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Sexual identities and political solidarities among cisgender women

Eric Swank and Breanne Fahs

Arizona State University, Glendale, AZ, USA

ABSTRACT

This study addressed the relative liberalism of White lesbians. In doing so, we compared sexuality differences in White women's reactions to sexual, gender, and racial hierarchies. In the end, our analysis of 2,950 women from the American National Election Survey (ANES) suggested three trends. First, lesbians and bisexual women rejected and challenged heteronormativity more than heterosexual women. Second, the relationship between sexual identities and feminist commitments was less consistent. Lesbians and bisexual women perceived higher levels of sexist discrimination than heterosexual women did, but sexual identities did not always predict involvement in feminist social movements. Third, lesbian women generally displayed greater support of antiracist activism than bisexual or heterosexual women. However, this greater lesbian concern over racial biases did not translate in sexual differences in antiracist activism. Implications for these findings were explored, as were suggestions of future research.

Questions of how lesbians and gay men see tensions, similarities, or alliances with women and people of color fall under the concept of "political solidarity" (Neufeld et al., 2019; Subašić et al., 2008). Solidarities within and between stigmatized groups cannot be assumed outright. It is possible that many lesbians may see their mistreatment as part of a heteropatriarchal social system that oppresses anyone who is not a rich cisgender White heterosexual man. Lesbians might also generally consider their group's discrimination experiences as unique and specific to their own group. Moreover, group relationships may also be interpreted in a constant "zero-sum" or threat mode, where the advances of different groups are be seen as competitive, adversarial, and "coming at their expense." In contrast, lesbians may see the plight of gay men, heterosexual women, or BIPOC individuals to overlap and intersect with their own lives. Better understanding solidarity is a key part to analyzing the relationship between individuals, groups, and social movements.

CONTACT Breanne Fahs ✉ breanne.fahs@asu.edu 💬 Professor of Women and Gender Studies, Arizona State University, 4701 W. Thunderbird Road, Glendale, AZ 85306.

This study addressed the political solidarities of lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual women through four interrelated topics: 1) the emotional ties to lesbians as well as groups of women and people of color; 2) the recognition of discrimination against queer individuals, women, and people of color; 3) the approval of efforts by lesbians, feminists, and people of color to challenge social hierarchies; and 4) the amount of participation in political mobilizations that act on the behalf of queer, feminist, and antiracist interests. The rest of this paper explored the ways lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual women have similar and divergent outlooks and practices on these topics.

Literature review

Neufeld et al. (2019) argued that political solidarity is about sympathizing and aligning with stigmatized groups who are seeking social change. At a fundamental level, political solidarity requires feelings of connection, unity, and allyship with a stigmatized out-group; affection, bonds, or respect of a group is not generally enough to form political solidarity. Political solidarity also includes a recognition of discrimination and support for ending the subjugation of disenfranchised groups. It also includes a sense of moral obligation or responsibility to personally challenge injustices. In short, political solidarity is about "embracing the minority's causes as their own" when "challenging the authority and the status quo" (Subašić et al., 2008, pp. 331, 345). With such a definition, political solidarity materializes within and across social groups. A person can feel solidarity toward ingroup members, such as women uniting with women or lesbians uniting with lesbians. People can feel political solidarity toward members of outgroups, such as heterosexuals protesting against heterosexism or White antiracists fighting against racism that targets people of color (Greenwood, 2008; Kleiman, Spanierman, & Grant Smith, 2015; Subašić et al., 2008).

This study addressed issues of ingroup and outgroup solidarities of lesbians, bisexual, and heterosexual women who identify as White. To address perceptions of homophobia, a commitment to queer liberation may help the lives of lesbians and bisexual women (in-group solidarity for White lesbians). A commitment to antiracism might improve race relations but it also challenges the logic of the hierarchies of Whiteness (out-group solidarity for White lesbians). The existing literature suggests that sexual identities were clearly connected to the in-group world of LGBTQ activism (Grollman, 2019; Jones, 2021) while there was less agreement of the possibility of greater lesbian and bisexual involvement in antiracist (Bunyasi & Watts Smith, 2019; Worthen, 2020a) and feminist efforts (Conlin & Heesacker, 2018; Radke et al., 2018).

