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Gay rights activism: collection action frames, networks, and protesting among gays, lesbians, and bisexuals

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ABSTRACT

While sexual minorities have produced large and efficacious social movements in many countries, there are few systematic studies on why gays and lesbians join these movements. To address this void, this study created a unique sample of activist and non-activist listservs to identify some factors that inspired greater involvement in protests for gay and lesbian equality ($n = 285$). Through the use of binary logistic regression, this study highlights the importance of several contextual, framing, and demographic variables on the protesting actions of sexual minorities. In particular, the act of protesting for gay and lesbian rights was predicted by involvement in voluntary groups, the concealment of sexual orientations, a concern over institutionalized heterosexism, and the internalizing several sorts of activist identities. Finally, racial background, but not gender, age, or economic factors, was associated with attendance at gay and lesbian rights demonstrations.

Introduction

The gay and lesbian rights movement is often considered the quintessential identity movement, as much of its energy is spent on challenging sexual prejudices and creating climates that affirm sexual minorities (Taylor & Whittier, 1992). By focusing on transforming the social customs and worldviews of others, some segments of the gay and lesbian rights movement attempt to reinterpret cultural practices by normalizing same-sex relationships and deconstructing the justifications of heterosexism and compulsory heterosexuality (among other things). Other wings of the gay and lesbian rights movement focus on improving governmental laws, policies, and regulations. The 'state-centred' approach emphasizes the expansion of rights and statutory protections through the use of electoral and protest tactics. This article deals with reasons why lesbians, gays, and bisexuals would join public demonstrations that challenge cultural and political structures that maintain heterosexism.

While there is a growing literature on the goals, tactics, and outcomes of the gay and lesbian rights movement (e.g. Kane, 2003), few empirical studies have examined the

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factors that influence gay and lesbian activism among sexual minorities (e.g. Egan, 2012; Harris & Battle, 2013; Jennings & Andersen, 2003; Simon et al., 1998; Swank & Fahs, 2011; Swank & Fahs, 2013; Taylor, Kimport, Van Dyke, & Andersen, 2009; Waldner, 2001). While these early lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) activism studies offer important insights, they are still undermined by serious methodological and theoretical limitations. Many studies of individual activists only sampled sexual minorities who belong to local advocacy groups (Jennings & Andersen, 2003; Lombardi, 1999; Paceley, Oswald, & Hardesty, 2014; Simon et al., 1998) or gays and lesbians on college campuses (Friedman & Leaper, 2010; Gray & Desmarais, 2014; Hyers, 2007; Swank & Fahs, 2012). The few random samples of LGB activism were hampered by their small number of predictor variables (Herek, Norton, Allen, & Sims, 2010; Smith & Haider-Markel, 2002) or a lack of precise measures for participation in LGB protest events (Lewis, Rogers, & Sherrill, 2011; Swank & Fahs, 2012).

To build upon these earlier research designs, this study used a stratified sample of sexual minorities who belong to political and apolitical listservs. We also assembled an interdisciplinary and more comprehensive list of 12 variables that identified a wide range of contextual and ideological factors that could differentiate protesters from non-protesters.

Literature review: mobilizing people into protest

The empirical literature on political participation is voluminous and well established. Analysis of protest participation generally focuses on three interrelated questions: (a) how are people brought to protests? (b) *why* do people protest?, and (c) who protests? The following sections will address how these questions can relate to the protesting actions of sexual minorities.

How are people recruited to protests? The role of social networks

Protest participation does not occur in a social vacuum but in relation to other individuals within meso and macro contexts. Theories about 'mobilizing structures' suggest that residing in certain social environments fosters greater protest activities (Corrigall-Brown, 2012; Klandermans, 1997; McAdam & Paulsen, 1993). Social networks, which represent webs of recurring interactions between people and groups, always convey some sort of beliefs, values, norms, and identities. Some social networks convey messages that legitimize and endorse heterosexism while others suggest that social change is necessary, important, and worthwhile. Although networks can cultivate the sort of attitudes that predispose people towards activism, they also draw people into specific political mobilizations (Andretta & Della Porta, 2014; Egan, 2012; Opp & Brandstätter, 2010). Political parties, committed partisans, and movement activists often try to motivate activism through different persuasive techniques (e.g. face-to-face conversations, phone calls, email, direct mail, etc.). 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 (Lim, 2008; Schussman & Soule, 2005).

In gay and lesbian activism studies, the concept of social network immersion has been measured via network size, network density, and types of group affiliations. Some studies find that gays and lesbians who routinely talked with other gays and lesbians were more politically active (Lombardi, 1999; Swank & Fahs, 2012), while other studies suggest that membership in voluntary groups is what matters for activism (Lewis et al., 2011; Paceley et al., 2014; Worthen, 2014). This is based on the premise that civic groups are activist hotbeds because they provide wider access to relevant information and have a higher concentration of activist friends (Lim, 2008). Although many groups may sensitize participants about shared grievances and enhance group solidarity, theorists have often argued that gay and lesbian festivals (Gamson, 1996) and the gay and lesbian community centres are the strongest engines of cognitive liberation (Bernstein, 1997; Lombardi, 1999; Waldner, 2001). While gay and lesbian centres provide access to psychological and educational resources, they also introduce political novices to explicitly political networks (e.g. consciousness-raising groups and national gay and lesbian rights groups that engage in 'block recruitment' at their functions).

