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The complementarity of behavioral styles among female same-gender romantic couples

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Abstract
This study extended previous research on complementarity through the examination of female same-gender romantic dyads. One-hundred and forty-four women (72 couples) completed interpersonal circumplex ratings of their romantic partner and a relationship measure of love and harmony. Results indicated that high levels of relationship quality were reported by participants who were warm and submissive or who had partners who possessed these characteristics. Additionally, members of female same-gender couples tended to complement each other in terms of dominance but not warmth. However, consistent with past research stressing the unique importance female same-gender couples tend to prescribe to relationship equality, dyads that contained members who were equivalent in terms of dominance tended to experience high levels of relationship quality.

In the past few years, civil rights issues among gay and lesbian couples have taken center stage in the political sphere. In the United States, gay and lesbian couples have struggled (and in most cases are still struggling) to maintain rights afforded to their heterosexual peers, such as legally acknowledged marriage and the ability to adopt children. At the heart of the debate about these civil rights lies the assumption that gay and lesbian relationships are "different" than heterosexual relationships (cf. Family Research Council, 2010). However, contrary to this belief, research examining female same-gender romantic couples has tended to find that these romantic relationships are extremely similar to heterosexual relationships across a wide range of variables. Female same-gender romantic couples and heterosexual couples report similar levels of affective expression, intimacy, conflict, relationship commitment, and overall satisfaction (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Kurdek, 1998, 2001, 2004). Research also suggests that various predictors of relationship satisfaction tend to be similar for both female same-gender romantic couples and heterosexual couples. For example, both heterosexual and female same-gender romantic dyads tend to report high levels of relationship quality and fewer arguments when both members are rated high on the trait of agreeableness (cf. Heller, Watson, & Iles, 2004; Kurdek, 1997; Malouff, Thorsteinsson, Schutte, Bhullar, & Rooke, 2010).

Although similar to heterosexual couples, research does suggest some differences between female same-gender couples and heterosexual couples, which might limit the generalizability of theories developed with heterosexual individuals in mind to this unique population (Kurdek, 2001). For example, if gender roles are critical to understanding the dynamics of romantic relationships (Gottman, Coan, Carrere, & Swanson, 1998; Huston,

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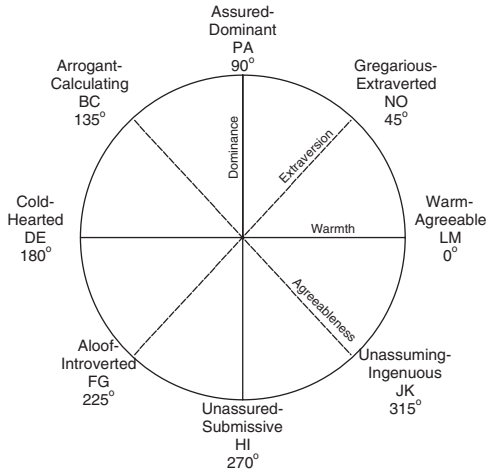

Figure 1. Wiggins, Trapnell, and Phillips's (1988) interpersonal circumplex.

2000), it is likely that female same-gender couples will differ in some ways from heterosexual couples. To this end, the current research examines the applicability of interpersonal complementarity to the understanding and prediction of behavioral styles and relationship quality among women involved in romantic relationships with other women.

The notion of complementarity was first introduced in Harry Stack Sullivan's (1953) interpersonal theory of personality, which asserts that during dyadic interactions, the behavioral style of one person tends to elicit or constrain the behavioral style of the other and vice versa.[1] For example, in a romantic dyad, if Person A was to act in a kind and compassionate manner toward Person B, the complementary response would probably be for Person B to act in a kind and compassionate manner in return. However, the behavior of Person B is not completely determined by Person A (i.e., she may act cold or uncaring toward Person A). In this manner, complementary behaviors occur in a probabilistic rather than a mechanistic way (Horowitz et al., 2006; Pincus, 1994; Tracey, 1994).

In an attempt to examine how these behavioral styles are related to each other, researchers at the Kaiser Foundation (Freedman, Leary, Ossorio, & Coffey, 1951; Leary, 1957) introduced a circular ordering of interpersonal variables known as the interpersonal circumplex (IPC). The circumplex structure implies that variables measuring interpersonal relationships are arranged on the circumference of a circle using the primary dimensions of dominance (i.e., dominant–submissive) and warmth (i.e., hostile–friendly). Although the exact number of interpersonal variables and their ordering has gone through a number of revisions, Figure 1 displays the circular ordering of the eight octant labels presented by Wiggins, Trapnell, and Phillips (1988).