In group solidarity: Fighting against heteronormativity among White lesbians

Reactions to heteronormativity were often patterned along sexual lines. Heterosexuals often liked heterosexual advantages and spent an inordinate amount of time "proving" their heterosexuality (Morgan & Davis-Delano, 2016) and avoiding allyship with lesbians (Grollman, 2017). On the other hand, lesbians embraced other lesbians at higher rates than heterosexual women. Lesbians were more likely to reject homophobia (Warriner et al., 2013), oppose discrimination against lesbians (Grollman, 2019; Jones, 2021), and attend LGBT political events (Harris & Battle, 2013) compared to heterosexual women. Studies have also suggested that bisexuals often challenged heterosexism more than heterosexuals (Schnabel, 2018), but that bisexuals showed lower levels of support for same-sex marriage then lesbians or gay men (Jones, 2021).

In group solidarity: Fighting against sexism among White lesbians

Lesbians and feminists have often been portrayed as rebels who break traditional gendered expectations. A heteropatriarchal mindset has typically chastised lesbians and feminists for their supposed lack of domesticity, their assertiveness, their lack of femininity, and a so-called hatred of men (Rudman & Fairchild, 2007). People also often conflated lesbianism and feminism as the same, and roughly a quarter of Americans endorsed the "lavender menace" trope (Morgan & Davis-Delano, 2016). In doing so, college students regularly suggested that feminists were "a big burly lesbian with a mullet," or "a pissed off tree-hugging lesbian hippy" (Houvouras & Scott, 2008).

While the majority of feminists were heterosexual, there was some evidence that lesbians often embraced feminism at high rates. For example, 73.5% of lesbian psychologists called themselves feminists (Szymanski, 2004) while at least half of adult and teenage lesbians had joined a feminist protest in the past (Fine et al., 2018; Taylor et al., 2009). A handful of studies contended that lesbian and gay men were more feminist-identified than heterosexuals in many aspects, such as rejecting hostile sexism (Cowie et al., 2019), supporting gender equality in families (Grollman, 2019; Kowalski & Scheitle, 2020; Schnabel, 2018; Silva, 2019; Swank & Fahs, 2019), recognizing sexism (Grollman, 2019), detesting paternalism (Kruk & Matsick, 2022), supporting feminist goals (Grollman, 2019), calling themself feminists (Kruk & Matsick, 2022; Radke et al., 2018; Worthen, 2020a), correcting sexist language (Conlin & Heesacker, 2018), joining a gender equality group (Conlin & Heesacker, 2018), or attending a feminist protest (Andersen & Jennings, 2010; Friedman & Ayers, 2013; Conlin &

Heesacker, 2018). Still, a few lingering studies warned that queer identities did not always predict feminist tendencies (Harnois, 2015; Radke et al., 2018; Swank, 2018a).

The extent to which lesbians differed from bisexual women was not as clear. Some studies indicated that, compared to bisexuals, lesbians were significantly more likely to call themselves feminists (Swank, 2018b; Worthen, 2020b), resent paternalism (Kruk & Matsick, 2022), support female politicians (Kowalski & Scheitle, 2020), and oppose the Brett Kavanaugh confirmation to the Supreme Court (Jones, 2021). Conversely some studies suggest that lesbians and bisexuals did not differ in their support of women in the workforce (Kowalski & Scheitle, 2020), approval of benevolent sexism (Cowie et al., 2019), and approval of abortion and gender restrictions (Kleiman et al., 2015; Worthen, 2020b).

Out group solidarity: Antiracism activism among White lesbians

There are reasons to believe that racial identities can alter the relationship of sexual identities to racial attitudes (Grollman, 2017; Schnabel, 2018; Swank, 2018b). White lesbians lived with a contradictory mix of racial, gender, and sexuality privileges (McCall, 2005). Along racial lines, White individuals were often drawn to ideas that defend and uphold White privilege. However, a White lesbian's gender and sexual identities might counteract the racial conservativism that was found among many White people.

Some studies confirmed the antiracist tendencies of lesbians and gay men (Grollman, 2017, 2019; Kleiman et al., 2015; Schnabel, 2018; Swank & Fahs, 2022). Lesbian and gay men were more likely than heterosexuals to dismiss racial stereotypes (Bunyasi & Watts Smith, 2019; Dull et al., 2021; Flores, 2017; Kleiman et al., 2015), recognize racial discrimination (Grollman, 2017; Jones, 2021; Kleiman et al., 2015; Schnabel, 2018; Swank & Fahs, 2022), desire the end of racism (Harr & Kane 2008; Heaney, 2021; Worthen, 2020a, Swank & Fahs, 2022), and approve of Black Lives Matter protests (Bunyasi & Watts Smith, 2019; Bonilla & Tillery, 2020; Swank & Fahs, 2022; Taylor, Wilcox, & Monceaux, 2020).

