Why Do Social Work Students Engage in Lesbian and Gay Rights Activism?

Eric Swank

Department of Sociology, Social Work, and Criminology, Morehead State University, Morehead, Kentucky, USA

Breanne Fahs

Women and Gender Studies Program, Arizona State University, Glendale, Arizona, USA

This paper considers the contexts and motivations as to why some social work students engage in lesbian and gay rights activism. To explain electoral and protesting modes of activism, this study utilized variables from resource, mobilizing, and framing theories of political participation to explain activism related to gay and lesbian rights. After gathering data on 159 undergraduate social work majors, regressions suggest that economic resources failed to explain participation in gay and lesbian politics. Instead, the predictors of gay and lesbian activism more closely aligned with four key variables: educational attainment, communicating with full-fledged activists, having an ability to recognize heterosexism, and maintaining a commitment to social justice.

Keywords: Activism, collective behavior, homosexuality, gay rights, political participation, social movements, social identity

INTRODUCTION

To recognize the damaging effects of sexual prejudice and discrimination, numerous social work organizations insist that social workers should confront all discrimination and biases against sexual minorities (the first National Association of Social Work (NASW) argument against homophobia[1] was ratified in 1977). For example, the 2008 revised NASW Code of Ethics argued, "Social workers should act to prevent and eliminate domination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against any . . . sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression" (NASW, 2008, section 6.04d). Clearly, one way to eliminate discrimination is to diminish practitioner biases that impede effective interventions for gay or lesbian clients (Liddle, 1999; Mohr, Israel, & Sedlacek, 2001; Ryan, 2000; Saulnier, 2002). Accordingly, there is a burgeoning literature on heterosexist assumptions among social workers (e.g., Berkman & Zinberg, 1997; Crisp, 2005; Liddle, 1999) and social work students (e.g., Chonody, Siebert, & Rutledge, 2009; Cluse-Tolar, Lambert, Ventura, & Pasupuleti, 2004; Newman, Dannenflesr, & Benishek, 2002; Snively, Kreuger, Stretch, Watt, & Chandha, 2004; Seelman & Walls, 2010; Swank & Raiz, 2007). While these studies predict the presence

Address correspondence to Eric Swank, Department of Sociology, Social Work, and Criminology, Morehead State University, 322 Rader Hall, Morehead, KY 40351, USA. E-mail: e.swank@morehead-st.edu

of heterosexist thoughts in respondents, they do not show how these beliefs translate into either micro- or macro-practice modalities for social workers themselves.

Social workers can seek macro-change by entering the political arenas that create and implement detrimental policies. Recognizing this point, the preamble for the code of Social Work Ethics reads: "Social Workers promote social justice and social change with and on the behalf of clients ... [through] direct practice, community organizing, social and political activism." While some social workers have always engaged in community and political activism for lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) rights, empirical research on this subject does not exist. This current study addresses this omission by concentrating on the factors that may inspire college undergraduates to engage in activism on the behalf of gay and lesbian rights. Accordingly, this research is driven by two questions: (1) What are the contextual and social psychological antecedents to lesbian and gay rights activism and (2) are demographic factors such as gender, income, and educational connected to involvement in the gay and lesbian rights movement?

By assembling possible antecedents to LGB rights activism, this study integrates three compatible literatures. First, our theoretical model is based on the general "resource," "mobilization," and "collective action" theories of political participation (Brady, Verba, & Scholzman, 1995; McAdam & Paulsen, 1993; Klandermans, 1997; Snow & Benford, 1992). Second, this paper also draws on early social scientific studies about people who typically protest for LGB or transgender rights (Fingerhut, 2011; Lombardi, 1999; Simon, Lowry, Sturmer, Weber, & Freitag, 1998; Swank & Fahs, 2011; Waldner, 2001; Wilkinson & Sagarin, 2010) and who advocate for better AIDS policies (Elbaz, 1996; Jennings & Andersen, 2003; Rollins & Hirsch, 2003). Last, the paper incorporates findings from studies on political participation among social work students (Aviram & Katan, 1991; Rocha, 2000; Weiss & Kauffman, 2006) and employed social workers (e.g., Andrews, 1998; Ezell, 1993; Hamilton & Fauri, 2001; Parker & Sherradan, 1992; Ritter, 2008; Wolk, 1981).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social movements are collective efforts that use both insider and outsider tactics to force change in reluctant opponents. Insider tactics focus on the electoral approaches of voting, campaign contributions, or petition drives while outsider tactics include the direct action means of protesting as well as various kinds of civil disobedience. New social movements, such as the LGB movement, use both types of tactics when they focus on the "politics of recognition" and "politics of redistribution" (Bernstein, 1997; Fraser, 1995; Taylor & Whittier, 1992). By prioritizing the politics of recognition, segments of the LGB rights movement want to challenge and eliminate detrimental social customs. When confronting heteronormative thoughts and actions, segments of the LGB rights movement want to break the veil of silence, normalize same-sex relationships, and deconstruct the justifications of heterosexism and compulsory heterosexuality, among other things. The instrumental and redistribution wings of the LGB rights movement center on improving governmental laws, policies, and regulations. This "state-centered" approach emphasizes the expansion of rights, statuary protections, and proper governmental spending through the use of "insider" and "outsider" political tactics.[2]

