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Queer Connections: Relationship Initiation Approach and Relationship Quality for Queer Couples

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College of Education and Human Sciences

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Kai Ambakad

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2025

Abstract

Queer Connections:

Relationship Initiation Approach and Relationship Quality for Queer Couples

by

Kai Ambakad

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Developmental Psychology

Walden University

May 2025

Abstract

Queer individuals encounter unique challenges in romantic relationships, making it essential to explore factors that influence their relationship quality. The purpose of this quantitative study was to compare relationship quality among queer individuals based on the method of meeting (i.e., through dating applications vs. in person) and to test communication quality as a moderating variable. This study examined commitment and satisfaction as the dependent variables for relationship quality and meeting method as the independent variable. The research addressed whether there were (1) differences in relationship quality based on meeting method and (2) whether communication quality moderated this relationship. The study was grounded in social identity theory, exploring how social identity influences preferences for meeting methods, and social exchange theory, emphasizing communication as a key relational investment. Using a comparative, cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 113 queer adults either currently partnered or previously partnered through online platforms, assessing relationship quality and communication quality. Data were analyzed using independent *t*-tests and linear regression. Results indicated no differences in relationship quality, commitment, or satisfaction based on meeting method. However, communication quality emerged as a strong predictor of relationship outcomes, accounting for 35%–47% of the variance in satisfaction, commitment, and perceived relationship quality. Despite nearing it, the interaction between communication quality and meeting method did not reach significance, suggesting that communication functions as a predictor. The study promotes communication skill-building in queer relationships and reducing stigma around dating applications.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to the LGBTQIA+ community, whose resilience, courage, and pursuit of love and connection inspire this research. May this work contribute to a greater understanding and support of the diverse and vibrant relationships within this community.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The topic of this dissertation centered on examining the differences in relationship quality among queer individuals based on whether they met their partners through in-person interactions or via mobile dating applications. As the use of dating applications has become increasingly prevalent, particularly within the LGBTQIA+ community, understanding the implications of these methods on relationship quality and stability is crucial (Cao & Smith, 2021). Although considerable research has been conducted on relationship dynamics in general, there is a significant gap in the literature specifically addressing how these dynamics differed between online and offline meeting methods within the queer population (Sharabi et al., 2022). This study proved to be necessary because it addressed the existing gap, providing insights into the unique challenges and benefits associated with each method of meeting partners. Furthermore, by exploring the moderating role of communication quality, the study offered a nuanced understanding of how interactions within relationships could influence outcomes (Chen & Toma, 2023). The implications for positive social change included informing relationship counseling practices, developing targeted interventions to improve relationship quality among queer individuals, and enhancing the overall well-being of this often-marginalized community.

The need for this study arose from the increasing reliance on mobile dating applications as a primary means of forming romantic connections, particularly within the LGBTQIA+ community, where traditional social networks may have been less accessible or supportive (Miller, 2015). Understanding the factors that contributed to successful and

satisfying relationships is essential for supporting the emotional and social well-being of queer individuals. Despite the widespread use of dating apps, there remains a significant lack of research examining the long-term effects of these platforms on relationship quality, especially when compared to relationships formed through traditional, in-person methods (Dhoest, 2022). This study also contributes to the broader field of relationship research by offering insights that could be applied to both queer and non-queer populations. Additionally, by addressing the underrepresentation of queer relationships in existing research, this study helped to fill a critical gap in the literature and provided a foundation for future studies aimed at enhancing relationship quality and stability (Blackwell et al., 2014).

In this chapter, the study's background and the specific problem it sought to address are thoroughly examined. The research questions, which guided the investigation, are clearly articulated, focusing on the comparison of relationship quality between couples who met in person and those who met through dating applications, as well as the moderating effect of communication quality. The chapter also includes a detailed discussion of the study's purpose and its significance in contributing to the field of relationship research, particularly within the LGBTQIA+ community (Blanc, 2023). Additionally, the theoretical foundations supporting the study are explored, providing a framework for understanding the observed outcomes. For instance, the social identity theory (SIT) and interactionist perspective were applied to explain how social identities and interactions influenced relationship dynamics in the context of modern dating platforms (Blumer, 1969; Tajfel & Turner, 2000). Finally, the chapter concludes with an

overview of the research design and methodology that were employed to answer the research questions, setting the stage for the detailed examination of the study's findings in subsequent chapters. Each section was designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the study's foundation, its aims, and the methods that were used to achieve those aims. This systematic approach underscored the significance of the study and its potential to contribute valuable insights into relationship dynamics within the LGBTQIA+ community.

Background

The rise of digital platforms, particularly mobile dating applications, has significantly transformed how individuals form romantic relationships. These applications, such as Tinder, Grindr, and Bumble, have become increasingly popular, especially within the queer community, where traditional avenues for meeting potential partners may be less accessible or inclusive (Cao & Smith, 2021). Research on dating applications has largely focused on their effectiveness in facilitating connections and the psychological impacts they have on users. For example, studies have explored how these platforms influence self-presentation, impression management, and the dynamics of initial romantic interactions (Blackwell et al., 2014). Additionally, research has highlighted the advantages of dating apps, such as providing safer spaces for marginalized communities and broadening the pool of potential partners, which foster a more inclusive dating environment (Sharabi et al., 2022). These platforms not only allow users to connect with others based on shared identities but also offer a level of anonymity

that can be particularly appealing to individuals who may face discrimination in traditional social settings (Miller, 2015).

Despite the growing body of literature on online dating, there is a notable gap in research specifically examining the differences in relationship quality between couples who meet through dating applications and those who meet in person, particularly within the queer community. Although some studies have touched on aspects of relationship satisfaction and communication in online and offline contexts, few have directly compared these two meeting methods within the LGBTQIA+ population (Dhoest, 2022). Additionally, the focus of most research has been on heterosexual relationships, with limited attention given to queer relationships (Smith, 2022). This gap is significant, given the unique social dynamics and challenges faced by queer individuals, which may influence how they perceive and engage in relationships formed through different mediums. Furthermore, the role of communication quality as a moderating factor in these relationships remains underexplored, despite evidence suggesting that communication plays a crucial role in relationship satisfaction and stability (Chen & Toma, 2023).

The importance of being in a high-quality relationship cannot be understated. Research shows that individuals in satisfying relationships experience higher levels of emotional well-being, greater mental health, and improved physical health outcomes compared to those in unsatisfying relationships (Beach & Anderson, 2020). Moreover, satisfying relationships can provide crucial social support, which is especially important for the queer community because of the additional stressors they tend to face such as discrimination and social isolation (Frost & Meyer, 2017). Understanding the factors that

contribute to high-quality relationships, particularly in terms of communication and the method of meeting, is therefore essential for promoting the well-being of queer individuals in both personal and social contexts. This continues to highlight the necessity of further research into how relationship initiation through dating apps or in-person encounters can affect relationship quality and satisfaction.

This study aimed to address these gaps in the literature and provided more insights into the unique challenges and benefits associated with different methods of meeting romantic partners within the LGBTQIA+ community. By focusing on relationship quality and the moderating role of communication, this research aimed to contribute to the field by offering a nuanced understanding of how digital and traditional dating environments affected relationship satisfaction and stability. Such insights proved to be essential for developing targeted interventions and support systems that can enhance relationship outcomes for queer individuals, ultimately contributing to their overall well-being and social integration. Moreover, this study extended the current knowledge base by providing empirical data to inform future research and guide practices aimed at supporting the LGBTQIA+ community in navigating the complexities of modern relationships.

Problem Statement

The research problem addressed in this study is the ongoing challenge queer individuals face in forming intimate connections within a predominantly heteronormative society. This issue is significant as it affects the ability of LGBTQIA+ individuals to find romantic partners in traditional, offline settings, such as schools, neighborhoods, and

social gatherings. These environments often lack inclusivity, leading many queer individuals to turn to online dating applications to expand their opportunities for connection. For example, research by Wu et al. (2022) highlighted that a significant number of LGBTQIA+ individuals use the internet to connect with potential romantic and sexual partners. In addition, Wu et al.'s review emphasized the importance of dating app studies by shedding light within dynamics for both macro-level contexts such as cultural roles to micro-level contexts, which pertained to the individual and daily environments. This review demonstrates how the researchers were able to find how dating apps have taken up a new level of functionality while also producing a sense of community for queer users, whether that be through the sexual or romantic inclinations users imply through their interactions. This result depicts a trend that underscored the limitations of offline environments for this population.

This problem is both current and relevant, especially within marginalized communities. The digital age has increasingly seen dating applications become a primary means for individuals to connect romantically. The shift from traditional to digital dating avenues is particularly evident with dating apps offering a level of safety, inclusivity, and accessibility that is often not found in offline settings (Miller, 2015). However, despite the widespread use of these platforms, the lack of comprehensive research examining how these different methods of meeting impact relationship quality pertaining to queer partners continues to exist. Previous research has primarily focused on heterosexual relationships, leaving a gap in the literature regarding the experiences of queer individuals in forming relationships online versus in person. Although studies have

explored the general effectiveness of online dating and the psychological impacts on users, there is little understanding of how these factors specifically affect queer relationships (Sharabi et al., 2022). This gap is particularly relevant given the unique challenges faced by queer individuals, including discrimination, lack of social support, and the need for safe spaces, all of which can significantly influence relationship dynamics and outcomes.

Through this study, I sought to address this crucial gap for advancing knowledge in the discipline and for offering practical insights that can enhance the relationship experiences of queer individuals. This study examined the differences in relationship quality based on whether couples met online or in person. This delivered a more nuanced understanding of the impact of digital and traditional dating environments. By focusing specifically on the LGBTQIA+ community, the research offered valuable empirical data that will inform future studies and guide the development of targeted interventions. Additionally, the findings support the creation of more inclusive and effective relationship-building platforms that cater to the unique needs of queer individuals. Ultimately, this study aimed to contribute to knowledge in both the practical world and academia for research in the field of relationship studies within the queer community.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study was to analyze differences in relationship quality among queer individuals by comparing relationships formed through offline interactions with those initiated via mobile dating applications within the LGBTQIA+ community. The study explored and compared how the method of meeting, whether in

person or through a dating application, affected the overall quality of romantic relationships. The independent variable in this study was the method of meeting (i.e., in person vs. via dating application), while the dependent variable was relationship quality. Additionally, communication quality was examined as a moderator to assess its effect on the relationship between the method of meeting and relationship quality. Through this analysis, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these factors interacted and influenced relationship satisfaction along with stability within the queer partnerships.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The research questions for this study were designed to explore the differences in relationship quality among gay couples based on how they met their partners. In addition, it also explored the role of communication quality as a moderating factor in these relationships. The study's research questions and corresponding hypotheses are as follows:

RQ1: What are the differences in relationship quality for gay couples who met their partner in person compared to those who met their partner on a dating application?

$H_0$1: There is no significant difference in relationship quality between gay couples who met their partner in person and those who met their partner through a dating application.

$H_1$1: There is a significant difference in relationship quality between gay couples who met their partner in person and those who met their partner through a dating application.

RQ2: Does the quality of communication moderate the relationship between meeting in person versus online and relationship quality?

$H_0$2: Communication quality will not moderate the relationship between initiation status (in person vs. online) and relationship quality.

$H_1$2: Communication quality will moderate the relationship between initiation status (in person vs. online) and relationship quality, where couples low in communication quality and who met online will report lower relationship quality compared to other participants.

These hypotheses aimed to test the association between the method of meeting (i.e., in person or via dating application) and relationship quality while considering the moderating effect of communication quality. The variables were measured using self-reported data from participants, with relationship quality being the dependent variable, initiation status as the independent variable, and communication quality as a covariate.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

The study is anchored in several established theoretical frameworks that offer a robust understanding of relationship quality, communication dynamics, and the influence of social and environmental factors on romantic connections within the queer community. The primary theories that guided this research are Tajfel and Turner's 2000 SIT, Blumer's 1969 symbolic interactionism (interactionist perspective), and Bronfenbrenner's 1979 ecological systems theory. These frameworks collectively provided a multidimensional perspective on how queer individuals form, maintain, and

navigate relationships in contexts where they meet their partners either via mobile dating applications or through in-person interactions.

SIT, developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in 2000, asserts that individuals derive their identity from the social groups to which they belong, and this identity influences their perceptions and behaviors in social interactions (Tajfel & Turner, 2000). Within the LGBTQIA+ community, this theory is particularly relevant, as it explains how individuals' identification with their sexual orientation and gender identity shapes their social interactions, including their dating preferences. The theory suggests that group membership can significantly affect the choices individuals make, including where and how they seek romantic partners. For example, queer individuals might gravitate toward mobile dating applications like Grindr or Tinder because these platforms often provide safer and more inclusive environments that affirm their identities, reducing the potential for discrimination commonly found in heteronormative spaces. This theory directly supported the study's exploration of whether the method of meeting is through dating apps or in person affects relationship quality.

The interactionist perspective, rooted in Herbert Blumer's (1969) symbolic interactionism, emphasizes how individuals create and interpret meanings in their social interactions. This theory is highly applicable to understanding the micro-level dynamics within romantic relationships, particularly how individuals communicate and negotiate meaning in their partnerships. In the context of this study, the interactionist perspective sheds light on how queer individuals make sense of their experiences and interactions when meeting partners in different environments, whether digitally or face to face. Part of

the study sought to examine how communication quality plays a role in shaping relationship outcomes, which directly aligns with the interactionist perspective's focus on the subjective meanings individuals assign to their social interactions. Communication frequency, openness, and empathy, which serve to be key variables in the study, are viewed as symbolic exchanges that can significantly influence relationship satisfaction and quality. This theory is particularly relevant to Research Question 2, which investigated the role of communication quality as a moderating factor between relationship initiation methods and overall relationship quality.

Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory provides a broader, environmental context to the study of queer relationships. Bronfenbrenner's model posits that individual development is shaped by various systems, ranging from the immediate microsystem (personal relationships) to the broader macrosystem (cultural values and societal norms). This theory is instrumental in understanding how external environmental factors such as societal acceptance, the inclusivity of social spaces, and the safety of dating environments can affect the relationship dynamics within the LGBTQIA+ community. Ecological systems theory helps explain why some queer individuals may prefer meeting partners in physical spaces, like in queer bars or community events because these microsystems offer supportive and affirming environments that directly counter the societal discrimination and exclusion they may face in broader, less inclusive settings. With this being said, the same theory also helps shed light as to how others may opt for the anonymity and safety provided by mobile dating apps. This theory supported the study's examination of how external environmental contexts, such as the method of

meeting, influence internal relationship dynamics, particularly in terms of satisfaction, commitment, and communication quality.

These theories proved to be essential in framing the research questions and providing a comprehensive lens through which the study's variables are analyzed. For instance, Research Question 1 sought to understand the differences in relationship quality between those who meet their partners through dating applications versus in person. SIT helped to explain how the social environments provided by these methods might impact relationship quality, while the interactionist perspective illuminated how individuals interpreted and navigated their interactions in these contexts. Research Question 2, which examined the role of communication quality in moderating the relationship between the method of meeting and relationship outcomes, directly draws from both the interactionist perspective and ecological systems theory, exploring how individual and environmental factors intersect to influence communication behaviors and, in turn, relationship satisfaction.

Together, these theoretical frameworks provided a solid foundation for investigating the complexities of relationship formation and maintenance in the queer community. They help establish a link between broader societal structures, individual identity, and interpersonal dynamics, allowing for a nuanced exploration of how dating applications and in-person meetings shape the quality of queer relationships. By integrating these theories into the study, the research aimed to fill critical gaps in the literature, offering new insights into how social identity, communication quality, and environmental factors collectively impact relationship outcomes within the LGBTQIA+

community. A more detailed analysis of these theories and their application to the current literature is provided in Chapter 2, where existing research is synthesized to further justify the study's approach.

Nature of the Study

The study employed a cross-sectional quantitative research design aimed at exploring differences in relationship quality among queer individuals based on their relationship initiation methods, whether through in-person interactions or mobile dating applications. A cross-sectional design was particularly well-suited for this study because it allows for the collection of data at a single point in time, enabling a comparative analysis of relationship dynamics without the need for longitudinal follow-up. This design also supported the study's focus on uncovering trends and patterns in relationship quality across groups while being efficient and cost-effective. Additionally, it aligns with the goals of capturing the current state of relationship quality through measures of satisfaction along with commitment and communication quality within the LGBTQIA+ community. The key variables in this study included the relationship initiation method as the independent variable, relationship quality as the dependent variable, and communication quality as a moderator. Relationship initiation is categorized as either in person or through dating applications. Relationship quality is measured through dimensions such as satisfaction and commitment, while communication quality is evaluated based on frequency, openness, and empathy in communication.

The study's design is informed by the theoretical frameworks used to guide the research questions and analysis. SIT plays a key role in explaining why queer individuals

may gravitate toward different relationship initiation methods, such as dating applications versus in-person interactions, based on how their social identities align with these mediums. By understanding how individuals categorize themselves and others into social groups, SIT provides insight into the choices queer individuals make in the context of their relationships. Furthermore, the interactionist perspective emphasizes how social interactions shape the development and quality of relationships. This is particularly relevant in comparing how dating app use and in-person meetings might influence the dynamics of queer relationships through these evolving interactions. Lastly, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory offers a broader lens by examining how environmental factors, including access to technology, social networks, and societal norms, affect queer relationships. These theoretical frameworks collectively support the study's examination of relationship initiation methods and communication quality, helping to ground the study in an exploration of how these factors intersect and influence relationship outcomes.

The methodology involved recruiting participants who are 18 or older and from the queer community through convenience sampling methods, including social media platforms like Reddit and Facebook, along with partnerships with LGBTQIA+ community centers as needed. Participants completed a survey hosted on Qualtrics that collected data on relationship initiation methods, relationship quality, and communication quality. Informed consent was collected electronically at the start of the survey, ensuring that participants are fully aware of their rights and the purpose of the study before proceeding. Afterward, within the data analysis process, the dataset was exported into

SPSS. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare relationship quality across groups for RQ1. For RQ2, a regression analysis was also conducted to examine whether communication quality moderates the relationship between meeting method (i.e., online vs. in person) and relationship quality. This approach allowed for a nuanced understanding of how both meeting method and communication quality collectively influence relationship outcomes for queer individuals.

Definitions

Commitment: A dimension of relationship quality reflecting the extent to which individuals are dedicated to their romantic relationship. Commitment includes feelings of attachment, loyalty, and long-term intentions with a partner (Stanley & Markman, 1992).

Communication Frequency: Refers to how often partners communicate with each other, including both verbal and non-verbal interactions. In this study, communication frequency is assessed to determine its impact on relationship satisfaction and quality, particularly in relationships initiated via dating applications (Blanc, 2023).

Communication quality: The covariate in this study, defined as the degree of openness, empathy, and frequency of communication between partners. This is measured using the Couple Communication Scale (Grello & Harper, 2001), which assesses aspects such as how often partners share feelings, resolve conflicts, and openly express themselves during interactions.

Dating application users: Individuals who engage with mobile or web-based platforms designed to facilitate romantic or sexual connections. Dating application users

may range from those seeking casual encounters to individuals looking for long-term relationships, with variations in motivations and behaviors (Blackwell et al., 2014).

Digital communication: Communication that occurs through digital platforms, including text messaging, video calls, or social media interactions. Digital communication is particularly relevant in relationships formed through mobile dating applications and is compared to in-person communication in this study.

Emotional intimacy: A measure of closeness between partners, characterized by the ability to share personal thoughts and feelings openly. Emotional intimacy is often considered a key factor in overall relationship quality and is assessed through self-report instruments like the Perceived Relationship Quality Components (PRQC) inventory (Fletcher et al., 2000).

Heteronormativity: A social construct that assumes heterosexuality as the norm or default sexual orientation. It can manifest in cultural practices, social policies, and interpersonal interactions, often leading to the marginalization of LGBTQIA+ individuals (Warner, 1991).

In-person dating: Traditional dating where individuals meet face-to-face through social events, mutual friends, or other offline settings. In-person dating typically involves physical interactions during social gatherings or casual encounters in public spaces (Finkel et al., 2007).

LGBTQIA+: An acronym referring to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and other identities that fall under the non-heteronormative and non-cisgender umbrella. This term is used to describe individuals whose sexual

orientation or gender identity does not conform to mainstream societal norms (Cao & Smith, 2021).

Mobile dating applications: Digital platforms designed to connect individuals for romantic or sexual relationships. Common examples include Grindr, Tinder, and Bumble. These apps often feature swiping, real-time messaging, and location-based matching to facilitate interactions (Blackwell et al., 2014).

Offline interactions: In-person or face-to-face encounters where romantic or social connections are formed without the use of digital platforms or applications. This includes meeting through social gatherings, mutual acquaintances, or traditional dating venues such as bars or events (Finkel et al., 2007).

Queer relationships: Refers to romantic relationships involving individuals who identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community, including but not limited to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual individuals. These relationships may face unique social, cultural, and systemic challenges, particularly in heteronormative environments (Cao & Smith, 2021).

Relationship initiation method: The independent variable of this study, referring to how individuals meet their romantic partners. It is categorized into two groups: meeting in person (e.g., through friends, social gatherings, or work) or through mobile dating applications (e.g., Tinder, Grindr, Bumble). Meeting in person involves face-to-face interactions, whereas dating applications are digital platforms used to connect with potential partners online (Finkel et al., 2007).