Why do people protest? Belief systems as motivators

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). Frames are essential to social movements because they highlight certain aspects of reality in ways that promote a particular problem definition, moral evaluation, and suggested remedy (Snow & Benford, 1992). While many frames portray social norms as legitimate or too powerful to change, collective action frames can be a vehicle that motivates collective challenges among aggrieved populations.

Framing as recognition of injustice

All collective action frames initially render some societal norms as wrong, unacceptable, and unjust (Corrigall-Brown, 2012; Klandermans, 1997; Miller, Gurin, Gurin, & Malanchuk, 1981; Taylor & Whittier, 1992). By naming the injustice, Snow and Benford (1992) suggested these frames serve as 'accenting devices that either underscore or embellish the seriousness and injustice of a social condition or redefine it as unjust and immoral' (p. 137).

Earlier studies of gay and lesbian activism have mostly overlooked perceived societal injustices in their models. Although gay and lesbian right groups often try to reframe traditional gender roles as detrimental or unfair (Ghaziani, 2011), explanatory studies of LGB activism often ignore possible grievances with the hostile, covert, and blatant side of heterosexism that 'denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any nonheterosexual form of behavior, identity, relationship, or community' (Herek, 1992, p. 89). The acceptance of 'old-fashioned' heterosexism may be important as recent studies noted that sexual minorities who internalize homophobia and criticized homosexuals as gender deviants were less inclined to join political protests (Swank & Fahs, 2013; Taylor et al., 2009). Furthermore, 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, while 'old-fashioned' forms of heterosexism chide homosexuals as inferior, immoral, or

unnatural (Morrison & Morrison, 2002). 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 to people who deny the existence of heterosexism.

Instead of focusing on the general recognition of injustices, most of the empirical research on gay and lesbian activism has focused on the effects of personal experiences of discrimination. Although enduring discriminatory events can lead to negative mental health outcomes (Meyer, 2003), the survival of such events can eventually lead to a 'moral shock' that pushes the person into activism (Jasper, 1998). Accordingly, some researchers have discovered a positive correlation between activism and exposure to discriminatory environments (Hyers, 2007; Jennings & Andersen, 2003; Swank & Fahs, 2013; Taylor et al., 2009; Waldner, 2001). Two studies on AIDS activism found that gay men were more likely to protest governmental policies when they were demeaned by medical professionals (Jennings & Andersen, 2003). Gays and lesbians who dealt with sexual and verbal harassment or discrimination in housing and employment were more likely to accept the sort of queer identity that leads to joining radical gay and lesbian rights groups (Friedman & Leaper, 2010; Rollins & Hirsch, 2003; Simon et al., 1998; Waldner, 2001).

Framing as system blame

Collective action frames also identify the causes of the injustice. By providing a diagnostic function, frames are etiologies that explain why problems exist and assign levels of culpability to different parties (Snow & Benford, 1992). By making these attributions, frames draw attention to the sources of social ills and highlight the practices that should be modified, transformed, or eliminated.

Many theorists have argued that system blame is integral to social movement participation (Miller et al., 1981), that is, people were more likely to organize against elites and mainstream institutions when they believed that a group's low status is attributable to biases built into social systems. Although the literature on gay and lesbian activism has mostly ignored system blame, people who recognized discriminatory marriage laws more often protested for gay and lesbian rights (Montgomery & Stewart, 2012; Simon et al., 1998; Swank & Fahs, 2012).

Frames and perceptions of power

Members of disenfranchised groups often respond to societal discrimination through individualistic coping mechanisms. Collective action frames, on the other hand, convince bystanders to use political tactics when trying to stop social injustices (Klandermans & Stekelenburg, 2014; Snow & Benford, 1992). 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 target (this confidence in movement tactics is sometimes called 'agency' or a 'sense of collective efficacy'). In short, collective action frames must assure gays and lesbians that protest movements are a viable response to their grievances.

Some studies suggest that efficacy perceptions are related to the protesting inclinations of gays and lesbians (Swank & Fahs, 2013; Waldner, 2001). When addressing personal efficacy, Jennings and Andersen (2003) suggested that gay men more often joined AIDS

advocacy groups when they thought they had a good understanding of political issues. However, the importance of group efficacy on the protesting activities of gays and lesbians is a little less certain. Perceptions of LGB political efficacy were irrelevant to how often married gays and lesbians joined gay and lesbian rights groups or attended a political demonstration (Taylor et al., 2009) as gays and lesbians preferred protest tactics when they thought the government was unresponsive to the demands of gay and lesbian activists (Waldner, 2001). As such, confidence in one's political competencies might have different effects on protesting than confidence in a group's ability to change institutional practices.