Theories of Political Participation

We began our theorizing with the much-cited "resource-model" of political participation (Brady et al., 1995). Offering a succinct answer to why people refrain from politics, the resource-model asserts, "because they can't, because they don't want to, or because nobody asked" (Brady et al.,

1995, p. 271). With regard to "they can't," many people refrain from politics because of a supposed dearth of necessary resources. While crucial resources may come in many forms, they emphasize the importance of financial conditions, free time, and civic skills. The predicament of "they don't want to" deals with a lack of psychological interest in politics. An indifference to politics and policy is sometimes belied as stupidity or indolence, but the resource model assumes that blasé attitudes derive from a lower sense of political efficacy or greater levels of individualism. Finally, the "nobody asked" factor implies that people are isolated from the recruitment networks that promote activism. That is, political bystanders are often excluded from the social networks that convey the values and information that make activism probable.

"They Can't": The Role of Income, Education, and Status Hierarchies

The resource model assumes that class and status hierarchies are fundamental to political inclinations and activism (Brady et al., 1995; Leighley & Vedlitz, 1999; Lim, 2008). According to these authors, a person's class location grants or impedes access to opportunities and financial resources that facilitate activism. Consequently, people at higher socioeconomic levels amass and retain the structural elicitors of activism, be it more money, wider educational opportunities, greater amounts of free time, or more chances to lead people in day-to-day scenarios.

Numerous studies argue that affluence predicts political activism in samples of the general public (Brady et al., 1995; Leighley & Velditz, 1999; Oliver, 1984; Wallace & Jenkins, 1995) and collegiate undergraduates (Paulsen, 1994). When moving to social workers, the impact of income on activism becomes less clear. A few studies argue that social workers are more political when they have higher incomes and more financial assets (Parker & Sherradan, 1992; Wolk, 1981). However, other studies find no such relationship (Andrews, 1998; Ezell, 1993; Hamilton & Fauri, 2001; Ritter, 2008; Swank, 2012). Similarly, matters of income and occupational status show inconsistent results for LGB activism. Some studies suggest that higher-income gays and lesbians attended more demonstration for gay rights (Jennings & Andersen, 2003; Lombardi, 1999; Taylor, Kimport, Van Dyke, & Andersen, 2009) while other studies have not replicated these findings (Elbaz, 1996; Rollins & Hirsch, 2003; Sturmer & Simon, 2004; Swank & Fahs, 2011, 2012).

The resource model also asserts that educational attainment leads to greater political engagement. A set of general population studies connects greater educational attainment to greater levels of electoral and protest activities activism (Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010; Finkel & Muller, 1998; Kingston & Finkel, 1987; Leighley & Velditz, 1999, Lim, 2008; Wallace & Jenkins, 1995). Studies among social workers often assert that educational attainment inspires greater levels of activism among practicing social workers (Andrews, 1998; Chui & Gray, 2004; Ezell, 1993; Parker & Sherradan, 1992; Wolk, 1981). Conversely, the role of education is a little less obvious for gay rights activists. Four studies have suggested that ACT UP members and gay activists were highly educated (Elbaz, 1996; Rollins & Hirsch, 2003; Swank & Fahs, 2011, 2012) while three studies claimed that educational attainment was not connected to LGB activism (Lombardi, 1999; Sturmer & Simon, 2004; Waldner, 2001). Heterosexuals who became lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans (LGBT) allies also seemed to have greater educational attainment (Fingerhut, 2011).

The relationship between gender status and political participation is far from certain. Some studies suggest that until the 1970s, women were slightly less likely to vote or join political protests (Kingston & Finkel, 1987; Wallace & Jenkins, 1995). Some studies suggest that women are still less likely to protest than men (Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010), but most studies on contemporary populations suggest that this gender gap disappeared or has even been reversed (Lieghley & Nagler, 1992; Paulsen, 1994; Hritzuk & Park, 2000; Schussman & Soule, 2005). Studies on a political action "gender gap" among social workers were more conclusive. One study of social workers in Hong Kong found that male respondents were more politically active (Chui & Gray, 2004), and another study found that conservative female social students protested less than their

conservative male counterparts (Swank, 2012). In every other study, gender failed to predict the political engagement of social workers (Andrews, 1998; Ritter, 2008; Rocha, 2000; Wolk, 1981). Studies of LGB activism mostly echo this lack of gender effects (Jennings & Andersen, 2003; Rollins & Hirsch, 2003; Swank & Fahs, 2011, 2012; Taylor et al., 2009; Waldner, 2001), but one study argued that gay men attend more protests than lesbians (Herek, Norton, Allen, & Sims, 2010). Finally, gender could have an inverse relationship for heterosexuals because heterosexual women more often joined an LGBT support group than did heterosexual men (Fingerhut, 2011; Montgomery & Stewart, 2012).