Lesbian and gay men's political behaviors also indicated greater solidarities with people of color compared to heterosexual people. LGB people had more inter-racial friendships and partnered cohabitations than heterosexuals (Lundquist & Lin, 2015), and queer people lived in less racially segregated neighborhoods compared to heterosexual people (Poston et al., 2017). Further, the Black Power movement of the 1970s had disproportionately higher levels of LGBTQ participants (Andersen & Jennings, 2010), while Latinx sexual minorities were more likely than heterosexual Latinx people to fight for immigrant rights in 2006 (Terriquez, 2015). Different

polls added that between 35 to 55% of queer activists have engaged in antiracist activism (Fine et al., 2018; Taylor et al., 2009), while as White lesbians and gay men displayed more antiracist stickers and attended more rallies against racism than White heterosexual people (Fingerhut & Hardy, 2020).

Another set of studies suggested that claims of queer racial liberalism were overstated or completely false. For example, heterosexuals and queer held similar attitudes about inter-racial dating (Wilson et al., 2009) and other studies doubted that sexual identities directly influenced emotional reactions to racial minorities (Chong & Mohr, 2020; Harris & Battle, 2013) or that sexual minorities engaged in more antiracist activism (Battle & Harris, 2013; Swank, 2018a). Two studies found that White lesbians and gay men felt more guilt about their White privilege than did heterosexuals, but this guilt did not translate into stronger commitments to dismantle White privilege (Dull et al., 2021; Kleiman et al., 2015). Finally, some studies even argue that lesbians might be especially fearful of racial minorities because they thought most people of color were homophobic (Craig & Richeson, 2016; Hill, 2013; Holley et al., 2008).

Method

Sample

This data was derived from two waves of the American National Election Survey (ANES). Data for this study came from the "Evaluations of Government and Society" and "Time Series" subsamples of the 2012 and 2016 American National Election Study (ANES). Access to this data can be found on the ANES web-page (https://electionstudies.org). As a multisplit research design, ANES modified its survey items and data gathering modes throughout the 2012 and 2016 election cycles (face-to-face interviews and web-based collection methods). This analytical sample only study examined only people who self-identified as White women (1,384 individuals in 2012 and 1,566 in 2016; notably, ANES did not distinguish if these were cis or transgender women). With such a sample, LGBT activism represented ingroup solidarity for lesbian and bisexual women while antiracist activism represented outgroup solidarity for all White women in the analysis.

This sample of women displayed certain demographic qualities. In the 2012 sample, 32.8% of participants had a high school degree, 26.8% attended some college, 19.4% achieved a four-year bachelor's degree, and 12.5% had a master's degree or higher. The 2016 sample had a similar educational composition except that the number of people with advanced degrees was higher at 18.8% and the people who had "some college" were

slightly higher at 36%. In 2012, the median household income range was $50,001–59,999 a year per family, while family incomes around $50,000–59,999 were also the most common (9.0% of the 2012 sample). The 2016 had the same median household income range while the modal family income was $80,000–100,000 (9.9% of the 2016 sample). The 2012 sampled skewed older as the mean age was 49.5-years-old and 50.1 in 2016. The 2012 sample disproportionally drew upon urban dwellers (80.8% of the sample currently lived in Standardized Metropolitan Statistical Areas, while this item was not included in 2016). For the 2012 data, 57.5% of the sample was currently married, 17.9% of the sample was single or never married, and 22.6% of participants was divorced or widowed. Four years later, the percentage of married women was smaller at 49.4% and the number of single-never married fell to 18.4%.

Measures

Political solidarities are the ways people align with disempowered groups who are seeking social change (Neufeld et al., 2019). Some solidarities are clearly with in-group members, such as lesbians trying to dismantle sexism and heteronormativity. Other solidarities deal with out-groups, such as White lesbians working on racial justice.

We traced political solidarities through a battery of "group consciousness" survey items. Miller and colleagues (1981) identified five dimensions of a group consciousness: (a) "group identification," or the awareness and support of a specific group; (b) "polar affect," a preference/disdain for members of that group and dislike/admiration for members of other groups; (c); "individual versus system blame," the belief that a group's social status is attributable to individual failings or to structural constraints, and (d) "polar power," an expressed satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the group's current status, power, or material resources in relation to other groups.