The structure of the IPC suggests that the eight behavioral styles arranged around the circle can be conceptualized as different "blends" of dominance and warmth. For example, agreeableness (octant JK) is a blend of submission and warmth, whereas extraversion (octant NO) is a blend of dominance and warmth. In fact, past research suggests that the IPC dimensions of warmth and dominance represent approximately 45° rotations of the trait dimensions of extraversion and agreeableness (Figure 1; Markey & Markey, 2006; McCrae & Costa, 1989). The IPC has a similar structure as the structural analysis of social behavior (SASB) but tends to be assessed as an individual difference measurement, whereas the SASB is often employed as a dyadic assessment. The IPC predates the SASB (Leary, 1957; Schaefer, 1959) and the SASB belongs to the IPC-based group of models of personality and interpersonal behavior. The primary differences between these models is that the SASB is a three-plane circumplex model (transitive, intransitive, and introject) and the definition of the vertical axes of the two models differ. Specifically, the IPC places submission as the opposite of the dominance, whereas the SASB model places emancipate as the opposite of control

1. Although there are many definitions of complementarity (Markey & Markey, 2009b), the current research defines complementarity in a manner consistent with interpersonal theory (Carson, 1969; Kiesler, 1983; Leary, 1957). This definition allows complementary behaviors to potentially be opposite (e.g., a dominant behavior might complement a submissive behavior) or similar (e.g., a warm behavior might complement a warm behavior).

(dominance; see Pincus, Gurtman, & Ruiz, 1998, for additional information).

Using the two main dimensions of the IPC, Robert Carson (1969) defined the particular manner in which complementarity occurs. During interpersonal interactions, dominant or submissive behavioral styles encourage the opposite style in interaction partners (i.e., dominance invites submission and submission invites dominance), and warm or cold behavioral styles encourage similar responses in interaction partners (i.e., warmth invites warmth and coldness invites coldness). This implies that an individual's behavioral style alters the behavioral style of his or her interaction partner in predictable ways. Figure 2 uses arrows to graphically display the manner in which behavioral styles are predicted to complement each other. For example, if Person A acts in a warm and dominant manner (octant NO), the likely response of Person B would be to complement this style of behavior by acting in a warm and submissive manner (octant JK). Consistent with this model, recent research has shown that during various dyadic interactions, individuals tend to act similarly in terms of their interpersonal warmth and dissimilarly in terms of interpersonal dominance (cf. Ansell, Kurtz, & Markey, 2008; Locke & Sadler, 2007; Markey, Funder, & Ozer, 2003; Markey & Kurtz, 2006; Markey, Lowmaster, & Eichler, 2010; Sadler, Ethier, Gunn, Duong, & Woody, 2009; Sadler & Woody, 2003).

Interpersonal researchers and theorists further suggest that when an individual is able to interact with a partner who complements his or her own behavioral style, he or she will likely experience a sense of self-validation and security (Carson, 1969; Kiesler, 1983; Markey et al., 2010; Markey & Markey, 2007; Tracey, 1994). Carson's model of complementarity has been found to predict many diverse relationship outcomes, such as therapy satisfaction (Tracey, 2004), closeness of friends (Yaughn & Nowicki, 1999), cooperative behavior among preschool children (McLeod & Nowicki, 1985), number of verbal exchanges (Nowicki & Manheim, 1991), and marital divorce (Tracey, Ryan, & Jaschik-Herman, 2001). Although the notion

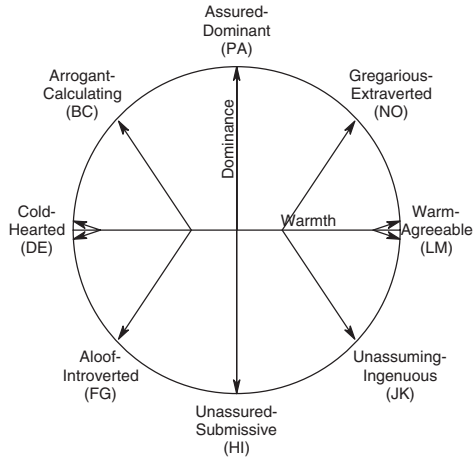

Figure 2. Complementary octants of the interpersonal circumplex according to Carson's (1969) definition.

of complementarity and its relation to positive relationship outcomes have been extensively examined among heterosexual couples (cf. Markey & Markey, 2007; Tracey et al., 2001), same-gender roommates (cf. Ansell et al., 2008; Markey & Kurtz, 2006), and stranger dyads (cf. Markey et al., 2003; Sadler & Woody, 2003), to date, no studies have examined whether complementarity occurs and is an important predictor of relationship outcomes among female same-gender romantic couples.