Relationship quality: The dependent variable, which refers to the overall satisfaction, stability, and commitment within a romantic relationship. It is measured using self-reported scales such as the Relationship Assessment Scale (Hendrick, 1988) and the PRQC Inventory (Fletcher et al., 2000), assessing factors such as emotional intimacy, trust, and overall satisfaction with the relationship.

Relationship satisfaction: A key component of relationship quality that refers to how content individuals are with their romantic relationship. This is often measured through self-report scales that assess emotional, psychological, and relational contentment (Hendrick, 1988).

Relationship stability: The degree to which a romantic relationship is secure and enduring over time. Stability is often linked to factors like communication quality, commitment, and relationship satisfaction, all of which are explored in this study (Stanley & Markman, 1992).

Situationship: A situationship refers to a romantic relationship characterized by a connection that often includes spending time together and engaging in physical or sexual activity, but lacks clear labels, defined boundaries, or commitment (Langlais et al., 2024).

Social support: Emotional, psychological, or practical assistance provided by members of one's social network, which is particularly important in queer relationships where societal acceptance may vary. Social support is considered an influential factor in relationship quality (Dhoest, 2022).

Assumptions

There are some key assumptions that were fundamental to the design and meaningfulness of this study, particularly concerning the collection and interpretation of self-reported data from participants. The first critical assumption was that participants would provide honest and accurate responses when completing the survey about their relationship quality, communication behaviors, and methods of relationship initiation. Given the personal and potentially sensitive nature of the information being collected, there was an inherent belief that participants would feel comfortable enough to disclose their experiences truthfully since the study is conducted anonymously. This assumption was vital to the integrity of the research because the validity of the findings depends on the participants' ability to report their relationship experiences without bias or distortion. If participants were to misreport their experiences, the analysis could lead to incorrect conclusions.

A second assumption was that participants would have a clear recollection of their relationship history. This could include how they met their partners and how their communication patterns evolved over time. Relationships are complex, and memories can be affected by time and personal biases, yet it was assumed that participants were able to accurately reflect on their interactions and communication quality within their relationships. This assumption was necessary because the study relied on participants' self-assessments of their communication and relationship dynamics, which are inherently subjective and shaped by individual perceptions. The belief that these self-assessments

are representative of true experiences allowed the study to measure communication and relationship quality effectively.

The third assumption was that the sample of participants recruited for the study would be reasonably representative of the broader queer community, despite the study using convenience sampling methods. It is assumed that while participants would be drawn from specific online platforms and potentially LGBTQIA+ community centers, their experiences with relationship initiation and communication would reflect a broader range of experiences present within the queer community. This assumption was critical because the study aimed to provide insights that could apply to the wider population. Without this assumption, the findings would be limited in their generalizability and impact, which could undermine the study's overall contribution to understanding relationship dynamics in the LGBTQIA+ community. Another assumption was that participants are engaging with the study in the context of substantial relationships, either current or within the past 5 years. This distinction is important for understanding the findings within the context of long-term relationship development and satisfaction rather than fleeting or temporary romantic connections.

Lastly, it was assumed that the instruments used to measure relationship quality, communication patterns, and initiation methods were appropriate for the LGBTQIA+ population in this context. Although these instruments, such as the Relationship Assessment Scale and the Couple Communication Scale, have been validated in previous studies, there was an assumption that they would perform similarly in this population and accurately reflect the constructs being measured. This assumption was necessary for the

validity of the results, as the reliability and effectiveness of these instruments directly impact the study's ability to draw meaningful conclusions from the data. If the instruments had failed to measure what they were intended to, the findings may not adequately address the research questions.

Scope and Delimitations

This study specifically addressed the relationship quality of queer individuals within the LGBTQIA+ community, focusing on differences between those who met their partners through in-person interactions versus those who initiated relationships via mobile dating applications. The primary reason for choosing this focus is the growing prevalence of dating apps among queer populations, coupled with the need to understand how these tools influence relationship dynamics and communication quality. By narrowing the research problem to examine communication quality and relationship initiation methods, the study sought to fill a gap in current literature, which often overlooks how digital platforms shape romantic relationships within this community. The study's design (comparing these two distinct methods of relationship initiation) offered valuable insights into how modern dating technology impacts relationship satisfaction and quality. The specific focus on the queer community reflected the unique challenges and opportunities queer individuals face in forming relationships in both digital and offline spaces.

The boundaries of the study are clearly defined in terms of the population being examined. The study included individuals who self-identify as LGBTQIA+ and who are 18 years or older. The decision to include only individuals 18 and older ensured that

participants were legally able to provide informed consent and that the study adhered to ethical guidelines concerning adult participants (Wendler & Grady, 2003). Additionally, the focus on adults allowed for the exploration of more mature relationship dynamics, which are likely to be more stable and long-term than those of younger individuals, as relationship maturity and stability tend to increase with age (Rauer et al., 2013). Only individuals currently in or who have been in romantic relationships within the past 5 years were included, ensuring the relevance of the data to current relationship dynamics. Excluded from the study were individuals who identify as heterosexual or who are outside of the queer community, as the focus is specifically on understanding relationship quality within queer populations. Moreover, the study does not explore non-romantic or purely casual relationships, as the primary aim was to assess long-term relationship satisfaction and quality. In terms of theoretical frameworks, while SIT, the interactionist perspective, and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory are central to this research, other frameworks related to the attachment theory or relationship satisfaction models were not investigated. This delimitation ensures that the study remains tightly focused on the social and ecological factors most relevant to the LGBTQIA+ community.

This study employed convenience sampling, which involves selecting participants who are readily accessible and willing to take part in the study. Although this approach allows for efficient data collection, it also presents limitations in terms of generalizability, as the sample may not fully represent the broader LGBTQIA+ population. For instance, individuals who are not active on digital platforms or those who do not frequent LGBTQIA+ spaces may be underrepresented. As a result, the findings may reflect the

experiences of a specific subset of the LGBTQIA+ community, particularly those with more access to dating apps or social networks. Nonetheless, this sampling method was chosen due to the practical constraints of recruiting a diverse and hard-to-reach population like the LGBTQIA+ community. The study's results provided valuable insights into the relationship dynamics of participants, though caution must be exercised when extending these findings to the wider population.

In addition, the study does not account for certain variables that might influence relationship quality, such as cultural or geographical factors. These could also have played a significant role in shaping relationship dynamics within the LGBTQIA+ community. For example, factors such as access to queer-friendly spaces or varying degrees of societal acceptance across different regions could impact the experiences of individuals in forming relationships. These variables, while important, fall outside the scope of this research and are considered areas for future investigation. By clearly defining the populations included and excluded, and the frameworks applied, this study maintains a focused scope that allows for in-depth analysis of the core research questions.

Overall, the study's scope and delimitations are designed to ensure that the research remains manageable while addressing a critical gap in the literature. The study's findings will offer specific insights into how communication quality and methods of relationship initiation affected relationship satisfaction among queer individuals. Though the study's generalizability may be somewhat limited by its specific population and sampling methods, it nevertheless provided a strong contribution to the understanding of relationship dynamics within the LGBTQIA+ community. This focused scope allowed

for a more detailed exploration of the research problem while laying the groundwork for broader studies in the future.

Limitations

One of the primary limitations of this study was its reliance on self-report measures, which can introduce response bias or social desirability bias. Participants may have provided answers that they believe are more socially acceptable or desirable, rather than responses that accurately reflect their true feelings or experiences. This is particularly relevant when collecting sensitive data related to dating experiences and relationship quality. For instance, individuals may overstate the satisfaction they feel in their relationships or underreport issues in communication, skewing the results. This limitation was addressed by ensuring the anonymity of participants and emphasizing the confidentiality of their responses. Reinforcing that their data will remain private and used solely for research purposes helped participants feel more comfortable providing honest responses. Additionally, the survey included well-validated and reliable scales that are designed to minimize response bias.

Another limitation of the study related to its cross-sectional design, which collects data at a single point in time. This design made it difficult to establish causality or examine changes in relationship quality over time. Although the cross-sectional approach was suitable for comparing groups and identifying trends, it does not allow for the observation of relationship dynamics as they evolve. Future research could address this limitation by employing a longitudinal design, which would enable the tracking of relationship quality and communication patterns over an extended period. This study

focused on examining relationships as they exist at the time of data collection, offering valuable insights but acknowledging the limitation in its ability to assess long-term relationship outcomes.

A third limitation involved external validity, particularly related to the study's sampling method. The use of convenience sampling meant that the sample may not have been fully representative of the broader LGBTQIA+ population. Participants were recruited from online platforms and LGBTQIA+ community centers, which may have led to an overrepresentation of individuals who were more active in these spaces. This could have limited the generalizability of the findings to the entire LGBTQIA+ community, as individuals who did not frequently use dating apps or engage with community centers may have had different relationship experiences. To mitigate this limitation, efforts were made to recruit participants from a variety of online and offline spaces to increase diversity within the sample. However, the findings should still be interpreted with caution, as they may not fully reflect the experiences of all queer individuals.

Construct validity could also have been a concern, as the study relied on established scales to measure complex constructs like relationship quality and communication. While the selected scales had been validated in prior research, there was always a risk that they may not have fully captured the unique nuances of queer relationships. For example, certain cultural or contextual factors specific to LGBTQIA+ relationships may not have been adequately represented in the measures used. To address this, the study carefully selected scales that had been validated in diverse populations and that aligned with the constructs being measured. Additionally, reliability was assessed

using Cronbach's alpha to ensure that the instruments were consistent and reliable for this sample.

Finally, there was the potential for confounding variables to influence the outcomes of the study. Variables such as prior relationship experiences, cultural background, or geographic location could all have impacted the results, as these factors may have shaped how individuals communicated and perceived relationship quality. For instance, individuals who had more relationship experience may have been more adept at managing communication challenges, potentially influencing both their preference for online versus in-person meeting methods and their overall relationship quality. Similarly, cultural background might have shaped norms around communication or relationship expectations, while geographic location could have affected the availability and use of dating apps. In addition to this, the correlational nature of this study warranted careful interpretation of the results. Since this was a non-experimental design, it was important to acknowledge that correlation does not imply causation. For example, a third variable, such as a person's social confidence or comfort with technology, may have increased the likelihood that they would use dating apps and also influenced relationship quality. This potential third variable could have accounted for observed relationships between meeting method and relationship quality, meaning that the findings may not have solely reflected a direct causal relationship between the independent and dependent variables. While the focus of this study remained on examining the relationships between initiation type and relationship quality, acknowledging these limitations was important in guiding how the

results were interpreted and in setting the stage for future research to address potential confounding influences.

Significance

This study had the potential to make significant contributions to the understanding of relationship dynamics within the LGBTQIA+ community by providing empirical data on how relationship initiation methods, either through dating applications or in-person meetings, impacted relationship quality. By focusing specifically on queer relationships, the study addressed a gap in the literature, which has historically centered on heterosexual couples, and thus expanded the discipline's knowledge of diverse relationship experiences. Additionally, this research could inform practitioners, such as therapists and relationship counselors who work with LGBTQIA+ clients, by highlighting the importance of communication quality in maintaining healthy relationships regardless of how couples initially met. In terms of policy, the findings may encourage the development of more inclusive dating platforms and support networks that foster healthy relationships within queer communities. Furthermore, the study's implications for positive social change are profound; by increasing awareness of the unique relationship challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals, the research could promote greater societal acceptance and encourage the creation of supportive environments for these relationships to thrive. Ultimately, the findings may help reduce the stigma surrounding queer relationships, leading to more informed, inclusive approaches to relationship support and policy.

Summary

Chapter 1 introduced the topic of the study, which focused on exploring the differences in relationship quality among queer individuals who met their partners through dating applications versus those who met in person. The chapter provided an overview of the research problem, emphasizing the challenges queer individuals face in navigating romantic relationships due to societal pressures and the importance of understanding how the method of relationship initiation affected relationship quality. Theoretical frameworks such as SIT, the interactionist perspective, and ecological systems theory were discussed, along with a justification for the quantitative study design. Key terms and concepts were defined, assumptions were outlined, and the scope, delimitations, and limitations of the study were identified. Finally, the significance of the study was established, highlighting its potential contributions to both academic knowledge and practical applications in relationship counseling and policy development.

In Chapter 2, I present the literature review, delving deeper into the existing research on queer relationships, communication quality, and dating applications. The review identified gaps in the literature and provided a foundation for the study's research questions and hypotheses. By examining relevant studies, Chapter 2 further solidifies the need for this research and its place within the broader field of relationship studies.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The specific research problem addressed in this study was the differences in relationship quality among queer individuals based on whether they met their partners through dating applications or in-person interactions while also examining how communication quality served as a moderator. In recent years, relationship initiation had become a prevalent issue as technology evolved. This problem became significant due to the growing reliance on digital platforms for relationship formation within the LGBTQIA+ community and the potential impact on relationship quality. The purpose of this quantitative study was to analyze differences in how relationships formed, with a particular focus on how communication quality moderated this relationship. Communication quality was a proposed factor because of its integral role in forming any relationship. By examining the comparative effectiveness of dating applications versus in-person interactions for forming relationships, this study aimed to provide insights that could inform better relationship practices and support systems within the queer community.

Recent literature underscored the evolving role of dating applications within the queer community, highlighting both their benefits and potential challenges. Baudinette (2018) explored how gay dating applications contributed to the production and reinforcement of queer spaces in Tokyo, emphasizing the applications' role in community building and the creation of safe spaces for interaction. Similarly, Blackwell et al. (2014) examined the influence of Grindr on impression formation and co-situation, suggesting

that location-aware dating applications significantly impacted user perceptions and interactions with potential partners. These studies collectively demonstrated how digital platforms shaped social landscapes and influenced the ways queer individuals connected and formed relationships. Blanc (2023) also investigated the relationship between dating application use and various sociodemographic variables, sexual attitudes, and risk behaviors, pointing to the complex dynamics at play in digital dating environments and how these factors influenced user experiences and relationship outcomes.

In another context, Cao and Smith (2021) delved into the effects of gay dating applications on loneliness in China, highlighting the interplay of perceived and internalized sexuality stigma. Their research suggested that while dating applications provided a platform for connection, they also had the potential to exacerbate feelings of isolation if users experienced stigma. Complementing this, Castro and Barrada (2020) provided a systematic review of dating application research, identifying key sociodemographic and psychosocial correlates that influenced their use. This review helped to contextualize the varying factors that impacted how and why individuals engaged with these platforms. Meanwhile, Dhoest (2022) offered insights into the experiences of different generations of men who have sex with men, showcasing the shifting perceptions and usage patterns of online dating platforms over time. This generational perspective stressed the evolving nature of online dating and how technological advancements influenced relationship formation. Powell and Powell (2022) discussed the impact of social distancing on queer dating through text-based applications, illustrating the adaptability of digital platforms in maintaining romantic connections

during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their study highlighted how technology facilitated ongoing social and romantic interactions despite physical distancing measures.

Additionally, Sharabi et al. (2022) explored the initiation experiences of diverse LGBTQIA+ dating application users, emphasizing the creation of personalized spaces within these digital environments. Their findings suggested that dating applications could cater to a wide range of preferences and identities, fostering inclusivity and tailored user experiences. Furthermore, Smith (2022) reviewed data on the dating application experiences of queer minority women, providing a cross-disciplinary perspective on the unique challenges and opportunities they faced. This review highlighted the intersectionality of gender and sexuality in the context of online dating, underscoring the need for more inclusive and representative research. Finally, Wu and Trottier (2022) offered a comprehensive literature review on dating applications, synthesizing findings across various studies to highlight the broader implications for relationship dynamics within the queer community. Their review consolidated existing knowledge and identified gaps, emphasizing the importance of further research into the unique experiences of queer individuals using dating applications. Collectively, these studies established the relevance of investigating how dating applications impacted relationship quality compared to in-person interactions, addressing a critical gap in understanding the nuanced experiences of queer individuals in forming and maintaining romantic relationships. However, these studies did not fully explore the comparative effectiveness of dating applications versus in-person dating within the queer community. They also lacked a focus on how communication quality within these relationships affected overall

relationship satisfaction and stability. This gap emphasized the need for continued exploration of digital versus traditional relationship formation methods, aiming to enhance relationship support structures and promote positive social change.

In this chapter, I present a comprehensive examination of the existing literature relevant to this study. The intention is to address the literature gap and contribute to the body of research on this topic. The Literature Search Strategy section will outline the systematic approach used to gather relevant research, including the databases searched, keywords used, and criteria for the inclusion and exclusion of studies. The Theoretical Foundation section will discuss key theories that underpinned this study, such as the SIT. This section will detail the theory, its relevance to the research questions, and its role in understanding how queer individuals' social identities influenced their preferences for dating application usage, whether they preferred in-person interactions or virtual interactions, and how these preferences impacted relationship quality. Lastly, the review of the literature will include an in-depth analysis of existing studies related to the key variables and concepts. This section will synthesize findings from various research articles to provide a robust context for the study. It will cover topics such as the role of dating applications in relationship formation within the queer community, the impact of communication quality on relationship satisfaction, and comparisons between online and offline relationship dynamics. This comprehensive review will also emphasize the existing gaps in the current literature and justify the need for the present study.

Literature Search Strategy

To ensure a comprehensive and systematic review of the existing literature relevant to the study of relationship quality among queer individuals, a thorough search strategy was employed. The keywords used in the search included a combination of terms such as “dating applications,” “queer relationships,” “LGBTQIA+,” “online dating,” “social impact,” “gender identity,” “sexual orientation,” “inclusivity,” “community building,” “sociodemographic factors,” “literature review,” “systematic review”, and “communication.” These keywords were chosen to capture a broad range of studies addressing various aspects of queer relationships, dating applications, and the social dynamics within the LGBTQIA+ community. The combination of these terms allowed for a nuanced exploration of the intersectionality within the queer community and the various factors that influence relationship quality. This strategic approach ensured that the literature review encompassed a diverse array of perspectives and research findings pertinent to the study’s objectives.

The search was conducted across multiple academic databases to ensure the inclusion of diverse and reputable sources. The databases utilized in this search included ScienceDirect, PubMed, PsycINFO, JSTOR, Google Scholar, and the Walden University Library. Each database offers a unique collection of academic journals, books, and articles, ensuring a wide coverage of relevant studies. ScienceDirect provided access to scientific and technical research, while PubMed was essential for sourcing studies related to health and psychosocial factors. PsycINFO was invaluable for psychological and behavioral studies; in addition, JSTOR offered a broad range of scholarly content across

disciplines, and Google Scholar helped identify widely cited articles and grey literature. The Walden University Library was instrumental in accessing full-text articles and dissertations relevant to this study.

The scope of the literature review covered publications from the past ten years to ensure the relevance and currency of the data. Both seminal literature and current peer-reviewed articles were included to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic. The review prioritized empirical studies, theoretical papers, and systematic reviews that focused on the LGBTQIA+ community and the use of dating applications in relationship formation. Additionally, seminal works that have significantly contributed to the understanding of queer relationships and social dynamics were included, regardless of their publication date, to provide historical context and foundational insights. This combination of contemporary and foundational literature ensured a balanced and thorough exploration of the subject. In cases where there was limited current research, including few dissertations or conference proceedings, efforts were made to identify and include grey literature and widely cited articles to fill the gaps. When recent peer-reviewed articles were scarce, older but seminal studies that continue to hold relevance were included to support the study's theoretical and conceptual framework. By incorporating these sources, I was able to address the existing literature relevant to the research questions effectively despite the scarcity of recent studies.

The initial search results were screened for relevance based on titles and abstracts. Articles that appeared to meet the inclusion criteria were retrieved for a more thorough review. During this phase, the full text of each article was examined to determine its

relevance and quality. This process involved a detailed assessment of the study's methodology, population, sample size, findings, and how directly it addressed the research questions. Articles that provided significant insights into the dynamics of queer relationships, the impact of dating applications, and factors influencing relationship quality were included in the final review, ensuring only high-quality, pertinent studies enhancing the reliability and validity of the literature review.

Theoretical Foundation

In examining the complex dynamics of relationship quality among queer individuals, it was essential to ground the study in robust theoretical frameworks that provided comprehensive insights into social behaviors, interactions, and environmental influences. This section explored the foundational theories that underpinned the research, including SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 2000), the interactionist perspective (Blumer, 1969), and ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Each theory offered a unique lens through which to analyze how queer individuals formed and maintained relationships, particularly focusing on the differences between relationships initiated through dating applications versus those formed in person.

As an overview, Tajfel and Turner's SIT provided a framework for understanding how social identities influenced preferences and behaviors in relationship formation, offering insights into why queer individuals might have gravitated toward digital or in-person interactions based on their social identity alignment (Tajfel & Turner, 2000). The interactionist perspective emphasized the subjective meanings and symbols that individuals attributed to their social interactions, highlighting the role of personal and

interpersonal dynamics in shaping relationship quality (Blumer, 1969). Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory examined the broader environmental contexts that influenced individual development and behavior, providing a comprehensive view of how various environmental factors, from immediate social settings to larger cultural contexts, impacted queer relationships (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Through the integration of these theories, this study aimed to develop a nuanced understanding of the interplay between social identity, interpersonal interactions, and environmental influences in determining relationship quality among queer individuals. This theoretical foundation not only supported the exploration of the research questions but also facilitated a deeper analysis of how different contexts and interactions contributed to the formation and maintenance of relationships within the LGBTQIA+ community. Through this multifaceted theoretical approach, the study sought to address gaps in the literature and provide valuable insights that could inform future research and practice in the field of queer relationship dynamics.