Previous studies sometimes find links between political participation and racial backgrounds. For example, African American high school and college students protested more regularly than Euro-American students in the 1970s (Paulsen, 1994) and in the 1990s (Dolan, 1995). Other studies contend that race is most important for the type of activism performed. Compared to people of color, heterosexual Whites more often voted, made campaign contributions, or volunteered for elected officials (Bobo & Gilliam, 1990; Leighley & Velditz, 1999). Further, Blacks, but not Latino(a)s or Asian Americans, had a greater tendency to turn to protest activities than did Whites (Martinez, 2005; Paulsen, 1994; Schussman & Soule, 2005). Theoretically, the racist legacy of blocked opportunities in electoral realms has made social movements preferred vehicles of social change for Blacks and Latino(a)s.

Social work studies have occasionally confirmed some of these patterns. Two studies found that African American social workers and MSW students wrote more letters to Congress, attended more political meetings, and joined more community organizing efforts than white Euro-Americans with lesser academic degrees (Ezell, 1993; Rocha, 2000). Nevertheless, five studies argue that race of respondents was irrelevant when addressing the electoral activities of social work students (Swank, 2012) and social workers in Michigan (Wolk, 1981), South Carolina (Andrews, 1998) and throughout the nation (Parker & Sherradan, 1992; Ritter, 2008). Finally, a recent study discovered no relationship between race and the electoral practices of sexual minorities (Swank & Fahs, 2012).

"They Don't Want to": Framing Grievances, Efficacy, and Collective Identities

Frames are generally conceived as cultural tools or schemas that provide "tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters" (Gitlin, 1980, p. 6). While conservative frames prioritize conformity and deference to conventional standards, collective action frames do the exact opposite. By offering cultural justifications of dissent, collective action frames provide a rationale to protest against unjust social arrangements. Or, in the words of William Gamson (1992), "collective action frames are 'sets of action oriented beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate [collective action]'" (p. 7).

Movement theorists have identified several dimensions of collective action frames (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLuaglin-Volpe, 2004; Gamson, 1992; Klandermans, 1997). First, collective action frames initially render some societal norms as wrong, unacceptable, and unjust. By naming the injustice, Snow and Benford (1992) suggested that these frames serve as "accenting devices that either underscore or embellish the seriousness and injustice of a social condition or redefines it as unjust immoral" (p. 137). These injustice frames can highlight many sorts of maltreatments, but they often elicit greater salience when they focus on violations of fairness or equity norms. Second, frames identify the causes of the injustice. By serving a diagnostic function, frames are etiologies that explain why problems exist and assign levels of blame or capability to different entities. By making these attributions, frames highlight the sorts of practices that should be modified, transformed, or eliminated. Third, frames also convince bystanders that they should use political tactics to stop these violations. These prognostic aspects of frames usually emphasize the urgency of political action and a sense that challenges from less powerful constituencies

can force concessions from a reluctant, dominant target. Such confidence in movement tactics is sometimes called "agency" or a "sense of collective efficacy." Finally, frames must provide a collective or shared identity among the aggrieved. These activist identities often contest and refute societal claims that members of their group are inferior, worthless, sick, or maladjusted. Instead, collective action frames offer narratives about the virtues of similar people by claiming that their group is illegitimately threatened, deprived, or treated badly. These collective identities enhance a sense of solidarity and loyalty for the people who share the same problems while also fostering some distrust of or contempt for the people or institutions that maintain these problems.

Numerous studies concur that injustice frames are relevant to joining social movements (Finkel & Muller, 1998). Feminist activism occurs more often when women notice power imbalances among men and women (Kelly & Breilinger, 1995; Cole, Zucker, & Ostrove, 1998) while civil rights activism is more common when African Americans see systematic forms of racial discrimination (Beyerlein & Andrews, 2008). Likewise, MSW students who see a just world are less likely to advocate on the behalf of women, people of color, and sexual minorities (Morrison Van Voorhis & Hoestetter, 2006; Van Soest, 1996). The acceptance of "old-fashioned" heterosexism may be important as sexual minorities who criticized homosexuality, or were opposed to same-sex marriages, were less inclined to join political protests (Swank & Fahs, 2011; Taylor et al., 2009). Further, most studies have not incorporated any measures of "new" or "modern" forms of heterosexism into their analysis. Modern heterosexism can be crucial because it focuses on the recognition or denial of societal discrimination against gays and lesbians (Morrison & Morrison, 2002; Seelman & Walls, 2010). Without an awareness of systematic and exploitative power imbalances between heterosexuals and gays and lesbians, any calls for liberation might seem unnecessary, nonsensical, or outlandish (Montgomery & Stewart, 2012).

