

Antecedents of Pro-LGBT Advocacy among Sexual Minority and Heterosexual College Students

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Abstract Utilizing the resource model of political participation, we identify the antecedents of willingness to sign a petition supporting employment protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people among sexual minority and heterosexual college students. Through secondary data analysis, we investigate the role of sociodemographic, mobilizing context, and framing variables, including various LGBT-related attitudes that have never been integrated in a single regression of LGBT activism. Results from a sample of sexual minority ($n=367$) and heterosexual ($n=1,707$) college students suggest that the majority of students from both sexual orientation groups are willing to sign a petition for LGBT rights. Although the impact of framing variables, such as transphobia and liberal identity, were most influential among both groups, the relevance of some framing antecedents (i.e., heterosexist attitudes and the disclosure of sexual identities) was specific to each sexuality. Before the inclusion of framing factors, knowing LGBT peers and observing heterosexist discrimination inspired greater activism among both sexuality groups as did being female and a graduate student; however, the significance of religious factors were only important among heterosexual students. Implications for future research are discussed.

Keywords Activism · Heterosexism · Discrimination · Sexual orientation · Legal protections

Government statutes and policies, such as laws prohibiting adoption by gay and lesbian couples, can generate or reinforce societal biases against sexual minorities. On the other hand, government legislation, for example laws criminalizing hate crimes based on sexual orientation, can protect sexual minorities, and some laws, such as same-sex marriage, can promote inclusion for this population (Woodford and Bella 2003; Woodford 2010). While laws advancing and/or protecting the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people cannot eliminate every instance of discrimination, their passage does seem to have beneficial effects for their intended beneficiaries. For example, antidiscrimination employment laws inclusive of sexual orientation have been found to have a positive effect on the number of interviews gay men report (Tilcsik 2011) and their reported earnings (Klawitter and Flatt 1998).

Although there is much debate as to how these laws come into existence and the role of citizenry in that process, many scholars agree that the passage of pro-LGBT laws is partially dependent upon the advocacy of lesbian and gay interest groups (Barclay and Fisher 2003; Camp 2008), as well as the voting practices of sexual minorities and their heterosexual allies (Frank and McEaney 1999; Lax and Phillips 2009; Pappas et al. 2009). With the possibility of public opinion, voting, and petition signing and other advocacy practices influencing the adoption of pro-LGBT laws, a line of studies have explored the extent in which heterosexual majorities support progressive sexual orientation ordinances (Barth et al. 2009; Brewer 2003; Olson et al. 2006; Swank and Raiz 2010; Woodford et al. 2012a; Woodford et al. *in press a*). This attitudinal literature is well developed; however, very few studies explore the reasons contributing to political behaviors such as advocacy efforts and voting behaviors that advance LGBT rights. Moreover, this nascent literature on LGBT activism has mostly engaged sexual

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minorities (Swank and Fahs 2011; Taylor et al. 2009; Waldner 2001), thus leaving the literature on heterosexual individuals' engagement in political activities that promote LGBT rights and protections underdeveloped (Fingerhut et al. 2010; Goldstein and Davis 2010; Swank and Fahs 2012). Existing studies (Goldstein and Davis 2010; Taylor et al. 2009; Waldner 2001) also fail to see if the predictors of electoral LGBT activism are the same across sexual identity groups. This is especially problematic since membership in dominant and subordinate social identities tends to produce unique and incompatible social experiences (Collins 2008).

Sexual minorities and their heterosexual allies can work for social change in many ways (Rimmerman 2008). Among other things, they can try to change their fellow citizens' opinions, establish and operate voluntary associations, and try to improve governmental laws and regulations. The state-centered approach pushes for the creation or modification of important laws and statutes and/or the expansion of important governmental programs, while the culture-centered approach seeks to change the assumptions and beliefs underpinning heterosexist practices. This study focuses on the state-centered approach and examines a willingness to sign a petition supporting employment protections for LGBT people.

Specifically, using the resource model of political participation as our conceptual framework, in this investigation, we identify the covariates of the intention to sign a petition for employment protections for LGBT people among a sample of sexual minority and heterosexual college students. Evidence suggests that the desire to sign a petition for a political cause significantly precedes subsequent engagement in activism (Coming and Myers 2002). We draw on data collected as part of a campus climate survey conducted at a large public university located in the Midwest. Nearly 20 % of the sample identified as sexual minorities, which, unlike other studies, enables us to compare heterosexual and sexual minority samples. Also unlike existing studies, we have a broad list of independent variables, including various LGBT-related attitudes that have never been integrated in a single regression of electoral LGBT activism. We map these variables onto the articulated categories of the resource model in order to determine which is most influential in regard to willingness to sign a pro-LGBT petition.

Literature Review

To assemble our theoretical model, we began with the much-cited and comprehensive resource model of political participation (Brady et al. 1995). Offering a succinct answer to why people refrain from political participation, 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 such

participation because of a supposed dearth of necessary resources to be political. While crucial resources may come in many forms, these authors emphasize the importance of financial situations, education, free time, and civic skills. The predicament of “they don't want to” deals with a lack of psychological interest in political issues. An indifference to politics and policy is sometimes belied as stupidity or indolence, but the resource model assumes that blasé attitudes are a reaction to 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 move citizens into action. That is, lower levels of political involvement may be a result of existing in social contexts that fail to transmit the necessary values and information that make activism probable.

This study ascertains which of the three explanations—“they can't,” “they don't want to,” or “nobody asked”—carries the most weight when predicting LGBT-related political activism. In doing so, our analysis is informed by earlier empirical studies that suggest possibly important antecedents to activism. Moreover, in delineating the relative power of each set of variables, by examining factors among sexual minority students and heterosexual students, we consider how a student's sexual identities may shift the importance of variables in the “they can't,” “they don't want to,” and the “nobody asked” domains.

“They Can't:” The Role of Education and Status Hierarchies

Every society has an unequal distribution of wealth, prestige, and power. This unequal allocation of resources creates aggregates of people—social classes—who share similar amounts of income and life opportunities. The resource model assumes these class and status hierarchies are fundamental to political inclinations and activism (Brady et al. 1995). In the simplest of terms, a person's class location grants or impedes access to opportunities and financial resources that make political participation easier. While income and wealth are often used in studies on the resource model, studies on student populations often focus on educational disparities because of a lack of income variance among young adults who are rarely employed full time (Petrie 2004; Stake 2007).

Research is unclear as to whether education fosters greater pro-LGBT political engagement. When looking at attitudinal issues, greater educational attainment often lessens the amount of heteronormativity among heterosexuals (Barth et al. 2009; Olson et al. 2006; Stake 2007). Likewise, some studies suggest that education is positively connected to participation in pro-LGBT political activities among LGBT and heterosexual populations (Barth et al. 2009; Fingerhut 2011; Montgomery and Stewart 2012; Swank and Fahs 2011). Conversely, several studies claimed that educational attainment did not differentiate the amount of political activism among

sexual minorities (Barrett and Pollack 2005; Lombardi 1999; Waldner 2001).