Social Identity Theory

One of the theories grounding this study was the SIT, developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in 2000. SIT posited that individuals categorized themselves and others into social groups based on shared characteristics, such as race, gender, or sexual orientation. These categorizations significantly influenced their perceptions, behaviors, and interactions. According to Tajfel and Turner, one's social identity, which is a large part of an individual's self-concept derived from their membership in social groups, played a crucial role in intergroup behavior and dynamics. By understanding the

mechanisms of social categorization and identity, this study gained insight into how group affiliations affected personal and social experiences, particularly in diverse communities. The major propositions of SIT included the idea that individuals strived to maintain a positive social identity by favoring their in-group over out-groups, which could lead to in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination. This bias helped individuals enhance their self-esteem and derive a sense of belonging and security. SIT also suggested that the social context and the relative status of one's group influenced the strength of social identification and the behaviors associated with it. Assumptions of SIT included the inherent human tendency to categorize, identify with, and compare groups, which were central to understanding social behavior and group dynamics. This theoretical framework allowed for a nuanced analysis of how social identities were constructed and the impact they had on interpersonal and intergroup relations.

SIT had been widely applied in research to explore group behaviors, prejudice, and identity formation. For instance, it had been instrumental in studies investigating the dynamics within minority groups and how social identity influenced their interactions and relationships within and outside their communities. Research had shown that strong social identities could provide support and a sense of belonging but could also result in intergroup conflict. In the context of the LGBTQIA+ community, SIT had been used to examine how group identification affected individuals' experiences of stigma, discrimination, and social support (Tajfel & Turner, 2000). These studies illustrated the broad applicability of SIT in understanding the social mechanisms that influenced group cohesion and conflict. The rationale for choosing SIT for this study was its relevance in

understanding how queer individuals formed and maintained their social identities and how these identities influenced their relationship choices and quality. SIT was particularly pertinent because it explained how social identity impacted preferences for meeting partners through dating applications or in-person interactions. It provided a framework to explore how social identity influenced relationship dynamics and quality within the queer community. By examining the intersections of identity, community, and relationship formation, this study aimed to uncover the underlying factors that drove relationship satisfaction and stability among queer individuals.

This study investigated the differences in relationship quality among queer individuals who met their partners through dating applications versus those who met in person. By applying SIT, the study examined how social identity alignment affected these preferences and outcomes. For example, individuals with a strong queer identity may have preferred dating applications due to perceived safety and community support, while others may have favored in-person interactions for authenticity and connection. The research questions challenged and built upon SIT by investigating these dynamics in a modern, digital context and by focusing on a specific, under-researched population—the queer community. This approach not only tested the applicability of SIT in new settings but also expanded the understanding of the factors that contributed to relationship quality among queer individuals. Integrating SIT helped provide insights into the role of social identity in the relationship formation and maintenance processes within the LGBTQIA+ community. It highlighted how different methods of meeting partners, whether through

dating applications or in person, could be influenced by the social identities of individuals, thereby affecting their relationship satisfaction and quality.

Interactionist Perspective

The interactionist perspective, rooted in symbolic interactionism, is another theoretical framework guiding this study. Symbolic interactionism, a theory developed by Herbert Blumer in 1969, focuses on the symbolic meanings that individuals attribute to their experiences. This perspective emphasizes the subjective aspects of human interaction, highlighting how people create and interpret symbols in social interactions (Blumer, 1969). The interactionist perspective posits that human behavior is shaped by the meanings that individuals ascribe to objects, events, and behaviors, and that these meanings are created and modified through social interaction. The major propositions of the interactionist perspective include the idea that individuals act based on the meanings they assign to their experiences. These meanings arise out of social interaction and are modified through an interpretive process used by individuals in dealing with the things they encounter. Assumptions of this perspective include the importance of context and the active role individuals play in interpreting and responding to their social world. This theoretical approach allows for a deep exploration of the dynamic and evolving nature of human interactions and relationships.

This theoretical approach has been widely applied in research to understand individual and group behaviors, particularly in the context of social interactions and relationships. For example, it has been used to study how people navigate and interpret their identities and roles within social settings, such as dating and relationship formation

(Blumer, 1969). Studies have shown that the meanings attributed to social interactions significantly influence relationship aspects, satisfaction, and stability (Blumer, 1969). In the context of the queer community, the interactionist perspective has been used to explore how individuals interpret and manage their sexual and gender identities in various social contexts, including online and offline environments (Blumer, 1969). The rationale for choosing the interactionist perspective for this study lies in its focus on the subjective meanings and interactions that underpin relationship formation and maintenance. This perspective is particularly relevant for understanding how queer individuals navigate their interactions on dating applications and in person, and how these interactions influence relationship quality. By examining the symbolic meanings and interactions specific to the queer community, this study aims to uncover how these factors impact relationship satisfaction and quality.

This study aims to investigate the differences in relationship quality among queer individuals who meet their partners through dating applications versus those who meet in person. By applying the interactionist perspective, the study will examine how the meanings attributed to these different methods of meeting influence relationship quality. For example, individuals may have perceived online interactions as more convenient or safer, whereas in-person interactions might have been seen as more authentic or intimate (Blumer, 1969). The research questions challenge and build upon the interactionist perspective by exploring these dynamics in a contemporary, digital context and focusing on a specific, under-researched population within the queer community. This approach will not only test the applicability of the interactionist perspective in new settings but also

expand our understanding of the factors that contribute to relationship quality among queer individuals.

By integrating the interactionist perspective, this study seeks to provide insights into the role of symbolic meanings and interactions in the relationship formation and maintenance processes within the queer population. It aims to highlight how different methods of meeting partners, whether through dating applications or in person, can be influenced by the symbolic meanings individuals ascribe to these interactions, thereby affecting their relationship satisfaction and quality. This perspective will also help illuminate the complex ways in which queer individuals negotiate their identities and relationships in different social contexts, potentially leading to more targeted and effective support mechanisms for improving relationship outcomes. By understanding these dynamics, practitioners and researchers can develop better strategies to support the LGBTQIA+ community in forming and maintaining healthy and satisfying relationships (Blumer, 1969).

Ecological Systems Theory

Ecological systems theory was a key theoretical framework guiding this study. Developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner in 1979, this theory examined how various environmental influences affected individual development through multiple interconnected systems. These systems included the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. Each of these represented different levels of environmental influence, ranging from immediate personal interactions to broader societal and cultural contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). By understanding these layers,

researchers could better grasp how individuals' relationships and behaviors were shaped by their environments.

One thing to note is that a revised version of the original ecological systems theory, called the process-person-context-time model, exists. However, this was ultimately not used for the study since the process-person-context-time model focuses more on dynamic interactions and processes over time rather than establishing the foundational concepts needed to understand environmental influences on development. Since this study aimed to broadly examine environmental contexts affecting queer relationships, the original model was determined to align more closely with the study's purpose and focus. The major propositions of ecological systems theory included the idea that development is influenced by interactions within and between these systems. The microsystem involved direct interactions with family, friends, and peers; the mesosystem referred to interconnections between microsystems, such as between family and school; the exosystem encompassed external environmental settings that indirectly affected development, like parental workplaces; the macrosystem included cultural and societal norms; and the chronosystem involved changes over time, such as life transitions and historical events. Assumptions of this theory included the interdependence of these systems and the dynamic nature of their interactions over time.

Ecological systems theory has been widely applied in research to explore how different environmental contexts influence behavior and development. For example, it has been used to study how family dynamics, peer interactions, and cultural norms impact individual development and relationships. In the context of the queer community,

the theory has been used to examine how societal attitudes, community support, and family acceptance affect the well-being and identity development of queer individuals (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The macrosystem, encompassing societal norms, cultural values, and laws, significantly influences these factors, with acceptance and legal protections enhancing well-being and stigma and discrimination hindering identity development. These applications demonstrate the theory's broad relevance and utility in understanding complex social phenomena.

The rationale for choosing Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory for this study was its comprehensive approach to understanding how various environmental factors influence queer relationships. This theory was particularly relevant for examining the different contexts in which queer individuals formed relationships, whether through dating applications or in-person interactions. By considering the multiple layers of influence, from immediate personal interactions to broader societal norms, the theory provided a robust framework for exploring how these factors collectively impacted relationship quality. This study investigated the differences in relationship quality among queer individuals who met their partners through dating applications versus those who met in person. By applying ecological systems theory, the study examined how different environmental contexts influenced these relationships. For instance, the microsystem involved the direct interactions on a dating application or during an in-person meeting, whereas the macrosystem included societal attitudes toward LGBTQIA+ relationships. The research questions challenged and built upon ecological systems theory by exploring these dynamics in a modern, digital context and focusing on a specific, under-researched

population within the queer community. This approach not only tested the applicability of the theory in new settings but also expanded our understanding of the factors that contribute to relationship quality among queer individuals.

By integrating Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, this study provided insights into the role of environmental contexts in the relationship formation and maintenance processes within the queer community. It highlighted how different methods of meeting partners, whether through dating applications or in person, were influenced by the various environmental systems individuals navigated, thereby affecting their relationship satisfaction and quality. This perspective also helped illuminate the complex ways in which queer individuals' relationships were shaped by their broader environmental contexts, potentially leading to more targeted and effective support mechanisms for improving relationship outcomes. By understanding these dynamics, practitioners and researchers can develop better strategies to support the queer community in forming and maintaining healthy and satisfying relationships.

Literature Review

Although extensive research has been conducted on dating applications and queer relationships (Blanc, 2023; Cao & Smith, 2021; Castro & Barrada, 2020), there is limited research comparing the differences in relationship quality between queer individuals who meet their partners through dating applications versus those who meet in person. Another unique question many of these studies neglect is what the role of communication quality is in these relationships. To address this topic and start the discussion, the study began by

looking at online dating applications, the currently practiced in-person dating methods, and finally, the importance of communication quality.

Online Dating Applications

Online dating referred to the practice of using digital platforms to find and interact with potential romantic partners. In the context of this study, "online dating" specifically pertained to the use of mobile dating applications designed for social and romantic connections. Popular examples of these dating applications included Tinder, Grindr, Bumble, and OkCupid. These platforms were primarily accessed via mobile devices and offered features such as swiping, real-time messaging, and location-based matching. Unlike traditional online dating, which might have involved desktop websites, these apps were tailored for on-the-go use and immediate interactions. Although some dating platforms could be accessed via desktop websites, the majority of users preferred mobile applications due to their convenience and real-time interaction capabilities. The functionalities provided by these applications had made them particularly popular within the queer community, offering safer and more inclusive environments for meeting potential partners. According to recent studies, a significant portion of the LGBTQIA+ population utilized these apps to form connections, with research indicating that approximately 70% of LGBTQIA+ adults had used a dating app at some point, reflecting their crucial role in modern dating landscapes (Cao & Smith, 2021; Miller, 2015; Sharabi et al., 2022).

The widespread adoption of online dating applications had significantly transformed the dating landscape, particularly for the queer community. Recent statistics

indicated that 55% of LGBTQIA+ adults had reported using a dating app within the past year, showcasing the prominence of these platforms in facilitating romantic and social interactions (Anderson et al., 2020). These applications provided a crucial avenue for queer individuals to connect, especially in regions or social contexts where meeting partners in person could be challenging or unsafe. Furthermore, dating apps like Grindr and Tinder were reported to have had millions of active users daily, with Grindr alone boasting over 4 million daily users worldwide (Blackwell et al., 2014). This high engagement level underscored the reliance on these platforms for daily social and romantic interactions. The accessibility and convenience of mobile dating apps allowed users to connect with a broader pool of potential partners beyond their immediate geographic location, fostering greater diversity and inclusivity in their dating experiences. As such, these platforms played a vital role in the social and romantic lives of queer individuals, offering both opportunities and challenges that warranted further exploration (Cao & Smith, 2021; Sharabi et al., 2022).

Research Methodologies and Outcomes

Research on online dating applications has grown significantly in recent years, focusing on their impact on relationship formation and quality. Studies utilized various methodologies, including surveys, interviews, and longitudinal designs, to explore how these platforms influenced romantic relationships. For instance, Blackwell et al. (2014) used a qualitative approach to examine how Grindr, a location-aware gay dating application, affected impression formation and co-situation among users. Their study highlighted the application's role in facilitating context-specific interactions, which could

enhance the perceived authenticity and intimacy of connections. They found that users are often engaged in impression management and strategic self-presentation to optimize their chances of forming connections. Key themes identified included the importance of physical appearance, the negotiation of authenticity versus idealized personas, and the use of location-based features to facilitate spontaneous, context-specific interactions. By focusing on user narratives and detailed interactions, the study provided deep insights into how Grindr shaped social and romantic encounters among its users. However, the qualitative nature of their study limited the generalizability of the findings, as it primarily captured specific experiences within a limited sample size.

In contrast, Blanc (2023) employed a quantitative approach, using surveys to assess the relationship between dating application use, sociodemographic variables, sexual attitudes, and sexual risk behaviors. This study's strength lies in its ability to capture data from a larger sample size, providing more generalizable insights. By analyzing responses from a diverse group of participants, Blanc's study identified broader trends and correlations between dating application usage and various behavioral and attitudinal outcomes. The study found that frequent use of dating applications was associated with higher levels of sexual risk behaviors and more liberal sexual attitudes, particularly among younger users. Additionally, themes emerged around the influence of sociodemographic variables on dating app usage, with younger, urban, and more educated individuals showing higher engagement with these platforms (Blanc, 2023). These findings were significant for this study as they highlighted the nuanced relationship between dating app usage and behavioral outcomes, underscoring the importance of

understanding how sociodemographic factors intersected with technology use to influence relationship dynamics and quality. However, quantitative studies like this might not capture the depth of personal experiences that qualitative studies could offer. They often overlooked the nuanced, subjective aspects of user interactions that could be critical for understanding the full impact of dating applications on relationships. For instance, while quantitative data could show a correlation between application usage and certain behaviors, it could not fully explain the underlying reasons or personal experiences driving those behaviors (Blanc, 2023). Despite this limitation, a quantitative approach remained valuable for identifying broad patterns and relationships across larger populations, providing a foundation for understanding key trends and correlations. This approach allowed for a comprehensive analysis of the data, offering insights into the generalizable aspects of dating app usage and its impact on relationship quality. By focusing on quantifiable measures, this study aimed to contribute to the broader understanding of how dating applications influence relationship dynamics within the LGBTQIA+ community.

Affordances of Dating Applications

The rationale for selecting online dating applications as a key variable in this study is well-supported by the literature. Online dating applications are increasingly popular tools for relationship formation, especially within the LGBTQIA+ community, where traditional social networks may be less accessible or supportive (Cao & Smith, 2021). These platforms offer unique affordances, such as anonymity, convenience, and a broader pool of potential partners, which can significantly influence relationship

dynamics and quality (Cao & Smith, 2021). Anonymity can provide a safer space for individuals to explore their identities and meet others without fear of immediate social repercussions. Convenience allows users to interact and form connections at their own pace, while the broad reach of these applications increases the likelihood of finding compatible partners. However, the impact of these affordances on relationship satisfaction and stability remains underexplored compared to in-person interactions. Understanding how these factors influence relationship outcomes is critical for comprehending the full scope of online dating's impact. The unique social dynamics within the LGBTQIA+ community, including issues of acceptance and visibility, make it an important context for studying these variables.

Influence on Relationship Dynamics and Psychological Effects

The influence of online dating applications on relationship dynamics extends beyond initial interactions. Researchers have found that the continued use of these platforms can affect long-term relationship stability and satisfaction. For instance, studies have shown that couples who met through dating applications may face unique challenges, such as managing online identities and integrating digital communication into their daily lives (Blackwell et al., 2014). Blackwell et al. (2014) noted that the digital nature of these interactions could sometimes lead to miscommunications or misunderstandings, which might not occur as frequently in face-to-face interactions. Although their study primarily focused on the immediate interactions facilitated by Grindr, the implications of their findings suggest that the medium through which a relationship is initiated can have lasting effects on how partners interact and resolve

conflicts. This rationale is based on the understanding that initial communication patterns often set the tone for ongoing relationship dynamics. Therefore, understanding how digital communication practices evolve over time is crucial for comprehending their long-term impact on relationships.

In contrast, Scott et al. (2019) examined communication quality and relationship outcomes within a specific subgroup, female same-gender couples, through observational communication tasks. The findings suggested that negative communication had a bigger impact on relationship quality and psychological aggression than positive communication and that improving communication could help female same-gender couples in relationship interventions. Although Scott et al.'s study provides valuable insights, it does not address communication quality as a moderating variable between relationship formation methods (in person vs. dating applications) and relationship quality. In my research, I sought to understand how the mode of relationship initiation interacts with communication quality to influence relationship outcomes within the broader LGBTQIA+ community. By exploring the moderating effects of communication quality, I aimed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how different relationship initiation methods impact relationship satisfaction and stability.

The psychological effects of using dating applications are also a critical area of study. Research by Blanc (2023) indicated that frequent use of dating applications might be associated with higher levels of anxiety and lower self-esteem, particularly among individuals who experience repeated rejection or superficial interactions. This psychological toll can impact relationship quality by influencing how individuals

perceive themselves and their partners (Valkenburg & Peter, 2007). On the other hand, research has also suggested that dating applications can enhance users' social skills and confidence, providing a platform to practice communication and interpersonal skills in a relatively low-risk environment (Blackwell et al., 2015). This duality highlights the complex nature of online dating and its varied effects on different individuals. Whereas some users might benefit from the increased social interaction, others might suffer from the pressures and disappointments associated with online dating.

Another consideration is the role of user expectations and motivations in using dating applications. Users approach these platforms with different goals, ranging from casual hookups to serious relationships. The alignment or misalignment of these expectations can significantly influence the satisfaction and longevity of the relationships formed. Researchers have found that users seeking long-term relationships might experience frustration if they encounter partners looking for casual interactions, which can lead to dissatisfaction and a sense of disillusionment with the platform. In Wu and Trottier's (2022) study, it was noted that the mismatch in expectations could lead to negative experiences and reduced trust in the platform's ability to facilitate meaningful connections. This finding underscores the importance of clear communication of intentions and expectations in the online dating contexts.

Design and Features of Dating Applications

The design and features of dating applications themselves can also influence user behavior and relationship outcomes. For instance, the algorithmic matching systems used by many dating applications aim to increase compatibility and match quality. However,

the effectiveness of these algorithms is still a subject of debate. Research has suggested that algorithmic matching can enhance relationship satisfaction by pairing users with compatible partners based on shared interests and values. Conversely, other research has indicated that these systems may oversimplify the complexity of human relationships and thought, leading to superficial matches based on limited criteria (Cao & Smith, 2021). This dichotomy points to the need for more research on how these algorithms work and their real-world impact on relationship quality. The integration of social media features into dating applications has added another layer of complexity because features such as profiles, likes, and messaging systems borrow heavily from social media platforms. This can influence how users present themselves and interact with others. Dhoest (2022) found that younger users, typically those under 30, who are more accustomed to social media, tend to be more adept at managing their online personas and navigating the digital landscape of dating applications. In contrast, older users, particularly those over 50, may find these features overwhelming or challenging, affecting their overall experience and satisfaction. This generational divide highlights the evolving nature of online dating and the need for user-friendly designs that cater to a broad demographic without the oversimplification of the human thought processes in seeking relationships.

Social, Sexual Health Implications, and Cultural Contexts

An important note that cannot be overlooked is the impact of online dating applications on social and sexual health. Although these platforms provide opportunities for connection and intimacy, they also raise concerns about sexual health risks and behaviors. Studies have explored the relationship between dating application use and

sexual risk behaviors, finding that certain features of these platforms, such as the ability to quickly connect with multiple partners, could contribute to higher rates of risky sexual behavior (Blanc, 2023). However, dating applications also have the potential to promote safer sex practices through education and resources. This dual impact further reinforces a balanced approach to understanding the health implications of online dating and the role of these platforms in promoting or mitigating risk.

Finally, the cultural and social contexts in which dating applications are used can significantly influence their impact on relationships. In many societies, there is still stigma associated with online dating, particularly within conservative or traditional communities (Smith, 2022; Wu & Trottier, 2022). This stigma can affect how individuals perceive their relationships and how they are perceived by others (Cao & Smith, 2021; Dhoest, 2022). Studies by Cao and Smith (2021) and Dhoest (2022) have highlighted how cultural attitudes towards online dating and LGBTQIA+ relationships can shape user experiences and relationship outcomes. Understanding these cultural dynamics is essential for providing a comprehensive analysis of the impact of dating applications on relationship quality. It also underscores the need for culturally sensitive approaches in both research and practice. For example, addressing cultural barriers and promoting inclusivity can enhance the acceptance and effectiveness of dating applications in diverse contexts.