To date, the role of efficacy interpretations in political activism is far from settled (Bobo & Gilliam, 1990; Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010). Studies of social work practitioners contend that human service workers are more politically active when they think social movements have the capabilities to produce social change (Hamilton & Fauri, 2001; Pawlack & Flynn, 1990; Ritter, 2008). When addressing LGB rights activism and levels of personal efficacy, Jennings and Andersen (2003) suggested that gay men were more likely to join AIDS advocacy groups when they thought they had a good understanding of political issues. Other studies suggest that gays and lesbians vote more and attend more demonstrations when they see greater power among sexual minorities (Swank & Fahs, 2011, 2012). However, other studies suggest that perceptions of collective efficacy were irrelevant to college student activism on the behalf of a lesbian and gay student center (Wilkinson & Sagarin, 2010) or how often married gays and lesbians joined gay rights groups or attended a political demonstration (Taylor et al., 2009). Finally, Waldner (2001) warns that confidence in one's political competencies might have different effects than confidence in a group's ability to change institutional practices.

Issues of collective identities and self-concepts can change a person's political behaviors in many ways. Advocacy on behalf of oneself and others is often interwoven with issues of closeness to oppressed groups and moral obligations to work for social change. When discussing solidarity within the LGB community, two studies suggest that gays who like and respect other gays and lesbians join more protests (Gould, 2002; Simon, Lowry, Sturmer, Weber, & Freitag, 1998). On top of bonding with a stigmatized group, collective identities can be connected to narratives of how to display a desired or idealized self and how to live a principled life (Kelly & Breilinger, 1995; Oliver, 1984; Opp, 1990; Polleta & Jasper, 2001). Supporting this assertion, one study found that lesbians challenge homophobic comments more often when they embraced the activist norms of "standing up for what's right" and defending the rights of subordinated groups (Hyers, 2007).

The importance of moral commitments could also vary by sexual identity. Myers (2008) has argued that heterosexual allies probably rely more on a "commitment-based rather experienced-based activist identity" than do gay and lesbian activists (p. 169). This is due to the merits

of authenticity and synchronizing one's actions with one's self-concepts. At a personal level, heterosexual students who distrust heterosexism may feel guilty, disingenuous or complicit with wrongdoing if they never rebel against it. By being an LGB activist, heterosexuals can "be real" by publicly defying their undeserved advantages, show empathy toward oppressed sexual minorities, and symbolically remove the shame of being an oppressor (Fingerhut, 2011; Wilkinson & Sagarin, 2010).

In studies of social workers, ethical reasons for activism seem especially important in predicting activist behavior. A study of Israeli social work students discovered a greater willingness to be politically involved when the students saw a congruency between social work and social action (Weiss & Kaufman, 2006). Similarly, one study found higher political participation among professors who thought social work was "inherently political" and that it is an ethical responsibility to engage in political activities (Mary, 2001), and another found that agency directors were less politically active when they thought such actions were inappropriate for a person in their profession (Pawlak & Flynn, 1990).

"Nobody Asked": Recruitment Networks and Belonging to Civic Groups

Theories about "mobilizing structures" suggest that residing in certain social environments fosters greater political activism (Lim, 2008; McAdam & Paulsen, 1993; McCarthy, 1996; Passy, 2001; Polleta & Jasper, 2001; Taylor, 1989). Social networks, which represent webs of recurring interactions between people and groups, always convey some sort of beliefs, values, norms, and identities. While the content of networks is filtered through a complicated interpretive process, most people derive their worldviews and identities from their immersion in contexts that praise prevailing social orders and dismiss the worth of minority groups. However, some networks transmit collective action frames that contest conventional social scripts and suggest that political challenges are necessary, important, and worthwhile. While the communication between network partners can inspire activist inclinations, such exchanges can also draw people into specific political mobilizations. Political parties, committed partisans, and movement activists often try to motivate activism through different persuasive techniques (e.g., face-to-face conversations, phone calls, e-mail, direct mail). As such, social networks seem to play the dual purpose of pushing and pulling people into political activism. In effect, social networks boost political engagement because they often convey the attitudes that make people prone or receptive to activism, and they also disseminate the logistical information that makes activism possible. In fact, budding activists were more likely to act on their political predispositions when they were encouraged or asked to be active by someone who they personally knew (Finkel & Muller, 1998; Hritzuk & Park, 2000; Lim, 2008; Ritter, 2008; Schussman, & Soule, 2005; Swank, 2012).

By exploring possible antecedents to gay rights activism, our multivariate analysis incorporated variables from each of the three domains in the resource model. To address demographic factors, this paper explored the relevance of the students' educational attainment, gender, and racial background. For framing factors, we explored the resonance of modern sexist attitudes, interpretations of collective power, and activist self-identities. For network factors, we explored the ramifications of having feminist friends and knowing politically active people.