Group identifications and linked fates

We sought information on how women thought their sexual, gender, and racial identities impacted their sense of self and how they are treated by other people. ANES offered a question on the relevance of being a woman: "How much of your life is effected by what happens to women?" (a lot = 1, all others = 0). ANES also asked about the personal adoption of a feminist label: "How well does the term feminist' describe you?" (extremely well = 3, very well = 2, somewhat well = 1, nor very well, not at all = 0). Unfortunately, ANES lacked measures on the salience of women's sexual or racial identities.

Polar affects

Polar affects deals with the preferences and admiration of one group and the disliking of that group's opponents and adversaries (Miller and colleagues 1981). Along racial lines, ANES posed the question "How often have you felt admiration for Blacks?" (always = 4, most of the time = 3, half of the time = 2, some of the time = 1, never = 0). Unfortunately, there were no items on admiration for or solidarity with White, Latinx, Asian-American, or Indigenous individuals. ANES addressed feelings toward women in a mostly negative direction. Anger and contempt toward women were determined through the "hostile sexism" subscale (Glick & Fiske, 1996), which portrays women as manipulative, treacherous plotters who are trying to attack masculinity and undermine male control. The 4-item scale included items such as: "Many women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist," "Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them," and "Women seek to gain power by getting control over men" (each item strongly agree = 5, strongly disagree = 1, α=.768). Finally, another measure dealt with the sexist belief that women should be kept in passive caretaking roles. To measure endorsement of the "male as breadwinner" narrative, respondents replied to: "It is better if man works and woman takes care of home" (much worse = 7, much better = 1). Measures of admiration or contempt toward men were not assessed by ANES.

Other items dealt with general moods, feelings, and dispositions toward different sexual, gender, and racial groups. The range of positive to negative emotions toward gay men and lesbians, feminists, Black Lives Matter protesters, and people in specific racial groups were ascertained through feeling thermometers. These thermometers mentioned a group's name and then asked people to rate the group on a 100-point favorable/warmth to unfavorable/cold scale (100 = very favorable or warm feeling).

Perceptions of discrimination and system blame

Political solidary recognizes instances of systematic discrimination and acknowledges the structural rules that benefit White heterosexual men. To address perceptions of contemporary biases, ANES asked people to consider "how much discrimination is there in the United States today against" women, gay men and lesbians, and people of color. Single-item responses were coded in the direction of detecting widespread biases against women and gays/lesbians (extremely serious = 5 to not a problem at all = 0). A two-item additive scale of perceived racism merged perceptions of discrimination against African-American or Latinx people into a single variable (α = .850 in 2012 and .754 in 2016). Recognizing the lingering effects of discrimination was ascertained through endorsement of one statement: "Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that

make it difficult for Blacks to work their way out of the lower class" (strongly agree = 1, all others = 0). Lastly, one item asked: "Do the police treat Whites or Blacks better?" (Whites better = 1, Blacks better = 0).

Polar power

ANES also had several items on anger about heteropatriarchy and institutionalized racism. Grievances about sexual identities were explored through a desire to end heterosexual advantages in the government and law. One item asked about the expansions of legal safeguards in the workplace: "Do you favor or oppose laws to protect gays and lesbians against job discrimination?" (favor = 1, all others = 0). Another item endorsed the recognition of same-sex marriages: "Gay and lesbian couples should be allowed to legally marry" (yes = 1, no = 0). The final item explored the support of same-sex couples becoming legal guardians to adopted kids and adolescents: "Do you think gay or lesbian couples should be legally permitted to adopt children?" (yes = 1, no = 0).

ANES also had measures on the legitimacy of women who challenge sexism. One measure asked participants to endorse the portrayal of feminists as counterproductive: "When women complain about discrimination, how often do they cause more problems than they solve?" (never = 4, always = 0). Another measure disparages and belittles women who contest male control and sexism: "Women demanding equality seek special favors" (coded as never = 2, some of the time = 1, about half of the time, most of the time, always = 0).

Sympathies with people of color were assessed through the approval of, or challenges to, racial biases. One item commiserated with the contemporary mistreatment of Black Americans: "Over the past few years, Blacks have gotten less than they deserve." (strongly agree = 2, somewhat agree = 1, all others = 0). Another focused on empathy for Black people: "How often have you felt sympathy for Blacks?" (always = 4, never = 0). Two items probed perceptions of racialized power imbalances and the responses to antiracist social movements. One item traced discomfort over White control of governmental spheres: "Blacks have too little influence in US politics" (too little influence = 3 and not much influence = 1). Another item dealt with participants' respect for Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests. Affective responses to BLM were placed on a 100-point feeling thermometer that assessed warmth and coldness.