Framing of collective identity and self-concepts

Finally, frames provide crucial interpretations of collective identities and self-definitions. In dealing with group processes, collective identities establish social boundaries of 'us' and 'them' by specifying who belongs to the virtuous in-group and the antagonistic out-groups (Miller et al., 1981). These collective 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, and they suggest that their group is illegitimately threatened, deprived, or treated badly. Moreover, collective identities also provide a cognitive framework and political consensus that specifies proper goals, means, and fields of action (Gecas, 2000).

Issues of concealing one's identity and 'passing-as-heterosexual' are inevitably linked to gay and lesbian rights activism (Gamson, 1996; Taylor & Whittier, 1992). When dealing with the risks of having a 'spoiled' or 'stigmatized' identity, sexual minorities can feign heterosexual identity to preserve the expectation that everybody is heterosexual. However, sexual minorities can also break these 'silent' scripts and reveal their identity to others. Public acknowledgments of sexual identities are often crafted through a complicated set of disclosure practices. Some sexual minorities may feel comfortable revealing their sexual identity in most settings, while others may only hint at their sexual identity to a few confidants or nobody at all. Within a movement that tries to 'gain the recognition for new social identities', the very act of being 'out' can be considered political (Bernstein, 1997; Taylor & Whittier, 1992).

In turn, this personal breaking of silence is often seen as precursor to joining groups that fight for collective LGB empowerment (Egan, 2012). With regard to activist inclinations, gays and lesbians were more interested in political activism when they were more open about their sexuality (Harris & Battle, 2013; Lewis et al., 2011; Swank & Fahs, 2013), identified as 'queer' (Gray & Desmarais, 2014) or felt solidarity with other sexual minorities (Friedman & Leaper, 2010; Harris & Battle, 2013). In light of political behaviours, Rollins and Hirsch (2003) found that people who called themselves 'queer' were more likely to join AIDS advocacy groups while Waldner (2001) discovered greater political involvement when gays and lesbians were unwilling to hide their sexual identity.

Collective identities also offer self-concepts that inspire political engagement. Gays and lesbians often have fear that they are living an inauthentic or fake life when they let heteronormative rules guide their actions (Gecas, 2000). When deference to unjust expectations is widespread, the joining of a LGB protest can temporally solve the authenticity gap. Protest events can offer a chance to synchronize one's suppressed values and actions within a group that verifies the importance of social justice mores (Jasper, 1998;

Opp & Brandstätter, 2010). Accordingly, the pride of acting against an unfair social system may also inspire activism as people often challenge homophobic comments when they embraced the activist norms of 'standing up for what's right', and 'being a person who challenges unjust laws' (Hyers, 2007; Swank & Fahs, 2012).

Who protests? Social statuses and protest proclivities

To rule out demographic explanations of protest activities, we included five control variables that are often related to political engagement (income, education, gender, age, and race). These variables often explain involvement in feminist and other leftist mobilizations (Andretta & Della Porta, 2014; Corrigall-Brown, 2012) and occasionally predict LGB activism. That is, some studies contend that LGB activists are more educated (Egan, 2012; Rollins & Hirsch, 2003; Smith & Haider-Markel, 2002; Swank & Fahs, 2011), have higher incomes (Barrett & Pollack, 2005; Lombardi, 1999; Smith & Haider-Markel, 2002; Taylor et al., 2009), and are disproportionately more male (Herek et al., 2010; Lewis et al., 2011; Paceley et al., 2014) than LGB non-activists. Age was also included because some studies suggest that sexual minorities were less willing to protest as they grew older (Egan, 2012; Lewis, Rogers & Sherrill, 2011) while others suggest that civic engagement was most pronounced among middle-aged lesbians and gays (Barrett & Pollack, 2005).

Although research has largely ignored the role of race on activist behaviours for self-identified gays and lesbians, we nevertheless added this as a control variable. Among heterosexuals, some studies indicate that Blacks have a greater tendency to turn to protest activities than Whites (Schussman & Soule, 2005). However, race factors may have a different effect for sexual minorities. Early research suggests that concealment practices may vary by race because there are elevated levels of homonegativity among Blacks, Asian Americans, and Latina/os and sexual minorities of colour are often suspicious of overt and covert forms of racial prejudice among White gays and lesbians (Harris & Battle, 2013; Ramirez-Valles, Kuhns, Vázquez, & Benjamin, 2014). Similarly, gays and lesbians of colour often feel like a 'token' racial minority at LGB events (Balsam, Molina, Beadnell, Simoni, & Walters, 2011), and wings of the gay and lesbian rights movement minimized, or sometimes re-enacted, the practices of white privilege (Alimahomed, 2010; Ghaziani & Fine, 2008; Ward, 2008). Accordingly, some studies contend that the 'double-oppression' of being an African-American sexual minority can dampen the propensity to join LGB protests (DeBlaere et al., 2014; Harris & Battle, 2013; Lewis et al., 2011; Swank & Fahs, 2013).

