relationship history, and it is coded 0, GLB, if the respondent had at least one same-sex relationship, thus a merging of behaviorally "gay" and "bisexual" respondents. There were zero missing cases for sexual orientation. Although there is reason for caution with the subsample size of GLB respondents (n = 144), it is large enough for a generalizeable comparison with heterosexual respondents (n = 14,038).

It is difficult to assess whether GLB respondents are underrepresented in this sample. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2008, there were 230,117,876 Americans aged 18 or older (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008), and 564,743 or 0.25% were at the time cohabitating with a partner of the same-sex

(O'Connell & Lofquist, 2009). Of the original NVAWS sample of 16,000 Americans aged 18 or older, 58 or 0.36% of respondents were cohabitating with a partner of the same-sex at the time of the survey. Based solely on same-sex cohabitation rates, therefore, the NVAWS closely mirrors the population. However, as sexual orientation identity was never inquired about in the questionnaire, it is impossible to know whether individuals self-identifying as GLB are also proportionately represented. Furthermore, it is likely that some respondents with a same-sex cohabitation history might identify as heterosexual, and some respondents with only an opposite-sex marital and cohabitation history might identify as GLB. Also unexplored in this study are noncohabitating relationships.

Education, Income, Age, and Race and Ethnicity

Several demographic variables have been controlled for. These include years of education ($M = 13.74$, $SD = 2.67$), the log of personal annual income ($M = 30.64$, $SD = 24.18$), age ($M = 45.14$, $SD = 15.16$), Hispanic ($n = 196$), African American ($n = 1{,}092$), Asian or Pacific Islander ($n = 203$), mixed race ($n = 296$), and Native American or Native Alaskan ($n = 139$). There were 45 missing values for education, 193 for age, and 140 in total for all of the race and ethnicity variables. Because income was missing for a substantial number of cases, 3,094, conditional mean imputation replaced these data with values predicted from a regression model where income is the dependent variable. This method has been known to downwardly bias coefficients and variance estimates.

Analytic Method

Four logistic regressions were run. In each model, the dependent variable is one of the four types of IPV, either verbal, controlling, physical, or sexual IPV. Each model includes the same independent variables of sex, sexual orientation, education, income, age, Hispanic, African American, Asian or Pacific Islander, Mixed Race, and Native American or Native Alaskan.

Findings

Turning to Table 1, means for physical and sexual IPV victimization were far greater for women, and means for all forms of IPV victimization were far greater for GLB than heterosexual respondents. In correlation matrices, being heterosexual significantly negatively correlated with all forms of IPV,

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlation Matrices (N = 14,182)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	*M*	*SD*	Key
1. Verbal IPV	—	.58*	.32*	.04*	−.07*	0.36	0.48	
2. Controlling IPV	.64*	—	.25*	.05*	−.08*	0.42	0.49	Women:
3. Physical IPV	.54*	.49*	—	.07*	−.06*	0.08	0.27	
4. Sexual IPV	.26*	.24*	.31*	—	−.06*	0.00	0.05	Men:
5. Heterosexual	−.07*	−.07*	−.04*	−.03*	—	0.99	0.10	
M	.38	.41	.21	.05	.99			
SD	.48	.49	.41	.21	.10			
Variables	1	2	3	4	5	*M*	*SD*	Key
1. Verbal IPV	—	.60*	.44*	.19*	−.01	0.37	0.48	
2. Controlling IPV	.59*	—	.39*	.17*	.00	0.41	0.49	Nonheterosexual:
3. Physical IPV	.26*	.10	—	.29*	−.19*	0.15	0.35	
4. Sexual IPV	.13	.16	.21*	—	−.14*	0.02	0.15	Heterosexual
5. Male	.05	.06	−.13*	−.15	—	0.49	0.50	
M	0.71	0.80	0.31	0.08	0.45			
SD	0.46	0.41	0.46	0.27	0.50			

Note: IPV = intimate partner violence. Sexual orientation coding: 1 for heterosexual (only opposite-sex romantic-cohabitating and marital relationships) and 0 for GLB (at least one same-sex romantic-cohabitating relationship). Gender coding: 1 for male and 0 for female. IPV refers to victimization.
*$p < .05$.

with the strength of the relationship for physical and sexual IPV slightly larger for men. GLBs in this sample are slightly younger and better educated than heterosexuals, and men are slightly younger, better educated, and wealthier than women (full correlation matrix available from author).

Hypothesis 1: Supported

Looking at subsample frequencies in Table 2, all types of IPV are approximately twice as prevalent among GLB individuals as compared to heterosexuals. Regarding the first hypothesis, in logistic regressions, being GLB does indeed significantly increase the risk of IPV victimization after controlling for sex, the effects being strongest with verbal and controlling IPV (see Table 3). Consistent with similar studies using nonprobability sampling (Balsam, Rothblum, & Beauchaine, 2005; Cameron, 2003; Freedner et al., 2002), the increased risk held true for all types of IPV.