In-Person Dating Methods

In-person dating refers to traditional methods of meeting potential romantic partners face-to-face in real-world settings. Examples of in-person dating include meeting

through friends, at social events, or in public places like bars, clubs, or coffee shops. These interactions typically involve initial encounters that lead to further dates and potential romantic relationships. Research has explored various aspects of in-person dating methods, especially within the context of heterosexual relationships, but the experiences and prevalence of queer individuals in these settings remain under-explored. Studies have shown that in-person dating often involves meeting through friends, social events, or common interests. For example, Finkel et al. (2007) found that traditional in-person dating venues such as speed dating events, bars, and social gatherings remain popular ways for individuals to meet potential partners. However, these venues often present challenges for queer individuals due to a lack of inclusive environments and potential exposure to discrimination or hostility. The heteronormative nature of many social spaces can create barriers for queer individuals seeking romantic connections in person, leading to a decreased prevalence of participation in these settings.

Research indicates that prevalence rates for in-person dating among queer individuals are generally lower compared to their heterosexual counterparts, largely due to these challenges. According to a survey by Anderson et al. (2020), while 48% of LGBTQIA+ adults have used online dating platforms, significantly fewer report meeting partners in person through traditional venues, highlighting a reliance on digital spaces for relationship formation. This disparity underscores the necessity of examining in-person dating methods and their effectiveness for queer individuals. Researchers in the discipline have approached the problem by examining the social and environmental factors that influence in-person dating experiences for queer individuals. For instance, Miller (2015)

used a mixed methods approach to study the use of social networks by men who have sex with men, highlighting the strengths of combining qualitative and quantitative data to provide a fuller picture. Miller's study found that social networks play a crucial role in facilitating connections and providing support within this community. The research revealed that these platforms are not only used for seeking sexual partners but also for finding emotional support, friendship, and a sense of community. Additionally, Miller's findings indicated that social networks could help mitigate feelings of isolation and provide a safer space for men who have sex with men to express their identities and experiences, thus enhancing their overall well-being and social integration.

The rationale for selecting the variable of current in-person dating methods is supported by literature that highlights the distinct challenges and dynamics faced by queer individuals in these settings. Studies have indicated that queer individuals may avoid traditional dating venues due to concerns about safety, acceptance, and visibility (Sharabi et al., 2022). This absence can lead to a reliance on more inclusive spaces or alternative dating methods, such as online applications. Therefore, understanding the participation and experiences of queer individuals in in-person dating contexts is crucial for addressing their unique needs and improving support structures. The underrepresentation of queer individuals in traditional dating studies requires a focused examination of their in-person dating experiences to fill this significant gap in the literature. Such an examination can provide insights into the barriers that queer individuals face and inform the creation of more inclusive and supportive environments for relationship formation.

Reviewing and synthesizing studies related to this key variable revealed what is known and what remained controversial. For instance, some research suggested that queer individuals who do participate in in-person dating often seek out specifically queer-friendly spaces, such as LGBTQIA+ bars and events, which can foster a sense of community and safety (Blanc, 2023). However, there are mixed findings regarding the effectiveness and inclusiveness of these spaces. Some studies argued that even within queer-friendly venues, issues of discrimination and exclusion based on physical appearance, race, gender identity, and socioeconomic status persist (Chen & Toma, 2023). Additionally, there is ongoing debate about the relative benefits of in-person versus online dating for queer individuals where some researchers suggest that online platforms offer a safer and more inclusive environment. Other studies have been done that shed more light on the impact of online versus in-person dating methods effectiveness within relationship quality specifically in heterosexual couples. A study done by Langlais et al. (2024) demonstrated how there were no significant differences in effectiveness in relationship quality between the two initiation methods. In fact, the study went on to discuss how despite the stigma associated with online dating, premarital relationships formed online were not of lower quality compared to relationships that were formed through in-person methods. These mixed findings highlight the complexity of the social dynamics within queer-friendly spaces and suggest the need for further research to understand how these environments can be improved to better serve all members of the queer community.

This also presents the gap that persists in understanding how in-person dating experiences compare to those facilitated by online methods in terms of relationship satisfaction and longevity. The current study aimed to fill this gap by comparing the relationship quality of queer individuals who met their partners through in-person methods versus via online dating applications. The research questions focused on uncovering and identifying the factors that contributed to successful and fulfilling relationships for queer individuals in various dating contexts. This comparison provided valuable insights into the unique challenges, advantages of different dating methods, and help to tailor support services to meet the specific needs of queer individuals.

Importance of Communication Quality

Communication quality is a critical variable in understanding relationships. Numerous studies have investigated the role of communication in relationship satisfaction and stability. For example, research by Chen and Toma (2023) highlighted the importance of effective communication in reducing social anxiety and improving relationship outcomes. Researchers in the discipline have approached the problem of communication quality using both qualitative and quantitative methods, such as those by Chen and Toma (2023), which captured data from larger samples giving generalized insights into communication patterns and their lasting impact on relationship initiation, maintenance, and satisfaction amongst partners. Similarly, studies by Miller (2015) emphasized that social networks and dating applications play a significant role in how communication quality affects relationship dynamics. The extensive use of mixed

methods in these studies allows for a more comprehensive understanding of communication quality's effects.

The rationale for selecting communication quality as the moderating effect is emphasized in various literatures by demonstrating its pivotal role in relationship satisfaction and longevity. Studies have consistently shown that high-quality communication is associated with better relationship outcomes, including higher levels of satisfaction, trust, and emotional intimacy (Chen & Toma, 2023; Miller, 2015). In the context of queer relationships, where partners may face additional stressors and societal pressures, effective communication becomes even more crucial. However, there is a significant lack of data specifically examining communication quality within queer relationships and how it influences relationship outcomes. This gap highlights the need for focused research on this effect to better understand the unique communication patterns in queer relationships and to develop remedial strategies to support these relationships.

Reviewing and synthesizing studies related to communication quality revealed both established knowledge and areas of controversy. For instance, while there is a consensus that effective communication positively impacts relationship quality, the specific elements that constitute "high-quality" communication can vary. Some studies emphasized the importance of frequency and openness in communication, while others highlighted the role of empathy and active listening (Chen & Toma, 2023). Furthermore, there is ongoing debate about the impact of different communication modes (e.g., face-to-face vs. digital communication) on relationship quality. While some researchers argue

that face-to-face communication is inherently superior, others suggest that digital communication can be equally effective if used appropriately (Miller, 2015; Blanc, 2023). These mixed findings underscore the complexity of communication and the need for further research to clarify these issues. Much is still unknown about how communication quality interacts with social support and societal acceptance, influencing relationship outcomes in queer populations.

By examining how communication quality affects relationship satisfaction and stability amongst queer individuals, more insights can be derived to support the efficacy of understanding which dating method is ideal for queer communities. For instance, Sharabi et al. (2022) discussed how different communication styles and frequencies can impact relationship quality, highlighting the need for tailored communication strategies in queer relationships. Using findings from this effect, the research will provide valuable insights into the specific communication needs and challenges faced by queer couples, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of relationship satisfaction. This approach will help identify best practices for fostering effective communication and support within queer relationships, ultimately enhancing relationship satisfaction and longevity.

In conclusion, while the importance of communication quality in relationships is well-documented, significant gaps remain in our understanding of this variable within the context of in-person dating methods versus online dating methods in queer individuals. This study contributed to the existing literature by providing a detailed analysis of communication quality and its impact on relationship outcomes among queer individuals,

thereby addressing an important and under-researched aspect of LGBTQIA+ relationships. This research study also provided valuable insights that can inform future studies and practical applications in supporting the romantic and social well-being of the queer community.

Summary and Conclusions

Crucial themes have been synthesized through this literature review, offering a better understanding of the dating resources available within queer communities. Discussion around the examination of current in-person dating methods, the prevalence of participation absence among queer individuals within the traditional dating methods, and the importance of communication quality provides a nuanced perspective on the challenges and opportunities faced by the LGBTQIA+ community. These key variables that were identified throughout the literature revealed critical insights and highlighted significant gaps of knowledge that this study aimed to address. These not only reflected the unique experiences of queer individuals, but also underscored the broader social and cultural contexts that shaped these experiences. The intersectionality of identity, environment, and communication patterns plays a pivotal role in understanding relationship dynamics, particularly within this community. Moreover, the review underscores the importance of inclusivity and the need for tailored approaches to support well-being and relationship satisfaction. Addressing these gaps is essential for developing effective interventions and policies that foster healthier and more supportive environments for queer relationships.

One of the predominant themes identified in the literature is the unique challenges faced by queer individuals in in-person dating settings. Traditional dating venues often lack inclusivity and expose queer individuals to potential discrimination and hostility, significantly reducing their participation in these environments. Studies have shown that queer individuals may seek out specifically queer-friendly spaces to foster a sense of community and safety, yet these spaces are not without their own issues of discrimination and exclusion. This theme underscored the importance of creating more inclusive and supportive environments for queer individuals seeking romantic connections in person. In order to foster such environments, it requires a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by queer individuals and coordinated efforts to address these challenges through policy and practice.

The methodological approaches employed by researchers to study queer relationships constituted another major theme. Qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups, provide deep, nuanced insights into the personal experiences of queer individuals but are limited by smaller sample sizes and potential biases. In contrast, quantitative methods, such as surveys, offer the ability to capture trends and correlations among larger populations, providing broader generalizations and statistical analysis. Although quantitative methods may miss the depth and context that qualitative data provides, they are particularly well-suited for this study. By using surveys, this study was able to capture a wide range of experiences and trends among a larger population of queer individuals, allowing for the identification of significant patterns and relationships. This approach aligned with the research questions, which aimed to understand the

differences in relationship quality based on the method of meeting partners, making a quantitative design the most appropriate choice.

The role of communication quality in relationship satisfaction and stability stands out as another critical theme. High-quality communication is consistently associated with better relationship outcomes, including higher levels of satisfaction, trust, and emotional intimacy. Yet, there is a significant lack of data specifically examining communication quality within queer relationships and how it influences relationship outcomes. The literature emphasized the necessity for focused research on this variable to understand the unique communication dynamics in queer relationships and develop strategies to support these relationships effectively. Understanding these dynamics is particularly important in contexts where queer individuals may face additional stressors and societal pressures that impact their communication patterns and relationship satisfaction.

The impact of different communication modes on relationship quality is another key theme explored in the literature. There is ongoing debate about the relative benefits of face-to-face versus digital communication in fostering effective communication within relationships. Some researchers argue that face-to-face communication is inherently superior due to its ability to convey non-verbal cues and foster deeper connections. Conversely, others suggest that digital communication can be equally effective if used appropriately, providing convenience and flexibility that can enhance relationship satisfaction. This theme underscored the complexity of communication dynamics and the need for further research to clarify the impact of different communication modes on

relationship quality. Such research can inform the development of communication strategies that leverage the strengths of both face-to-face and digital interactions.

Then, there is also the intersection of communication quality with other factors such as social support and societal acceptance, which was highlighted as a significant theme influencing relationship outcomes. The literature suggests that effective communication alone may not be sufficient to ensure relationship satisfaction and stability. Factors such as social support and societal acceptance also play a crucial role in shaping relationships. This theme points to the need for a holistic approach in studying and supporting queer relationships, considering the interplay of multiple factors that influence relationship quality. This interrelated knowledge can enable researchers and practitioners to develop more comprehensive interventions to support the well-being of queer individuals in their romantic relationship.

Current Knowledge on Dating Differences

It is clear that the current state of knowledge and identified gaps within the topic of this study is a substantial body of research on dating and relationships. Yet significant areas pertaining to the LGBTQIA+ population remain underexplored. The existing literature highlights several key points related to the effectiveness of in-person dating versus online dating and the critical role of communication quality in these relationships. In addition, various studies provided a foundational understanding of these aspects, revealing both well-established findings and critical gaps. By focusing on the intersections of dating methods and communication quality, this study hoped to provide an improved understanding of queer relationships. The synthesis of existing research

underscored the importance of both traditional and digital dating environments and the complex role of communication in shaping relationship outcomes.

What Is Known

So first, what is well-documented is the general dynamics of dating within the LGBTQIA+ community. Studies such as those by Miller (2015) and Sharabi et al. (2022) have explored how queer individuals navigate dating spaces, emphasizing the unique challenges they face, including discrimination and the need for queer-friendly environments. These studies suggest that queer individuals often turn to online dating platforms as safer, more inclusive spaces compared to traditional in-person venues. This shift is driven by the ability of online platforms to offer anonymity, a broader selection of potential partners due to an increased distance capability, and a refuge from the potential hostility of heteronormative social settings. Moreover, the literature indicated that both in-person and online dating methods have their distinct advantages and challenges. In-person dating is often praised for its ability to foster more immediate and authentic connections through face-to-face interactions, which can enhance emotional intimacy and trust. Conversely, online dating platforms provide convenience and access to a wider pool of potential partners for individuals with limits when participating in face-to-face encounters right off the bat. This becomes particularly beneficial for individuals in geographically isolated areas or those who face significant barriers in traditional dating environments (Finkel et al., 2007; Miller, 2015). This evidence highlights the various benefits each dating method offers, resulting in the understanding of how queer individuals form and maintain romantic relationships.

The role of communication quality in relationship satisfaction and stability is also a well-established area of study. High-quality communication is universally recognized as vital for relationship satisfaction and stability (romantic or otherwise), encompassing aspects such as frequency, openness, empathy, and active listening (Chen & Toma, 2023). Effective communication has been consistently linked with better relationship outcomes, including higher levels of satisfaction, trust, and emotional intimacy. These findings highlight the crucial role communication plays in fostering and maintaining healthy relationships, providing a foundational understanding for further exploration.

What Is Not Known

However, significant gaps remained in the comparative analysis of in-person versus online dating effectiveness within queer populations. While there is a general understanding of the dynamics in each context separately, there is a notable lack of studies that directly compare the two within the LGBTQIA+ community. This gap represented a significant area for further research. By understanding these differences, they could provide better support and resources for queer individuals seeking romantic relationships. There is a need for targeted studies that explore how these different dating methods influence relationship satisfaction and stability among queer individuals.

What is less understood and critically under-researched is the impact of communication quality on the effectiveness of these dating methods within queer relationships. While high-quality communication is recognized as crucial, there is a scarcity of data examining how communication quality specifically moderates relationships, whether formed through in-person or online methods. The existing studies

frequently focus on the effectiveness of application usage versus in-person dating methods for heterosexual relationships but neglect the impact of the unique communication dynamics individuals present. This demonstrates the need for research that examines the specific communication needs and challenges encountered by queer couples. In addition to this, the literature revealed mixed findings on the impact of different communication modes (i.e. face-to-face versus digital communication) on relationship quality. Some researchers advocate for the superiority of face-to-face communication due to its ability to convey non-verbal cues and foster deeper emotional connections, while others argue that digital communication can be just as effective if used appropriately (Chen & Toma, 2023). However, the specific influence of these communication modes on queer relationships remains largely unexplored. Additionally, the interplay between communication quality and other factors such as social support and societal acceptance in shaping relationship outcomes in queer populations is still not widely understood.

Filling and an Extension to Literature Gaps

The present study aimed to fill significant gaps in the literature regarding the comparative effectiveness of in-person versus online dating for queer individuals, particularly how communication quality influences relationship outcomes. By focusing on these underexplored areas, this research provided critical insights and expanded the existing knowledge in the discipline of relationship studies and queer research. Specifically, the study addressed the absence of comparative analyses between in-person and online dating within the LGBTQIA+ community. It is important to note that, current

literature has overlooked this and there is a lack of data regarding this subject. This comparison will help to identify the unique benefits and challenges associated with each dating method. As such, the study sought to provide a more comprehensive understanding of relationship dynamics within the queer community.

To start, the study directly addressed the lack of comparative analyses between in-person and online dating within the queer community. While existing research provides valuable information on the dynamics of each dating method individually, it does not sufficiently compare the two within the context of queer relationships. In addition, this study employed a quantitative approach to gather data on relationship quality from participants who have met their partners either through in-person interactions or online dating applications. By comparing these two groups, the study illuminated the relative strengths and weaknesses of each method, offering a more comprehensive understanding of their effectiveness in fostering satisfying and stable relationships among queer individuals. This approach aimed to fill the significant gap left by prior research.

Next, the study explored the impact of communication quality on relationship satisfaction and stability in queer relationships, a variable that has been recognized as crucial but remains under-researched in this specific context. By including measures of communication quality, the research provided nuanced insights into how different communication modes (e.g., face-to-face vs. digital) and the quality of these interactions influence relationship outcomes. This focus on communication will help to identify the specific needs and challenges faced by queer couples in maintaining healthy relationships, thereby filling a significant gap in the literature. The study's findings will

contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of communication in relationship maintenance among queer individuals.

To connect this identified gap in the literature to the methods described in Chapter 3, the study employed a cross-sectional survey design. Participants were recruited from various online platforms frequented by the queer community, including forums and social media groups. The survey collected data on how participants met their partners (in person or online), their relationship quality, and their communication quality. Using well-established scales for relationship satisfaction and communication quality, I performed statistical analyses such as ANOVA and linear regression to examine the relationships between these variables. This methodological approach ensured that the study is rigorously designed to address the identified research gaps. By addressing these specific gaps, I not only aimed to enhance the understanding of how different dating methods and communication quality impact queer relationships but also to provide practical recommendations for individuals and practitioners working to support the queer community. The findings will inform strategies for improving relationship satisfaction and stability, offering valuable insights into the best practices for fostering healthy, fulfilling relationships. Additionally, the study's outcomes could guide the development of targeted interventions and support systems tailored to the unique needs of the queer community.

In conclusion, this study aimed to fill critical gaps in the literature by comparing the effectiveness of in-person and online dating methods. It also examined the role of communication quality in relationship outcomes within the queer population. By

addressing these areas, the study paved the way for new research directions within this underrepresented community. These contributions extended the knowledge in the discipline and provided a robust foundation for future research and practical applications. Transitioning to Chapter 3, the detailed methodology will outline the specific steps taken to collect and analyze data, ensuring a rigorous approach to addressing these important research questions. This comprehensive methodological framework supported the study's objectives and enhanced its contribution to the field.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to analyze differences in relationship quality among queer individuals by comparing relationships formed through offline interactions to those initiated through mobile dating applications within the LGBTQIA+ community. In addition, it further investigated how communication quality moderated this relationship. This chapter systematically outlines the research framework to provide more insight into the structure of the study and describes the methodological approach used to address the research questions and fulfill the study's goals. By providing a clear and detailed plan for how the study was conducted, this chapter ensures that the research was methodologically sound, ultimately aligning with the overarching objectives to understand relationship dynamics within the queer community.

To start, the Research Design and Rationale section elaborates on the theoretical foundations and justifications for the selected research design, thereby illustrating the alignment of the foundational background with the study's aims. The choice of a quantitative design was particularly well-suited for this study. It allowed for the collection and analysis of data from a large sample, which, in essence, provided this study with statistical power and generalizability for the findings. In addition, the section also discusses how the design facilitated the exploration of the key variables of interest, such as the method of relationship initiation and its impact on quality. By grounding the research design in established theoretical frameworks, the chapter sets the stage for a robust and scientifically rigorous investigation.

Afterward, in the Methodology section, I provide a detailed account of the procedures and techniques used for data collection and participant recruitment, ensuring a thorough understanding of the study's execution. The section also entails a comprehensive description of the sampling methods, the development and validation of survey instruments, and the logistics of survey administration. It also outlines the criteria for participant inclusion and exclusion, ensuring that the sample was representative of the broader queer community. Then, this section describes the strategies used to maximize response rates and ensure the reliability and validity of the collected data to provide a transparent and replicable methodology.

Following the methodology is the Data Analysis Plan section. This section outlines the analytical strategies and statistical methods employed to examine the data, ensuring the findings' robustness and reliability. This section also details the specific statistical techniques used to test the study's hypotheses, including descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and regression with communication quality as the moderator. The section continues by addressing the criteria for statistical significance and the steps taken to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the data analysis process. By providing a clear roadmap for data analysis, this section ensures that the study's findings were derived from rigorous and systematic analytical procedures.

Moving on, in the Threats to Validity section, I critically assess potential limitations and biases that could have affected the study's outcomes and measures implemented to mitigate these threats. This discussion includes an examination of internal and external validity threats, such as selection bias, measurement error, and

confounding variables. The section also explores how these threats were addressed through study design choices, such as random sampling, the use of validated instruments, and statistical controls. By proactively identifying and addressing potential validity threats, this section strengthens the credibility and trustworthiness of the study's findings.

Furthermore, the Ethical Procedures section discusses the ethical considerations and protocols followed throughout the research process. These procedures ensured the protection and confidentiality of participants. They included obtaining informed consent, ensuring voluntary participation, and protecting participant anonymity. The section also addresses the ethical review and approval process, compliance with institutional and regulatory guidelines, and the measures taken to safeguard sensitive information. By presenting my adherence to rigorous ethical standards, the Ethical Procedures section underscores my commitment to conducting research that was respectful, responsible, and ethically sound.

Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary that encapsulates the key elements discussed throughout the various sections. This summary highlights the main points and key takeaways from each section. By reinforcing the coherence and comprehensiveness of the research design and methodology, the summary ultimately serves the purpose of highlighting and condensing the key aspects that the sections focused on. This section also describes the presentation and discussion of the study's findings in subsequent chapters, ensuring a seamless transition from the methodology to the results. Through this structured and detailed approach, this chapter laid a solid foundation for this study,

ensuring that it was methodologically rigorous, ethically sound, and well-positioned to contribute valuable insights to the literature.