When discussing the notion of complementarity, Kiesler (1996) theorized that complementarity is most likely to occur and be maintained in a dyadic relationship when two individuals are of the same gender. Furthermore, research addressing social development suggests that girls spend more time engaged in prosocial behaviors, care more about having friendships, and are more likely to endorse goals that develop and maintain relationships than boys (Benenson & Benarroch, 1998; Chung & Asher, 1996; Jarvinen & Nicholls, 1996; Murphy & Eisenberg, 2002; Rose & Asher, 1999, 2004; Strough & Berg, 2000). Taken together, this led Ansell and colleagues (2008) to speculate and find that same-gender interactions among female college roommates tended to occur in a complementary manner more than interactions among male college

roommates. In a similar manner, Yaughn and Nowicki (1999) found that women's reports regarding same-gender friendships tend to occur in a complementary manner, whereas no support for complementarity was found for men's reports regarding their same-gender friendships.

Given the research described above, it might seem reasonable to suspect that because female same-gender romantic couples are composed of two women, they may express higher degrees of complementarity than heterosexual dyads. However, there is an important difference between female same-gender couples and heterosexual couples, which might cause the traditional predictions of complementarity to be reversed (at least in terms of dominance) for this unique population. Although female same-gender couples and heterosexual couples are similar to each other across a wide array of variables (e.g., affective expression, intimacy, conflict, and relationship commitment), female same-gender couples tend to value and express relationship equality (i.e., sharing power in a relationship) more than heterosexual couples (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Kurdek, 1998, 2001, 2004). In a comprehensive examination of over 40 variables, Kurdek (2001) found that female same-gender couples and heterosexual couples differed more from each other in terms of equality than any of the other relationship variables they examined.[2] It has been speculated that this occurs because female same-gender romantic couples start their relationships with a history of being socialized into the same gender role and are therefore more easily able to operate on the basic ethic of equality than heterosexual couples (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983). Consistent with this notion, female same-gender couples are more likely to share housework chores than heterosexual couples (Kurdek, 2007). On videotaping the interactions of female same-gender couples, Gottman and colleagues (2003) found that these couples argued more effectively than heterosexual couples by compromising and were unlikely to use a style of conflict resolution where one partner dominates and the other submits. Such findings led Gottman and colleagues to suggest that female same-gender couples handle conflict well because they value equality and tend to have similar levels of power and status.

Given the unique importance of equality among female same-gender romantic couples, it is probable that the traditional model of complementarity, which predicts that dominance or submissive behavioral styles complement the opposite style in an interaction partner, might not generalize to this population. Instead, it seems possible that, among female same-gender couples, dominant or submissive behavioral styles might encourage similar responses in a romantic partner (i.e., dominance invites dominance and submission invites submission). Additionally, given the importance female same-gender couples tend to prescribe to equality as a predictor of relationship quality (Kurdek, 2001), it is expected that female same-gender couples who contain individuals who are similar to each other in terms of dominance will experience more loving and harmonious relationships than those who contain members who are dissimilar in terms of this dimension. In other words, female same-gender couples that are composed of either two submissive or two dominant women may experience higher levels of relationship quality than dyads composed of one dominant and one submissive woman.

Current study

The current study examines the complementarity of informant-rated behavioral styles of female same-gender romantic couples. Specifically, each woman in a same-gender relationship will describe the behavioral style of the other member of the dyad. Such a methodology allows for the assessment of how an individual tends to behave when she is in the presence of her romantic partner

2. The variable that produced the biggest difference between female same-gender romantic couples and heterosexual couples was the five-factor trait of openness to experience (lesbians were more open than heterosexuals). The relationship variable of equality produced the second largest difference between these couples (female same-gender romantic couples valued and expressed equality more than heterosexuals; Kurdek, 2003, Table 3).