Social movement participation

ANES also had some measures on social movement involvement. ANES asked participants to disclose whether they ever were "active" in the LGBT rights movement, women's rights' movement, or racial equality movement.

The three items traced lifetime participation for each of the movements but it did not address in what way or how often people participated in these movements (participated in a lifetime = 1, no participation = 0).

Lesbian identity

To assess sexual identities, ANES asked people to classify their sexual identity: "Do you consider yourself…?" The three answers of heterosexual, bisexual, and gay or lesbian were transformed into the dichotomous variable or being a lesbian or not. People who skipped this question were removed from the sample. With this coding scheme, 40 participants were classified as lesbian, 84 were considered bisexual, and 2,826 were deemed heterosexual. This measure traced current sexual identities, but it did not address questions of sexual fluidity over time nor did it measure whether people based their answers on actions, desires, relationship statuses, or another criterion. That said, several studies have found that self-identified sexual identities predicted political solidarities better than sexual behaviors did (Schnabel, 2018, Swank & Fahs, 2019). Finally, lesbians were coded by themselves because we wanted to see if they distinguished themselves from women who identified as heterosexual or bisexual.

Results

The analysis explored commonalities among lesbians and how lesbians might diverge from women of other sexual identities. Statistical differences between lesbians and women of other sexualities were estimated through a one-way between subjects Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The magnitude of effect was determined by the of Eta squared (η^2) and a Tukey post hoc test revealed the cases of an honest significance difference between women of specific sexual identities (lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual).

Table 1 highlighted reactions to homophobia along a sexuality continuum. As expected, a woman's sexual identity influenced their understandings of, and responses to, heteronormativity. Each ANOVA detected a statistically significant difference in queer sentiments with participation in the LGBT rights movement offering the biggest sexuality difference ($F(2, 1340) = 33.54$, $p = .000$) and emotional closeness to lesbians and gays being the smallest ($F(2,1566) = 4.21]$, $p =.015$). Lesbians presented higher scores than bisexuals for seven of the eight measures and heterosexuals always presented the lowest scores. A Tukey's Post Hoc Test for multiple comparisons found that lesbian and heterosexual women always significantly diverged. Similarly, bisexual women significantly differed than heterosexual women in all but one case (perceptions of discrimination against lesbians and gays in 2016). Finally, lesbian and bisexual women

Table 1. Sexual identities and LGBT consciousness among White women.

Dependent variable	Sexual identity			F	η^2
	Lesbian	Bi	Het		
ANES 2012					
Attitudes and feelings					
Emotional closeness to LG	72.0[b]	66.1[c]	45.7	**8.4***	.016
Perceived discrimination against LG	4.18[b]	4.39[c]	3.12	**10.1***	.017
Political actions					
Joined the LGBT rights movement	.30[ab]	.10[c]	.01	**53.5***	.048
N	14	30	1340		
ANES 2016					
Attitudes and feelings					
Emotional closeness to lesbians/gays	83.4[b]	71.5	56.6	**4.2**	.005
Perceived discrimination against LG	1.03[ab]	.88[c]	.61	**7.1***	.009
Laws against LG job discrimination	.92[b]	.79	.65	**6.2***	.008
Laws for LG adoption of children	1.00[b]	.96[c]	.74	**11.0***	.014
LG couples should be allowed to marry	.96[b]	.94[c]	.60	**19.4***	.025
N	26	54	1486		

Notes: Notes: *<.05; **<.01; ***<.001; Comparisons were made between three groups (Lesbian vs Bisexual vs Heterosexual).

Results for Welch's F test were reported when Variables exhibited unequal variances across groups. The effect size estimate is the Eta^2 (η^2). Fisher Exact tests also present the same significance results for items with dichotomous dependent variables.

[a]Significant F-test of Lesbian women compared to Bisexuals in Post Hoc ($p < .01$).
[b]Significant F-test of Lesbian women compared to Heterosexuals in Post Hoc ($p < .01$).
[c]Significant F-Test of Bisexuals compared to Heterosexuals in Post Hoc ($p < .01$).

only significantly differed on participation in the LGBT rights movement. Thus, lesbians routinely displayed the most LGBT-centered consciousness, while heterosexual women displayed the least. Bisexual women were routinely in the middle, but the differences between lesbian and bisexual women were often fairly minimal.