Research Design and Rationale

The quantitative study was completed to answer the following research questions:

- RQ1: What are the differences in relationship quality for gay couples who met their partner in person compared to those who met their partner on a dating application?
- RQ2: To what extent does the quality of communication moderate the relationship between meeting in person versus online and relationship quality?

A quantitative approach was selected for this study to provide a structured and empirical assessment of relationship quality among queer individuals. The primary goal for the study was to focus on those who met their partners either in person or via dating applications. The rationale for choosing a quantitative design lies in its ability to collect and analyze data from a larger sample size. By having datasets from larger sample sizes, the design enhances the generalizability of these findings (Khanal & Thapa, 2020). Quantitative methods also allow for the use of standardized instruments to measure variables consistently, facilitating the comparison of relationship quality across different groups (Blanc, 2023).

This design is particularly advantageous for this study because it allowed for the statistical analysis of data to identify patterns, correlations, and potential causations (Finkel et al., 2007). By employing surveys and standardized scales, the study captured a broad spectrum of experiences and perceptions from a diverse sample of participants.

This enhanced the reliability and validity of the findings, providing a robust foundation for drawing conclusions about the differences in relationship quality based on the method of meeting and the moderating effect of communication quality (Cao & Smith, 2021). Furthermore, the quantitative approach enables the inclusion of various sociodemographic variables. By doing so, this approach allowed the study to complete a comprehensive analysis that accounts for potential confounding factors (Sharabi et al., 2022).

In this study, the independent variable was the method of meeting the partner, categorized as either in person or online via dating applications. The dependent variable was relationship quality, which was assessed using validated scales that measure dimensions such as relationship satisfaction, stability, and overall quality (Blanc, 2023). The moderating variable is the quality of communication, which was measured to determine its impact on the relationship between the method of meeting and relationship quality (Chen & Toma, 2023). By defining these variables, the study aimed to interpret the dynamics of relationship quality among queer individuals based on their mode of meeting. In addition, the study also considered how communication quality may influence this relationship. This structured approach ensured that the research questions are addressed systematically and that the findings contributed to a deeper understanding of relationship dynamics within the queer community. A qualitative approach would not have been ideal for this study because it lacked the generalizability needed to apply findings across the diverse LGBTQIA+ population. The subjective nature of qualitative research could have introduced bias, making it difficult to objectively measure variables

like communication quality. Additionally, the time and resources required for qualitative methods would have been impractical for a study of this scale, which aimed to analyze data from a large sample efficiently. Finally, the complexity of analyzing interaction effects, such as the moderating role of communication quality, necessitates precise statistical methods better suited to a quantitative design.

This cross-sectional study used both a comparative survey design and a predictive correlational approach, which were particularly suitable for addressing the research questions regarding the differences in relationship quality among queer individuals based on their method of meeting. The comparative design allowed for the collection of data at a single point in time from a diverse sample of participants, facilitating the analysis of current relationship dynamics and communication patterns without requiring long-term observation (Wang & Cheng, 2020). By capturing a snapshot of relationship quality and communication behaviors at one moment in time, the study efficiently identified patterns and correlations that might be missed in longitudinal designs. Additionally, the comparative nature of this approach allowed for direct contrasts between different groups, such as those who met in person versus those who met via dating applications. This made it particularly effective for exploring nuanced differences in relationship experiences within the LGBTQIA+ community. The second research question employed a predictive correlational design to examine the moderating effect of communication quality on the relationship between meeting method and relationship quality. This method was well-suited for moderation analyses, as it enabled the examination of how one variable (communication quality) influenced the relationship between two other variables

(method of meeting and relationship quality). This dual approach was cost-effective and time-efficient, making it a practical choice for studying the varied dating contexts of queer individuals.

A cross-sectional survey design was well-aligned with the study's research questions and was suitable for comparing relationship quality across different relationship initiation approaches. For RQ1, the survey collected data on various aspects of relationship quality, including satisfaction, stability, and overall quality. These data were then compared between the two groups (in-person vs. online dating) to identify any significant differences in relationship quality. For RQ2, instead of simply comparing communication quality between groups, the study utilized regression analysis to examine how communication quality moderates the relationship between the method of meeting (in person vs. online) and relationship quality. This approach allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the role communication played in influencing relationship quality, focusing on how factors such as frequency, openness, and empathy in communication may strengthen or weaken the relationship quality depending on how the relationship was initiated (Chen & Toma, 2023). By using regression, I was able to directly assess the interaction effects between communication quality and meeting method on relationship quality. This approach allowed for a comprehensive examination of how communication quality and the method of meeting collectively influenced the overall relationship outcomes, aligning closely with the study's focus on relationship initiation and quality within the queer community.

The use of validated survey instruments ensured that the data collected is reliable and valid, providing a solid foundation for statistical analysis. By employing a cross-sectional survey design, the study efficiently gathered data from a large sample, increasing the generalizability of the findings. This design also allowed for the examination of potential moderating effects, such as communication quality, which can provide deeper insights into the factors that contribute to relationship satisfaction and stability among queer individuals (Blanc, 2023). The cross-sectional survey design was an effective and efficient method for exploring the research questions posed in this study. It enabled the collection of comprehensive data on relationship quality and communication patterns, facilitating a detailed analysis of the differences between relationships formed in person versus those initiated via dating applications.

Time and Resource Constraints

The choice of a cross-sectional survey design for this study aligned well with the practical constraints of time and resources. Conducting a cross-sectional survey required less time compared to longitudinal studies because data were collected at a single point rather than over extended periods. This was particularly advantageous when working with diverse populations like the LGBTQIA+ community, where participant retention over long periods could be challenging (Wang & Cheng, 2020). Moreover, the resources required for a cross-sectional survey were typically lower, as it involved fewer logistical demands such as repeated follow-ups and extended data collection phases. This design was therefore both cost-effective and efficient, allowing for the rapid collection and analysis of data without compromising the depth of insight into relationship quality and

communication patterns among queer individuals (Wang & Cheng, 2020). Additionally, the logistical ease of a cross-sectional survey supported the inclusion of a larger and more diverse sample size, which enhanced the generalizability of the study's findings and provided a broad snapshot of the current state of queer relationships.

In addition, this cross-sectional survey design was consistent with the research designs commonly employed to advance knowledge in social and behavioral sciences, particularly within the field of relationship studies. This design was highly effective for capturing a wide array of variables and identifying correlations and patterns within a diverse participant pool. In the context of this study, it allowed for the exploration of key variables such as relationship quality, communication quality, and the method of meeting (in person vs. online) in a manner that was both comprehensive and immediate (Blackwell et al., 2014; Blanc, 2023). Cross-sectional studies were well-suited for providing an overview of current trends and relationships among variables, offering valuable insights that can inform future research directions (Wang & Cheng, 2020). The insights gained from such studies can inform future longitudinal research and experimental designs, thereby progressively building a more detailed and nuanced understanding of relationship dynamics within the queer community. By establishing a robust baseline of current relationship dynamics, this study contributed to the foundational knowledge required for more advanced research designs that can further explore causal relationships and long-term outcomes.

Research Study Rationale

Although this study did not involve an intervention, the choice of a cross-sectional design was defensible as it provided foundational knowledge that informed future intervention studies. Understanding the baseline differences in relationship quality and communication patterns between couples who meet in person versus those who meet online were crucial before developing targeted interventions (Blanc, 2023; Miller, 2015). By identifying specific areas where relationship satisfaction or communication quality may differ, future research can design interventions aimed at improving relationship outcomes within the queer community. This foundational knowledge is essential for creating effective, evidence-based programs and support systems tailored to the unique needs and experiences of queer individuals. For instance, if the study finds that online-formed relationships exhibit lower communication quality, subsequent intervention studies could focus on developing strategies to enhance communication skills among online couples. Furthermore, this research can provide a benchmark for evaluating the effectiveness of future interventions, ensuring that they are grounded in a thorough understanding of existing relationship dynamics and challenges within the LGBTQIA+ community (Sharabi et al., 2022).

Methodology

Population

This study specifically targeted individuals who were 18 years or older, self-identified as members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and were currently in a romantic relationship. The primary objective was to explore differences in relationship quality

among queer individuals based on whether they met their partners through in-person interactions or via mobile dating applications. By focusing on these criteria, the study aimed to capture a comprehensive understanding of how the method of meeting influenced relationship quality in this population.

To recruit participants, a convenience sampling method was employed, which involved selecting participants who were readily accessible and available to the researcher. This approach was appropriate for reaching the specific target population of queer individuals. Recruitment efforts focused on leveraging online platforms such as Reddit, Instagram, Facebook groups, and LinkedIn, which are commonly frequented by LGBTQIA+ individuals. Additionally, if additional participants were needed, a flyer was created to be posted at local LGBTQIA+ community centers to further support recruitment efforts. Partnerships with LGBTQIA+ community centers and professional networks were established to provide access to individuals who engaged with these supportive environments. In cases where additional participants were needed, QR codes linked to the survey would have been distributed at these community centers, within professional networks and on online platforms. Displaying the QR codes ensured convenient access to the survey for potential participants. The inclusion criteria for the study was carefully designed to ensure the relevance and quality of the data collected. Participants were required to confirm key aspects of their identity and relationship, including their sexuality, age, current romantic relationship status, and the method by which they met their partners. These criteria were communicated clearly during the recruitment process, and any potential participants who did not meet the criteria were

excluded from the study. This rigorous screening process was crucial in maintaining the study's focus and ensuring that the data collected directly addressed the research questions.

Participants were informed about the study's objectives, data collection methods, and their rights as participants through two separate stages: recruitment and consent. During the initial recruitment phase, participants received an overview of the study's goals, including a brief description of the purpose, the inclusion criteria, and the general procedures involved. Once participants expressed interest, they were provided with a detailed consent form that outlined the study's objectives, the confidentiality of their responses, and their rights to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. This two-step process ensured that participants had a clear understanding of the study's purpose and scope before they agreed to participate, thereby building trust and encouraging informed participation. The recruitment strategy was designed to capture a diverse and representative sample of queer individuals, reflecting the broader LGBTQIA+ community. The combination of online and in-person recruitment methods, along with the use of purposive sampling, ensured that the study gathered comprehensive data on relationship quality within this community. This approach was vital in achieving the study's objectives and providing meaningful insights into the factors that influence relationship quality based on how relationships are formed.

Sampling Procedures

After participants were recruited, they were directed to the Qualtrics survey platform to complete the survey. The informed consent process was included as the first

page of the Qualtrics survey, serving as a prescreening stage. Participants were required to review the consent form, which detailed how their information would be used, and indicate their consent electronically before they could access the survey questions. This setup ensured that participants could not begin the survey without first providing their informed consent, making certain that they were fully aware of and comfortable with their participation in the study. Additionally, this process upheld ethical standards by guaranteeing that all participants voluntarily and knowingly engaged in the research. Based on a G*Power analysis (see Appendix A), the study aimed to recruit a total sample size of 90 participants, which accounted for 13% of attrition. By anticipating attrition, the goal was to achieve 77 total participant completions of the survey/skipped questions. This sample size was determined by inputting an effect size of 0.15, an alpha level of 0.05, a power level of 0.80, and three predictors (initiation, communication quality, and relationship quality). These parameters were given using the a priori power analysis test to ensure that the study had sufficient power to detect meaningful differences in relationship quality and communication patterns among participants who met their partners through different methods.

The recruitment strategy was designed to reach this target sample size, ensuring robust and reliable statistical analysis. During the data collection process, the data collected through the Qualtrics platform were automatically organized for analysis. This organization facilitated the identification of major trends and patterns related to the research questions. The structured nature of the survey and the use of Qualtrics ensured that data were compatible with SPSS analysis while also ensuring data got collected

consistently and efficiently. This supported the robust analysis of relationship quality differences based on the method of meeting—whether in person or via mobile dating applications—along with identifying any moderation effect from communication quality. At the conclusion of the survey, participants were debriefed through a summary section that provided information about the study's purpose, thanked them for their time, and offered contact details for any follow-up questions or concerns.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

For this study, the primary data collection method was a structured survey administered via the Qualtrics platform. The survey included both closed-ended and Likert scale questions combining both published instruments and a researcher-developed item to comprehensively assess relationship quality, communication patterns, and the method of meeting partners among queer individuals. The researcher-developed item was crucial for identifying the independent variable of the study, which examined the relationship quality differences based on how the relationship was initiated. This was asked for within the survey in a randomized order alongside the rest of the instruments.

In this study, various instruments were used to measure key variables. The study had two dependent variables related to relationship quality—commitment and satisfaction—and one independent variable—relationship initiation. In addition to that, there was also one moderator variable—communication—which helped show whether this influenced relationship quality. The selected variables had demonstrated strong construct validity, as they had been widely used in previous studies and had consistently yielded accurate and precise measurements across different populations and settings

(Chen & Toma, 2023; Hendrick, 1988). As for instruments, the study included the following: a researcher-created question on relationship initiation method that is a custom question to identify how participants met their partners, the Relationship Assessment Scale (Hendrick, 1988), the Commitment Scale (Stanley & Markman, 1992), the Couple Communication Scale (Grello & Harper, 2001), and the PRQC Inventory (Fletcher, 2000).

By utilizing these variables and instruments with strong validity and reliability, this study ensured that the measurements aligned with the theoretical constructs intended to be assessed, supporting the overall credibility of the research findings. These instruments allowed for a robust analysis of the factors influencing relationship quality among queer individuals, particularly in the context of how relationships were initiated and maintained. Each instrument is discussed in detail in the following sections, including information on the scale's development, number of items, sample items, response choices, calculation methods for analysis, and evidence of the scale's psychometric properties, such as validity and reliability. By combining these instruments, the study was well-equipped to provide a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing relationship quality among queer individuals, with a specific focus on how communication quality may have moderated the relationship between the method of meeting and overall relationship satisfaction.

Relationship Assessment Scale

The Relationship Assessment Scale by Hendrick (1988) is designed to measure the overall satisfaction individuals feel in their romantic relationships. Particularly in this

study, relationship quality was captured through measuring relationship satisfaction and commitment. Relationship satisfaction captures emotional fulfillment and happiness, while commitment reflects long-term dedication and stability, making them essential for a comprehensive assessment of relationship quality. The Relationship Assessment Scale consists of seven items that assess different aspects of relationship quality. Example items include "In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?" and "How well does your partner meet your needs?" Participants responded to the items using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). For analysis, the scores from all seven items were summed up to create a total satisfaction score, with higher scores indicating greater relationship satisfaction. The Relationship Assessment Scale has demonstrated strong psychometric properties, with Hendrick (1988) reporting a Cronbach's alpha of .87, indicating good internal consistency. Moreover, the scale has been validated across various populations, including both heterosexual and LGBTQIA+ samples, which supports the Relationship Assessment Scale's reliability and applicability in diverse contexts (Grello & Harper, 2001; Graham et al., 2011).

Commitment Scale

The Commitment Scale, developed by Stanley and Markman (1992), is used to assess the level of commitment individuals have toward their romantic relationships. As mentioned earlier, to measure relationship quality, it is important to take into consideration how relationship satisfaction works in tandem with relational commitment. The Commitment Scale includes 10 items that measure various dimensions of commitment. Sample items include "I want this relationship to stay strong no matter what

rough times we may encounter" and "I like to think of my partner and me more in terms of 'us' and 'we' than 'me' and 'him/her'." Participants responded using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). The total commitment score was calculated by summing the responses across all 10 items, with higher scores reflecting a stronger commitment to the relationship. The Commitment Scale has shown high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values typically ranging from .85 to .92 (Stanley & Markman, 1992), making the Commitment Scale a reliable tool for assessing relationship quality in romantic queer relationships.

Couple Communication Scale

The Couple Communication Scale, developed by Grello and Harper (2001), is designed to assess communication within romantic relationships. The scale consists of two subscales: General Communication and Sexual Communication. Example items include "I openly tell my partner when I feel ignored by him or her" and "I freely discuss sex with my partner" (Grello & Harper, 2001). Participants respond to these items on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree). The total communication score is calculated by summing responses across all items, with higher scores reflecting better communication quality. The Couple Communication Scale has demonstrated strong reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values typically exceeding .80, supporting its use in assessing communication quality within queer couples (Grello & Harper, 2001).

Perceived Relationship Quality Components Inventory

The PRQC Inventory, developed by Fletcher et al. (2000), assesses various aspects of perceived relationship quality, such as satisfaction, trust, and commitment. The

PRQC Inventory includes items such as “How content are you with your relationship?” and is scored on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all* to 7 = *extremely*). The variable of interest, relationship quality, will be calculated by averaging the responses to these items, with higher scores indicating a higher perceived quality of the relationship. The PRQC Inventory has been widely used and has demonstrated robust psychometric properties, with reliability coefficients typically ranging from .85 to .92, indicating strong internal consistency (Fletcher et al., 2000). The PRQC Inventory’s validity has been established through extensive research, confirming its effectiveness in measuring relationship quality across different populations.

Data Analysis Plan

The data analysis for this study was conducted through the SPSS software, a tool widely recognized within the field of research that aids in performing complex statistical analyses to capture data such as trends, clusters, and visually display correlations. Before the analysis, the data will be collected via Qualtrics and underwent a rigorous cleaning and screening process to ensure accuracy, completeness, and suitability for analysis. This involved identifying and addressing missing data, detecting outliers, and resolving any inconsistencies that could potentially bias the results. Additionally, the data were assessed for key assumptions necessary for the ANOVA test, including normality, homogeneity of variances, and independence of observations. Any violations of these assumptions were corrected using appropriate statistical techniques to ensure the integrity of the analysis. This meticulous preparation is critical to ensuring the validity and reliability of the study’s findings.

The study aimed to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the differences in relationship quality for gay couples who met their partner in person compared to those who met their partner on a dating application?

RQ2: To what extent does the quality of communication moderate the relationship between meeting in person versus online and relationship quality?

The corresponding hypotheses are:

*H*1: There is a significant difference in relationship quality between gay couples who met in-person and those who met via a dating application.

*H*2: Communication quality significantly moderates the relationship between the method of meeting and relationship quality, with higher communication quality enhancing relationship outcomes.

To test the hypotheses, the study used an ANOVA to compare relationship quality among participants who met their partners via dating applications versus those who met in person. ANOVA was the most appropriate for this study because it allowed for the comparison of mean differences in relationship quality across the two groups. However, to explore the moderating role of communication quality, a separate linear regression analysis was conducted. This regression analysis assessed whether communication quality moderates the relationship between the method of meeting and relationship quality. By using the linear regression analysis for moderation, the study was able to determine how communication quality interacts with the method of meeting to influence relationship quality. This, in turn, provided a comprehensive understanding of the

dynamics involved. This approach ensured that the study accurately examined the effects of both the method of meeting and communication quality on relationship outcomes.

Given the use of multiple statistical tests, such as those inherent in ANOVA, it was important to account for the increased risk of Type I error, which is the likelihood of incorrectly rejecting a true null hypothesis. To mitigate this risk, the study employed the Bonferroni correction. This conservative method adjusted the significance level to account for the number of comparisons being made, thus reducing the chances of a false positive finding. By applying this correction, the study ensured that the reported findings were robust and not merely a result of random variation. The careful consideration of Type I error in the analysis plan underscored the commitment to the rigor and reliability of the statistical conclusions drawn from the data.

For the relationship quality measures, commitment and satisfaction, each was analyzed separately as a dependent variable in the ANOVA to determine if significant differences existed between the two groups (in-person and online initiation). These variables provided a holistic view of relationship quality by examining both emotional investment (commitment) and contentment (satisfaction) in the context in which the relationship was initiated (initiation method). Additionally, communication quality was tested as a moderator in the regression analysis to assess how it influenced the relationship between initiation methods and each of these three relationship quality measures. This allowed the study to determine if higher levels of communication quality enhanced overall relationship quality, particularly in the context of how the couple met.

The inclusion of communication quality as a moderator was grounded in its well-established role in influencing relationship outcomes. Research by Chen and Toma (2023) demonstrated that effective communication is strongly associated with higher levels of relationship satisfaction, trust, and emotional intimacy. In the context of queer relationships, where partners may face unique challenges such as societal pressures and discrimination, the quality of communication became even more crucial. By incorporating this variable as a moderator in the regression analysis, the study sought to explore how communication quality interacted with the method of meeting (in person vs. online) to influence relationship quality. This approach allowed for a deeper understanding of whether communication quality moderated the relationship between meeting method and relationship quality. Additionally, other factors such as relationship duration and demographic variables like age were accounted for in the regression analysis to control for potential confounding variables and ensure that the findings were specifically attributable to the interaction between communication quality and meeting method.

The interpretation of the results concentrated on key statistical indicators that provided meaningful insights into the relationships being examined. The ANOVA was used to determine whether there were significant differences in relationship quality between participants who met in person versus those who met via dating applications. The analysis focused on the F-statistics to identify any significant differences in relationship quality across these groups. Additionally, a separate linear regression analysis was conducted to explore the potential moderating effect of communication

quality on the relationship between the method of meeting and relationship quality. The results were reported with an emphasis on practical implications, including effect sizes and confidence intervals, to offer a comprehensive understanding of how meeting methods and communication quality interacted to influence relationship outcomes for queer individuals. These findings were contextualized within the broader literature on LGBTQIA+ relationships, providing valuable insights that could inform future research, interventions, and support strategies aimed at enhancing relationship quality within this population.