The role of gender hierarchies in political participation is important to examine and may have distinct qualities for heterosexuals and sexual minorities. Studies among heterosexuals routinely find that women are less homophobic than men (Brewer 2003; Olson et al. 2006; Woodford et al. 2012d) and one study found a gender gap in heterosexual individuals joining LGBT support groups (Fingerhut 2011). However, the broader literature on gender and voting is less conclusive. Older studies suggest that heterosexual women, from the beginning of enfranchisement to the 1950s, have been slightly less inclined to be politically active than heterosexual men. However, newer studies suggest that this gender gap disappeared or had even reversed in the years that followed the second wave of the women's movement (Harder and Krosnick 2008; Schussman and Soule 2005). To add to the confusion, a recent study suggests that women were more likely to vote in elections and sign petitions but were less likely to write a politician or join a protest (Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010).

The role of gender in the political activism of sexual minorities has produced mostly inconsistent results. One study argued that lesbians voted more for lesbian political candidates than gay men (Hertzog 1996) while another suggested that lesbians wore more political buttons than their gay counterparts (Herek et al. 2010). Further, gay men wrote more letters to politicians (Herek et al. 2010) and made larger financial contributions to political candidates than lesbians (Herek et al. 2010; Swank and Fahs 2011). Other studies contend that the frequency of political activism was roughly the same between gay men and lesbians (Bailey 1999; Jennings and Andersen 2003; Rollins and Hirsch 2003; Taylor et al. 2009; Waldner 2001) but that heterosexual women do more LGBT activism than heterosexual men (Fingerhut 2011).

Age is another factor that can influence political engagement. Younger people are often less homophobic than older adults (Brewer 2003; Olson et al. 2006) and young adults are often drawn to the protest tactics of the LGBT rights movement (Jennings and Andersen 2003; Rollins and Hirsch 2003; Taylor et al. 2009). Conversely, these progay tendencies may be undercut by the trend of younger citizens voting less than middle aged or elderly citizens (Harder and Krosnick 2008; Turner et al. 2001). One study concluded that age failed to predict the amount of voting among gay and lesbian citizens (Waldner 2001).

Due to issues of “dual oppressions,” the relationship between racial background and LGBT activism is far from certain. Some studies suggest that race does not predict petition signing practices (Leighley and Vedlitz 1999) but other studies contend that Whites vote more than racial minorities (Lien 1998). Other studies suggest that African Americans generally join more social movement protests than people of

other races (Schussman and Soule 2005), but students of color probably do less LGBT activism because of greater heterosexism in Black and Latino(a) communities (Lewis et al. 2011) and racial prejudice in White LGBT communities (Alimahomed 2010; Balsam et al. 2011).

“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 2003, p. 6). While frames help with the classification and organization of incoming stimuli, they also serve a political role of sanctioning or challenging the status quo. Conventional frames acquire the consent of the less powerful by portraying the social order as proper, normal, and inevitable. By seeking widespread conformity, mainstream narratives get people to subscribe to values, ideals, and self-definitions that bind them to their location in the prevailing power structure. While conservative frames prioritize deference to conventional standards, collective action frames do the exact opposite, as they motivate people into joining collective efforts that publicly seek social change (Benford and Snow 2000).

Activist frames often render some sort of societal norms as wrong, unacceptable, and unjust (Schussman and Soule 2005). Because traditional attitudes blame sexual minorities for the discrimination thrown upon them, LGBT activism is often stunted by the acceptance of the blatant, as well as often covert expressions of heterosexism that “denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any nonheterosexual form of behavior, identity, relationship, or community” (Herek 1992, p. 89). Accordingly, research has found that sexual minorities who criticized homosexuality or were opposed to same-sex marriage were less inclined to join political protests (Swank and Fahs 2011; Taylor et al. 2009) or vote for gay political candidates (Morrison and Morrison 2011). Empirical studies also conclude that heterosexuals who organize for LGBT rights are resistant to negative attitudes about sexual minorities (Fingerhut 2011; Stotzer 2009) and worry a lot about heterosexual privilege (Montgomery and Stewart 2012).

Perceptions of heterosexist injustices can be related to lived experiences as well. Although experiencing discrimination can contribute to negative behavior and poor physical and mental health among sexual minorities (Meyer 2003; Swank et al. 2013; Woodford et al. 2012b, c), cases of first-hand discrimination seem equally important to gay and lesbian activism (Duncan 1999; Hyers 2007; Jennings and Andersen 2003; Taylor et al. 2009; Waldner 2001). Studies on AIDS activism found that gay men were more likely to protest governmental policies when they were demeaned by the medical professionals (Jennings and Andersen 2003; Tester 2004). Moreover, the act of surviving deliberate and

overt forms of homophobia remained statistically significant even when researchers controlled for contextual and framing influences in explaining LGBT activism (Simon et al. 1998; Swank and Fahs 2013; Waldner 2001).

While heterosexuals are rarely the primary targets of heterosexism, their wellbeing can be threatened when they are subjected to heterosexism and when heterosexism exists in their social environment (Silverschanz et al. 2008) as well as vicarious or secondary versions of discrimination (Woodford et al. 2012c; *in press b*). By observing heterosexist social patterns or talking with sexual minorities about their experiences with sexual prejudice, heterosexuals can become cognizant of the extent and severity of heterosexism (Morrison and Morrison 2011; Pharr 1997; Walls 2008). One study noted that college students went to more demonstrations for LGBT rights when they read about or observed cases of heterosexist discrimination (Goldstein and Davis 2010), while another suggests that the denial of heterosexism blocks LGBT activism among heterosexuals (Swank and Fahs 2012).

Gaining awareness of heterosexual privilege may be a necessary but insufficient motivator of LGBT activism. Issues of agency or perceived efficacy may be crucial since the perception that one is weak and unable to change social conditions could block political activism (Leighley and Vedlitz 1999; Schussman and Soule 2005). While expectancy theories highlight the importance of imagining future political success, only a couple of studies indicate that efficacy perceptions are related to the political participation of gay and lesbian individuals (Jennings and Andersen 2003; Jones 2003; Swank and Fahs 2011). When addressing personal efficacy, Jennings and Andersen (2003) suggested that gay men more often joined AIDS advocacy groups when they had a good understanding of political issues (see also Waldner 2001). However, one study found that perceptions of LGBT political efficacy was irrelevant to how often married gay and lesbian couples joined LGBT rights groups or attended political demonstrations (Taylor et al. 2009). Another study suggested that gay and lesbian individuals 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.