Table 2 contrasts the feminist tendencies among lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual women. An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) yielded significant variations among 8 of the 13 variables. The biggest difference was for a feminist identity ($F(2, 1256) = 27.46$, $p = .000$) while the smallest significant association was found for perceived discrimination against women in 2012 ($F(2, 1340) = 3.43$, $p = .033$). Other significant relationships were found for joining the women's movement, closeness to feminists, hostility toward women, worrying about Donald Trump's sexism, approving of complaints about sexism, and rejection traditional male control in families in 2012. Interestingly, the items for supporting feminist demands and seeing a common fate with women never displayed a significance difference between women of different sexual identities.

Most of the time lesbians displayed the strongest feminist tendencies, heterosexual women displayed the least, and bisexuals were somewhere in

Table 2. Sexual Identities and Feminist Consciousness Among White Women.

Dependent Variable	Sexual Identity			F	η²
	Lesbian	Bi	Het		
ANES 2012					
Attitudes and Feelings					
Joint fate with women	.18	.21	.07	.5	.001
Rejection of men as breadwinners	3.84[ab]	2.60	2.74	**4.0***	.008
Complaining about sexism is fine	3.18[b]	2.78	2.51	**3.9***	.006
Perceived sexism against women	3.00	3.14[c]	2.75	**3.4***	.005
Support feminist demands	1.23	.92	.86	1.8	.003
Political Actions					
Joined the women's right movement	.00	.10[c]	.02	**3.5***	.005
N	14	30	1340		
ANES 2106					
Attitudes and feelings					
Emotional closeness to feminists	69.9[b]	71.9[c]	.56	**14.0***	.018
Hostility toward women	13.6[b]	15.2	14.7	**4.2***	.005
Rejection of men as breadwinners	3.50	2.31	1.99	2.6	.003
Perceived sexism against women	1.71	1.31	1.28	.4	.001
Support feminist demands	1.28	1.27	1.15	.5	.001
Trump's sexism matters	.92[b]	.87[c]	.56	**5.2***	.007
Feminist identity	1.19[b]	1.11[c]	.57	**27.4***	.034
N	26	54	1486		

Notes: Comparisons were made between three groups (Lesbian vs Bisexual vs Heterosexual).
Results for Welch's F test were reported when Variables exhibited unequal variances across groups. The effect size estimate is the Eta² (η²). Fisher Exact tests also present the same significance results for items with dichotomous dependent variables.
[a]Significant F-test of Lesbian women compared to Bisexuals in Post Hoc ($p < .01$).
[b]Significant F-test of Lesbian women compared to Heterosexuals in Post Hoc ($p < .01$).
[c]Significant F-Test of Bisexuals compared to Heterosexuals in Post Hoc ($p < .01$).

between. However, the highest feminist scores were sometimes reversed and bisexuals had higher feminist marks than lesbians for seeing a common fate with women, perceiving sexism in 2012, closeness to feminists, and joining the women's movement. The post hoc Tukey test suggested significant differences were present six times between lesbian and heterosexual women (e.g., rejecting men as breadwinners, complaining about sexism, admiration of feminists, hostility toward women, being bother by Trump's sexism, and embracing a feminist identity) and five times between bisexuals and heterosexuals (e.g., perceived sexism, being bothered by Donald Trump, closeness to feminists, calling oneself a feminist, and joining the women's right movement). Only once did lesbians and bisexuals significantly diverge (e.g., the rejection of men as breadwinners).

Table 2 suggests that sexual identities were often, but not always, connected to feminist inclinations. In the instances of significant sexuality differences, both lesbians and bisexual women departed from heterosexual women in similar ways. Lesbians often showed slightly more feminist tendencies than bisexual women, and lesbian and bisexual women only significantly differed on the item of men as financial provider for families. Finally, bisexual women were more likely than heterosexuals to join the women's movement but lesbian and heterosexual women were both less likely to join the women's movement in comparison to bisexual women.

Table 3 explored the links of racial consciousness to sexual identities. In being a sample of White women, this comparison tested the role of lesbianism and bisexuality in outgroup and ally activism among White people. With six of the eighteen items reaching statistical significance, the impact of sexual identities on racial topics were intermittent and more conditional. Sexual identities never connected to emotional reactions to members of specific racial groups and joining collective efforts for racial equality. Most of the larger sexual differences were found in perceptions of institutionalized racism and reactions to the Black Lives Matter. In fact, between-subject ANOVAs were the largest for perceived racism against Blacks and Hispanics, $F(2, 1566) = 13.75$, $p = 0.000$, seeing slavery as current impediment $F(2,1370) = 6.99$, $p = .000$, and doubting that Blacks getting treated as the deserve, $F(2, 1371) = 7.64$, $p = .000$.