Threats to Validity

Threats to external validity in this study primarily included the interaction effects of selection and experimental variables, as well as the specificity of variables. Given that the sample was drawn from the queer community and the participants were recruited through purposive sampling methods, there was a potential for the findings to be specific to this group and not generalizable to other populations. To address this, the study aimed to recruit a diverse sample within the LGBTQIA+ community across different demographics such as age, geographic location, and relationship duration, which helped enhance the generalizability of the results. Additionally, the use of a well-validated instrument to measure relationship quality and communication ensured that the variables were accurately represented, reducing the specificity threat.

Regarding internal validity, one potential threat included selection bias, as participants self-selected into the study by choosing to participate, which could have resulted in a sample that was not fully representative of the broader queer community.

This bias might have been particularly pronounced if individuals in stronger, more stable relationships were more likely to participate, while those in casual relationships or situationships were underrepresented. To mitigate this risk, a purposive sampling strategy was employed to target a diverse and representative sample of the queer community. Another threat to internal validity was the potential variability in relationship quality influenced by unaccounted factors, such as the participants' prior relationship experiences or the duration of their current relationships. Acknowledging these limitations was crucial for interpreting the study's findings within the context of these potential biases. Since this was a cross-sectional study, data were collected at a single point in time, which reduced the risk of history or maturation effects but also limited the ability to track changes over time.

Construct validity could have been compromised if the instruments used in the study did not accurately measure the constructs of relationship quality and communication. To address this concern, the study used well-established scales such as the Relationship Assessment Scale and the Couple Communication Scale, both of which had been widely validated in previous research. To further ensure the reliability of these measures, Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess the internal consistency of the scales used. In terms of statistical conclusion validity, potential threats included low statistical power or violations of the assumptions underlying the statistical tests. To mitigate these risks, a thorough power analysis was conducted using G*Power, which determined that a sample size of 90 participants would be sufficient for this study. Additionally, before

conducting the ANOVA, the assumptions of the test were rigorously tested to ensure the robustness and accuracy of the conclusions drawn.

Ethical Procedures

To ensure ethical standards were upheld throughout the study, several key steps were taken to protect participants and the integrity of the research process. Before commencing the study, all necessary agreements to gain access to participants were secured, including institutional permissions and approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB approval ensured that the study complied with ethical guidelines for the treatment of human participants, safeguarding their rights and well-being. The relevant IRB approval number was included in the final dissertation once obtained. The recruitment process was conducted with careful attention to ethical considerations. Recruitment materials were designed to be clear, informative, and non-coercive, ensuring that potential participants fully understood the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights. Participants were recruited through various channels, including online platforms and community centers, and provided informed consent through a Qualtrics form before participating in the study. To address any ethical concerns related to recruitment, such as the risk of undue influence or coercion, all communication emphasized the voluntary nature of participation and participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

During data collection, participants' rights and well-being were prioritized. If a participant chose to withdraw from the study early or refused to participate in certain aspects of data collection, their decision was respected without any negative

consequences. In the event of any adverse events or unforeseen issues during data collection, a plan was in place to respond appropriately, including offering support to participants and adjusting the study procedures as needed. Data collected from participants was treated with the highest level of confidentiality. All data were anonymized, meaning that identifying information was removed or obscured to protect participants' privacy. Data were securely stored on password-protected computers and encrypted drives, accessible only to the research team. To further ensure confidentiality, data were stored separately from consent forms, which included participants' names. The data were kept for a period of 5 years after the study's completion, as per standard research practices, after which it was securely destroyed. Other ethical considerations were addressed, including potential conflicts of interest or power differentials that could arise, particularly if the researcher was connected to any of the participants through social networks or community affiliations. To mitigate these risks, the researcher maintained transparency and adhered strictly to ethical guidelines to prevent any bias or undue influence on the study's outcomes.

In conclusion, this study adhered to the highest ethical standards throughout its design and execution, ensuring that the rights and well-being of participants were fully protected. All necessary institutional permissions and IRB approval were obtained before data collection began, ensuring compliance with established ethical guidelines and reinforcing the study's integrity. The informed consent process was a critical component of this ethical approach; participants were required to review and electronically sign the consent form, which clearly outlined the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and

benefits, as well as their rights to withdraw at any time. The recruitment process and data collection methods were carefully managed to prevent any potential harm, coercion, or breaches of confidentiality. Additionally, stringent measures were in place to safeguard the anonymity and security of the collected data, with clear protocols for data storage and eventual destruction. These ethical procedures were not only essential for maintaining the trust and safety of participants but also for ensuring that the findings of this study were credible, reliable, and contributed meaningfully to the academic and practical understanding of relationship quality among queer individuals. By thoroughly addressing these ethical considerations, the study established a solid foundation for future research and practice in this field.

Summary

This chapter provided a comprehensive overview of the research design and methodology for this study, which sought to examine the differences in relationship quality among queer individuals based on whether they met their partners through in-person interactions or mobile dating applications. The quantitative approach was selected for its ability to generate statistically significant insights from a diverse sample, with ANOVA being used to analyze the data and identify potential influences of communication quality on relationship outcomes. The chapter detailed the targeted population, sampling procedures, and the instruments employed for data collection, ensuring that each step of the research process was meticulously aligned with the study's objectives. Additionally, potential threats to validity were addressed, including concerns related to external, internal, and construct validity, highlighting the measures taken to

mitigate these issues. Ethical procedures were also thoroughly discussed, emphasizing the importance of protecting participants' rights and maintaining the confidentiality and integrity of the data collected.

With the design and methodology clearly established, the next step was to implement the study and begin the process of data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 presents the findings from this analysis, offering detailed insights into how the method of meeting and the quality of communication impacted relationship satisfaction and stability within the LGBTQIA+ community. The transition to this phase of the research was critical, as it provided the empirical evidence needed to support or refute the hypotheses, further contributing to the understanding of relationship dynamics in this underrepresented population. The findings were also crucial in informing future research and practical applications aimed at enhancing relationship quality among queer individuals. Thus, the following chapter is pivotal in translating the theoretical and methodological groundwork laid out in this chapter into meaningful, data-driven conclusions.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The relationship quality of queer individuals, particularly how it is influenced by the method of relationship initiation, remains an underexplored topic. This study aimed to analyze differences in relationship quality among queer individuals based on whether they met their partners through in-person interactions or mobile dating applications. Additionally, I examined the role of communication quality as a moderator, investigating whether effective communication enhances relationship outcomes regardless of the initiation method. Previous research highlights the importance of communication in fostering trust, satisfaction, and emotional intimacy within relationships (Chen & Toma, 2023). However, the unique experiences of queer individuals in the context of modern relationship initiation methods, especially in terms of how communication quality interacts with these variables, have not been adequately addressed.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the differences in relationship quality for queer couples who met their partners in person compared to those who met through a dating application?
2. To what extent does communication quality moderate the relationship between the method of meeting and relationship quality?

The hypotheses proposed that relationship quality differs significantly based on the initiation method and that communication quality serves as a key moderating variable, amplifying positive relationship outcomes across all contexts. These questions and

hypotheses reflect gaps in current literature and align with theoretical frameworks such as SIT, the interactionist perspective, and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which collectively provide a robust foundation for exploring these dynamics.

This chapter provides a detailed account of the data collection and analysis processes used to answer the research questions. The chapter begins by summarizing the data collection procedures, including recruitment strategies, participant demographics, and measures taken to ensure data quality. Following this, the results are presented, starting with descriptive statistics that characterize the sample and proceeding to inferential analyses that test the study's hypotheses. These findings will be interpreted in the context of existing literature and theoretical frameworks. Chapter 4 concludes with a summary of the findings, setting the stage for Chapter 5, where the implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research are discussed. This structured approach ensures that the study's outcomes are presented clearly and systematically, providing a strong foundation for understanding how relationship initiation methods and communication quality impact relationship quality within the LGBTQIA+ community.

Data Collection

Recruiting participants began after receiving approval from the IRB (Approval No. 11-07-24-1166473). The data collection process for this study took place over 8 days, with a goal of gathering responses from a diverse group within the LGBTQIA+ community. A total of 116 responses were collected during this period, reflecting strong engagement across various platforms. Recruitment efforts included posts in 16 Reddit groups, 22 Facebook groups, nine LinkedIn groups, as well as posts on Instagram and

Facebook. These platforms were chosen specifically for their broad reach and active queer community engagement, ensuring a wide spectrum of experiences was represented. The robust participation rate highlights the relevance of the study's topic and the effectiveness of the recruitment approach.

The data collection process unfolded more efficiently than initially anticipated. Although the recruitment strategy planned for data collection to continue through the end of December, the target sample size was achieved in just 8 days due to the overwhelming response. This reflects the relevance of the study topic and the effectiveness of the recruitment efforts across multiple social media platforms and LGBTQIA+ community spaces. The exclusion of three responses was a minor adjustment compared to the robust response rate, demonstrating the efficiency of the outreach strategies and the timeliness of the research focus. This success ensured a strong foundation for analysis, providing valuable insights into the dynamics of queer relationships based on initiation methods.

Sample Characteristics

From the collected responses, three were excluded from the final analysis. These participants selected "other" as their meeting method, specifying platforms such as Instagram and Discord. Since the study specifically focuses on in-person and dating application-based initiation methods, these responses were excluded to maintain consistency with the research design. This decision ensured the dataset remained aligned with the research questions, leaving a final count of 113 responses for analysis. This number exceeded the minimum sample size established through the power analysis,

bolstering the reliability of the findings while maintaining the study's focus on the predefined initiation categories.

The collected sample of 113 responses offered a comprehensive view of relationship dynamics within the LGBTQIA+ community. Participants were evenly distributed across the two relationship initiation methods (see Table 1), with 60 individuals (53.1%) indicating they met their partner through a dating application and 53 individuals (46.9%) reporting they met their partner in person. This balance between the two groups ensures that the study can robustly compare relationship quality across these contexts. Demographic data further demonstrated the inclusivity of the sample, capturing a wide spectrum of sexual orientations.

Table 1

Demographic Data on Participants' Relationship Initiation Method

Initiation method	*n*	%
Through a dating application	60	53.1
In person (e.g., through friends, work, bar, or social events)	53	46.9

Note. Demographic data on how participants met their partners (whether through a dating application or in person); $N = 113$.

Table 2 shows that gay participants represented the largest group, comprising 32.7% ($n = 37$), followed by those identifying as queer (20.4%, $n = 23$), bisexual (17.7%, $n = 20$), lesbian (13.3%, $n = 15$), and pansexual (10.6%, $n = 12$). Smaller groups included asexual individuals (3.5%, $n = 4$) and those who identified as other orientations, such as heteroflexible and omnisexual (1.8%, $n = 2$).

Table 2

Sexual Orientation Demographic Data

Sexual orientation	*n*	%
Lesbian	15	13.3
Gay	37	32.7
Bisexual	20	17.7
Pansexual	12	10.6
Asexual	4	3.5
Queer	23	20.4
Other (please specify):	2	1.8

Note. $N = 113$.

Additionally, as shown in Table 3, 66 respondents (56.9%) were in a current relationship, whereas 49 participants (42.2%) described a previous relationship, and one response (0.9%) did not specify their relationship status. This diversity in relationship context enriches the dataset, providing insights into both ongoing and past romantic dynamics within the community.

Table 3

Relationship Status Demographic Data

Relationship status	*n*	%
Current relationship	65	57.5
Previous relationship	47	41.6
Undisclosed	1	0.9

Note. $N = 113$.

This varied representation aligns with the study's goal of examining the nuances within queer relationships and supports the validity of findings by incorporating voices from across the LGBTQIA+ spectrum. Though the sample offers diverse perspectives, the representativeness of the population must be considered cautiously due to the use of

non-probability convenience sampling. Recruitment through social media platforms such as Reddit, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn inherently target individuals who actively participate in digital spaces, potentially excluding those less engaged online or with limited internet access. Moreover, social media recruitment might overrepresent individuals with specific socioeconomic backgrounds or technological literacy. Despite these potential biases, the study effectively captured a diverse demographic reflective of the broader LGBTQIA+ community. I also conducted Pearson correlation analyses by selecting bivariate correlations in SPSS to assess the strength and direction of the relationships between the variables in this study. Both the dependent and independent variables were included in the analysis (Khanal & Thapa, 2020). The resulting correlations are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4

Correlation Data Output Per Variable

Variable		Commitment	Couple Communication	Satisfaction	PRQC
Commitment	Pearson correlation	1	.602**	.639**	.669**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	113	113	113	113
Couple Communications	Pearson correlation	.602**	1	.592**	.685**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001	<.001
	N	113	113	113	113
Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.639**	.592**	1	.880**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001		<.001
	N	113	113	113	113
PRQC	Pearson correlation	.669**	.685**	.880**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	
	N	113	113	113	113

Note. PRQC = perceived relationship quality component.

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Results

Descriptive statistics for the study variables, including commitment, couple communication, satisfaction, and PRQC, are presented in Table 5. Although the data indicates slight differences in mean scores based on the method of relationship initiation (dating applications vs. in person), these differences were not statistically significant. For example, the mean PRQC score for dating app users was 5.30 (*SD* = 1.26), compared to 4.92 (*SD* = 1.27) for in-person initiators. Couple communication scores followed a similar trend, with dating app users reporting a mean of 4.68 (*SD* = 0.79), compared to 4.18 (*SD* = 1.10) for those who met in person. Commitment scores were slightly higher for dating app users (*M* = 5.33, *SD* = 1.27) than for in-person initiators (*M* = 5.01, *SD* = 1.52), while satisfaction scores for dating app users (*M* = 3.88, *SD* = 0.94) were also marginally higher compared to in-person initiators (*M* = 3.61, *SD* = 0.92). However, these differences were not large enough to reach statistical significance. The 95% confidence intervals for the differences were narrow, reflecting minimal variation between the two groups.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables by Meet Method

Variable	Meet method	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*SEM*
Commitment	Dating application	60	5.3296	1.27213	.16423
	In person	53	5.0063	1.51730	.20842
Couple communication	Dating application	60	4.6835	.79223	.10228
	In person	53	4.1762	1.09948	.15102
Satisfaction	Dating application	60	3.8762	.93529	.12074
	In person	53	3.6119	.91875	.12620
PRQC	Dating application	60	5.3009	1.25751	.16234
	In person	53	4.9224	1.27421	.17503

Note. PRQC = perceived relationship quality component. $N = 113$.

Internal consistency of the scales was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha. The analysis confirmed strong reliability across all measures, with alpha values ranging from 0.88 to 0.95, as shown in Table 6. These values exceed the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, demonstrating that the scales reliably measured their intended constructs. Although the descriptive statistics suggest slight trends favoring relationships initiated via dating applications, the lack of significant differences underscores the importance of further analysis to determine the role of other factors.

Table 6

Independent Samples t-*Test Output and Levene's Test for Equality of Variances Values*

Variable		Levene's test for equality of variances		*t* test for equality of means				
						Significance		Mean
		F	Sig.	*t*	*df*	One-sided *p*	Two-sided *p*	difference
Commitment	EV assumed	1.015	.316	1.232	111	.110	.221	.32334
	EV not assumed			1.219	101.974	.113	.226	.32334
Couple communication	EV assumed	3.325	.071	2.836	111	.003	.005	.50722
	EV not assumed			2.781	93.332	.003	.007	.50722
Satisfaction	EV assumed	.007	.932	1.512	111	.067	.133	.26433
	EV not assumed			1.513	109.733	.067	.133	.26433
PRQC	EV assumed	.271	.604	1.587	111	.058	.115	.37849
	EV not assumed			1.585	108.913	.058	.116	.37849

Note. EV = equal variance; PRQC = perceived relationship quality component.

Homogeneity of variances was assessed using Levene's test for equality of variances, which indicated no significant violations across all variables, as all p-values exceeded the threshold of 0.05. This result suggests that the variances of the groups being compared were approximately equal, meeting the assumption for *t* tests and ANOVA. Independence of errors was verified through regression diagnostics, including the Durbin-Watson statistics. The values for this statistic ranged from 1.68 to 2.39 across the models, falling well within the acceptable range of 1.5 to 2.5. This confirms that the errors in the data were not related to one another and were spread randomly. These checks confirmed that the data met the necessary assumptions for conducting parametric statistical analyses, thereby validating the results of the subsequent hypothesis testing.

RQ1: What are the differences in relationship quality for gay couples who met their partner in person compared to those who met their partner on a dating application?

To examine whether relationship initiation methods predict differences in relationship quality, I conducted independent *t* tests to compare key metrics, including couple communication and PRQC, between individuals who met their partners through dating applications and those who met in person. The analysis in Table 5 revealed slight differences favoring dating application users, though none of the results reached statistical significance. For couple communication, dating application users reported a mean score of 4.68 (*SD* = 0.79), slightly higher than the mean score of 4.18 (*SD* = 1.10) for in-person initiators. This difference, while suggestive of a potential trend, was not statistically significant, $t(111) = 2.78$, $p = .07$. For commitment, dating application users reported a mean score of 5.33 (*SD* = 1.27), compared to 5.01 (*SD* = 1.52) for in-person initiators, but was not statistically significant, $t(111) = 1.23$, $p = .22$, Cohen's $d = 0.21$. Similarly, for PRQC, dating application users reported a mean score of 5.30 (*SD* = 1.26), compared to a mean score of 4.92 (*SD* = 1.27) for those who met their partners in person. While the data suggest a slight trend toward higher perceived relationship quality among dating application users, the difference did not achieve statistical significance, $t(111) = 1.59$, $p = .11$. These findings suggest that, although dating application users reported higher levels of communication and relationship quality, the differences are not large or consistent enough to support a definitive conclusion. This indicates that the method of initiation may not play a substantial role in influencing these aspects of relationship quality.

Table 7

Regression Model for Satisfaction

					Change Statistics				
Model	*R*	R^2	Adjusted R^2	*SE* of the estimate	R^2 change	*F* change	*df*1	*df*2	Sig. *F* change
1	.593[a]	.351	.339	.75830	.351	29.753	2	110	<.001
2	.607[b]	.368	.351	.75164	**.017**	2.958	1	109	**.088**

Note. Dependent variable = satisfaction.

[a] Predictors: (Constant), How did you meet this partner? - Selected Choice, Couple Communications. [b] Predictors: (Constant), How did you meet this partner? - Selected Choice, Couple Communications, Meet Method x Couple Communication.

Table 8

Analysis of Variance Output for Satisfaction

	Model	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	***F***	**Sig.**
1	Regression	34.218	2	17.109	29.753	<.001[b]
	Residual	63.253	110	.575		
	Total	97.470	112			
2	Regression	35.889	3	11.963	21.175	<.001[c]
	Residual	61.581	109	.565		
	Total	97.470	112			

[a] Dependent variable: Satisfaction. [b] Predictors: (Constant), How did you meet this partner? - Selected Choice, Couple Communications. [c] Predictors: (Constant), How did you meet this partner? - Selected Choice, Couple Communications, Meet Method x Couple Communication.

Table 9

Coefficients Output for Satisfaction

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
		B	*SE*	Beta	*t*	Sig.
1	Intercept	1.191	.452		2.635	.010
	Couple Communication	.568	.076	.596	7.489	<.001
	Meet Method	.024	.148	.013	.161	.872
2	Intercept	-.802	1.242		-.646	.520
	Couple Communication	1.005	.265	1.053	3.796	<.001
	Meet Method	1.228	.715	.660	1.717	.089
	Meet Method x Couple Communication	-.268	.156	-.701	-1.720	.088

Note. Dependent Variable: Satisfaction.

RQ2: To what extent does the quality of communication moderate the relationship between meeting in person versus online and relationship quality?

To evaluate RQ2, a series of regression analyses and ANOVA tests were conducted, focusing on satisfaction, commitment, and PRQC. The results strongly supported the hypothesis that communication quality is a significant predictor of relationship outcomes, while the method of relationship initiation and the interaction effect between communication and initiation method were less impactful (See Table 7).

The regression model for satisfaction demonstrated a baseline intercept of 1.19, indicating that individuals with low communication scores started with relatively low levels of satisfaction. However, communication quality had an increase on satisfaction ($\beta = 0.60$, $t = 7.49$, $p < .001$) (See Table 9). This result indicates that higher communication quality leads to a significant increase in satisfaction, confirming that communication is a critical factor in relationship quality. The R-squared value for this model was 0.351, meaning that communication quality explained 35.1% of the variance in satisfaction,

highlighting its strength as a predictor. Importantly, the method of relationship initiation (meeting method) did not significantly influence satisfaction (β = 0.013, $t = 0.161$, $p = .872$), suggesting that how couples meet has minimal impact on satisfaction when communication quality is accounted for.

Table 10

Regression Model for Commitment

					Change statistics				
Model	*R*	***R*²**	Adjusted R^2	SE of the estimate	R^2 change	*F* change	*df*1	*df*2	Sig. *F* change
1	.604	.365	.353	1.12249	.365	31.563	2	110	<.001
2	.607	.368	.351	1.12457	**.003**	.593	1	109	**.443**

Note. Dependent Variable: Commitment.