Method

Participants

This cross-sectional study drew from an online survey of 285 self-identified gays, lesbians, and bisexuals from throughout the United States (conducted in December 2007). Online surveys are often the best option when studying gay and lesbian populations (Meyer & Wilson, 2009; Riggle, Rostosky, & Horne, 2009; Riggle, Rostosky, & Reedy, 2005; Weinberg, Freese, & McElhattan, 2014) for several reasons. First, national random samples often fail to ask questions about sexual orientation and political behaviours at the same

time. Second, online surveys offer researchers access to people who have and have not gone to a protest. By using political and apolitical listservs to find respondents, we could create comparison groups of gays and lesbians who were involved in activist and non-activist social circles (Babbie, 2008). This use of non-equivalent comparison groups is rarely done in studies on gay and lesbian political participation. Previous studies of gay and lesbian activism collected their data through snowball samples of activists (Taylor et al., 2009; Waldner, 2001), mailing surveys to members of gay and lesbian organizations (Rollins & Hirsch, 2003; Simon et al., 1998) or distributing surveys at political events (Lombardi, 1999; Waldner, 2001). Third, in-person recruitment at lesbian or gay venues, or snowball samples, are often less representative than online surveys because they disproportionately select those who are already 'out' and can overstate racial, social class, age, and gender homogeneities (Riggle et al., 2005).

To ensure an adequate number of protesters and non-protesters, respondents were selected through a purposive stratified sample of several types of email listservs. The first stratum included two listservs of members in gay and lesbian rights organizations. These political listservs were run by umbrella 'Fairness Alliances'. These coalitions of political and human service organizations seek equality for LGB individuals by encouraging leadership development, public education, and participation in the democratic process. Membership in these email groups was free and most participants resided in Midwestern and Mid-Atlantic states, with the largest contingencies from Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Tennessee, and West Virginia. It was assumed that these lists would guarantee access to Southern and Midwestern people who are already embedded in a politically energized social network.

The second stratum served as a comparison group of gays and lesbians involved in less politically engaged networks. The researchers selected Yahoo groups that met three criteria. First, the group had to exist for explicitly social purposes (i.e. they did not mention anything political in the description of their listserv). Some of these groups primarily concentrated on hobbies (e.g. 'Dykes on Bykes' 'Gay Square Dancers' or 'GLBT Horselovers') while others displayed support group qualities (e.g. 'Lavender Mothers' or 'Kentucky Pride'). Second, we excluded groups that seemed to serve as romantic or sexual match-making sites. We feared that the use of such sites would oversample younger sexual minorities who are not in long-term relationships or bisexuals who are seeking discrete affairs (Lever, Grov, Royce, & Gillespie, 2008). Finally, we looked for groups that mentioned the regions that were most common in the political listservs (e.g. Queer Kentucky, Rural Pride of Tennessee, or Gay in Ohio).

The cover letters sent via the listservs asked potential respondents to click over to a surveymonkey website. The letter solicited the involvement of adults who considered themselves gays or lesbians. In addition to the standard discussion of anonymity, voluntarism, and informed consent, we tried to build some trust and rapport by describing the educational and professional backgrounds of the primary investigators. The response rate to this letter was impossible to calculate because we cannot estimate the number of people who belonged to each listserv, but 285 of the 296 people who clicked on the survey actually completed the survey.

The sample of 285 participants had a preponderance of males (58% male) and Euro Americans (79% European American, 7% Native American, 2% African-American, 1% Asian American, 1% Latina/o, and 10% 'refuse to answer'). Ages ranged from 18 to 75, with 24% under age 30, 54% aged 30–50, and 22% aged 51–75. The sample included a

diverse array of incomes, including 10% below $20,000 per year, 27% $20,000–50,000 per year, 25% $50,000–80,000 per year, and 31% over $80,000 per year, with 8% missing income data. Similar to most samples of 'out' lesbian and gay participants (Black, Gates, Sanders, & Taylor, 2000), our sample was highly educated, with 3% having earned a high school degree, 58% having some college or a bachelor's degree, and 32% having a graduate degree. Participants indicated that they resided in many types of urban and rural spaces, with 26% residing in a large urban centre, 18% residing in a suburb of a large city, 18% residing in a mid-sized city, and 32% residing in smaller towns or rural areas. Because the majority of recruitment took place in the geographic south of the United States, 65.2% of participants lived in the South, 15.7% lived in the Midwest, 6.2% lived in the West, and 4% lived in the East, with Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Tennessee, and West Virginia representing the most respondents.