METHODS

Sample

This study drew upon the impressions of 159 BSW students—both heterosexual-identified and LGB-identified—in the United States. To establish a stratified sample, this study selected respondents through two channels. By seeking a pool of fully engaged student activists, the lead

researcher distributed surveys at several college-based protests throughout the Midwest and South (Indiana University, Ohio State University, University of Kentucky). Most of these protests focused on antiwar activism, but one of them highlighted expanding health benefits to gay and lesbian domestic partners. These protests occurred from winter 2001 through spring 2002. To maximize the likelihood of completed surveys, the researcher asked the protesters to complete the survey before they left the event. Thirty-seven of our 159 BSW participants were derived from these protests.

To create a comparison group of nonactivists, this study also distributed surveys to students who belonged to 12 colleges throughout the United States (fall of 2000). To create this comparative group, we initially separated all public campuses into research, doctoral, master's, or baccalaureate clusters (using the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education). This creation of four clusters enabled access to students from many sorts of colleges, including large research campuses and smaller, state-run commuter colleges. Next, three schools were randomly selected from each of the four stratums[3] (see footnote 3 for school names).

After selecting these 12 colleges, we contacted faculty from each institution (via e-mail). Professors in the natural sciences, humanities, social sciences, and business were asked to administer surveys in their classrooms as student attitudes have previously differed by such majors (Astin, 1993). With participation being purely voluntary, 28 of the 338 contacted professors decided to distribute and collect the surveys during one of their class sessions (8.2%). Four of these professors taught in BSW programs, and these four provided the data for this study.[4]

In total, 159 BSW students completed the survey. As expected, this sample had a higher proportion of women (89.3%). The racial breakdown seemed to mirror that of many public institutions, with 85% Euro-American, 7% African American, 5% Latino(a), and less than 1% Native or Asian American participants. Likewise, the age pyramid conformed to familiar trends as the mean age was 26.4 years, and 48% of the students were between ages 18 and 22 (standard deviation [SD] equals 9.5, and the mode was 22 years old). Finally, the social-class composition of the sample was slightly skewed toward lower-middle incomes. Twenty-seven percent of the students reported a family income of less than $20,000 a year, another 28% had incomes between $21,000 and $40,000, 40% had incomes of $41,000 to $80,000, and 15% had family incomes above $81,000.

Measures

The survey collected information on general political attitudes. Almost every item recorded responses using a five-point Likert scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree). In the standard fashion, these responses were coded with scores of 1 to 5 (strongly agree generally equaled 5). The more idiosyncratic coding procedures are described below.

Engaging in LGB activism was based on a political-activities approach. Respondents were given a checklist of many different ways to be politically active (Barnes & Kaase, 1979). Five of the behaviors in this study addressed electoral means of influencing governmental policies (e.g., making financial contributions to elected officials, writing a letter to a politician, signing a petition, handing out political fliers, and volunteering for a political group), while four items dealt with more unconventional and protesting tactics (going to a legal demonstration, engaging in civil disobedience, picketing a building, and protesting another group). Students were also asked about the political causes that motivated such actions. If students indicated that they engaged in any of these political actions for gay or lesbian rights or AIDS issues, they were deemed LGB rights activists. In total, 25 of the 159 students indicated that they had engaged in either electoral or protest activities on the behalf of LGB rights or AIDS issues (20 of these 25 LGB activist students came from the sample of political demonstrations, and 5 belonged to the comparison

TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics for Electoral and Protest Activities for Lesbian and Gay Rights

Action	% Yes	Action	% Yes
Electoral		Protest	
Sign a petition	15.7	Go to a legal demonstration	9.4
Write a letter to a politician	9.4	Protest another group	5.0
Hand out political fliers	6.9	Picket a building	2.1
Volunteer for a political group	5.6	Do civil disobedience	.1
Make a financial contribution to a politician	2.5		

Note. ($n = 159$).

group). Finally, two additive scales were constructed for electoral or protest activities on the behalf of LGB rights or AIDS issues (Table 1).

Most of the demographic variables were measured through dichotomous dummy variables. For gender, respondents were asked "What is your sex" (female = 1, male = 0). Race was determined by their response to the question "How would you classify your race/ethnicity?" Although it is better to identify variance by all races, the small number of Asian, Latino(a), and Native American students led to the binary coding of Euro-American = 1 and others = 0.

Some of the other demographic factors were measured through closed-end scales. Social class was determined through a family income scale (there were 10 categories that started at under $10,000 and ended with above $151,000). For educational attainment, students were asked to "Please indicate your highest level of education." Undergraduates who said they were first-year students received a 1 while seniors were given a 4.