Table 2. Victimization Frequencies (%) Among Sex and Sexual Orientation Subsamples

	IPV victimization type			
Subsample	Verbal	Controlling	Physical	Sexual
Heterosexual (n = 14,038)	36.64	41.14	14.55	2.40
Men (n = 6,860)	35.99	41.33	7.54	0.18
Women (n = 7,178)	37.26	40.96	21.17	4.51
GLB (n = 144)	71.09	79.53	31.16	7.69
Men (n = 65)	73.68	82.14	24.59	3.13
Women (n = 79)	69.01	77.46	36.36	11.39
Gay (n = 60)	55.56	69.64	29.31	3.33
Men (n = 32)	65.52	82.76	33.33	3.13
Women (n = 28)	44.00	55.56	25.00	3.57
Bisexual (n = 84)	82.43	87.32	32.50	10.84
Men (n = 33)	82.14	81.48	16.13	3.13
OS abuser	53.57	44.44	12.90	0.00
SS abuser	3.57	14.81	3.23	3.13
SS & OS abuser	25.00	22.22	0.00	0.00
Women (n = 51)	82.61	90.91	42.86	15.69
OS abuser	45.65	43.18	34.69	15.69
SS abuser	13.04	6.82	6.12	0.00
SS & OS abuser	23.91	40.91	2.04	0.00

Note: GLB = Gay or Bisexual; SS = same-sex; OS = opposite-sex. Sexual orientation defined by romantic-cohabitating and marital relationship history.

Hypothesis 2: Supported

In bivariate analyses, women were about as likely as men to experience verbal and controlling IPV but more likely to experience physical and sexual IPV (see Table 2). However, as predicted, in logistic regressions, sex does not significantly predict victimization for any type of IPV once controlling for sexual orientation (see Table 3).

Hypothesis 3: Mainly Supported. The third hypothesis, that the interaction between sex and sexual orientation would be uncorrelated with IPV, was supported in three of the four models. However, as foreshadowed by the

Table 3. Logistic Regression Analyses on IPV (Intimate Partner Violence) Victimization

	Verbal IPV			Controlling IPV		
Predictor	β	*SE B*	e^B	β	*SE B*	e^B
Male	0.25	0.40	1.28	0.32	0.46	1.38
Heterosexual	−1.38***	0.26	0.25	−1.73***	0.29	0.18
Interaction	−0.22	0.40	0.80	−0.22	0.46	0.81
Age	−0.01***	0	0.99	−0.02***	0	0.98
Education	−0.06***	0.01	0.94	−0.09***	0.01	0.91
Income	−0.00***	0.00	1.00	−0.00***	0.00	1.00
Hispanic	−0.48**	0.16	0.62	0.00	0.15	2.06
African American	0.50***	0.07	1.65	0.72***	0.07	1.11
Asian	−1.81	0.16	0.83	0.11	0.15	2.21
Mixed race	0.70***	0.12	2.00	0.79***	0.13	2.44
Native	0.49**	0.18	1.63	0.89***	0.19	
Constant	2.33			3.33		
$\chi^2(df)$		451.87(11)			715.70(11)	
Nagelkerke R^2		0.0331			0.0520	
% victimized		36.4			40.6	
	Physical IPV			Sexual IPV		
Predictor	β	*SE B*	e^B	β	*SE B*	e^B
Male	−0.65	0.39	0.52	−1.37	0.81	0.25
Heterosexual	−0.72**	0.24	0.49	−0.96**	0.36	0.38
Interaction	−0.54	0.39	0.58	−1.85*	0.86	0.16
Age	−0.02***	0.00	0.98	−0.02***	0.00	0.98
Education	−0.04***	0.01	0.96	−0.06*	0.02	0.94
Income	−0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
Hispanic	−0.34	0.24	0.71	−0.84	0.72	0.43
African American	0.27***	0.09	1.31	−0.22	0.22	0.81
Asian	−0.50*	0.25	0.60	−1.56	1.01	0.21
Mixed race	0.58***	0.15	1.78	0.64*	0.31	1.91
Native	0.60**	0.22	1.82	0.73	0.40	2.08
Constant	0.70			−0.52		
$\chi^2(df)$		719.83 (11)			400.39(11)	
Nagelkerke R^2		0.0526			0.0293	
% victimized		14.3			2.4	

Note: Gender coding: coded 1 for male and 0 for female. Sexual orientation (sexual orientation defined by having romantic-cohabitating and marital relationship history) coding: 1 for heterosexual (only opposite-sex relationship history) and 0 for GLB (at least one same-sex relationship). Interaction is the interaction term for the variables male and heterosexual. IPV refers to victimization.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

relative prevalence of sexual IPV in Table 1 and the correlation matrices in Table 2, the interaction term did significantly predict sexual IPV in logistic regressions. Specifically, heterosexual men are least likely to be victims of sexual IPV ($B = –4.7$), GLB men are more likely ($B = –1.89$), heterosexual women are next most likely ($B = –1.48$), and GLB women are most likely to be sexual IPV victims ($B = –0.52$).