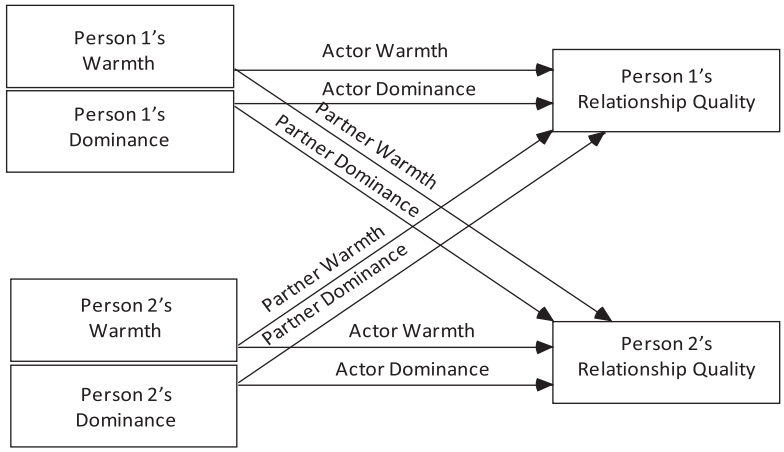

Figure 3. Actor–partner interdependence model of interpersonal warmth and dominance predicting relationship quality.

and how her romantic partner tends to behave when in her presence. Although not an analysis of complementarity at the behavioral interchange level, the informant ratings of behavioral styles approximate an aggregated rating of behaviors expressed within the presence of an informant (i.e., one's romantic partner). Such informant ratings of behavioral styles have proven to be a useful means of examining complementarity outside of the laboratory (cf. Ansell et al., 2008; Markey & Kurtz, 2006). Thus, the focus of this research is an attempt to understand whether relationship quality of female same-gender romantic dyads can be predicted by the behavioral styles of dyadic members and the complementarity of these behavioral styles. Using data from female same-gender romantic couples, we will address this issue using actor–partner interdependence models (APIMs).

APIMs (Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2008) are statistical methods that make it possible to examine how an individual's predictor variables simultaneously and independently relate to her own criterion variable and to her partner's criterion variable. In the current context, an APIM can be used to examine how relationship quality is shaped by unique and interpersonal variables that exist among romantic partners. This methodology allows one to isolate several potential variables of influence. First, the association between an individual's own interpersonal warmth and dominance and her report of relationship quality can be estimated. The APIM denotes this as an "actor effect" (see lines "actor warmth" and "actor dominance" in Figure 3). Second, the association between the romantic partner's interpersonal warmth and dominance and the individual's own report of relationship quality can be estimated. This link between the partner's behavioral styles and the individual's report of her relationship quality is termed the "partner effect" (see lines "partner warmth" and "partner dominance" in Figure 3). Finally, the extent to which similarity and dissimilarity among romantic partners' warmth and dominance predicts relationship quality can be examined.

Hypotheses

1. *Complementarity of warmth:* Consistent with previous research, and the traditional model of complementarity (Figure 2), it is expected that the behavioral styles of female same-gender romantic dyads will be similar to each other in terms of interpersonal warmth. In other words, dyads will tend to be composed of individuals who are either both interpersonally warm or both interpersonally cold.

2. *Complementarity of dominance:* Because previous research suggests female same-gender romantic couples tend to place great value on relationship equality (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Kurdek, 1998, 2001, 2004), it seems unlikely that they will tolerate a partner who differs considerably from themselves in terms of interpersonal dominance. Therefore, contrary to the traditional model of complementarity (Figure 2), it is expected that the behavioral styles of female same-gender romantic dyads will tend to be similar to each other in terms of interpersonal dominance. In other words, female same-gender dyads will tend to be composed of individuals who are either both interpersonally dominant or both interpersonally submissive.
3. *Actor and partner effects predicting relationship quality:* Consistent with past research indicating that relationship quality tends to be highest when individuals and their romantic partners are agreeable (i.e., are interpersonally warm and submissive; Markey & Markey, 2006; McCrae & Costa, 1989), it is expected that actor and partner effects of warmth will both be positive, while the actor and partner effects of dominance will both be negative. In other words, individuals who are warm and submissive (i.e., act in a manner consistent with the JK octant) and individuals who have partners who are warm and submissive (i.e., act in a manner consistent with the JK octant) will have high levels of relationship quality.
4. *Similarity effect for warmth predicting relationship quality:* Consistent with the traditional model of complementarity, which predicts that individuals will enjoy satisfying relationships when their partner is similar to themselves in terms of warmth, it is expected that female same-gender romantic dyads who have members with similar levels of interpersonal warmth will experience more loving and harmonious relationships than those dyads with dissimilar levels of interpersonal warmth.
5. *Similarity effect for dominance predicting relationship quality:* Contrary to the traditional model of complementarity, which predicts individuals will enjoy satisfying relationships when their partner is dissimilar to them in terms of dominance, it is expected that female same-gender romantic dyads will experience high levels of relationship quality when members of a dyad have similar levels of interpersonal dominance. Specifically, because previous research suggests female same-gender romantic couples tend to place great value on relationship equality (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Kurdek, 1998, 2001, 2004), it is expected that female same-gender dyads that report high levels of relationship quality will likely contain members who are both interpersonally dominant or both interpersonally submissive.