The variable "feminist friends" traced the extent to which peers criticized conventional gender roles and approved of women's rights activism among peer referents "Many of my friends are feminists" (Strongly Agree = 5). The variable "recruitment networks" dealt with issues of access to peers who shared relevant information about ongoing or future political campaigns: "Have any friends ever asked you to go to a political event?" To code the dichotomous responses, yes equaled 1 and no equaled 0.

All of the collective action frames were measured through Likert scales. The injustice frame dealt with issues of "modern heterosexism" (Morrison & Morrison, 2002), a kind of sexual prejudice that fails to recognize discrimination and heterosexual privilege: "Too often heterosexuals are unfairly accused of being homophobic" (Strongly Agree = 5).

The concept of collective efficacy was assessed through interpretation of the potential efficacy of different movement tactics (Finkel & Mueller, 1998). Four items asked about how much signature drives, demonstrations, and "sit-ins" helped the social movement achieve its goals (Cronbach $\acute{\alpha}$ = .650; "Helped a lot" = 5; "Hurt a lot" = 1). Total scores in this additive scale ranged from 4 to 20.

Activist identities were detected through a five-item composite scale on politicized self-concepts (Cronbach $\acute{\alpha}$ = .700). The first two questions dealt with the extent that people felt obliged to protest: "I see myself as someone who is involved in promoting social justice" and "I feel guilty when I am politically active" (similar to Opp, 1990; Kelly & Breilinger, 1995). Another item dealt with support for collective efforts to assuage injustice: "If we leave well enough alone, eventually men and women will be treated equally" (Strongly Agree = 1). Finally, to address the belief that the respondent must remain active in order to compensate for the political apathy of others, we posed "I must be politically active since most people are politically inactive" (Strongly Agree = 5).

TABLE 2
OLS Regressions of Resource, Framing and Mobilizing Variables on Electoral and Protest
Forms of Lesbian and Gay Rights Activism

Independent Variable	Electoral Activities			Protest Activities		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
Resources						
Income	−.03	(.03)	−.08	−.01	(.01)	−.06
Educational attainment	.37	(.12)	.23**	.18	(.06)	.19**
Male	−.08	(.25)	−.02	−.07	(.14)	−.03
Euro American	−.41	(.22)	−.13	−.22	(.12)	−.13
Collective action frames						
Modern heterosexism	−.10	(.08)	−.09	−.11	(.05)	−.14*
Activist identity	.06	(.03)	.15	.03	(.01)	.17*
Collective efficacy	.01	(.04)	.03	.02	(.02)	.06
Mobilizing structures						
Recruiting network	.35	(.11)	.23**	.19	(.06)	.22**
Adjusted R^2		.20			.24	
F		6.16**			6.83**	

Note. Cell scores include the standardized and unstandardized coefficients plus standard errors.
($n = 159$).
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$.

RESULTS

Our objective was to determine the effects of resource, mobilizing, and collective action frames on electoral and protest activism for LGB rights. To assess the relative strength of resource, mobilization and framing variables, Table 2 displays the results of two ordinary least square regressions. Each regression contains the full model as we simultaneously regressed all of the independent variable on a single dependent variable. As expected, the sample met all of the assumptions to run these statistics (constant variance, independence, and normal distributions). Multicolinearity diagnostics also suggested low variance inflation factors (VIF) in each regression because the VIF was below 1.42 for every independent variable. With a pair-wise treatment of missing data, any person who failed to answer an item was automatically removed from the regressions in this study.

The regressions suggest that the resource variables were the weakest predictors of LGB activism in a multivariate context. When holding the framing and mobilizing variables constant, only educational attainment displayed significant direct associations to electoral and protest activities ($\beta = .23$ and .19, $p < .01$). Income, gender, and race failed to offer any significant relationships with either electoral or protest behaviors.

The framing variables had mixed results. When exploring the electoral realm, there were no significant connections for any of the framing variables. In other words, noticing heterosexism, seeing oneself as an activist, and perceptions of tactical power did not have a direct effect on engaging in electoral activism. Several of the framing factors gained importance in the realm of protest and contentions politics. Net of the relationship with other independent variables, having an activist identity elevated protesting behaviors ($\beta = .17$, $p < .05$) while ignoring LGB discrimination deterred such activities ($\beta = −.14$, $p < .05$). Finally, a sense of efficacy seemed unconnected to participants' political actions.

Last, the mobilization factor of recruiting networks furnished some of the largest coefficients in the study. Even after controlling for framing factors, being asked to participate in a political event inspired both types of LGB activism equally well ($\beta = .22$ and $.23$, $p < .01$).