Measures

The anonymous online survey contained 88 close-ended items. From these 88 items, this analysis was able to create 12 independent variables. Of these 12 predictors, group membership captured 'mobilizing' factors while the seven 'framing' factors were experiencing economic discrimination, enduring hate crimes, concealing sexual identities, closeness to other LGBs, system blame, perceptions of collective efficacy, and activist identities. The study also employed the five social statuses of family income, educational attainment, race, gender, and age as controls.

The framing items were mostly measured via a 5-point scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree). Several variables are measured by a single item when the Cronbach α suggested that multi-items scales had insufficient reliability. Demographics and experiences of discrimination were handled through more idiosyncratic scales. For example, respondents were offered the responses of never, once, or twice or more to the item of 'Because of your sexual orientation, have you ever had verbal insults directed at your way since you were 16 years old?' The coding for each item is delineated in the following section (please see appendix for means and standard deviation for items).

Protesting behaviours: In democratic societies, citizens can choose among a range of conventional and unconventional political behaviours. The options of attending demonstrations, engaging in civil disobedience, creating political graffiti, refusing to pay taxes, and trying political violence typify the 'outsider', 'disruptive', or 'non-institutionalized' modes of political participation. To match the option of protesting to the gay and lesbian rights movement, our dependent variable asked respondents: 'Have you ever attended a demonstration on the behalf of gay and lesbian rights?'[1] This item was answered in a yes or no format, so we then created a binary score for this dependent variable (44 of 285 respondents answered yes).

Gay and lesbian group membership: To trace the role of enabling social networks, we asked if respondents had ever joined a gay or lesbian athletic team, professional group, or support group. These groups were selected since early studies found them predictive of LGBT activism (Lombardi, 1999; Waldner, 2001). By creating a composite measure, we combined the yes or no items into a final score. Participant responses ranged from 0 (none of these activities) to 3 (all of these activities).

Heterosexist discrimination: A four-item additive scale assessed different forms of exposure to heterosexist discrimination. Herek's (2009) victimization scales were used to trace personal experiences of hate crimes since they were 16 years old. Respondents were asked two questions about the frequency in which they have been physically or verbally attacked because of their perceived sexual identity in their adult lifetime. Because sexual prejudices are also expressed and reinforced through the norms of mainstream institutions, we posed two questions about discrimination at the workplace and discrimination in securing housing. Using an additive scale in which people could respond never, once, twice, and three times or more, respondent answers to the four-item scale could range between 0 and 12 (Cronbach $\acute{\alpha}$ = .697)

Concealed sexual identities: To see how people managed public disclosures of gay and lesbian identities, we chose an item from the public identification subscale of the Lesbian Internalized Homophobia Scale (Szymanski & Chung, 2001). Our item focused on issues of trying to hide every aspect of a person's gay or lesbian identity: 'I try not to give any signs that I am gay or lesbian'. Responses ranged from 0 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

Salience of LGB community: Group membership may be considered trivial or crucial to a person's impressions of themselves. Accordingly, our item addressed collective identities by focusing on the centrality of being involved in gay and lesbian settings: 'Being a part of the gay and lesbian community is important to me'. Responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

System blame: Our measure dealt with the loci of blame for discrimination. By utilizing attribution theory, our question assessed the notion that heterosexism would lessen if sexual minorities stopped acting in ways deemed deviant: 'Negative attitudes towards homosexuals would end if gays and lesbians acted more responsibly'. With strongly disagree receiving the highest score, this item was coded against sexual minorities themselves being blamed for homophobia. Responses ranged from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

Perceived collective efficacy: Collective efficacy judgements are future-oriented expectancies about the likelihood of a group achieving its intended goals. When focusing on group potency, our measure stated: 'When gays and lesbians work together, they can solve the problems facing them'. Responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Activist Identity: To explore issues of self-concepts, we focused on self-designations as a person who is explicitly committed to social justice for sexual minorities. By modifying an 'activist commitment' measure from the Feminist Identity Development scale (Bargard & Hyde, 1991), our item asserted: 'It is important for me to fight for gay and lesbian rights' (Strongly Disagree = 1; Strongly Agree = 5).

Family income: Participants' economic resources were assessed through a current family income scale ranging from 1 (under $20,000) to 5 (above $150,000).

Educational Attainment: Academic achievement was measured by a five-item scale that focused on the highest status achieved. Responses ranged from 1 (some high school) to 5 (graduate or professional degree).

Gender: Answers to 'What is your gender?' were coded in a binary fashion, from 0 (female) to 1 (male).

Race: The responses of 'Please identify your race' were coded into a single dummy variable. Euro American/White received a one, while African-American, Asian American,

Native American, and Latina/o all received a zero. The separate racial minorities were collapsed into a single category due to the small number of people in several of the racial classifications.

Age: Through an open-ended question, respondents were asked to indicate their age.