Method

Participants and procedures

One hundred and forty-four women (72 couples; M age $= 33.40$, $SD = 10.20$) participated in this study as part of a larger study examining associations between romantic relationships and health. Sixty-nine percent of the sample was European American, 17% was African American, 7% was Hispanic, 4% was Asian, and 3% was of an "other" ethnic background. All couples were required to have maintained an exclusive monogamous relationship for at least 6 months. The majority of couples in our sample were cohabitating (83%) and couples had been romantically involved for 4.68 years on average ($SD = 3.48$ years). All participants completed the self-identification scale from the Klein Sexual Orientation Grid (Klein, 1993). This scale asks participants to rate their self-identified sexual orientation using a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*exclusively heterosexual*) to 6 (*exclusively homosexual*) with a score of 3 indicating equally heterosexual and homosexual. In the current sample, the mean score was 5.39 ($SD = 0.93$) with all

the subjects but one (who gave a score of 3) responding with scores > 4.

Participants were recruited from a Northeastern university campus and the surrounding area by advertising in diverse periodicals and through local health and advocacy groups located in the Philadelphia area. Participants were placed in separate rooms in the researchers' laboratory while they completed the measures used in this study. Couples were compensated with $100 for their time. This methodology was approved by an Internal Review Board where the research took place, and participants indicated their voluntary involvement in this research via a consent form.

Measures

Behavioral style of romantic partner

Participants rated the behavioral style of their romantic partner using an informant version of the International Personality Item Pool–Interpersonal Circumplex (IPIP–IPC; Markey & Markey, 2009a). Participants were instructed through verbal and written directions to "rate your romantic partner based on how your romantic partner interacts with you." The IPIP–IPC consists of 32 items assigned to one of eight scales. Possible responses ranged from 1 (*extremely inaccurate*) to 5 (*extremely accurate*). Each scale measures an octant of the IPC (Figure 1), and they are alphabetically labeled in a counterclockwise direction: assured-dominant (PA; "My partner does most of the talking"), arrogant-calculating (BC; "My partner has a sharp tongue"), cold-hearted (DE; "My partner doesn't fall for sob-stories"), aloof-introverted (FG; "My partner is a very private person"), unassured-submissive (HI; "My partner dislikes being the center of attention"), unassuming-ingenuous (JK; "My partner thinks of others first"), warm-agreeable (LM; "My partner gets along well with others"), and gregarious-extraverted (NO; "My partner feels comfortable around people"). Past research suggests that the octant scales of the IPIP–IPC conform to a circumplex structure and are highly correlated with other assessments of the IPC (e.g., the Interpersonal Adjective Scales; Markey & Markey, 2009a).

In addition to assessing the eight octants of the IPC, the IPIP–IPC scales can be combined to assess the main dimensions of the circumplex: dominance and warmth. An individual's dimensional score on dominance and warmth can be computed using the following geometric formulas (Wiggins, 1995):

$$\text{Dominance dimension} = (0.3)\Sigma Z_i \sin\theta_i,$$

$$\text{Warmth dimension} = (0.3)\Sigma Z_i \cos\theta_i,$$

where Z_i represents the standardized score of the ith octant and θ_i is the angle of the ith octant.

Because four items are used to assess each octant, it was expected that the reliability of any single octant would be modest. Consistent with past research, the average four-item composite reliability of the eight octant scales was 0.68. However, because the dimensional scores combine the octant scales together, they typically yield higher reliabilities. The reliabilities of these dimensional scores are easily calculated by methods traditionally used to compute reliabilities of weighted sums (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994, Equation 7-17). The reliabilities for the dimensional scores of warmth was 0.88 and dominance was 0.89.

Relationship quality

To assess the quality of each dyad's romantic relationship, participants separately completed the 15 items of the Marital Interaction Scale (MIS; Braiker & Kelley, 1979), which were designed to assess love (e.g., "How committed do you feel toward your partner?") and conflict (e.g., "How often do you and your partner argue with one another?"). As the MIS was originally designed to assess married couples, the measure was revised to read "significant other" instead of "spouse." A high score on the MIS indicates a participant reported that their romantic relationship is full of love and harmony (i.e., low conflict), whereas a low score indicates a participant reported that their relationship does not have much love and is