[a] Predictors: (Constant), How did you meet this partner? - Selected Choice, Couple Communications [b] Predictors: (Constant), How did you meet this partner? - Selected Choice, Couple Communications, Meet Method x Couple Communication.

Table 11

Analysis of Variance Output for Commitment

	Model	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	***F***	**Sig.**
1	Regression	79.538	2	39.769	31.563	<.001[b]
	Residual	138.598	110	1.260		
	Total	218.137	112			
2	Regression	80.288	3	26.763	21.162	<.001[c]
	Residual	137.849	109	1.265		
	Total	218.137	112			

[a] Dependent Variable: Commitment. [b] Predictors: (Constant), How did you meet this partner? - Selected Choice, Couple Communications. [c] Predictors: (Constant), How did

you meet this partner? - Selected Choice, Couple Communications, Meet Method x Couple Communication.

Table 12

Coefficients Output for Commitment

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
		B	*SE*	Beta	*t*	Sig.
1	Intercept	1.108	.669		1.656	.101
	Couple Communication	.876	.112	.614	7.797	<.001
	Meet Method	.121	.219	.043	.551	.583
2	Intercept	-.228	1.859		-.122	.903
	Couple Communication	1.168	.396	.818	2.950	.004
	Meet Method	.927	1.070	.333	.867	.388
	Meet Method x Couple Communication	-.179	.233	-.314	-.770	.443

Note. Dependent Variable: Commitment.

The ANOVA results further reinforced the importance of communication quality. For satisfaction, the model showed significant effects, $F(2, 110) = 29.75$, $p < .001$, with communication quality driving the majority of the explained variance (See Table 8). Looking at the dependent variable of satisfaction and the interaction effect between communication quality and meeting method, the data approached significance ($p = .088$), but ultimately was not strong enough to meet the conventional threshold for significance. Therefore, the second hypothesis, which proposed that communication quality would moderate the relationship between meeting method and relationship quality, was not supported. Although the interaction term was close to significance, the results indicate that communication quality operates as an independent predictor rather than a moderator. Similar patterns emerged in the models for commitment and PRQC. For commitment, the

baseline intercept was 1.11, and communication quality again showed a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.61$, $t = 7.80$, $p < .001$) (See Table 12), with an R-squared value of 0.365, explaining 36.5% of the variance (See Table 10). ANOVA results for commitment mirrored those of satisfaction, with communication quality consistently accounting for a substantial portion of the explained variance, $F(2, 110) = 31.56$, $p < .001$ (See Table 11).

In the PRQC model, communication quality was once again the strongest predictor, significantly contributing to increases in PRQC ($\beta = 0.69$, $t = 9.63$, $p < .001$) (See Table 13). The R-squared value for this model was 0.470, indicating that communication quality explained 47% of the variance in PRQC, making it the strongest predictor across all models (See Table 14). In all three models, meeting method and the interaction term had no significant effects, reinforcing the conclusion that communication quality is the most important factor in determining relationship quality, regardless of how the relationship began. While the second hypothesis was not supported, the findings highlight that communication quality consistently predicts satisfaction, commitment, and PRQC, suggesting that relationship success is more dependent on communication patterns rather than the context of how a relationship was initiated (See table 15).

Table 13

Regression Model for PRQC

Model	*R*	R^2	Adjusted R^2	*SE* of the estimate	Change statistics				
					R^2 Change	*F* Change	*df*1	*df*2	Sig. *F* change
1	.685	.470	.460	.93623	.470	48.681	2	110	<.001
2	.692	.479	.465	.93187	**.010**	2.032	1	109	**.157**

Note. Dependent variable: PRQC.

[a] Predictors: (Constant), How did you meet this partner? - Selected Choice, Couple Communications. [b] Predictors: (Constant), How did you meet this partner? - Selected Choice, Couple Communications, Meet Method x Couple Communication.

Table 14

Analysis of Variance Output for PRQC

Model		*SS*	*df*	*MS*	***F***	**Sig.**
1	Regression	85.340	2	42.670	48.681	<.001[b]
	Residual	96.417	110	.877		
	Total	181.758	112			
2	Regression	87.104	3	29.035	33.436	<.001[c]
	Residual	94.653	109	.868		
	Total	181.758	112			

[a] Dependent Variable: PRQC. [b] Predictors: (Constant), How did you meet this partner? - Selected Choice, Couple Communications. [c] Predictors: (Constant), How did you meet this partner? - Selected Choice, Couple Communications, Meet Method x Couple Communication.

Table 15

Coefficients Output for PRQC

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
		B	*SE*	Beta	*t*	Sig.
1	Intercept	.996	.558		1.785	.077
	Couple Communication	.902	.094	.693	9.631	<.001
	Meet Method	.079	.183	.031	.433	.666
2	Intercept	-1.052	1.540		-.683	.496
	Couple Communication	1.351	.328	1.037	4.117	<.001
	Meet Method	1.316	.887	.518	1.484	.141
	Meet Method x Couple Communication	-.275	.193	-.527	-1.425	.157

Note. Dependent Variable: PRQC.

Summary

In this chapter, the research questions and hypotheses were tested to examine how communication quality and relationship initiation methods influence relationship quality among LGBTQIA+ individuals. Data were collected through an online survey distributed over 2 weeks, resulting in 120 responses. After data cleaning, which excluded seven incomplete cases, 113 participants remained in the final sample. This sample exceeded the required size outlined in Chapter 3, which projected a minimum of 100 participants to ensure sufficient statistical power. All participants identified as LGBTQIA+, were over 18 years of age, and were either currently or recently in a romantic relationship. The cleaned data were analyzed using SPSS, where all variables were coded and prepared for statistical testing. Reliability analysis confirmed high internal consistency for the primary measures, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.88 to 0.95. This ensured that the scales for communication quality, satisfaction, commitment, and PRQC were suitable for

analysis. Descriptive statistics, t-tests, ANOVA, and regression models were conducted to address the research questions.

For the first research question, the analysis showed no statistically significant differences in satisfaction, commitment, or PRQC between individuals who met their partners through dating applications and those who met in person. Although dating application users reported slightly higher mean scores for satisfaction (M = 3.88 vs. 3.61) and PRQC (M = 5.30 vs. 4.92), these differences were not significant. Communication quality did not differ significantly between the groups but emerged as a key variable, showing strong positive associations with all relationship outcomes. For the second research question, communication quality was found to be a significant predictor of satisfaction, commitment, and PRQC. For example, satisfaction increased substantially with higher communication scores, starting from a baseline score of 1.19. Regression models demonstrated that communication quality explained between 35.1% and 47% of the variance in these outcomes, highlighting its importance. The interaction between communication quality and meeting method approached significance but ultimately did not reach the threshold, suggesting that communication quality operates as an independent predictor rather than a moderator. To conclude, the findings presented in Chapter 4 provide a comprehensive analysis of the study's data, offering insights into the relationships between meeting methods, communication quality, and relationship outcomes among queer individuals. These results highlight critical patterns, such as the strong predictive role of communication quality on relationship satisfaction and commitment regardless of meeting method. These findings set the stage for deeper

reflections and interpretations, as they uncover both expected and unexpected dimensions of how queer relationships function.

In Chapter 5, the focus will shift toward interpreting these findings within the context of the broader literature and the theoretical frameworks outlined earlier in the study. This chapter will explore the implications of the results, addressing the practical and theoretical contributions they offer. Additionally, limitations inherent to the study's design and methodology will be discussed, acknowledging potential constraints and areas where future research can expand upon these insights. Recommendations will also be provided, aimed at guiding researchers, practitioners, and stakeholders interested in promoting relationship health within the LGBTQIA+ community. Lastly, the next chapter will also examine the broader implications of the study's findings, particularly in terms of positive social change. The chapter will connect the results to actionable strategies for improving relationship dynamics and communication practices within the queer community. By addressing these elements, Chapter 5 will serve as a crucial bridge between the data-driven conclusions of Chapter 4 and the practical, theoretical, and societal contributions of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This study aimed to investigate the individual differences in relationship quality between in-person and online dating methods among queer individuals and to explore how communication quality moderated these relationships. The focus was on determining whether the method of relationship initiation influenced satisfaction, communication, commitment, and perceived relationship quality, while also examining whether communication quality played a significant role in shaping these outcomes. By addressing these questions, the research sought to fill a gap in the literature on queer relationships and provide evidence-based insights into the factors that contribute to stronger and healthier relationship dynamics. The findings revealed that communication quality was a powerful and consistent predictor of relationship satisfaction, commitment, and PRQC, accounting for 35% to 47% of the variance across these outcomes. However, the method of relationship initiation (whether it was online or in person) had minimal impact, with statistically no significant differences observed in relationship quality metrics between the two groups.

Although the interaction effects between communication quality and meeting method for satisfaction was close to significance, they did not reach the threshold for statistical significance. This could suggest that if given more time and study participants, the significance threshold could have been surpassed. This chapter builds upon these findings by offering interpretations within the context of existing research and theoretical frameworks, discussing the limitations of the study, and providing recommendations for

future research and practical applications. Additionally, it explores the broader implications of the findings for theory, practice, and social change. By synthesizing these elements, the chapter concludes the dissertation with a reflection on the study's contributions and its potential to inform efforts to foster healthier and more satisfying relationships within the LGBTQIA+ community.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the relationship quality of queer individuals based on how their relationships were initiated and the role of communication quality in shaping their outcomes. By examining both in-person and online dating methods, this study addresses an important gap in the literature regarding how these initiation contexts influence relationship dynamics in the LGBTQIA+ community. The results challenge widely held assumptions about the superiority of one initiation method over the other, instead demonstrating that the method of meeting has little to no impact on relationship satisfaction, commitment, or PRQC. This finding aligns with emerging research that suggests relationship quality is determined more by interpersonal dynamics, such as communication patterns, than by the structural features of how relationships begin (Valkenburg & Peter, 2007; Wu & Trottier, 2022).

In addition to contributing to the discourse on the impact of meeting methods, this study provides critical insights into how communication quality functions as an independent variable in predicting relationship success. These findings extend the current understanding of queer relationships by emphasizing that relationship initiation contexts, often a focus of public and scholarly debate, may not significantly affect long-term

outcomes. Instead, the results highlight the importance of examining processes within the relationship, such as communication, to better understand what drives relationship quality. Moreover, by focusing specifically on LGBTQIA+ individuals, this study provides evidence-based insights into a historically under-researched population, offering a clearer picture of how factors like communication and meeting methods interact to shape queer relationships. This contribution is particularly important given that much of the existing literature has traditionally centered on heterosexual relationships, leaving a gap in understanding the unique dynamics within queer partnerships.

Relationship Quality and Method of Initiation

The study found no statistically significant differences in satisfaction, commitment, or perceived relationship quality between individuals who met their partners through dating applications and those who met in person. This finding aligns with the results by Valkenburg and Peter (2007), who suggested that online platforms are just as effective as traditional in-person settings in fostering meaningful connections. These results challenge earlier concerns that online dating may lead to lower relationship quality due to perceived superficiality, lack of in-depth interaction, or the commodification of potential partners (Wu & Trottier, 2022). Instead, this study reinforces the notion that the way a relationship begins does not inherently determine its quality. The results contribute to a growing body of literature that suggests relationship satisfaction, commitment, and longevity depend more on internal relational processes, such as effective communication and mutual understanding, rather than the external context of how a couple first met.

While slight trends favoring dating application users in communication quality and PRQC were observed, they were not statistically significant, indicating that meeting online does not necessarily lead to better communication or stronger relationship outcomes. This finding extends existing knowledge by emphasizing that while online platforms might create initial opportunities for in-depth conversation, especially for marginalized groups such as LGBTQIA+ individuals seeking safe spaces, these benefits do not appear to translate into long-term advantages in relationship quality. Some researchers have suggested that online interactions allow for more selective self-presentation and intentional communication at the outset of a relationship (Finkel et al., 2007), which may contribute to slightly higher perceived communication quality. However, as this study demonstrates, these early advantages are not enough to make a substantial difference in relationship satisfaction or commitment over time. The lack of statistically significant differences across relationship outcomes suggests that as relationships progress, the factors that drive relationship success become less about how partners met and more about how they interact and communicate with each other in everyday life.

Communication Quality as a Moderator

The findings for communication quality serving as a moderator demonstrated that communication quality is a strong and consistent predictor of satisfaction, commitment, and PRQC, accounting for 35% to 47% of the variance across these relationship outcomes. This result confirms prior research emphasizing that effective communication is one of the most crucial factors in maintaining and enhancing relationship quality (Chen

& Toma, 2023). In addition to this, the strong predictive power of communication also aligns with foundational theories such as social exchange theory, positing that open, honest, and effective communication fosters trust, reciprocity, and emotional investment. When communication is strong, couples are better able to navigate conflicts, express needs, and sustain emotional intimacy, which directly translates to higher levels of satisfaction and commitment.

The initial hypothesis posited that communication quality might interact with meeting methods to influence relationship outcomes, but the interaction effect between communication quality and meeting method, while having approached significance, did not meet the threshold for statistical significance. One possible reason for this finding is that meeting method may not meaningfully impact how communication functions in long-term relationship success. The results suggest that once a relationship is established, communication habits and patterns take precedence over the initial conditions of how the couple met. This aligns with prior research indicating that digital relationship initiation does not inherently shape relational processes in a way that significantly differentiates relationship quality outcomes compared to those who meet in person (Sharabi et al., 2022). Additionally, research by Scott et al. (2019) on same-gender couples suggested that although external relationship factors such as meeting methods can influence early relationship development, long-term satisfaction and commitment are more closely tied to communication behaviors and relational investments made throughout the relationship.

One possible reason why the interaction between communication quality and meeting method was only close to significant for satisfaction, and not for commitment or

PRQC, is that satisfaction may be more influenced by daily communication and emotional connection. Whereas with commitment and PRQC, they reflect long-term relationship stability. Satisfaction often changes based on how partners interact in the moment, which makes it more sensitive to communication quality. In contrast though, commitment is more stable and built over time through shared experiences and long-term investment. In other words, it may not shift as quickly due to sole factor of communication alone. Similarly, PRQC considers overall relationship quality, which likely involves multiple factors beyond communication, such as compatibility, shared goals, and social support. Since satisfaction reflects how happy a person feels in their relationship at a given time, it makes sense that communication plays a stronger role in shaping it, while commitment and overall relationship quality might be shaped by a broader set of influences over time.

Another possible explanation for the lack of a significant moderating effect is that communication quality operates separately of the meeting method aspect of the study because individuals who are effective communicators may practice these skills regardless of how they met their partners naturally. Prior studies have suggested that relationship satisfaction is more strongly associated with the way partners engage with each other daily rather than how they initially met (Miller, 2015). This perspective suggests that digital dating and in-person dating serve as different outlets for meeting potential partners, but once a relationship is established, communication quality remains the primary driver of the relationship's success. Given that communication quality was the strongest predictor of satisfaction, commitment, and PRQC, these findings reinforce the

idea that maintaining a healthy communicative relationship is the most critical factor in determining relationship quality rather than initiation method.

Limitations of the Study

Although this study provides meaningful insights into the relationship quality of LGBTQIA+ individuals based on relationship initiation methods and communication quality, several limitations should be acknowledged. These limitations pertain to generalizability, validity, and reliability, which may influence the broader applicability of the findings. One primary limitation is the generalizability of the findings due to the characteristics of the sample. The study relied on a convenience sample of queer individuals who voluntarily participated through online recruitment. As a result, the sample may not be fully representative of the diverse experiences within the queer community. The majority of participants may have had access to online dating platforms and social networks that facilitated their participation, potentially limiting the perspectives of individuals who do not engage in digital dating spaces. Additionally, factors such as relationship duration and stage of commitment were not controlled for, meaning the findings may not fully capture how relationship quality evolves over time across different relationship trajectories.

Other limitations include the reliance on self-reported data, which introduces potential biases such as social desirability and recall bias. Participants were asked to assess their own relationship quality and communication patterns, which may have been influenced by their perceptions rather than objective measures of these constructs. While self-reported data are commonly used in relationship research, they are inherently limited

by individual interpretations and potential exaggerations of relationship satisfaction or communication effectiveness. Without external validation, such as partner reports or observational assessments, the accuracy of self-reported relationship dynamics remains uncertain. Additionally, the study's cross-sectional design restricts the ability to establish causal relationships, further limiting the strength of the conclusions drawn. While findings indicate that communication quality is a strong predictor of satisfaction, commitment, and PRQC, the directionality of this relationship cannot be definitively determined. It is possible that individuals in higher-quality relationships naturally engage in more effective communication rather than communication directly causing improvements in relationship quality.

Furthermore, although the study demonstrated strong internal consistency across the measures used, there are still limitations related to validity and measurement reliability. While Cronbach's alpha values for key variables indicated high reliability, some constructs may be influenced by additional contextual factors that were not accounted for in the study. The survey instruments used may also not fully capture the nuances of queer relationship dynamics, particularly in relation to external stressors such as discrimination, minority stress, or cultural expectations. Despite these limitations, the study contributes valuable insights into the understanding of queer relationships, reinforcing the importance of communication quality while challenging assumptions about the impact of relationship initiation methods.

Recommendations

Any study has space to improve the concepts and contexts analyzed. Through the process of creating and implementing a study, researchers stumble on ways that could have better executed the study. Other times, researchers find out new ventures on topics or areas to study that can further research within the scope of interest. Within this study, limitations of this study have been discussed. Now, the focus shifts to recommendations on what avenues to look into for future research to further explore the relationship quality of queer individuals and the factors that influence it.

One key recommendation is for future research to focus on recruiting a more diverse and representative sample of LGBTQIA+ individuals. The current study relied on a convenience sample primarily accessed through online recruitment, which may not fully capture the experiences of those from different racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, or geographical backgrounds. Expanding recruitment efforts to include participants from a broader range of communities would help increase the generalizability of the findings. Not only that, but it would provide a more comprehensive understanding of relationship dynamics across different subgroups within the queer population. Additionally, future research should explore how relationship quality and communication patterns differ based on factors such as relationship duration, age, or cultural influences, which were not explicitly accounted for in this study. Prior research has shown that dating applications are used differently across cultural contexts, with some platforms reinforcing existing social hierarchies while others facilitate connections among marginalized groups

(Baudinette, 2018). Future studies could investigate whether cultural differences affect how queer individuals experience and navigate online versus in-person relationships.

A second recommendation is to incorporate alternative data collection methods to address the limitations of self-reported data. Although self-reports are commonly used in relationship research, they are subject to biases such as social desirability and recall errors. Future studies could integrate partner reports to obtain a more balanced perspective on relationship quality and communication dynamics. Additionally, observational or experimental methods, such as analyzing recorded conversations between partners, could provide more objective insights into how communication influences relationship outcomes. These approaches would strengthen the reliability and validity of the findings and allow for a deeper exploration of communication processes.

Another recommendation is to conduct longitudinal research to assess how communication quality and relationship quality evolve over time. The present study identified communication as a strong predictor of satisfaction, commitment, and PRQC, but it remains unclear whether strong communication precedes higher relationship quality. Another aspect that remains unclear is whether individuals in satisfying relationships develop stronger communication skills over time. Longitudinal designs would help clarify the directionality of the relationship and determine whether early communication patterns in a relationship predict long-term outcomes. This approach could also examine whether the importance of communication varies at different relationship stages, from initial dating to long-term commitment.

Lastly, future research should also consider exploring additional contextual factors that may influence PRQC beyond communication quality and meeting method. This study demonstrated that communication quality plays a crucial role in relationship satisfaction and commitment. However, it did not account for external influences such as minority stress, discrimination, or social support networks. Prior research has found that digital dating platforms serve as both affirming and exclusionary spaces for queer individuals, influencing how they navigate relationships and community belonging (Blackwell et al., 2014). Investigating how these external factors interact with communication quality to shape relationship quality could provide a more nuanced understanding of queer relationship dynamics.

Implications

The findings of this study have several implications for positive social change at the individual, family, organizational, and societal levels, as well as methodological, theoretical, and empirical contributions. At the individual level, the study reinforces the importance of communication quality in fostering relationship quality among queer individuals. Recognizing that communication is the strongest predictor of relationship success can encourage individuals to actively develop their communication skills, leading to more fulfilling relationships. At the family level, these findings highlight that relationship success is not determined by how partners meet but by how they interact. This perspective can help shift familial attitudes toward greater acceptance and validation of LGBTQIA+ relationships leading to reduced stigma and fostering more supportive environments.

At the organizational level, these results can inform queer advocacy groups, relationship counselors, and mental health professionals working with queer couples. Given the strong relationship between communication quality and relationship satisfaction, organizations providing relationship support services should emphasize communication skill-building in their programs. Relationship education workshops and counseling models tailored to LGBTQIA+ experiences could equip individuals with strategies to navigate conflict and enhance emotional connection. Additionally, dating application developers can incorporate features that encourage meaningful conversations and relationship-building to support lasting connections.