Lesbians and bisexual women trended more for antiracist stances compared to heterosexuals for every measure except involvement in racial equality social movements. Post hoc Tukey tests suggest that lesbians significantly differed from heterosexual women for six measures (e.g., Blacks getting less than they deserve, closeness to BLM, perceptions of widespread racism, recognition of police racism, and seeing the never-ending problems of slavery) and that bisexuals significantly departed from heterosexual women only three times (e.g., observing racism in society and police departments and acknowledging the lasting effects of slavery). Lesbians showed greater anti-racist propensities than bisexuals in 13 of 16 measures and lesbians were significantly more antiracist in three instances (e.g., recognizing police racism, feeling that Blacks do not get what they deserve and fondness of BLM).

Discussion

Our analysis explored the political commitments of lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual women. By focusing on White women, we wanted to see if the "lesbian difference" remained constant across different political mobilizations. Similarly, with regard to ingroup and outgroup solidarities, we wanted to determine is lesbian liberalism was more or less pronounced for battles over queer, feminists, or antiracist liberation.

This work expanded on previous research in several ways. First, we relied upon an all-female sample. Most "sexuality difference" studies ignore gender specific findings because they merged men and women into a single sample (Grollman, 2017; Schnabel, 2018). Second, this national random sample provided adequate numbers of lesbians and bisexuals for a robust analysis and improved the generalizability of our findings. Earlier studies have often relied on less representative convenience samples of college students (Dull et al., 2021; Friedman & Ayers, 2013), people who

Table 3. Sexual Identities and Antiracist Consciousness Among White Women.

Dependent Variable	Lesbian	Bi	Het	F	η²
		Sexual Identity			
ANES 2012					
Attitudes and feelings					
Emotional closeness to White people	62.3	60.5	66.7	.7	.001
Emotional closeness to Black people	54.6	55.7	56.4	.0	.000
Emotional closeness to Hispanic people	47.0	49.6	54.0	.7	.001
Admire Blacks	1.36	1.54	1.59	.4	.001
Perceived racism against Blacks/Hispanics	2.92	2.75	2.62	.6	.001
Blacks have too little influence in politics	1.11	.96	.85	.1	.000
Blacks get less than what they deserve	.30[ab]	.07	.07	**3.6***	.005
Sympathy toward the plight of Blacks	1.54	1.24	1.09	2.0	.003
Political actions					
Joined a racial equality social movement	.00	.00	.04	.09	.000
N	14	30	1340		
ANES 2016					
Attitudes and feelings					
Emotional closeness to White people	64.0	57.1	68.5	1.4	.001
Emotional closeness to Black people	66.1	58.5	57.8	.8	.001
Emotional closeness to Hispanic people	67.6	52.3	57.0	1.4	.002
Emotional closeness to Black Lives Matter	95.0[ab]	52.3	44.7	**4.8****	.006
Perceived racism against Blacks/Hispanics	3.4[b]	2.87[c]	2.0	**13.7*****	.017
Perceived police racism	.83[ab]	.58	.52	**4.9****	.007
Slavery impedes Black improvement	.32[b]	.26[c]	.12	**6.9*****	.010
Blacks have too little influence in politics	1.80	1.15	1.10	.8	.001
Blacks get less than what they deserve	.68[b]	.58[c]	.33	**7.6*****	.011
N	26	54	1486		

Notes: Comparisons were made between three groups (Lesbian vs Bisexual vs Heterosexual).
Results for Welch's F test were reported when Variables exhibited unequal variances across groups. The effect size estimate is the Eta² (η²). Fisher Exact tests also present the same significance results for items with dichotomous dependent variables..
[a]Significant F-test of Lesbian women compared to Bisexuals in Post Hoc ($p < .01$).
[b]Significant F-test of Lesbian women compared to Heterosexuals in Post Hoc ($p < .01$).
[c]Significant F-Test of Bisexuals compared to Heterosexuals in Post Hoc ($p < .01$).

visited Craigslist (Kruk & Matsick, 2022), members of Facebook (Taylor, Wilcox, & Monceaux, 2020), or people that belonged to political groups (Andersen & Jennings, 2010; Heaney, 2021). Third, we analyzed political thoughts and social movement participation in this study. Many studies have used only attitudinal items (Grollman, 2017; Schnabel, 2018) but political solidarity also includes behavioral actions (Neufeld et al., 2019; Subašić et al., 2008).