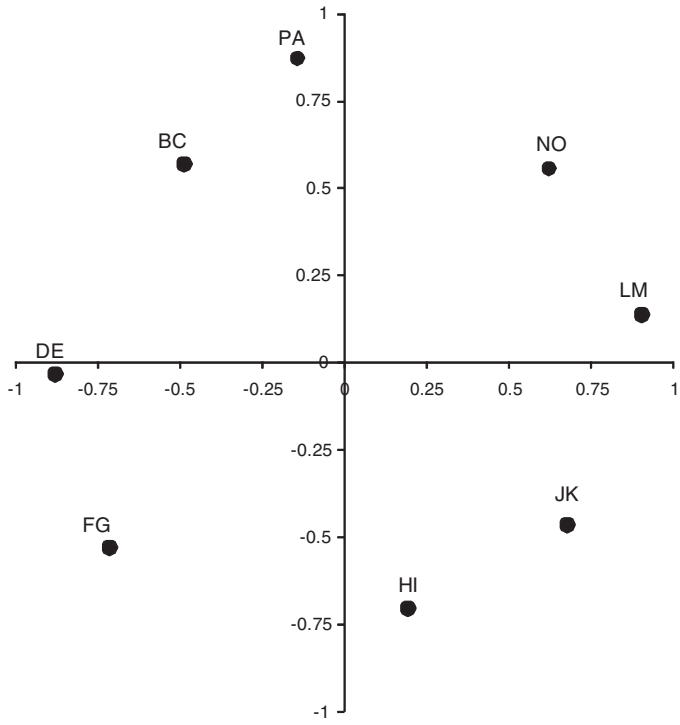

Figure 4. Circular structure of Personality Item Pool–Interpersonal Circumplex octant scales.

conflict ridden. A principal components analysis of the MIS produced a clear single factor as indicated by the first to second eigenvalue of 4.41 to 0.98. The reliability of the MIS was 0.80, and there was a high level of agreement between romantic partners as to the quality of their relationship, pairwise intraclass $r(70) =+ 0.52$, $p < .01$ (Griffin & Gonzalez, 1995).

Results

Circular ordering of the IAS octant scales

Before complementarity can be examined, it was first important to determine whether the IPIP–IPC informant ratings occurred in a manner predicted by the IPC (Figure 1). To visually examine the circular nature of the IPIP–IPC octant scales, Figure 3 displays the loadings of the eight octant scales on the first two orthogonal components of a principal components analysis when these scales are rotated for maximum convergence with their theoretical locations on the IPC. Taken together, these two components accounted for 71% of the total variance among IPIP–IPC octant scales (40% and 31%, respectively). A more formal test of this circular structure is given by computing a correspondence index (CI; Hubert & Arabie, 1987; Rounds, Tracey, & Hubert, 1992). A CI is a fit index indicating how well the circular structure of octants implied in Figure 4 fits the obtained correlations among the IPIP–IPC octants. The CI can be interpreted in a manner similar to a Somers' *d* statistic (Somers, 1962), with a value of 1.00 indicating perfect fit. Randomization tests can also be computed to test the significance of the fit (Tracey, 1997). Results indicated that a circular structure strongly fits the correlations among the IPIP–IPC octant scales ($CI = 0.97$, $p < .001$).

Hypotheses 1 and 2: Complementarity

To examine Hypotheses 1 and 2, statistical tests were performed to test whether the behavioral styles of partners measured with the IPIP–IPC occurred in a complementary manner. To examine this issue,

pairwise intraclass correlations were computed between romantic dyads' dimensional warmth, scores and dimensional dominance scores. Participants' warmth, $r(70) = 0.09$, $p = .45$, was not significantly related to their romantic partners' warmth and participants' dominance, $r(70) = -0.24$, $p < .05$, was negatively associated with their partners' dominance. Contrary to Hypothesis 2, but consistent with the traditional model of complementarity (Figure 2), this finding indicates that female same-gender romantic dyads tended to be composed of one member who had a somewhat dominant behavioral style and one member who had a somewhat submissive behavioral style.

Hypothesis 3: Actor and partner effects predicting relationship quality

Although female same-gender dyads tended to contain members who had different levels of dominance, this does not necessarily imply that such a difference is an important predictor of relationship quality. To examine the predictors of the relationship quality, and the hypotheses central to the current study, multilevel modeling was first used to test an APIM model, including only the main effects (the actor and partner effects; Figure 3). This model simultaneously tests the unique contributions of actor warmth and dominance and partner warmth and dominance on relationship quality. As expected (Hypothesis 3) for warmth, both the actor and partner effects were positive, whereas for dominance, both the actor and partner effects were negative (Table 1). This suggests that women who are interpersonally warm ($r = 0.30$) and submissive ($r = -0.19$) tended to report high levels of relationship quality. Similarly, as expected (Hypothesis 1), women in relationships with other women who are warm ($r = 0.26$) and submissive ($r = -0.19$) also tend to report high levels of relationship quality.