Issues of sexual minorities concealing their sexual identities and passing-as-straight are inevitably linked to gay and lesbian rights activism. Within a movement that tries to gain the recognition for new social identities, the very act of being “out” challenges the veracity of compulsorily heterosexuality and its assumptions that heterosexuality is the default orientation regardless of people's orientation (Bernstein 1997; Rich 1980). For individuals, public acknowledgements of sexual identities are often crafted through a complicated set of disclosures practices. Disclosures of sexuality are often intermittent and strategic, and the explicit assertion of a gay or lesbian

identity could be seen as a political act in itself in that it challenges the basics of compulsory heterosexuality.

Questions of identities are often important to politics because the ways that people respond to their social statuses often have a bearing on their evaluation of what is appropriate and inappropriate political action. When addressing activist inclinations of sexual minorities, gay and lesbian people were more interested in political activism after they fully committed to their sexual identity (Konik and Stewart 2004) or felt solidarity with other sexual minorities (Friedman and Leaper 2010; Simon et al. 1998). In terms of political behaviors, Herek et al. (2010) discovered that sexual minorities who were comfortable with their sexuality were more likely to contact a government official or give money to a political candidate, while Rollins and Hirsch (2003) found that people who called themselves “queer” were more likely to join AIDS advocacy groups. Likewise, Waldner (2001) and Gortmaker and Brown (2006) discovered greater political involvement when gays and lesbians were unwilling to always conceal their sexual identity. However, one study warned that the significant relationship between joining a gay and lesbian rights demonstration and disguising a gay or lesbian orientation was erased when they moved from a bivariate to multivariate analysis (Simon et al. 1998).

Scholars also argue that political identities can also be related to political activism (Dalton 2002; Jost et al. 2008; Schussman and Soule 2005). People who call themselves liberals often value tolerance, incrementalist social change, and greater opportunities for the disenfranchised than people who adapt other political labels. Dalton (2002) notes, participation in movements like LGBT rights “is often seen as a tool for liberals and progressives who want to challenge the political establishment” (p. 67). Self-defined liberals often seek greater social equality and generally favor the legalization of same-sex marriages (Barth et al. 2009; Haider-Markel and Joslyn 2008; Morrison and Morrison 2011; Woodford et al. 2012a). Accordingly, heterosexuals often engage in AIDS activism or join LGBT social movements when they call themselves liberals (Goldstein and Davis 2010; Jennings and Andersen 2003), are aligned with the Democratic Party (Rollins and Hirsch 2003), or are committed to being people who fight for social justice (Swank and Fahs 2012). However, one study contends that the significance of liberal identities to LGBT activism disappears when researchers control for education levels, attitudinal factors, and perceptions of efficacy (Taylor et al. 2009).

“Nobody Asked:” Intergroup Contact and Belonging to Civic Groups

Residing in certain social environments can foster greater political activism (McAdam and Paulsen 1993; Passy 2001; Schussman and Soule 2005). 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.

People who belong to religious institutions often hear negative comments about sexual minorities. Membership in orthodox and traditional denominations often reinforces the desire to restrict the rights of sexual minorities. Further, individuals who attend religious services more frequently and accept the term of religious fundamentalist or “born-again” are more likely to vote for referendums against same-sex marriages than people who are less dogmatic, orthodox, or secular in their beliefs (Barth et al. 2009; Brewer 2003; Haider-Markel and Joslyn 2008; Olson et al. 2006). Breaking from the traditional confines of religion may also have the opposite effects. Two studies noted that AIDS activists in the 1980s rarely attended religious services (Jennings and Andersen 2003; Rollins and Hirsch 2003). One study found that a high level of agnostics and atheists among heterosexual college students joined a campus LGBT ally group (Goldstein and Davis 2010).

While religious contexts often mute LGBT activism, other social networks can have the opposite effects. 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, and direct mail). As such, social networks seem to play the dual purpose of pushing and pulling people into political activism (Passy 2001; Schussman and Soule 2005). In effect, social networks boost political engagement since they often convey the attitudes that make people prone or receptive to activism and they also disseminate the logistical information that makes activism possible.

The concept of social network immersion has been measured in several ways, including types of group affiliations (Elbaz 1996; Lombardi 1999; Waldner 2001). Some studies suggest that simply joining any voluntary group can increase political participation (Swank and Fahs 2011), while other studies suggest that membership in LGBT groups matters even more (Duncan 1999; Swank and Fahs 2013). Joining a gay athletic club, a gay friendly church, or a LGBT center may sensitize participants about shared grievances and enhance group solidarity, as they also introduce political rookies to explicitly political networks that can translate into greater political activism for sexual minorities (Elbaz 1996; Lombardi 1999; Waldner 2001).

The frequency and types of interactions with sexual minorities can influence one's political participation on LGBT issues. Some studies have found that gays and lesbians who routinely talked with other gay and lesbian people were more politically active (Lombardi 1999; Tester 2004). For heterosexuals, the “intergroup contact” hypothesis may be especially

important to LGBT activism. In assuming that conversations with sexual minorities erodes sexual prejudice among heterosexuals, the simple act of knowing gays and lesbians can turn heterosexuals against referendum that outlaw same-sex marriages (Barth et al. 2009; Haider-Markel and Joslyn 2008). When addressing involvement in the LGBT rights movement, intergroup contact has been seen as prerequisite to ally activism since it normalizes queer sensibilities and challenges stereotypes about sexual minorities (Stotzer 2009). Two quantitative studies supported this claim as they concluded that having gay or lesbian friends predicted membership in a LGBT support group (Fingerhut 2011) or attendance at demonstrations for LGBT rights (Goldstein and Davis 2010).

Using these previous studies in model construction, the following analysis assesses the relative importance of demographic, contextual, and framing factors in predicting electoral types of LGBT activism. In doing so, subsequent regressions highlight the direct relationships with demographic factors (age, gender, race, and education level), mobilizing factors (religious activities, observing heterosexism, group membership, and contact with sexual minorities), and framing factors (sexual prejudice variables, personal efficacy, political identities, and disclosure practices). The study represents the first systematic investigation of these various factors, including various LGBT-related attitudes, among both sexual minority and heterosexual individuals.

Methods

The current study is a secondary data analysis of a cross-sectional campus climate study conducted at a large public Midwestern Research-I university in 2009. Campus climate was defined on the survey as “the actions and attitudes within a university that influence whether people feel welcomed and valued as members of the community.” The university has a long history of student activism and the institution itself has been involved in high-profile court cases concerning affirmative action for racial minorities and women. The university's antidiscrimination policy includes sexual orientation and gender expression and identity and the university offers numerous courses and extra-curricular activities and programs that aim to foster understanding of diversity, including in regard to these identities. The university is located in a state where same-sex marriage is constitutionally prohibited as a result of a ballot initiative held in 2004 and sexual orientation and gender identity and expression are not enumerated categories in employment protection legislation. The study received Institutional Review Board approval. To minimize participant self-selection, recruitment materials did not reference sexuality or gender identity or expression.