Results suggested that sexual identities were routinely connected to queer topics (i.e., Grollman, 2019; Jones, 2021). Lesbians and bisexual women significantly differed from heterosexual women in liking lesbians and gays, perceiving discrimination against sexual minorities, and joining the LGBT rights movement. In most cases lesbians held slightly stronger queer-affirmatie positions than bisexual women but these differences were only significant in the cases of perceiving discrimination against lesbians and gays and joining the LGBT rights movement.

The connection of sexual identities to feminist solidarities was a bit smaller and less consistent (i.e., Kruk & Matsick, 2022; Radke et al., 2018;

Worthen, 2020a). Lesbians and bisexual women largely embraced feminism more than heterosexual women but the differences were not always large. Lesbians significantly departed from heterosexual women for six of the 13 variables while bisexuals significantly diverged from heterosexuals in five variables (e.g., rejecting the "rejecting the husband as breadwinner" message as well as being amicable to women, admiring feminists, accepting a feminist label, and being bothered by Donald Trump's sexism). Lesbians were marginally more feminist-identified compared to bisexual women in most practices, but bisexual women significantly eclipsed lesbians on the important dimension of actually joining the women's rights movement. Implications for sexual identities and political activism are an important consideration here, as questions about why this different emerged remain open.

The link of sexual identities to racial attitudes was more modest and case specific (six of 18 racialized variables were significant). Lesbians were significantly more liberal than bisexual and heterosexual women for the recognition of police racism, thinking biases are deserved, and supporting Black Lives Matter. Both lesbians and bisexual women were also more concerned of the insidious legacy of slavery than heterosexual women. Issues of emotional reactions to racial groups and involvement in racial equality movements did not connect to White women's sexual identities.

Limitations and future directions

In terms of strengths and weaknesses of this study, ANES survey items were informative but they ignored some relevant dimensions of political solidarity. We were unable to know if women were upset about male or heterosexual privilege and ANES lacked questions on how people might consciously link the dynamics of sexual oppression to racial and gender hierarchies (see Greenwood, 2008; Heaney, 2021). This means future research should focus on how out-group solidarity is enhanced by a sense of common fate and shared oppressions with other stigmatized groups. This study also lacked a measure of what people do in feminist and anti-racist social movements, so it is impossible to know if their activism falls into the realms of radical transformation or sympathy for lower-status groups (Ostrove & Brown, 2018; Spade, 2020). Our measure on sexual identities broadly asked if women considered themselves heterosexual, bisexual, and lesbian. While this item clearly captured a person's general sexual identity, this measure did not address sexual fluidities or other sexual identities like queer or asexual. Overlooking the "queer" option might have the biggest impact on the results because some research found that queer identified women were more progressive than lesbians (Worthen, 2020b). ANES did not cover all of the possible gender categories and its binary approach ignored the sentiments of non-binary people.

Like all cross-sectional studies, there can always be problems of over-demanding recall and our study could not determine the temporal order of associations. Sexual identities can change over a lifetime (Kaestle, 2019), as some women might have different perspectives and attitudes before or after they come out as a lesbian (Silva, 2019). Scholars should also note that the election of 2016 was different than the election of 2012 in that Donald Trump as a presidential candidate was especially hostile to women, people of color, and queer people. Lastly, even large random samples only create a small number of women who call themselves lesbians and bisexuals.

In all, lesbians and bisexual women clearly sympathized with ending heterosexism more than women. However, greater lesbian and bisexual desire for social change was not limited to only sexuality laws and norms. Lesbians and bisexual women embrace feminist struggles more than women of other sexual identities and lesbian women were more concerned about racism than bisexual and heterosexual women. There are some caveats toward this lesbian liberalism trajectory. Being a lesbian or bisexual woman did not generally enhance emotional ties to other women or women from specific races. Thus, lesbian identity seemed to increase perceptions of political solidarity for women but it did not change feelings of emotional solidarity to people of the same gender or any race. Finally, the lesbian difference did not apply to joining feminist or antiracist movements. This lack of queer involvement in social movements is supported by some studies (Dull et al., 2021; Harnois, 2015; Kleiman et al., 2015; Radke et al., 2018; Swank, 2018a) and is detrimental to the sort of collective efforts that foster social change (Cunningham & Gillezeau, 2021; Htun & Weldon, 2012). In all, we hope this study offers a better understanding of the ways in which sexual and racial identities are related to issues of solidarities and alliances along the bumpy road toward social equality, liberation, and social justice for all.

ORCID

Eric Swank http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1617-4350
Breanne Fahs http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6843-8066

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