Analytical strategy

The following section displays the results derived from several binary logistic regression analyses. Logistic regressions are efficient at analysing dichotomous dependent variables as they calculate a likelihood estimation of a certain event occurring (Hosmer & Lemeshow, 1989). In our case, respondents either participated or did not attend a protest for LGB rights (nonparticipation is the reference). Logistic regressions are also well suited for our data because their use is not confined to many of the strict requirements of other sorts of regressions (i.e. a normal distribution in the dependent variable or no problems of homoscedasticity). As expected, the data met all the conditions for a logistic regression, in that the outcome variable was coded in categorical binary fashion, linear relationships were assumed between the independent variable and the logit of the dependence, and there was an absence of high multicolinearity or outliers. Multicolinearity diagnostics suggested low variance inflation factors (VIF) in each regression because the VIF was below 1.48 for every independent variable. To maintain a larger sample size, means were inserted for the few cases of missing data.

Results

Our main objective was to determine, using a logistic regression approach, the association of mobilizing structures and collective action frames with joining a protest for gay and lesbian rights. To assess the relative strength of each sort of variables, Table 1 displays the relationships for different variable types through a series of hierarchical regressions. Protest behaviour is first regressed on LGB group membership when controlling for the factors of family income, educational attainment, gender, race, and age. The later regression determines whether any of the specific framing factors are associated with protest attendance even after holding the mobilizing factors and the individual-level controls constant.

Table 1 reveals the results for the predictor variables on attending a public demonstration for lesbian or gay and lesbian rights. Model 1 limits itself to an analysis of our sole mobilizing structure, that is, membership in gay and lesbian groups. Even when holding the control variables constant, membership in such groups presents a strong adjusted odds ratio of 2.41 ($p < .01$). This suggests that attending at least one protest was associated with greater integration into LGB civic groups (even when taking race, class, and gender differences into account). Among the controls, being White presented a significant odds ratio of 3.06 ($p. < .01$) as did educational attainment 1.48 ($p. < .05$).

The full model is displayed in Model 2. Belonging to explicitly gay or lesbian groups remained important even as framing and resource factors were added to subsequent regressions (odds ratios dropped from 2.41 to 1.62 but probabilities stayed under .05). Race, or being White, grew in importance after the framing factors were held constant (odds ratio = 3.39, $p < .01$). Conversely, educational attainment lost its significance in

Table 1. Logistic regression estimates of protesting for gay and lesbian rights ($n = 285$).

Independent variables	Model 1			Model 2		
	b	(SE)	OR	*b*	(SE)	OR
Mobilizing structures						
LG group membership	.81**	(.18)	2.41	.53*	(.20)	1.62
Framing processes						
Heterosexist discrimination				.12	(.19)	1.17
Concealed sexuality				−.61*	(.16)	.56
Salience of LGB community				.01	(.25)	1.01
System blame				.37*	(.14)	1.43
Perceived collective efficacy				.21	(.25)	1.69
Activist identity				.77**	(.31)	2.13
Social status						
Family income	.02	(.14)	1.02	.10	(.16)	1.11
Educational attainment	.39*	(.13)	1.48	.29	(.20)	1.34
Male	−.23	(.29)	.79	−.26	(.35)	.70
White	1.11**	(.07)	3.06	1.22**	(.05)	3.39
Age	.03	(.28)	1.03	.37	(.33)	1.45
Pseudo R^2	.24			.42		

Note: Figures include the Nagelkerke's Pseudo R-squared and adjusted odd ratios (OR).
*$p < .05$.
**$p < .01$.
***$p < .001$.

the final regression. This suggests that educational attainment may not intrinsically increase activism, but rather educational content is important when college courses successfully modify the framing practices of its students.

The 'collective action framing' variables of Model 2 provided a new set of important predictors. As separate independent variables, three of the six framing factors attained significance. Net of mobilizing and other framing factors, concealing one's sexuality dramatically lessened the likelihood of sexual minorities protesting for their rights (odds ratio = .56, $p < .05$). System blame significantly increased attendance at communal demonstrations (odds ratio = 1.43, $p < .05$) as did having an activist identity (odds ratio = 2.13, $p < .01$). Some framing factors did not display significant direct associations. A sense of collective efficacy, salience of the LGB community, and experiencing heterosexist discrimination seemed disconnected to a respondent's political actions.

Methodological strengths and weaknesses

Several research decisions could have undermined the external validity of this study. First, measurement errors regularly haunt survey data. Problems of overdemanding recall could hurt our mobilization measures, in that people may have difficulty remembering important events. Questions of social desirability may be especially relevant to our activist identity measures, as participants may want to impress themselves by overstating the amount that they fight for social justice. The use of gays and lesbians can also cause problems with overgeneralization since it is possible that respondents are more connected to either gay or lesbian communities. Second, our operationalization of variables may have ignored key dimensions that would have made the impact of that variable stronger. For the dependent variable, we only concentrated on attending protests, though political expression can manifest in many different ways (e.g. graffiti, kiss-ins, wearing buttons, supporting gay, or lesbian political candidates). In turn, we would warn that more individualistic and

electoral types of LGB activism could be governed by factors that are different from participation in collective demonstrations (Swank & Fahs, 2013). Finally, cross-sectional studies can always have problems with temporal ordering. It is possible that some people join more LGB groups and develop a stronger commitment to social justice after they attend a protest.