Participants and Procedures

To ensure an adequate sample size of sexual minority students, a three-phase disproportionate sampling technique was employed. Specifically, the sample was drawn from (1) a census of sophomore and junior undergraduate students ($N=11,342$), (2) a random sample of 8,000 graduate students, and (3) a convenience sample of sexual minority students involved in LGBT student organizations. This approach offers the benefits of specifically oversampling sexual minority students, a relatively small, hard-to-reach population (Kalton 2009; Riggle et al. 2005).

Students in the census and random sample were contacted via email using official university email addresses and asked to join the study. Reminder messages were sent 7 and 14 days later. The invitation and reminder messages included the survey link. The link was activated by 5,007 students and 3,762 agreed to participate in the study. Due to missing data, the sample was reduced to 2,301. Based on the number of students who were in the sampling frame, the response rate is 12 %; however, based on the number of students who activated the survey link, the response rate is 46 %.

To recruit a convenience sample of sexual minority students, an invitation to join the study was posted on the electronic mailing list for the LGBT student organizations registered with the university's LGBT student services office and student leaders were asked to share the invitation with their organizations' members. Reminder messages were posted 7 and 14 days later for distribution to organizational members. Students were asked to complete the survey if they had not been previously invited to participate in the study. The invitation and reminder messages included the survey link. Seventy-three students agreed to join the survey; however, only 26 surveys were useable for this study.

For the current study, we combined the undergraduate, graduate, and convenience samples but limited the analytical sample to domestic student ($n=2,078$). The inclusion of graduate students allows for greater variance in educational matters and the exclusion of international students limits the sample to people who can potentially vote in US elections.

The analytical sample overall was approximately 23 years of age. Most participants were female, White, and registered as undergraduate students. Similar results were found for both sexual orientation groups in terms of age and gender, whereas significantly more students of color were in the heterosexual sample than the sexual minority sample. Table 1 reports additional information about the overall sample and subsamples.

Measures

Sexual Orientation

We measured sexual orientation using the question, "What is your sexual orientation?" (completely lesbian or gay, mostly

lesbian or gay, bisexual, mostly heterosexual, and completely heterosexual). For this analysis, we split the larger sample into two groups: sexual minority students ($n=368$) and heterosexual students ($n=1,170$). The sexual minority group consisted of those who selected mostly heterosexual ($n=230$), bisexual ($n=61$), mostly lesbian or gay ($n=29$), or completely lesbian or gay ($n=48$). We included mostly heterosexual respondents in the sexual minority group for both theoretical and empirical reasons. Those who selected mostly heterosexual represent a numerical minority compared to the completely heterosexual respondents. Moreover, in selecting mostly heterosexual, a respondent suggested that their sexuality was more fluid and they did not totally self-identify as part of the heterosexual majority. Further, preliminary analyses (ANOVA) comparing the three sexuality groups of completely heterosexuals, mostly heterosexuals, and LGB, found the mostly heterosexuals to be statistically different than the completely heterosexuals on the petition signing variable ($p<0.001$) whereas differences between mostly heterosexuals and LGB were not significantly different. Similar results were found for all sexuality-related framing variables with the exception of comfort in disclosing one's sexual orientation with the mostly heterosexuals being significantly different than both the completely heterosexual and LGB groups (both $p<0.001$).

Dependent Variable

Our dependent variable dealt with pro-LGBT political intentions, specifically petition signing intentions. To assess the likelihood of signing a petition for LGBT rights in the future, we used an author-created item that dealt with the expansion of employment protections to sexual minorities, "I would sign my name to a petition asking the government to protect the employment rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people" (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree).

Independent Variables

Sociodemographics All demographic variables were categorical with the exception of age. Respondents reported their sex (female/male), race (selected from a list of eight options, including not listed), and level of study (undergraduate student, masters students, doctoral student). Race was dichotomized as people of color/White because research suggests that Whites are more likely to vote and join the LGBT movement than African Americans and other minorities (Lewis et al. 2011). Educational attainment was coded as undergraduate versus graduate due to sample size among the sexual minority students. Students also indicated if they identified as transgender (no/yes).

Mobilizing Contexts Respondents indicated their religious affiliation by choosing from a list of 22 options, including

Table 1 Descriptive statistics for study variables by full sample, sexual minority sample, and heterosexual sample

Variable	All students	Sexual minority students	Heterosexual students	Subsample comparison test statistic	
	<i>M</i> (SD)	<i>M</i> (SD)	<i>M</i> (SD)	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i> test
Continuous variables					
Pro-LGBT voting intentions	5.93 (1.63)	6.68 (0.93)	5.77 (1.70)	974 ^a	14.239***
Age (years)	22.88 (5.84)	23.26 (5.24)	22.80 (5.96)	2,076	1.353
Participation in religious services ^b	1.43 (1.60)	0.73 (1.18)	1.56 (1.64)	707 ^a	−9.401***
Accepting climate for LGBT students ^b	5.21 (1.23)	5.08 (1.26)	5.23 (1.22)	2,073	−2.121*
Witnessed heterosexism on campus ^b	1.61 (1.22)	1.83 (1.26)	1.57 (1.20)	520 ^a	3.671***
Traditional heterosexism ^b	2.42 (1.96)	1.33 (0.95)	2.65 (2.04)	1,204 ^a	−18.973***
Adversive heterosexism ^b	2.52 (1.52)	1.75 (1.12)	2.68 (1.55)	705 ^a	−13.454***
Transphobia ^b	2.01 (1.22)	1.43 (0.79)	2.13 (1.26)	828 ^a	−13.607***
Liberal identity ^b	4.81 (1.33)	5.62 (0.99)	4.63 (1.32)	660 ^a	16.005***
Comfort disclosing sexual orientation ^b	5.99 (1.45)	5.17 (1.73)	6.17 (1.32)	462 ^a	−10.409***
Personal efficacy ^b	3.76 (1.74)	4.04 (1.74)	3.70 (1.74)	2,072	3.394***
<i>Categorical variables</i>					
	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>df</i>	<i>X</i> ²
Sex				1	2.400
Female	1,305 (62.9)	245 (66.5)	1,060 (62.1)		
Male	769 (37.1)	122 (33.5)	647 (37.9)		
Race				1	4.126*
White	1,644 (79.9)	305 (83.8)	1,339 (79.1)		
People of color	413 (20.1)	59 (16.2)	354 (20.9)		
Transgender				–	– ^c
No	2,058 (99.2)	355 (96.5)	1,703 (99.8)		
Yes	16 (0.8)	13 (3.5)	3 (00.2)		
Sexual orientation				–	–
Completely lesbian/gay	48 (2.3)	48 (13.0)	–		
Mostly lesbian/gay	29 (1.4)	29 (7.9)	–		
Bisexual	61 (2.9)	61 (16.6)	–		
Mostly heterosexual	230 (11.1)	230 (62.5)	–		
Completely heterosexual	1,710 (82.3)	–	1,710 (100)		
University affiliation (level of study)				1	6.780**
Undergraduate	1,260 (60.6)	201 (54.6)	1,059 (61.9)		
Masters/Doctoral	818 (39.4)	167 (45.4)	651 (38.1)		
Religious affiliation				2	100.644***
No affiliation	689 (34.8)	198 (56.6)	491 (30.1)		
Christian traditions	1,095 (55.3)	112 (32.0)	983 (60.3)		
Non-Christian traditions	197 (9.9)	40 (11.4)	157 (9.6)		
Political group engagement				1	53.166***
No	1,858 (89.4)	290 (78.8)	1,568 (91.7)		
Yes	220 (10.6)	78 (21.2)	142 (8.3)		
LGBT friend				1	33.807***
No	392 (19.2)	27 (7.9)	365 (21.5)		
Yes	1,645 (80.8)	314 (92.1)	1,331 (78.5)		
LGBT acquaintance				1	19.276***
No	463 (22.8)	46 (13.6)	417 (24.6)		
Yes	1,572 (77.2)	292 (86.4)	1,280 (75.4)		
LGBT immediate family member				1	26.574***
No	1,870 (91.8)	289 (84.8)	1,581 (93.2)		
Yes	168 (8.2)	52 (15.2)	116 (6.8)		