Results from the previous analysis were then used to define the IPC behavioral style that was most strongly related to high levels of relationships quality. Specifically, the actor and partner effects presented in Table 1 were used to compute the angular location of individuals and their romantic partners on the IPC who reported the highest levels of relationship quality. The angular location that defines these individuals can be computed using the following geometric formula (Wiggins & Broughton, 1991; Wright, Pincus, Conroy, & Hilsenroth, 2009):

$$\text{Angular location} = \arctan(r_{\text{dominance}}/r_{\text{warmth}}),$$

where $r_{\text{dominance}}$ is the effect size r associated with either the actor or partner effect of dominance and r_{warmth} is the effect size r associated with either the actor or partner effect of warmth (Table 1). As predicted, the angular location for the actor effect was 328° (i.e., within the JK octant) and the angular location for the partner effect was 306° (i.e., within the JK octant).

Hypotheses 4 and 5: Similarity effects predicting relationship quality

To test Hypotheses 4 and 5, a second APIM analysis examined whether similarity between romantic partners' warmth and dominance predicted relationship quality. To do this, two new variables were created that were the absolute difference between the two romantic partners' scores on dominance and warmth (Kenny et al., 2008). To make these values easier to interpret, they were reversed by multiplying them by −1. Thus, dyads with low similarity scores indicate the members are not very similar to each other in terms of dominance or warmth, and large values reveal a high level of similarity in terms of dominance or warmth. The warmth and dominance similarity scores were then included as an independent variable, along with the actor and partner main effects, in a new model. Contrary to Hypothesis 4 (Table 1), similarity along the warmth dimension did not predict relationship quality. However, consistent with Hypothesis 5, similarity along the dominance dimension was positively related to relationship quality. In other words, female same-gender romantic couples that contained members who were similar to each other in terms of dominance tended to express higher levels of love and

Table 1. *Summary of actor–partner interdependence model of relationship quality*

	Estimate	*SE*	*t*	Effect size (*r*)
Actor effects				
Warmth	0.25	0.07	3.54**	0.30
Dominance	−0.15	0.06	−2.31*	−0.19
Partner effects				
Warmth	0.22	0.07	3.23**	0.26
Dominance	−0.28	0.06	−4.51**	−0.36
Similarity effects				
Warmth	0.04	0.09	0.46	0.06
Dominance	0.25	0.09	2.69**	0.31

Note. n dyads = 72; n individuals = 144.
*$p < .05$.**$p < .01$.

harmony than those dyads that contained individuals who were dissimilar to each other.

Discussion

A central principle of interpersonal theory is that the behavioral styles of dyadic members tend to complement each other in particular ways (Carson, 1969; Kiesler, 1983). That is, when two individuals interact, they tend to modify their behavioral styles in response to each other. The most common model of complementarity predicts that dominant or submissive behavioral styles encourage the opposite style in interaction partners (i.e., dominance invites submission and submission invites dominance) and warm or cold behavioral styles encourage similar responses in interaction partners (i.e., warmth invites warmth and coldness invites coldness). Results from the current study indicated that the behavioral style ratings provided by women in same-gender romantic relationships occurred in a manner predicted by the IPC model (Rounds et al., 1992). More importantly, it was also found that female same-gender romantic dyads tended to complement each other in terms of dominance but not warmth. In other words, even though female same-gender romantic couples tend to value equality, they tend to be composed of one dominant individual and one submissive individual. Although this finding was contrary to what was expected, it is similar to other studies, which have found that strangers during dyadic interactions and even same-gender roommates tend to modify their behavioral styles so that there is one dominant individual and one submissive individual (Ansell et al., 2008; Markey et al., 2003; Markey et al., 2010; Markey & Kurtz, 2006; Sadler et al., 2009; Sadler & Woody, 2003).

Not only did interpersonal dominance among women predict the dominance of their romantic partner, both dominance and warmth predicted the amount of love and harmony these women experienced in their relationships. As expected, women tended to report high levels of relationship quality when they and their same-gender romantic partners were somewhat warm and submissive (i.e., when they were located in the JK octant). Such findings are consistent with previous research examining heterosexual couples, which has found the five-factor trait of agreeableness (a trait highly related to the JK octant; Ansell & Pincus, 2004; Markey & Markey, 2006; McCrae & Costa, 1989) to be positively related to relationship quality and satisfaction (cf. Heller et al., 2004; Malouff et al., 2010).