Discussion

By constructing a stratified sample, this analysis offers a unique look into a retrospective sample of protesters and non-protesters. The study also offers a theoretically comprehensive analysis because this quantitative study synthesizes the insights of 'mobilization' and 'framing' theories of protest participation. While researchers have tested similar models among heterosexual populations for other social movements, this is not true among studies of gay and lesbian activists (LGB studies rarely go beyond a handful of variables at a single time).

The mobilizing factor of membership in a gay and lesbian organization increased protest behaviours. This suggests that access to LGB groups is important, regardless of the frequency and extent of group involvement (Lewis et al., 2011; Paceley et al., 2014; Swank & Fahs, 2013). Although involvement in gay and lesbian athletic, professional, and self-help groups led to greater protester inclinations, the strength of being embedded in such networks was somewhat muted by the framing factors. This suggests that some of the apparent links between group affiliations and protest actions resulted from the messages that these networks conveyed. Future research may want to see if membership in gay and lesbian groups increased a person's commitment to social activism and their contempt for structural inequalities. We also wonder if being ensconced in other types of political groups inspires greater electoral activism (e.g. belonging to a political party, feminist organization, or union). Perhaps informal socialization processes in primary groups can also predispose people to activism (Taylor et al., 2009). Gays and lesbians may show greater inclinations to political activism if their families debated politics, they took a gender studies classes in college, or they routinely sat through religious sermons that chastised homosexuality (Rollins & Hirsch, 2003). Of course, the list of possible socializing agents is quite vast, and future researchers can explore the impact of communicative acts in many different types of settings.

Our data also suggest that several of the framing processes are important as well. To address issues of collective identities and self-concepts, there are political consequences of being 'closeted' or 'out'. Respondents who denied or hid their sexual orientation were less likely to join public struggles for gay and lesbian rights (Friedman & Leaper, 2010; Harris & Battle, 2013; Rollins & Hirsch, 2003). This means reconciling private and public identities is probably the first step in becoming a sexual minority who feels entitled to demand equal rights. The acceptance of activist identities was also linked to protest proclivities. This suggests that the desire to be politically active on the behalf of other sexual minorities is an integral part of gay and lesbian activism. This may be partially a development of self-interest—it seems wise to protect gay or lesbian rights when one fully embraces such identities. However, publicly challenging heterosexist tenets can be related to definitions of an authentic, moral, or liberated

self. People often feel better about themselves when their actions correspond to their internalized standards of just and compassionate behaviours. After years of being ignored or vilified, sexual minorities are often relieved or excited when they feel safe enough to advocate for greater rights (Halpin & Allen, 2004). Similar satisfactions may also come from the personal validation of being a 'brave' person who takes the risk of breaking of demeaning social roles and for doing the 'right thing' of protecting more vulnerable gays and lesbians.

The importance of other frames was revealed as well. The significance of system-blaming points to the value of attributions and etiologies. When gays and lesbians want to end discrimination by fixing some supposed 'bad manners' of other sexual minorities, they are less inclined to join a protest for gay and lesbian rights (Swank & Fahs, 2012; Taylor et al., 2009). Conversely, the recognition of structural causes of heterosexism seems to have a direct association with LGB activism.

Finally, several frames were unable to directly predict attending a protest. Personal exposure to economic or employment discrimination did not automatically lead to greater or lesser involvement in the gay and lesbian rights movement. While this finding of insignificance could be due to the difficulty of measuring discriminatory experiences, it also highlights the centrality of system blaming, activist identities, and organizational memberships. That is, exposure to discriminatory practices may lead to greater gay and lesbian rights activism if victims get integrated into groups for sexual minorities, become more public with their sexual identity, stop blaming sexual minorities for discrimination, and embrace a commitment to social justice.

Questions of collective efficacy never reached significance for protesting (Taylor et al., 2009). Our data suggest that going to protests is probably not contingent upon some form of expected external results. More precisely, beliefs about possible concessions from recalcitrant targets are less important to gay and lesbian rights activism compared to being in gay and lesbian groups, concealing sexual identities, or embracing an activist identity.

Only two social statuses were ever linked to protesting actions. While African-Americans and Latina/o have a history of protesting more often than people of other races, there were disproportionately more white protesters in this sample of gays and lesbians. Clearly, this reversal of racial background for sexual minorities must be explored in future studies. It would be insightful to see if this finding is replicated in samples with greater racial diversity and if sexual minorities of colour are less inclined to join the gay and lesbian rights movement due to racism in the LGB communities (Ward, 2008) or the possibility of greater homophobia in African-American and Latina/o communities (Lewis, 2003; Whitley, Childs, & Collins, 2011).