Table 1 (continued)

Variable	All students	Sexual minority students	Heterosexual students	Subsample comparison test statistic	
	<i>M</i> (SD)	<i>M</i> (SD)	<i>M</i> (SD)	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i> test
LGBT extended family member				1	7.200**
No	1,395 (68.9)	212 (62.7)	1,183 (70.1)		
Yes	630 (31.1)	126 (37.3)	504 (29.9)		

LGBT=lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender

^a Equal variances not assumed

^b Higher score indicates greater frequency in participation, perceptions of a more accepting climate, witnessing more incidents on campus, greater prejudice, stronger liberalism, more comfort, and more efficacy

^c Due to insufficient cell size, chi-square test could not be performed

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$

other Christian, other non-Christian, and not listed (please specify). For the purposes of this study, all denominations were collapsed into three broad categories: non-affiliated (i.e., not a member of any religion), Christian affiliation, and member of a non-Christian religion. Previous research suggests that secular citizens support LGBT rights more than citizens who affiliate with any official religion (Brewer 2003; Haider-Markel and Joslyn 2008). The question, “How often do you attend religious services?” queried religiosity (0=never, 1=very rarely, 2=once a month, 3=every other week, 4=once a week, 5=more than once a week).

We also asked about students' political group engagement, perceptions of campus climate for LGBT students, and witnessing heterosexism on campus. Political group involvement was categorized (no/yes) to capture engaging in any sort of student organization(s) with a political, social, or environmental issue purpose.

Since students may have different experiences on the same campus and each student may have diverse perceptions of the campus' climate based on their experiences (Rankin and Reason 2008), we include two variables that measure campus climate, namely perceptions of the general acceptance of sexual minorities on campus and exposure to heterosexist events. A three-item scale assessed perceptions of a positive campus climate for LGBT students; “Transgender [Lesbian, gay, and bisexual] people would feel pressured to stay closeted in my department/school,” and “Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people are free to be themselves at [university name].” Each item was scored using a seven-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree). The first two items were reverse coded. A higher score on the scale signifies perceiving a more accepting climate (sexual minority students, $\alpha = 0.77$; heterosexual students, $\alpha = 0.76$). Based on the Heterosexist Harassment Scale of Silverschanz et al. (2008), witnessing heterosexist incidents was ascertained by a three-item

composite scale on the frequency of exposure to heterosexist comments on campus over the past 12 months (or since at the university, if less than 12 months). These were “I've heard other people called homophobic names (such as “fag” or “queer”) because someone thought they were not heterosexual enough,” “I've heard someone else being criticized for not being masculine enough (if male), or not feminine enough (if female),” and “I've heard other people say “that's so gay” to suggest something is stupid or undesirable.” Each item was scored 0=none, 1=once, 2=2–3 times, 3=4–9 times, and 4=10 or more. A higher mean score on the scale indicates witnessing more heterosexist incidents (sexual minority students, $\alpha = 0.81$; heterosexual students, $\alpha = 0.78$).

Our final set of mobilizing context variables examined LGBT social contacts. Specifically, we inquired about whether or not participants had LGBT friends, acquaintances, immediate family members, and extended family members. Each of the four contact variables were treated as a separate dichotomous categorical variable (no/yes).

Framing In addressing the legitimacy of conventional sexuality scripts, three variables on specific forms of sexual prejudice were included. One variable dealt with traditional heterosexism or the explicit and covert acceptance of heterosexual privilege (Herek 2004). Specifically, using an item from the Heteronormative and Beliefs Scale (Habarth 2008), we measured traditional heterosexism using a seven-point Likert item, “It is perfectly okay for people to have intimate relationships with people of the same sex” (1=strongly agree; 7=strongly disagree). Using the same Likert scale, other variables dealt with aversive heterosexism and transphobia. Aversive heterosexism is concerned with beliefs such as sexual minorities are “receiving too much attention” (Walls 2008, p. 46). The item, “Lesbian, gay, and bisexual people should be private about their sexual

orientation,” which was adapted from an earlier campus climate survey (Eliason 1996) assessed this variable. Transphobia is generally defined as a range of negative attitudes and feelings directed toward transgender individuals because of the expression of their gender identity. We evaluated transphobia through the item, “If I found out that a friend was changing their sex, I could no longer be their friend.” This item was adapted from the Genderism and Transphobia Scale (Hill and Willoughby 2005). We recoded the item concerning traditional heterosexism to be consistent in directionality with the other two variables, thus a higher score represented more prejudice for each variable.