Hypothesis 4: Regarding Bisexual Respondents

In the Bivariate analyses summarized in Table 2, bisexual respondents were not only more likely to be victimized than heterosexuals but also than those who were gay or lesbian, hereafter referred to as "gay" for the sake of brevity. In addition, gay men were more likely than gay women to experience all forms of IPV with the exception of sexual IPV, and, conversely, bisexual women were more likely than bisexual men to experience all forms of IPV other than verbal IPV. Although a large portion of bisexuals experienced verbal or controlling IPV in both same-sex and opposite-sex relationships, the same cannot be said for physical and sexual IPV.

Due to a lack of prior research on the subject, there was no prediction made regarding which sex is most likely to abuse bisexuals. Findings in Table 2 reveal that the few bisexual men and women who experienced sexual IPV were all victimized by men. Beyond this exception, for verbal, controlling, and physical IPV, bisexual men and women were far more likely to be victimized by an *opposite-sex abuser*. This information along with recognition of subsample sizes shed light on why previous analyses of same-sex IPV in the NVAWS found both GLB men and women were most often victimized by a man (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000; Tjaden et al., 1999). Specifically, GLB women were more likely to be victimized by a man because there were far more bisexual women ($n = 51$) than gay women ($n = 28$) in the sample. GLB men were more likely to be victimized by a man as well because, given the nearly identical numbers of gay ($n = 32$) and bisexual men ($n = 33$) in the sample, gay men plus the minority of bisexual men abused by men comprise a majority of GLB male respondents. This suggests that merging bisexual and gay subsamples in analyses may obscure the sex of abusers for bisexuals, the only respondents for which the sex of the abuser is not immediately apparent.

Hypothesis 5: Supported

As expected, the relative prevalence of the IPV types does not change by the victim's sex or sexual orientation: Verbal and controlling IPV each occur

more often than physical IPV that in turn occurs more often than sexual IPV (see Table 2). Further analysis (available from author) reveals that, regardless of sex or sexual orientation, verbal and controlling IPV—a tandem often referred to as psychological IPV—are most often experienced without other IPV types; physical IPV is most often experienced in conjunction with psychological IPV, and sexual IPV is most often experienced in a trio alongside psychological and physical IPV.

Discussion

Contrary to the implied expectation among policy makers and researchers that same-sex IPV does not warrant much concern, the present study, being the first to use multiple variable regression analysis with a nationally generalizeable adult sample, finds IPV is significantly more prevalent among GLB individuals than heterosexuals. Indeed, GLB IPV is startlingly *twice* as prevalent. Replication is of course necessary, preferably including questions on IPV perpetration so as to explore directionality of abuse. With only questions on victimization, scholars have been left to speculate as to the nature of the abusive relationships in the NVAWS, with some concluding that it largely represents less violent, less controlling, and generally bidirectional "situational couple violence" (Johnson & Leone, 2005) and others conversely concluding that the crime focus of the NVAWS led some respondents to underreport situational couple violence that they may have found difficult labeling as crime (Anderson, 2005; Kimmel, 2002; Straus, 1999).

Although IPV prevalence is higher among bisexual respondents than gay respondents, among bisexuals, IPV is more often perpetrated by an opposite-sex partner. Future research should explore this issue, perhaps by first determining the impact of minority stress in opposite-sex relationships when at least one partner is bisexual. To achieve such studies with smaller samples than the NVAWS, the GLB presence should increase by measuring sexual orientation as identity. Although cohabitation and marital history questionnaire items will capture a portion of the most committed intimate relationships, it represents a fraction of Americans identifying as GLB, upwards of 10% of the population (for a review, see Tjaden et al., 1999).

That being gay rather than heterosexual increases IPV risk for both men and women can be rephrased to reveal that gay women perpetrate more IPV than heterosexual men. This raises critical questions about theories positing that men are socialized to be more violent than women (see Haraway & O'Neil, 1999; Moore & Stuart, 2005) and data revealing that men commit the vast majority of crime (Wallace, 2005). One potential answer may

reside with social constructionist gender theory, which in part contends that demographics like sexual orientation may affect the versions of masculinities and femininities performed (Butler, 1990; West & Fenstermaker, 1995).

With such little attention being paid by policy makers and researchers alike, this study represents an invaluable first step in raising awareness about IPV in the GLB community, but it is only a first step. Concerns over "airing the dirty laundry" of an already stigmatized community alongside researcher prejudice or indifference cannot justify treating GLB IPV victims as invisible, leaving them without support in a painful and potentially dangerous environment.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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Bio

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