Strengths and Limitations

This study offers some theoretical and methodological contributions to the existing literature. Our list of predictor variables was theory-driven, and the breadth of variables lessens the chance of interference from extraneous or spurious variables. Moreover, our implementation of a stratified sample allowed for the comparison of students who did and did not join the LGB rights movement. This juxtaposition of activist and bystander qualities allowed for a greater specification of the motivations behind LGB rights activism. Also, our distinction between electoral and protest behaviors highlighted the conditional importance of several of the framing factors. Finally, our sample of students from different colleges throughout the nation lowers problems of representativeness, as this study is therefore less inclined to suffer from the idiosyncratic side effects that occur when studying a single campus.

Research designs can also play havoc with the accuracy and generalizability of research findings. Several research decisions could have undermined this study's external validity. First, the small sample size can lead to errors in hypothesis testing (e.g., the probability of failing to reject the null when it should be rejected). Second, the sampling procedures were not identical for activist and comparison groups, so problems of selection bias exist. Third, the small number of men in the sample could have underestimated the importance of gender on LGB activism. Fourth, an omission of sexual identity measures can be equally problematic. Even when controlling for other factors, movements often draw a higher proportion of their members from constituencies that might benefit from movement endeavors (laborers from unions, women from feminist movements, etc.). Fifth, measurement errors regularly haunt survey data. Problems of over-demanding recall could hurt our mobilization measures in that people may have difficulty remembering whether anyone asked them to join a political event. Questions of social desirability may be especially relevant to our activist identity measures, as participants may want to sound socially desirable to themselves by overstating the amount that they fight for social justice. Finally, single item measures for complicated frames such as modern heterosexism can clearly miss some crucial elements of this multidimensional phenomenon.

DISCUSSION

By exploring LGB rights activism among BSW students, this study offers a unique look into a retrospective sample of activists and nonactivists. To date, the literature lacks published studies on LGB activism among social work students. While activism for LGB rights was rare among our sample, our analysis reveals the value of an integrated theoretical model. Variables from each of the resource, framing, and mobilization theories yielded significant results.

Only one of the resource factors drove LGB activism. With greater educational attainment being significant, activism was more prevalent among the students who have completed more classes. This finding might be the result of effective classroom interventions or issues of self-selection among social work majors, as students less inclined to work for gay rights may leave the social work major during their junior and senior years in college. While this bodes well for social work educators, future research should try to identify what sorts of content and assignments are better at inspiring political participation.

The rest of the resource variables were statistically insignificant. Levels of family income did not seem to sway involvement in the LGB rights movement. This suggests that students from

affluent, middle-class, and working-class backgrounds were equally drawn to LGB activism. With such a finding, one might conclude that access to financial resources is irrelevant to activism that challenges sexual codes and the stigmatization of sexual minorities. However, some caution is necessary when interpreting the generalizability of this finding. Due to the lack of income dispersion among young college students, it is possible that income might matter more to older social workers who are employed in the profession. Also, students sometimes have problems accurately recalling the amount of income in their family of origin.

Matters of gender and racial statuses seemed equally inept at forecasting LGB rights activism. When comparing White students to students of color, it appears that race did not predict electoral or protest inclinations. While the race finding runs against some findings of earlier research, it is possible that our coding obfuscates different protest levels between African Americans, Latino(a)s, and Asian Americans (Martinez, 2005). Nevertheless, this finding may reveal a crucial insight to the differences between social attitudes and political behaviors. Because previous studies link greater homophobia to men and racial minorities (Cluse-Tolar et al., 2004; Snively et al., 2004), it is possible that demographic forces behind sexual prejudice and political activism are not the same. That is, gender and racial statuses might predispose people toward heteronormative beliefs, but these statuses do not drive people into political action. Instead, the true catalyst of LGB activism is education.

Our data also suggest that framing variables were mostly important to protesting. The recognition of heterosexist discrimination, along with activist identities, were forces behind LGB protesting. That is, collective action frames become salient to social work students when frames combined an awareness of systematic subjugation of sexual minorities with a sense that the student has an obligation to do something to end such oppression. Questions of collective efficacy never reached significance, which suggests that LGB activism is not contingent upon some form of expected external results. This means that narratives about anticipated victories failed to drive LGB rights activism, while the recognition of sexual biases and the desire to fight against such injustices actually did inspire protesting. Thus, the desire to protest did not always hinge upon the outcomes of those protests.

Although the internalization of "protest norms" and "modern heterosexism" were important to LGB activism, other framing factors may matter as well. Ensuing studies can investigate the impact of other framing factors, such as maintaining fundamentalist beliefs about religion and gender roles, having authoritarian personalities, knowing about a victim of LGB discrimination or hate crimes (Rollins & Hirsch, 2003; Seelman & Walls, 2010; Simon et al., 1998; Waldner, 2001), or expressing emotional closeness to gays and lesbians (Konik & Stewart, 2004; Waldner, 2001). Moreover, living in states that had "Defense of Marriage" votes might have inspired greater levels of activism among students (Riggle, Rostosky, & Horne, 2009). We also wonder about the virtues of scales that measure the sort of "old-fashioned homophobia" that degrades, vilifies, and pathologizes homosexuality (i.e., Herek, 1988; Wright, Adams, & Bernat, 1999).