To capture a self-characterized political ideology, like Jacoby (1991), we measured liberal identity through the item, “In general, how do you characterize your political views?” (1=extremely conservative, 7=extremely liberal). We queried comfort of disclosing one’s sexual orientation with the item, “When it comes up in conversation, I feel comfortable sharing my sexual orientation (this includes all sexual orientations)” (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree). Personal efficacy, the belief that the respondent is individually capable of achieving goals, was measured through the item, “I certainly feel useless at times” (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree), which was taken from Rosenberg’s (Rosenberg 1979) self-esteem scale. Compared with other items in this scale, this item offered greater face validity in terms of personal efficacy. We reverse coded this item so that a higher score suggested a greater sense of efficacy.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were conducted for all study variables for the full sample and for each sexual orientation group. To ascertain the relationships with petition-signing intentions, we conducted hierarchical ordinary least square (OLS) regressions. Although the dependent variable is abnormally distributed (skewness sexual minorities, -3.801 ; heterosexuals, -1.430 ; kurtosis sexual minorities, 16.402 ; heterosexuals, 1.076), we used OLS because non-normality of data poses little threat to statistical inference using this statistical method (Diehr et al. 2002). Given our interest in determining if the independent variables worked based on sexuality, we divided the sample into sexual minorities and heterosexuals for OLS regression analysis. The sets of factors in the hierarchal analysis corresponded with the types of variables in the resource model (demographics, contextual, and framing). In moving from structural factors to the most social-psychological, our first step is limited to ascribed and achieved social statuses (model 1), while the second step deals with the types of social networks that surrounded our students (model 2), and the final step focuses on the beliefs students may have internalized (model 3). Multicollinearity was not an issue as the tolerance statistics for each model indicated low correlations between the independent variables, in that the value inflation factor never surpassed 1.64 for any independent variable. Further, intercorrelations were tolerable (see Table 2). We report the F change statistic to represent the significance level of each subsequent step (see Table 3).

Table 2 Intercorrelations among continuous variables for full sample by sexual orientations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 Pro-LGBT voting intentions	–	0.053*	–0.311**	0.104**	0.024	–0.578**	–0.530**	–0.458**	0.527**	0.106**	0.043
2 Age (years)	0.121*	–	–0.001	–0.020	–0.374**	–0.029	0.010	–0.103**	0.032	–0.078**	–0.051*
3 Participation in religious services	–0.122*	0.038	–	–0.026	–0.037	0.563**	0.283**	0.187**	–0.389**	–0.030	–0.030
4 Accepting climate for LGBT students	0.081	–0.061	0.035	–	–0.085**	–0.104**	–0.158**	–0.172**	0.054*	0.131**	–0.049*
5 Witnessed heterosexism on campus	0.087	–0.375**	0.027	–0.190**	–	–0.031	–0.025	0.026	0.011	0.105**	0.051*
6 Traditional heterosexism	–0.356**	–0.159**	0.290**	–0.006	–0.068	–	0.555**	0.407**	–0.548**	–0.116**	–0.018
7 Adversive heterosexism	–0.241**	–0.116*	0.111*	0.013	–0.089	0.339**	–	0.475**	–0.463**	–0.129**	–0.016
8 Transphobia	–0.341**	–0.112*	0.063	0.020	0.024	0.240**	0.441**	–	–0.362**	–0.066**	–0.003
9 Liberal identity	0.356**	0.182**	–0.170**	–0.101	0.017	–0.301**	–0.295**	–0.321**	–	0.092**	0.046
10 Comfort disclosing sexual orientation	0.238**	0.010	–0.040	0.248**	0.016	–0.083	–0.123*	–0.175**	0.144**	–	–0.005
11 Personal efficacy	0.050	0.004	–0.060	–0.073	0.017	–0.031	0.079	–0.010	0.036	–0.107*	–

Correlations for LGB and mostly heterosexual students ($n=350$) are below the diagonal

Correlations for heterosexual students ($n=1,609$) are above the diagonal

* $p<0.05$; ** $p\leq 0.01$; *** $p\leq 0.001$

Results

Endorsement for Employment Protections

While the general public is divided on LGBT rights, by selecting “slightly agree,” “agree,” or “strongly agree” the overwhelming majority of respondents (81.1 %) reported that they would sign a petition advocating for LGBT employment rights protections. As seen in Table 1, collectively sexual minority students reported significantly higher intentions to sign the petition ($M= 6.68$, $SD= 0.93$) than their heterosexual counterparts ($M= 5.77$, $SD= 1.70$), $t(974)=14.239$, $p<0.001$. This suggests that most students were inclined to sign the

petitions, but sexual minority students as aggregate were more likely to sign a petition for LGBT employment rights protections than heterosexual students.

Multivariate Results

The results of our hierarchical linear regressions are displayed in Table 3. The first regression model included the sociodemographic control variables (age, sex, race, level of study). In this step, sex and level of study had significant effects regardless of sexual identity. With β between 0.11 and 0.19, females and graduate students were more likely to vote for protections across both samples. No

Table 3 OLS multiple hierarchical regression predicting pro-LGBT petition-signing intent

Variable	Sexual minority students <i>n</i> = 302			Heterosexual students <i>n</i> = 1,501		
	Model 1 β	Model 2 β	Model 3 <i>B</i>	Model 1 β	Model 2 β	Model 3 β
Sociodemographics						
Age (in years)	-0.02	0.03	-0.00	-0.00	0.01	0.03
Male	-0.15**	-0.13*	-0.00	-0.16***	-0.15***	-0.03
White	-0.07	-0.06	-0.06	-0.05	-0.03	-0.03
Graduate student	0.19*	0.21**	0.15*	0.11**	0.09**	0.01
Mobilizing contexts						
Religious affiliation (ref. no affiliation)						
Christian traditions		-0.10	-0.01		-0.07*	0.01
Non-Christian traditions		0.04	0.09		0.06*	-0.01
Participation in religious services		-0.12	-0.08		-0.27***	0.01
Political group engagement		0.04	0.05		0.02	0.01
Accepting climate for LGBT students		0.11	0.08		0.07**	0.00
Witness heterosexism on campus		0.16**	0.10		0.06*	0.02
LGBT friend		0.13*	0.10		0.12***	0.01
LGBT acquaintance		0.06	-0.04		0.08**	0.01
LGBT immediate family member		-0.09	-0.09		0.02	0.00
LGBT extended family member		0.09	0.03		0.05	0.03
Framing						
Traditional heterosexism			-0.07			-0.29***
Aversive heterosexism			-0.07			-0.17***
Transphobia			-0.23***			-0.16***
Liberal identity			0.17**			0.22***
Comfort disclosing sexual orientation			0.13*			0.02
Personal efficacy			-0.09			-0.02
R^2	0.06	0.17	0.30	0.04	0.19	0.47
ΔR^2	0.06	0.10	0.14	0.04	0.15	0.28
ΔF	5.00***	3.50***	9.38***	14.55***	28.37***	127.52***

LGBT lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender

In separate analyses, we controlled for mostly heterosexual status among the sexual minority students. Compared to the reported models, no noteworthy differences were found

* $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.01$; *** $p\leq 0.001$

other demographic variables were significant between the two groups. While model 1 had a significant F score, the variables as a whole explained little variance in the outcome for both groups of sexual minority students (6 %) and heterosexual students (4 %).