Educational attainment was significant only before framing factors were included in the analysis (Rollins & Hirsch, 2003; Swank & Fahs, 2011). Thus, access to schooling probably increases activism only when it liberalizes the sentiments of gay and lesbian students (e.g. educational experience enhances a student's system blame, makes sexuality disclosure practices easier, and builds a commitment to social justice).

Finally, none of the other demographic controls displayed significance. In contradicting the claims of some studies (Barrett & Pollack, 2005; Lewis et al., 2011; Lombardi, 1999; Paceley et al., 2014; Ramirez-Valles et al., 2014), the variables of gender, age, and family income never attained significance. With gays and lesbians protesting at similar rates, we assumed that the old gender prescription of 'women staying out of

politics' was inapplicable to lesbian women. Also, at least for sexual minorities, protest was not an action engaged in only by the young and middle-aged. The lack of significance for salary can mean two different things. Class backgrounds may in fact fail to predict gay and lesbian rights activism. That is to say, heterosexism is so bad or that access to LGB groups is so encompassing, that sexual minorities from all social classes protest at roughly the same rates. On the other hand, the proponents of the 'resource' theories of participation could argue that our research methodologies probably underestimated the effects of family income. Perhaps using an online survey somehow distorted the impact of salaries because there is a class divide in internet access. However, some methodological papers have found that the demographic characteristics of online and mail samples of gays and lesbians were 'practically indistinguishable' and 'equivalent' (Riggle et al., 2005; Weinberg et al., 2014).

Future research should insert new variables into their studies. This study did not have variables for every step in the process of becoming an activist; variables for things such as sympathizing with movement goals and movement organizations, becoming a target of a specific recruitment effort, and dealing with barriers to movement participation remained absent. Accordingly, other studies might explore the role of other framing processes. It is possible that activism can be connected to general impressions of discrimination, perceived certainty of their sexual orientation, a dislike for heterosexuals, impressions of gay and lesbian rights groups, or perceptions of civic duties. Studies may also want to see if fear of negative reactions by others dampens the political engagement of gays and lesbians (Klandermans & Stekelenburg, 2014).

Understanding the impact of different mobilizing structures could be illuminating. Befriending heterosexual activists, living in liberal neighbourhoods, or going to 'gay-friendly' colleges could foster greater activism. Conversely, being raised in socially conservative families or orthodox religious institutions could dampen any inclinations to gay and lesbian activism. Researchers may also see how contact with movement activists and access to different recruiting apparatuses shape the actions of the politically committed. Finally, the inclusion of transgendered identities could be another important social status to study in the future.

As researchers, we know that findings on political activism can be time-specific and hope that future research will utilize longitudinal studies on lesbian and gay activism because protesting behaviours are often contingent upon different historical conditions. The increased acceptance of protest tactics (Caren, Ghoshal, & Ribas, 2011) as well as the general liberalization of attitudes towards homosexuality (Schafer & Shaw, 2009) might alter the political inclinations of sexual minorities over time. Similarly, activist behaviours can be spurned by the ever-changing laws on same-sex marriages or hate crimes, as well as the growth of more LGB social and political groups throughout the nation (Riggle, Rostosky & Horne, 2009; Van Dyke & Cress, 2006).

Overall, this study points to the centrality of sexual identity disclosures, social justice commitments, and group membership in determining the protest behaviours of gays and lesbians. It also suggests that, despite the intensity of heteronormativity experienced by the gay and lesbian communities in this country, gay and lesbian populations have often found a variety of ways to make their voices heard, combat homophobia, and participate in collective action.

Note

1. For the sake of clarity, demonstrations can be defined as an 'a distinct collective action pursuing an explicit goal by the use of confrontive, disruptive and even violent means' (Rucht & Ohlemacher, 1992, p. 77).

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Appendix

Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix for the independent variables

	Mean	Std(X)	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. LG group membership	.98	1.01	.076	.235	.360	.370	−.086	.287	.359	.161	.343	−.051
2. Heterosexist discrimination	6.51	1.52		.183	.010	.006	−.032	.050	.099	−.061	.038	.175
3. Age	39.75	12.19			−.050	−.030	.103	.052	−.144	.191	.320	.187
4. Concealed sexuality	3.34	1.09				.250	−.142	.218	.319	.045	.172	−.102
5. Salience of LGB community	3.92	.92					−.244	.390	.361	−.039	.150	−.269
6. System blame	2.43	1.23						−.060	−.283	.029	−.095	.290
7. Perceived collective efficacy	4.09	.79							.365	−.014	.179	−.142
8. Activist identity	4.05	.80								−.061	.151	−.198
9. Family income	2.88	1.08									.361	.107
10. Educational attainment	3.96	.88										−.043
11. Gender (Male = 1)	.63	.43										