At the societal and policy level, these findings challenge the assumption that online relationships are inherently less meaningful than those formed in person. Policies should recognize the legitimacy of various relationship initiation methods. Policymakers and educators should advocate for relationship education programs that teach effective communication skills within various relationship structures. These changes could help normalize and validate different ways of forming relationships, while also promoting healthy communication practices. Methodologically, this study utilizes a cross-sectional study design to capture only a single moment in a relationship's development. Although this is a great start, it makes it difficult to determine whether communication directly improves satisfaction or whether individuals in satisfying relationships naturally communicate better.

Moving on, there are also the important theoretical implications in understanding how relationship quality develops over time. The social exchange theory emphasizes the

role of communication in building trust, reciprocity, and emotional investment. However, the results of this study reinforce that effective communication is the strongest factor in predicting relationship satisfaction, commitment, and PRQC. Ultimately, this supports the idea that the quality of partner interactions has a greater impact on long-term relationship success than the initial conditions of how a relationship began. Additionally, these findings challenge aspects of attachment theory that suggest early relationship experiences, including how partners met, significantly shape long-term outcomes. As the results indicate, however, communication is a stabilizing force in relationships and each partners' ability to navigate challenges together matters more than whether they met online or in person.

Empirically, this study contributes to LGBTQIA+ relationship research by demonstrating that meeting method has minimal impact on long-term relationship outcomes, reinforcing the argument that relationship success is shaped more by interpersonal dynamics than by how partners meet. Prior research on dating applications has suggested that these platforms create both opportunities and challenges for queer individuals (Blackwell et al., 2014). This study extends that research by showing that while dating app users reported slightly higher communication quality, this difference was not significant. These findings suggest that future research should continue to explore how digital dating environments influence communication patterns in queer relationships.

In practice, relationship counselors, LGBTQIA+ organizations, and dating platforms should prioritize communication skill-building as a core aspect of relationship

success. Mental health professionals working with queer couples can incorporate structured communication training into their therapy approaches, while LGBTQIA+ organizations can develop workshops to help individuals strengthen their relational communication. Dating applications could design features that encourage more meaningful interactions beyond initial messaging. By reinforcing communication as the key to relationship success, this study contributes to positive social change by promoting stronger and healthier queer relationships.

Conclusion

This study explored the individual differences in relationship quality between queer individuals who met their partners in person versus those who met their partners through dating applications. In addition, it also examined how communication quality influenced these relationships. The findings demonstrated that although the method of relationship initiation had minimal impact on relationship aspects of relationship quality, communication quality emerged as the strongest and most consistent predictor of relationship success. Regardless of how a relationship was formed, those with higher communication quality reported significantly better relationship outcomes, reinforcing that interpersonal dynamics matter far more than the medium through which partners initially connect. These results challenge the notion that online-initiated relationships are inherently weaker or less meaningful than those formed in person and highlight the universal importance of communication in fostering relational well-being.

By emphasizing communication as the key factor in relationship success, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of queer relationship dynamics and provides

meaningful implications for individuals, families, professionals, and policymakers. The findings support a shift in focus from how relationships begin to how they are maintained. This highlights the need for and importance of communication skill-building as a central strategy for enhancing relationship quality. Given the growing reliance on digital platforms for romantic connections, this research also calls for continued exploration of how online interactions shape long-term relational experiences, particularly within LGBTQIA+ communities. Although this study provides valuable insights, it also acknowledges its limitations, including the use of a cross-sectional design, reliance on self-reported data, and potential sample constraints. Future research should employ longitudinal methods to assess how communication and relationship quality evolve over time and further investigate external factors that may impact queer relationships, such as cultural influences and minority stress.

Ultimately, the key takeaway from this study is clear: strong communication is the foundation of a satisfying and committed queer relationship. This does not change regardless of whether partners meet online or in person. Rather this research reinforces that relational success is built on how individuals interact and communicate with each other, rather than the circumstances of their initial connection.

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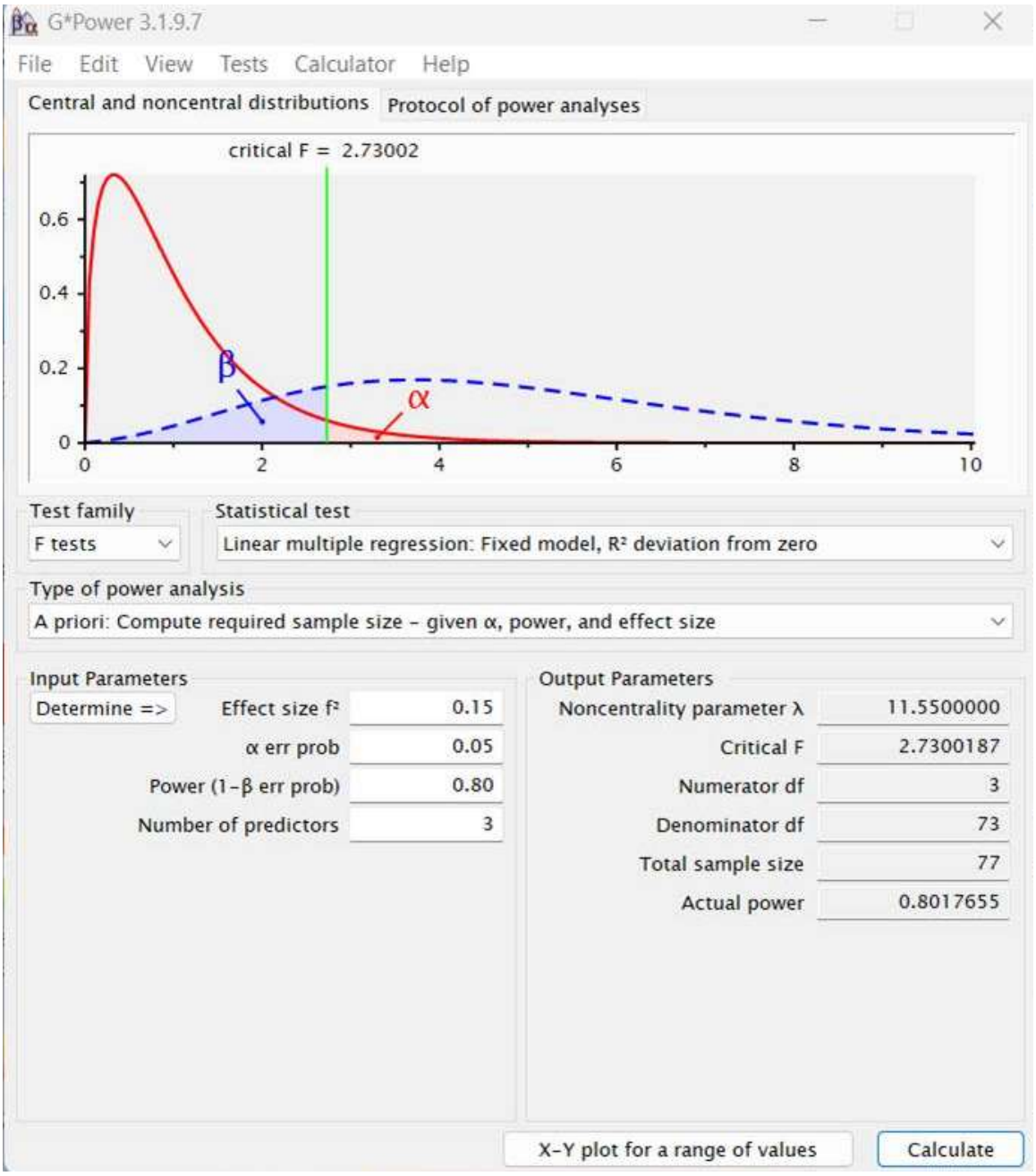
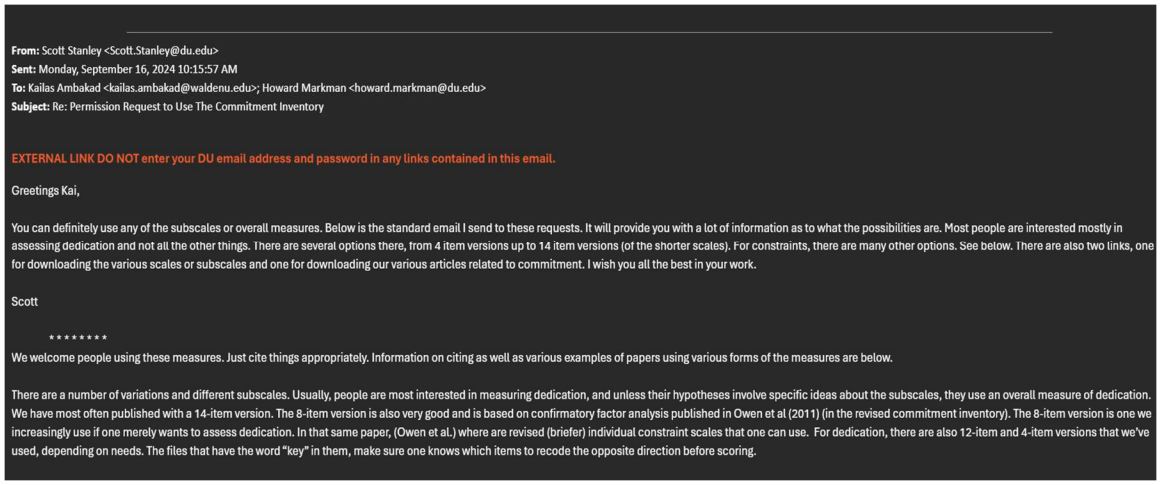
Appendix A: G*Power Analysis Output



Appendix B: Permission to Use Scales and Copy of Instruments

The 9-Item Commitment Inventory



From: Scott Stanley <Scott.Stanley@du.edu>
Sent: Monday, September 16, 2024 10:15:57 AM
To: Kailas Ambakad <kailas.ambakad@waldenu.edu>; Howard Markman <howard.markman@du.edu>
Subject: Re: Permission Request to Use The Commitment Inventory

EXTERNAL LINK DO NOT enter your DU email address and password in any links contained in this email.

Greetings Kai,

You can definitely use any of the subscales or overall measures. Below is the standard email I send to these requests. It will provide you with a lot of information as to what the possibilities are. Most people are interested mostly in assessing dedication and not all the other things. There are several options there, from 4 item versions up to 14 item versions (of the shorter scales). For constraints, there are many other options. See below. There are also two links, one for downloading the various scales or subscales and one for downloading our various articles related to commitment. I wish you all the best in your work.

Scott

****

We welcome people using these measures. Just cite things appropriately. Information on citing as well as various examples of papers using various forms of the measures are below.

There are a number of variations and different subscales. Usually, people are most interested in measuring dedication, and unless their hypotheses involve specific ideas about the subscales, they use an overall measure of dedication. We have most often published with a 14-item version. The 8-item version is also very good and is based on confirmatory factor analysis published in Owen et al (2011) (in the revised commitment inventory). The 8-item version is one we increasingly use if one merely wants to assess dedication. In that same paper, (Owen et al.) where are revised (briefer) individual constraint scales that one can use. For dedication, there are also 12-item and 4-item versions that we've used, depending on needs. The files that have the word "key" in them, make sure one knows which items to recode the opposite direction before scoring.

Please answer each question below by indicating how strongly you agree or disagree with the idea expressed. You can circle any number from 1 to 7 to indicate various levels of agreement or disagreement with the idea expressed. Please try to respond to each item.

1 = Strongly Disagree, 4 = Neither Agree Nor Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 My relationship with my partner is more important to me than almost anything else in my life.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 I want this relationship to stay strong no matter what rough times we may encounter.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 I get satisfaction out of doing things for my partner, even if it means I miss out on something I want for myself.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 I like to think of my partner and me more in terms of "us" and "we" than "me" and "him/her."

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 It can be personally fulfilling to give up something for my partner.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 My relationship with my partner is clearly part of my future life plans.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 It makes me feel good to sacrifice for my partner.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 I am not seriously attracted to anyone other than my partner.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 I want to grow old with my partner.

Couples Communication Satisfaction Scale

12-item Scale - 1 (Strongly disagree) to 6 (Strongly agree):

1 2 3 4 5 6 I openly tell this individual when I feel ignored by him or her.
1 2 3 4 5 6 I strongly express an opposing opinion when this individual and I disagree.
1 2 3 4 5 6 I freely discuss sex with this individual.
1 2 3 4 5 6 I tell this individual honestly when I am not interested in engaging in sexual activity.
1 2 3 4 5 6 I communicate to this individual when I want to try something new sexually.
1 2 3 4 5 6 If I cheat on this individual, I tell him or her about it.
1 2 3 4 5 6 I tell this individual my sexual fantasies.
1 2 3 4 5 6 I express my feelings to this individual when I am upset with him or her.
1 2 3 4 5 6 I tell this individual when he/she has hurt my feelings.
1 2 3 4 5 6 I correct this individual when he/she misunderstands me.
1 2 3 4 5 6 I do not defend myself when this individual criticizes me.
1 2 3 4 5 6 I tell this individual that I love him or her.

Relationship Assessment Scale

RELATIONSHIP ASSESSMENT SCALE

Reference:

Hendrick, S. S. (1988). A generic measure of relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 50,* 93–98.

Description of Measure:

A 7-item scale designed to measure general relationship satisfaction. Respondents answer each item using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (low satisfaction) to 5 (high satisfaction).

Abstracts of Selected Related Articles:

Aron, A., Norman, C. C., Aron, E. N., McKenna, C., & Heyman, R. E.(2000). Couples' shared participation in novel and arousing activities and experienced relationship quality. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 78*, 273-284.

> Using a newspaper questionnaire, a door-to-door survey, and 3 laboratory experiments, the authors examined a proposed effect of shared participation in novel and arousing activities on experienced relationship quality. The questionnaire and survey studies found predicted correlations of reported shared "exciting" activities and relationship satisfaction plus their predicted mediation by relationship boredom. In all 3 experiments, the authors found predicted greater increases in experienced relationship quality from before to after participating together in a 7-min novel and arousing (vs. a more mundane) task. Comparison with a no-activity control showed the effect was due to the novel-arousing task. The same effect was found on ratings of videotaped discussions before and after the experimental task. Finally, all results remained after controlling for relationship social desirability. Results bear on general issues of boredom and excitement in relationships and the role of such processes in understanding the typical early decline of relationship quality after the honeymoon period.

Self Report Measures for Love and Compassion Research: *General Relationship Satisfaction* Fetzer Institute

7-Item Scale:

1 2 3 4 5 How well does your partner meet your needs?
1 2 3 4 5 In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?
1 2 3 4 5 How good is your relationship compared to most?
1 2 3 4 5 How often do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship?
1 2 3 4 5 To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?
1 2 3 4 5 How much do you love your partner?
1 2 3 4 5 How many problems are there in your relationship?

Scoring:

Items 4 and 7 are reverse-scored. Scoring is kept continuous. The higher the score, the more satisfied the respondent is with his/her relationship.

Perceived Relationship Quality Component Scale

Relationship Science Online

www.relationshipscienceonline.com

Relationship Health Assessment

(The Perceived Relationship Quality Component Scale [PRQC])

This document includes:

- **A measure of relationship quality formatted for administration to a client – The Perceived Relationship Quality Component Scale (PRQC, Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000)**
- **An annotated item-by-item description regarding scale composition**
- **Scoring instructions**

Please read each of the following items carefully and, using the rating scale, rate your current partner and relationship (ranging from 1 = not at all to 7 = extremely). Please circle your response:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7	How satisfied are you with your relationship?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	How committed are you to your relationship?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	How intimate is your relationship?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	How much do you trust your partner?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	How passionate is your relationship?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	How much do you love your partner?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	How content are you with your relationship?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	How dedicated are you to your relationship?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	How close is your relationship?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	How much can you count on your partner?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	How lustful is your relationship?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	How much do you adore your partner?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	How happy are you with your relationship?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	How devoted are you to your relationship?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	How connected are you to your partner?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	How dependable is your partner?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	How sexually intense is your relationship?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	How much do you cherish your partner?

Item composition – Perceived Relationship Quality Components (PRQC) Scale

1	Satisfaction	How satisfied are you with your relationship?
2	Commitment	How committed are you to your relationship?
3	Intimacy	How intimate is your relationship?
4	Trust	How much do you trust your partner?
5	Passion	How passionate is your relationship?
6	Love	How much do you love your partner?
7	Satisfaction	How content are you with your relationship?
8	Commitment	How dedicated are you to your relationship?
9	Intimacy	How close is your relationship?
10	Trust	How much can you count on your partner?
11	Passion	How lustful is your relationship?
12	Love	How much do you adore your partner?
13	Satisfaction	How happy are you with your relationship?
14	Commitment	How devoted are you to your relationship?
15	Intimacy	How connected are you to your partner?
16	Trust	How dependable is your partner?
17	Passion	How sexually intense is your relationship?
18	Satisfaction	How much do you cherish your partner?

Scoring:

The following six total scores were then computed:

(1) The Satisfaction score is computed by averaging items 1, 7, and 13. Higher scores reflect greater relationship satisfaction.

(2) The Commitment score is computed by averaging items 2, 8, and 14. Higher scores reflect greater commitment.

(3) The Intimacy score is computed by averaging items 3, 9, and 15. Higher scores reflect greater intimacy.

(4) The Trust score is computed by averaging items 4, 10, and 16. Higher scores reflect greater levels of trust.

(5) The Passion score is computed by averaging items 5, 11, and 17. Higher scores reflect greater levels of passion.

(6) The Love score is computed by averaging items 6, 12, and 18. Higher scores reflect greater levels of love.

Appendix C: Queer Connections Survey Instrument

1. How would you describe your sexual orientation?
    - Lesbian
    - Gay
    - Bisexual
    - Pansexual
    - Asexual
    - Queer
    - Self-describe: _____

2. Will you be completing this survey based on your current relationship or previous relationship?
    - Current
    - Previous

3. How did you first meet your current partner?
    - Through a dating application
    - In-person (e.g. through friends, work, bar, or social events)
    - Other: _____

4. Please answer each question below by sliding the marker to how strongly you agree or disagree with the idea expressed. Please try to respond to each item.
   1 = Strongly Disagree, 4 = Neither Agree Nor Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree
    - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
      My relationship with my partner is more important to me than almost anything else in my life.
    - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
      I want this relationship to stay strong no matter what rough times we may encounter.
    - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
      I get satisfaction out of doing things for my partner, even if it means I miss out on something I want for myself.
    - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
      I like to think of my partner and me more in terms of “us” and “we” than “me” and “him/her.”
    - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
      It can be personally fulfilling to give up something for my partner.
    - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
      My relationship with my partner is clearly part of my future life plans.
    - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
      It makes me feel good to sacrifice for my partner.
    - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
      I am not seriously attracted to anyone other than my partner.
    - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
      I want to grow old with my partner.

5. On a scale of 1 (Strongly disagree) to 6 (Strongly agree), based on whether your answering this survey using your current or previous romantic relationship, please read each of the following items carefully and rate your response:
    - 1 2 3 4 5 6
      I openly tell this individual when I feel ignored by him or her.
    - 1 2 3 4 5 6
      I strongly express an opposing opinion when this individual and I disagree.
    - 1 2 3 4 5 6
      I freely discuss sex with this individual.
    - 1 2 3 4 5 6
      I tell this individual honestly when I am not interested in engaging in sexual activity.
    - 1 2 3 4 5 6
      I communicate to this individual when I want to try something new sexually.
    - 1 2 3 4 5 6
      If I cheat on this individual, I tell him or her about it.
    - 1 2 3 4 5 6
      I tell this individual my sexual fantasies.
    - 1 2 3 4 5 6
      I express my feelings to this individual when I am upset with him or her.
    - 1 2 3 4 5 6
      I do not defend myself when this individual criticizes me.
    - 1 2 3 4 5 6
      I tell this individual when he/she has hurt my feelings.
    - 1 2 3 4 5 6
      I tell this individual that I love him or her.
    - 1 2 3 4 5 6
      I correct this individual when he/she misunderstands me.

6. On a scale of 1 to 5, please score each of the items below based on your experience of the current/previous relationship:
    - 1 2 3 4 5
      How well does your partner meet your needs?
    - 1 2 3 4 5
      In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?
    - 1 2 3 4 5
      How good is your relationship compared to most?
    - 1 2 3 4 5
      To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?
    - 1 2 3 4 5
      How much do you love your partner?
    - 1 2 3 4 5
      How many problems are there in your relationship?
    - 1 2 3 4 5
      How often do you wish you hadn’t gotten into this relationship?

7. Please read each of the following items carefully and, using the rating scale, rate your current/previous partner and relationship
   1 = not at all to 7 = extremely
   - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
     How satisfied are you with your relationship?
   - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
     How committed are you to your relationship?
   - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
     How intimate is your relationship?
   - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
     How much do you trust your partner?
   - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
     How passionate is your relationship?
   - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
     How much do you love your partner?
   - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
     How content are you with your relationship?
   - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
     How dedicated are you to your relationship?
   - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
     How close is your relationship?
   - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
     How much can you count on your partner?
   - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
     How lustful is your relationship?
   - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
     How much do you adore your partner?
   - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
     How happy are you with your relationship?
   - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
     How devoted are you to your relationship?
   - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
     How connected are you to your partner?
   - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
     How dependable is your partner?
   - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
     How sexually intense is your relationship?
   - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
     How much do you cherish your partner?