Model 2 added the mobilizing contexts of religious factors (affiliation and religiosity), political group engagement, perceptions of LGBT campus climate, witnessing heterosexism, and LGBT social contacts. Similar to model 1, sex and level of study were significant for both groups. Neither political group engagement nor having an LGBT family member (immediate or extended) was significant for either sexual orientation sample. While contact with family members did not predict pro-LGBT petition signing intentions, contact with peer sexual minorities sometimes did. For sexual minority and heterosexuals, having a LGBT friend was significant in this model ($\beta=0.13$ and 0.12 , respectively), while a LGBT acquaintance displayed a significant association for heterosexuals ($\beta=0.12$).

The rest of the contextual factors in model 2 had more distinctive results for each sexual identity. Witnessing heterosexism was significant for both sexual identities, but the association for sexual minorities was much stronger (sexual minorities, $\beta=0.16$; heterosexual $\beta=0.07$). Additionally, religion-related variables had divergent effects for heterosexuals and sexual minorities. For heterosexuals, religiosity was negatively associated with the dependent variable, suggesting that greater participation in religious services dampens a predisposition toward LGBT activism. Moreover, heterosexuals who had a Christian affiliation were less likely to report intentions of endorsing a pro-LGBT petition than secular heterosexuals, while heterosexuals who were affiliated with any religion other than Christianity tended to have higher outcome scores than secular heterosexuals. Finally, none of the religious factors had direct associations with the intentions of the sexual minorities in the study. In addressing the coefficient of determination, model 2 accounted for 10 % of the additional explained variance for sexual minorities and 15 % for the heterosexuals.

In the final model, framing variables were added including LGBT attitudes, political identity, and comfort disclosing sexual orientation, and personal efficacy. This full model, which tested the significance of attitudinal and personal contexts through which individuals might frame their petition signing intentions, explained 30 % of the variance for sexual minority students and 47 % for the heterosexuals. With the ΔR^2 being double for heterosexuals, it is clear that framing factors were especially relevant for students with dominant sexual identities.

Interestingly, when the framing variables were entered, most of the earlier crucial variables lost their

significance. Sex for all sexual identities lost its direct associations when sexual prejudice and liberal identities were held constant. Moreover, the importance of religious factors and contact with peer LGBTs was usurped for heterosexuals when perceptions of sexual minorities and political leanings were entered into the formula. Educational factors also lost their significance for heterosexuals when framing factors were included in the model while educational attainment retained a significant association beyond the framing factors for sexual minorities.

In several cases, the framing factors were significant for each of the sexual orientation groups. Having a liberal identity was significant regardless of sexuality (sexual minorities, $\beta=0.22$; heterosexuals 0.17). Similarly, embracing transphobia dampened pro-LGBT intentions for both sexuality groups (sexual minorities $\beta=-0.23$; heterosexuals -0.16). However, other framing factors were critical to only one of the sexualities. The acceptance of traditional heterosexism and aversive heterosexism were crucial to heterosexuals only ($\beta=-0.29$ and -0.17 , respectively). Conversely, disclosing sexual identities was significant only for sexual minorities ($\beta=0.13$).

Limitations

Although our study offers unique insights into electoral activism for LGBT rights, methodological concerns exist. In matters of sampling, several concerns are noteworthy. The students in this study belong to a campus that has been described as a historical “hotbed” for student activism (Van Dyke 1998) and the students' attitudes toward sexuality seemed especially liberal. While our recruitment efforts within this campus produced a large sample, the response rate is low. As is common with anonymous online surveys (Dillman et al. 2009), we are unable to determine if students who did not activate the survey link received the invitation/reminder messages or if they were not interested in joining the study. Because of the use of an anonymous survey, we are unable to determine if differences exist between respondents and nonrespondents. Compared to the research population, students of color and men are slightly under-represented in our sample. The percentage of sexual minorities was high; however, we are unable to assess the sample's representativeness in terms of sexual orientation because the host institution does not record this information. It is possible that the national reputation of the university may draw a high proportion of LGBT students. Although nearly 20 % of the sample identified as sexual minorities, the smaller number of sexual minority students made it harder to reject the null among this population. Moreover, our use of LGBT organizations as a part of our sample frame probably means we oversampled from sexual minorities who are highly integrated into LGBT communities. On issues of generalizability, the behaviors of students from an exclusive research public

university that is famous for activism may not totally reflect the practices of students from other universities, 4-year state colleges, private schools, or community colleges. Thus, ensuring research might enlist information from campuses that are distributed throughout the entire country. Also, the patterns of college students may not accurately depict patterns of different populations (age, cohorts, and greater contact with sexual minorities).

In conducting secondary data analysis, some of our measures were less than ideal. Our dependent variable misses many forms of political activism, such as voting in an election or participating in political protest. Additionally, the intent to sign a petition is not the same as actually signing one, but, as noted above, research demonstrates a positive relationship between willingness to sign a petition and subsequent political behaviors (Coming and Myers 2002). Our measure of perceived personal power focuses on internal forms of efficacy, while an item that focused on external types of efficacy may have been more appropriate. Respondents may also have difficulties recognizing and recalling incidents of heterosexism in their lives and the phrase “free to be themselves” for campus climate is vague. Finally, our measure of educational attainment focuses on level of study while taking specific classes might have a larger impact of the activism of students.

Discussion

Groups try to alter governmental policies through political participation and activism, including petitions advancing their cause. This study ascertains the factors that increase the willingness of sexual minority and heterosexual college students to sign a petition for LGBT rights, specifically employment protections. In doing so, we applied the “resource model” of political participation to a sample of sexual minority and heterosexual college students. The hierarchical regression results highlight the value of incorporating demographic, contextual, and framing factors into the study of political behaviors since some of the “they can’t,” “they do not want to,” or “nobody asked” variables were related to activist intentions in the early regressions. However, our findings also reveal that framing factors were the most influential predictors since the “they don’t want to” variables provided the strongest associations and drowned out the importance of the other factors in the final regressions. Our comparative analysis also reveals the way that sexual orientation can mitigate the effects of certain predictor factors. And while this research design was unique, we discovered that most of the demographic and contextual factors worked very similar for heterosexuals and sexual minorities in the final regression (framing factors seemed more specific to sexualities).

As a whole, the demographic or “they can’t” factors had the smallest impact among the variable types. Only two of the four

demographic variables occasionally displayed statistical significance. Women from all sexualities were more likely than men to sign a petition for LGBT rights until the framing variables were entered into the last regression. This suggests that there may be an apparent gender gap when engaging in political activities about sexuality topics. However, this gender gap is probably not due to essential differences between the genders, but rather women hold less traditional gender and sexuality beliefs than men. That is, heterosexual women are stronger proponents of LGBT rights because they are more likely to reject heterosexism, transphobia, and conservative labels than heterosexual men. Similarly, lesbians are more likely to vote for LGBT rights because they are less hostile to transsexuals, have more liberal orientations and are more comfortable divulging their sexual identities than gay men. Greater educational attainment also leads to pro-LGBT tendencies, but this factor was much stronger among sexual minorities than their heterosexual counterparts. For sexual minorities, attending graduate school was associated with greater petition signing intentions regardless of which covariates were in the study (Rollins and Hirsch 2003; Swank and Fahs 2011). Conversely, for heterosexuals, a graduate school affiliation lost its significance when measures of heterosexism, transphobia, and liberalism (they do not want to) were added. This suggests that educational attainment generally empowers sexual minorities into activism on their own behalf, while educational attainment leads to greater ally activism when the educational content leads to greater gender role liberalism. Accordingly, it is possible that educational attainment could have had stronger effects for heterosexuals if we asked questions about exposure to multicultural education (specifically, courses concerning women or gender studies, or LGBT people).

