



Heterosexism and Emotional Support: Correlates of Positive States of Mind in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Communities

Michelle Smith, James Miller, M.S., Alexandra Wike, M.A. and Mark Vosvick, Ph.D.
University of North Texas



Introduction

- Numerous authors have noted the deleterious effects of societal heterosexism on the intimate relationships in lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities (Szymanski, Kashubeck-West & Meyer, 2008).
- Perceived social support is conceptualized as a general psychological construct that may be eroded through exposure to discrimination; this erosion of social support is posited to result in long-term negative mental health outcomes (Burns, Kamen, Lehman & Beach, 2012).
- Positive States of Mind (PSOM) has been associated with problem-focused coping (Snyder et al., 1991; Taylor, 2000), increased self-worth (Barnum et al., 1998), decreased levels of depression (Elliott et al., 1991) and in facilitating positive appraisals of adverse situations (Affleck & Tennen, 1996).
- PSOM creates hope, which is an important factor in a person's ability to adjust to a serious or threatening event. Conversely, loss of hope is associated with poor psychological adjustment and poor physical outcome (Perry, Taylor & Shaw, 2007).
- The goal of the current study is to reduce the disparity of research in the LGBT communities.

Hypotheses

- In LGBT communities from Dallas/Ft. Worth, heterosexism (harassment, rejection and discrimination) is negatively associated with positive states of mind.
- In LGBT communities from Dallas/Ft. Worth, emotional support satisfaction is positively associated with positive states of mind.
- In LGBT communities from Dallas/Ft. Worth, heterosexism (harassment, rejection and discrimination) and emotional support satisfaction account for a significant proportion of the variance in positive states of mind.

Theoretical Model

Stressors

Minority Stress Model (Meyer, 1995)

Everyday Stress, Minority Status, Heterosexism, Lack of Social Support

Multiple Stressors

Minority Stress

PSOM Serves as a Buffer Against Negative Health Outcomes

Negative Health Outcomes

Procedures

- LGBT participants were recruited from community based organizations throughout Dallas/Fort Worth to complete a comprehensive self-report survey protocol.
- The participants were required to be at least 18 years of age, be fluent in English and self-identify as either L, G, B or T.
- IRB approval was obtained and participants signed informed consent.
- Participants received \$25 as incentive.

Measures

Heterosexist Harassment, Rejection, and Discrimination Scale (Szymanski, 2006); $\alpha=.90$

- Displays construct validity (Szymanski, 2006)
- Asked to reflect on the past year
- 14 item 6 point likert-type scale survey measuring harassment, rejection, and discrimination
- Anchors: 1 (never happened to you) to 6 (almost all the time)
- Example item: "How many times have you heard ANTI-LESBIAN/ ANTI-GAY remarks from family members?"

UCLA Social Support Satisfaction Inventory (Dunkel-Schetter, Feinstein & Call, 1986); $\alpha=.89$

- Excellent construct validity (Dunkel-Schetter, Feinstein & Call, 1986)
- Asked to reflect on the past three months
- 70 item 5 to 7 point likert-type scale survey with five dimensions of support
- Anchors: 1 (very dissatisfied) to 7 (very satisfied)
- Example item: "In general, how satisfied or dissatisfied have you been with the assistance (minor and major) you have received from everyone in the past three months?"

Positive States of Mind Scale (Horowitz, Adler & Kegeles, 1988); $\alpha=.77$

- Displays construct validity (Jain, Shapiro, Swanick, Roesch, Mills, Bell & Schwartz, 2007)
- Asked to reflect on the past week
- 7 item 4 point likert-type scale survey rating aspects of positive states of mind
- Anchors: 0 (unable to have it) to 3 (have it easily)
- Example item: "Sensuous Nonsexual Pleasure: Being able to enjoy bodily senses, intellectual activity, doing things you ordinarily like, such as listening to music, enjoying the outdoors, lounging in a hot bath."

Demographics

Stratified sample; n=173

Variable	n	%
Gender		
Female	74	35.8
Male	62	42.8
Transgender	37	21.4
Ethnicity		
African American	21	12.1
European American	119	68.8
Latino	18	10.4
Other Ethnicity	15	8.7

Variable	M	SD	Range
Other			
Age (years)	34	13.8	18-73
Education (years)	15	4.7	1-33
Income	\$29,000 [^]		\$0-390,000

[^]=Median

Univariate Statistics

Scale	M	(SD)	Possible Range	Actual Range	Calculated α
HHRDS	1.61	0.66	1-6	1-4.6	.90
SS	5.16	1.52	1-7	1-7	.93
PSOM	17.19	4.67	0-28	0-28	.87

Bivariate Statistics

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
1. Age	-										
2. Education	.14	-									
3. African American	-.06	-.01	-								
4. Latino	-.07	-.05	-.13	-							
5. Other Ethnicity	-.09	-.07	-.12	-.11	-						
6. Female	-.34**	-.01	.00	.13	-.06	-					
7. Trans	.38**	-.09	-.06	-.13	-.06	-.45**	-				
8. Income	.37**	.06	.01	.04	.04	-.10	.12	-			
9. HHRDS	-.19*	.02	.04	-.16*	-.01	.03	.07	-.08	-		
10. SS	-.08	.12	-.17*	.10	-.03	.07	-.13	.02	-.13	-	
11. PSOM	.09	.12	-.18*	.10	-.04	.09	-.05	.09	-.16*	.47**	-

* = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$

Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Positive States of Mind is the outcome variable

IV	β	t	p	Tol	VIF
Block 1					
Age	.09	1.00	.32	.70	1.43
Education	.11	1.46	.15	.97	1.03
African American	-.17	-2.25	.03	.95	1.05
Latino	.06	.82	.41	.93	1.07
Other Ethnicity	-.04	-.56	.58	.94	1.07
Female	.08	.93	.35	.74	1.34
Transgender	-.07	-.83	.41	.72	1.38
Income	.07	.87	.38	.85	1.17
<i>Adj. R</i> ² =.03; <i>F</i> (8,164)=1.7; <i>p</i> =.10					
Block 2					
HHRDS	-.07	-1.03	.31	.90	1.11
SS	.44	6.24	.00	.91	1.10
<i>Adj. R</i> ² =.22; <i>F</i> (10,162)=6.0; <i>p</i> <.001					

Discussion

- (H1), (H2) & (H3) are supported.
- According to the regression analysis, heterosexism (harassment, rejection and discrimination) is not found to be a significant predictor of PSOM.
- According to the regression analysis, emotional support satisfaction is found to be a significant predictor of PSOM.
- According to the correlation matrix, heterosexism has a significant negative relationship with PSOM while social support has a significant positive relationship with PSOM.

Clinical Implications

- Clients may benefit from interventions which focus on the development and implementation of emotional support networks. Strong social support networks may serve as a buffer against stressors and as a protective insulator from negative mental health outcomes (Jain et al., 2007).

Limitations

- Limited generalizability due to the sample's demographics.
- Survey responses are subject to self-report bias.
- Participants self-identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender which excludes people within the LGBT population that are not yet comfortable self-identifying as L, G, B or T.
- Due to cross-sectional correlational design, causation cannot be inferred.

Future Research

- Future studies should include a larger sample of LGBT participants from differing geographic locations.
- Include participants who may be newly self-identifying as a sexual or gender minority.
- Include other variables that may impact positive states of mind.

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See handout for references.