The study also highlights the importance of mobilizing structures, and it indicates that being embedded in preexisting activist networks matters for future rounds of activism. Accordingly, these findings suggest that a good deal of political preparation must occur before a student takes up the struggle for LGB rights.

While belonging to recruitment networks predicts LGB activism, different measures of mobilization variables may be crucial as well. Future studies could explore the political ramifications of having gay and lesbian friends or being integrated into LGB social groups (Elbaz, 1996; Lombardi, 1999; Waldner, 2001; Swank & Fahs, 2012). Moreover, early socializing agents in families, schools, or churches can lead to the sort of homophobia that would block LGB activism (Swank & Raiz, 2007). Friends and college-aged peers are often considered the key political socializers of young adults (Dolan, 1995). Accordingly, one study found that college students were

more supportive of a gay and lesbian student center when they thought their friends condoned such a plan (Wilkinson & Sagarin, 2010).

Implications for Social Work Education

This paper can inform social work education in several ways. Faculty must recognize that LGB rights activism and a general lessening of homophobic sentiments among the citizenry can lead to less discriminatory laws and ordinances (Kane, 2003; Otis, 2004; Soule, 2004). With injustice frames being essential to protest activities, clearly social work programs should try to motivate activism by reveal the discriminatory and exploitative nature of many United States institutions (e.g., systematic sexism, racism, classism, heteronormativity, ageism). Moreover, there is some evidence that students are more politically active after they take a class on heterosexism (Stake & Hoffman, 2001), homophobia (van Soest, 1996), or any form of oppression (Astin, 1993; Beaumont, Colby, Ehrlich, & Torney-Purta, 2006; Morrison et al., 2006; Rocha, 2000). Similarly, with activist identities being important in most cases, professors must reveal the connections between client well-being and injustices in families, agencies, and political arenas. Likewise, educators must try to convince students that politics is not a "spectator sport," that is, social work ethics requires involvement in political struggles. Moreover, educators should make assignments and exercises that offer opportunities in advocacy practice. Some of these assignments can be classroom experiences of speaking at a mock congressional hearing, developing an imaginary media campaign, or planning a community meeting (Hoeffer, 1999; Keller, Whittaker, & Burke, 2001). Equally important, students should be given an opportunity to have first-hand experiences in meeting governmental officials, attending political meetings, knocking on doors, chanting at protests, or doing some grassroots fundraising (see Fisher, 1995; Haynes & Mickelson, 1997). In fact, some studies argue that political activism among students increases after colleges offer policy practice experiences outside of the classroom (Anderson & Harris, 2005; Rocha, 2000). Finally, the profession as a whole can modify its curriculum. Programs can augment their policy classes by providing more classes on social action, connecting students to issue-based advocacy groups, and offering greater access to political field practica placements (Wolk, Pray, Weismiller, & Dempsey [1996] estimated that less than 20% of BSW programs offer field practice in electoral politics and policy advocacy). While these programs will not convert every student into a full-fledged activist, such efforts will probably lessen the widespread complaint that social work programs too often inadequately prepare students for policy practice (Ritter, 2008; Wolk et al., 1996).

NOTES

1. The terms *sexual prejudice*, *heterosexism*, and *homophobia* are sometimes used interchangeably. For the rest of this paper, we will be using the term *homophobia* to mean a hostile reaction to lesbians and gay men, *heterosexism* to deal with the cultural ideology that justifies discrimination against homosexuals who challenge conventional gender expectations, and *sexual prejudice* as the individuals' acceptance of ideological frameworks that degrade any sexual orientation other than complete heterosexuality (see Herek, 2004). The term *heteronormativity* centers on the assumption that all people are heterosexuals and that sexual identities that break from this assumption are deemed deviant and undesirable.

2. While it is difficult to know the effects of LGB movements, some studies have noted some major changes in same-sex laws and social movements (Kane, 2003; Soule, 2004).

3. Research schools: University of Delaware, University of Oregon, University of Texas; Doctoral: University of North Carolina-Greensboro, University of Mass-Lowell, Rutgers; Masters: Longwood College, University of Southern Maine, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay; Baccalaureate: Evergreen State College, Mesa State College, Southeast Arkansas College.

4. Clearly this response rate was neither high nor random. Professors who never read e-mail automatically removed themselves from the sample, and the willingness to distribute the surveys was not constant throughout the different sorts of schools and disciplines. For the sample of all professors, around 2% of the research professors distributed surveys, while 13% professors at master's-granting universities did so. Likewise, fewer than 1% of chemistry, biology, and physics professors assisted in this project while professors in political science, sociology, and social work were most receptive to our requests (11%). Of the social work professors who actually distributed surveys, all either taught research or policy classes.

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