Although some studies suggest that racial background can influence support and advocacy for LGBT rights, this study does not echo these results (race failed to predict voting intentions in any model). This lack of significance can mean that race does not predict LGBT voting intentions or this finding could be an artifact of unique qualities among college students (age distributions are skewed toward young adults and prestigious college campuses have less racial and social class diversity than the general US populace).

The impact of “nobody asked” and mobilization contexts had inconsistent and conditional results. Some factors consistently failed to predict voting intentions (e.g., contact with LGBT family members and membership in a political group). The weak link with LGBT family members was not that unexpected because family of origin factors are often less crucial than peer factors for studies of homophobia among college-aged adults (Eldridge et al. 2006; Woodford et al. 2012d). Also, Allport (1954) originally argued that contact has its strongest impact among people who share “equal status.” However, the lack of significance for membership in political groups is a bit surprising. It is possible that impact of group

membership is less vital for the intent to sign petitions than the actual doing of this action or the group membership may matter less for individual actions like petition signing as compared to group activities like attending a demonstration for LGBT rights. It is also possible that our study underestimated the effects of political group membership because our measures failed to include groups that have a primary goal of extending LGBT rights.

The last contextual factors were directly significant as long as the framing factors were not included in the calculations. Before inclusion of the framing factors, the act of witnessing discrimination on campus and having a LGBT friend increased the desire to sign a pro-LGBT petition for both sexuality groups. Thus, first- and second-degree exposure to discrimination and having close emotional bonds with a sexual minority can provide a necessary but insufficient antecedent to LGBT electoral activism. In other words, witnessing heterosexual harassment with an emotionally close sexual minority friend probably predisposes a person to LGBT activism only if the person internalizes progressive attitudes toward sexual minorities and the broader social order. However, a caveat about temporal ordering is important for such associations: it is possible that people are more aware of heterosexism and befriend more LGBT individuals after they get involved in LGBT activism.

Several mobilizing factors were more important for heterosexuals than sexual minorities in the early regressions (model 2). Heterosexuals who interpreted their campus as supportive of sexual diversity were inclined to endorse LGBT petitions. Moreover, those heterosexuals who actually aligned their personal attitudes with perceived collective acceptance were especially likely to condone LGBT activism (full model). Perceptions of a LGBT friendly campus were not statistically significant for sexual minorities but this failure to reject the null could be due to smaller sample size for sexual minorities (beta weight for campus was higher for the 302 sexual minorities in comparison to the 1,501 heterosexuals).

Likewise, involvement in religious institutions seemed more important to heterosexuals. Heterosexuals who frequently went to religious services, or those who were aligned with Christian denominations, were less likely to sign a petition than their secular and non-Christian brethren. Moreover, with framing factors diminishing the direct effects of religious participation, it is clear that Christian students who have internalized sexual prejudice and conservative identities are less likely to back LGBT petitions than Christians who reject homophobia and conservative self-concepts.

Finally, the framing, or “they don't want to,” factors generally provided the strongest predictors in this study. Some framing factors were significant across all sexualities, while most framing factors vacillated in significance for heterosexuals and sexual minorities. Students in all sexualities were more likely to sign a pro-LGBT petition when they embraced a liberal identity.

This suggests that students who categorize themselves as liberals are more supportive of employment rights for sexual minorities than students who avoid such a label (regardless of their sexuality or their personal stance on LGBT topics). One framing factor that was insignificant for both sexualities was personal efficacy. It is possible that the general sense of personal efficacy is more important for actual political participation rather than anticipated political participation. It is also possible that a measure of perceived abilities to change governmental policies would garner stronger associations.

Most of the remaining framing factors saw their significance fluctuate by sexual identity. Heterosexuals who disparaged LGBT people were disinclined to intend to sign a LGBT employment protections petition. Conversely, the importance of sexual prejudice was not as universal among sexual minorities. Rejection of transgendered friends lead to less petition signing intent among sexual minorities (as well as among heterosexuals), but the internalization of different forms of heterosexism had no significant links with electoral activism among minority respondents. These inconsistent findings seem to suggest that “outgroup” prejudice may have larger impacts than “ingroup” prejudice when discussing sexual politics. That is, sexual prejudice against sexual minorities gains in importance when heterosexuals are chastising LGBT people and when gays, lesbians, and bisexuals are disapproving of transsexuals.

As expected, the relevance of disclosure practices was sexuality specific. Due to the logic of compulsory heterosexism, the act of heterosexuals unveiling their sexuality is a nonevent that is considered normal, natural, and typical. In conforming to that status quo, it does not produce a greater impetus to supporting the rights of sexual minorities among people in the dominant group. Conversely, the “personal is political” when sexual minorities are willing to risk negative sanctions as they break the rules of silence. Moreover, sexual minorities probably feel more entitled to demand further rights when they try to transform a traditionally stigmatized identity into a normal or celebrated social category.

While this study found many crucial variables, it could have ignored some other factors. Income was not used in this study due to the compressed salaries of college students, but this factor may play a role in the LGBT activism of the general population (Taylor et al. 2009). Additional framing factors may be important as well, such as emotional closeness to sexual minorities, perceptions of collective efficacy, and embracing activist norms of defending the rights of subordinated groups (Fingerhut 2011; Hyers 2007; Swank and Fahs 2011).

Conclusions and Future Study

Political advocacy is instrumental in advancing legal rights for LGBT people. By illuminating the shared and unique

antecedents of the intention to sign a petition supporting LGBT employment protections among sexual minority and heterosexual college students this study advances understanding of the complicated nature of pro-LGBT political behaviors across these groups, and provides evidence to the utility of the resource model of political advocacy using signing a petition extending employment rights to LGBT people as an indicator. This study adds to the scientific literature in important ways and establishes some key directions for future research. In addition to addressing the limitations articulated above, future studies might examine how the resource model applies to the LGBT activism of noncollegiate samples, including among transgender individuals as well as sexual minorities. It will be important to examine various types of political advocacy, including engaging in protests and other forms that involve greater risk than signing a petition. These studies should follow our lead in investigating the possible ways in which the importance of independent variables varies by sexual identity.

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