Although the behavioral styles of women and their romantic partners were related to relationship quality in a predictable manner, the importance of the complementarity of these behavioral styles for relationship quality was at odds with interpersonal theory and research. Traditional predictions derived from interpersonal theory suggest that individuals

will enjoy satisfying and lasting relationships when they interact with a person who is dissimilar to themselves in terms of dominance (cf. Carson, 1969; Kiesler, 1983; Markey et al., 2010; Markey & Markey, 2007; Tracey, 1994). Though the current study found that female same-gender romantic couples tended to contain members who were dissimilar in terms of dominance, this dissimilarity was not predictive of relationship quality. Instead, we found that couples that contained members who were similar to each other in terms of dominance tended to express higher levels of love and harmony than dyads that were dissimilar in terms of dominance. Although the current study cannot directly demonstrate the reason why similarity in terms of dominance was an important predictor of relationship satisfaction, it is possible to speculate that this finding occurred because female same-gender romantic couples tend to value and express high levels of relationship equality (Gottman et al., 2003; Kurdek, 2001). In other words, because these dyads tend to value the importance of having equal power and being treated as equals, it is likely that the members of a dyad who are equivalent in terms of their interpersonal power and control experience high levels of relationship quality. In contrast, dyads composed of members with different levels of interpersonal dominance might experience higher levels of conflict and lower levels of love as they attempt to negotiate the interpersonal inequality in their relationship. Hopefully, future research will utilize the methodology presented in this research to further elucidate these results.

When interpreting the results of this study, it is important to take into account the limitations inherent in our methodology. This sample was fairly diverse in terms of ethnicity and socioeconomic background but was not necessarily representative of all female same-gender romantic couples. Replication of these findings with larger samples of more diverse couples, including male same-gender couples, will strengthen our understanding of the role of romantic partners in predicting relationship quality. It will be interesting for future researchers to examine whether male couples express complementarity in a manner similar to female couples (i.e., similarity in terms of dominance being predictive of relationship quality) or similar to heterosexual couples (i.e., dissimilarity in terms of dominance being predictive of relationship quality). Such information will provide insight into whether the importance of equality along the dominance dimension found in female romantic dyads generalizes to dyads comprising two males.

Owing to the cross-sectional nature of these data, it is possible that members of female same-gender romantic couples tended to be dissimilar from one another in terms of dominance, not because they altered their behavioral styles to complement each other (i.e., dominance encouraged submission and vice versa) but because of initial selection (i.e., dominant women are attracted to submissive women and vice versa). Though such an explanation is possible, it is contrary to a large body of research that has consistently found that individuals, regardless of sexual orientation, tend to be attracted to others who are similar to themselves in terms of most personality and demographic characteristics (cf. Botwin, Buss, & Shackelford, 1997; Buss, 1985; Buss & Barnes, 1986; Kurdek, 2003; Vandenberg, 1972).

The current study relied on informant reports to assess the behavioral styles of participants. Although past research has demonstrated that such informant ratings provide valid measures of behavior (Ansell et al., 2008; Funder & Sneed, 1993; Markey, Markey, & Tinsley, 2004) and are better assessments of complementarity than self-report ratings (Markey & Kurtz, 2006), informant reports are susceptible to various response biases and errors (John & Robins, 1993). It is possible that the results obtained in the current research may simply reflect informants' perceptions of each other's behavioral styles rather than the participants' actual behavioral styles. Future researchers might consider examining the generalizability of these results to observations of behaviors. Of course, in the current research design, it would have been almost impossible to record the general behavioral styles of romantic

dyads during their daily interactions in the "real" world using traditional laboratory techniques (e.g., video cameras and tape recordings). Even if one was able to videotape the interactions of romantic dyads as they lived together, such an unnatural intrusion would likely limit the generalizability of the findings to more naturalistic (i.e., nonvideotaped) situations. As noted by Markey and Kurtz (2006), it is unlikely that any single study could provide both an "objective" assessment of behavioral styles and a natural environment. This methodological tradeoff implies that to best assess the validity of complementarity, results from multiple studies employing various methodologies need to be considered. Therefore, the natural extension of this research is to determine whether the results presented in this study generalize to the videotaped dyadic interactions between female same-gender romantic couples within a less natural, but controlled, laboratory environment.

In conclusion, this research extends our understanding of interpersonal theory and romantic relationships among female same-gender romantic couples. Our findings suggest that some elements of interpersonal theory are applicable to these understudied couples, whereas other elements are not. It is hoped that this and other similar studies inspire researchers to provide an empirical understanding of diverse romantic relationships to policy makers and the general public who sometimes rely on stereotypes instead of research when discussing gay and lesbian relationships.

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