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Heterosexist Discrimination and LGBQ Activism: Examining a Moderated Mediation Model

Trevor Lee Dunn
University of Tennessee, Knoxville, tdunn13@vols.utk.edu

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<div align="right">Dawn M. Szymanski, Major Professor</div>

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Donna M. Braquet, Joseph R. Miles, Gina P. Owens

<div align="right">Accepted for the Council:
Dixie L. Thompson</div>

<div align="right">Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School</div>

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Heterosexist Discrimination and LGBQ Activism: Examining a Moderated Mediation Model

A Dissertation Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

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Trevor Lee Dunn

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this project to those people who use their voices to foster understanding, create meaningful connections with others, and promote systemic changes for social justice. As the poet, author, and activist Gloria E. Anzaldúa wrote, "May we do work that matters. Vale la pena, it's worth the pain."

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Abstract

Although the negative outcomes of heterosexist discrimination have been well researched in the psychological literature, positive coping mechanisms and outcomes, such as engagement in activism aimed at improving the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer (LGBQ) individuals, are understudied. The present study examined potential mediators (i.e., LGBQ relational connectedness, search for meaning, and heterosexism awareness), moderators (i.e., LGBQ identity centrality and perceived efficacy for collective action), and moderated mediation of the link between heterosexist discrimination and activism among 867 LGBQ adults. Results revealed that heterosexist discrimination was directly and indirectly (via search for meaning and heterosexism awareness) related to LGBQ activism. Identity centrality moderated the heterosexist discrimination→heterosexism awareness link and indicated support for moderated mediation via conditional process analyses. More specifically, heterosexist discrimination predicted heterosexist awareness for LGBQ persons with low, moderate, and high identity centrality but the relations were stronger for those with low identity centrality.

Keywords: discrimination, lesbian, gay, bisexual, activism, positive psychology

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Literature on the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer (LGBQ) individuals has historically focused on dysfunction, deficits, and distress, with more recent increased attention to positive aspects (Horne, Puckett, Apter, & Levitt, 2014; Vaughan et al., 2014). Prominent theories that aim to explain the links between the experiences of minority stressors (e.g., experiences of heterosexism, internalized heterosexism, concealing sexual identity) and a variety of poor mental and physical health outcomes have been developed, including Meyer's (2003) Minority Stress Theory and Hatzenbuehler's (2009) Psychological Mediation Framework. Research using both Hatzenbuehler's (2009) and Meyer's (2003) models have primarily focused on the processes of how experiencing minority stressors may be contributing to psychological distress in sexual minority populations. This is especially important as many negative mental and physical health outcomes have been found in the LGBQ population, including increased rates of substance use disorders, affective disorders, and suicide (Meyer, 2003). The literature suggests that experiences of discrimination and other forms of minority stressors often are linked to poorer health outcomes.

Amidst the focus on negative outcomes, however, the potential positive aspects of dealing with minority stress continues to be understudied. Meyer (2003) notes that minorities often have positive adaptations and ways of coping to stress with effects on mental health. These positive adaptations occur on multiple levels, from the individual, psychological levels (e.g., search for meaning, hardiness, resilience) to larger group and societal levels (e.g., community connectedness, activism). Currently there have been calls for research that examines these strengths and positive coping responses to discrimination in LGBQ populations at these multiple

levels (Herrick, Stall, Goldhammer, Egan, & Mayer, 2014; Horne et al., 2014). More specifically, Wexler, DiFluvio, and Burke (2009) called for researchers to examine ways that marginalized individuals cope with adversity through resilient methods such as group affiliation and identification, meaning-making, oppression awareness raising, and collective mobilization to achieve positive outcomes in their lives.

Heterosexist Discrimination and LGBQ Activism

One potential positive outcome of dealing with oppression and discrimination is increased participation in activism related to the sexual minority community (Levitt et al., 2009). LGBQ activism can be defined as actions that attempt to improve conditions for and advance the status of sexual minorities in society (DeBlaere et al., 2014). Although same gender marriage has recently expanded within the United States (U.S.), there are still many areas of LGBQ injustice that call for LGBQ activism. These injustices include, but are not limited to, high rates of homelessness among sexual minority youth, workplace discrimination and inadequate legal protections, bullying and harassment in the schools, family and community rejection, physical and mental health disparities, and issues related to LGBQ parenting and adoption (e.g., Braquet, 2015; Institute of Medicine, 2011; Pizer, Mallory, Sears, & Hunter, 2012). Although transgender (e.g., gender identity) collective action is often done in conjunction with LGBQ (e.g., sexual minority) activism, and is a needed and important area of research and activism, we chose to focus specifically on heterosexism and LGBQ activism in order to limit the scope of the study.

Qualitative studies highlight the importance of activism in response to discrimination for some LGBQ individuals. When asked about positive aspects of their sexual identity, LGBQ participants indicated that due to their sexual identity, they can promote social justice for the LGBQ community, make the personal political, engage in activism that challenges heterosexist

systems of oppression, and foster equality and human rights for all (Riggle, Whitman, Olson, Rostosky, & Strong, 2008; Rostosky, Riggle, Pascale-Hague, & McCants, 2010). Similarly, in a qualitative study of responses to discriminatory legislation toward sexual minorities, Levitt et al. (2009) describe how some individuals cope with a discriminatory, oppressive environment through activism.

The link between discrimination and activism has been supported in quantitative studies as well. For example, Friedman and Leaper (2010) found that in a sample of sexual minority women, experiences of gendered heterosexism predicted commitment to LGBQ activism. Similarly, experiencing a heterosexist hate crime predicted action behaviors for LGBQ rights such as voting, signing a petition, or writing a letter to a politician (Swank & Fahs, 2013). Higher levels of heterosexist experiences (e.g., physical and sexual assaults, and property damage) predicted higher levels of participation in activities related to advancing LGBQ rights (e.g., writing to representatives, donating money, and attending demonstrations; Waldner, 2001). Finally, a unique study on systemic levels of discrimination in the U.S. found that LGBQ persons living in states that had passed anti-LGBQ marriage amendments in 2006 reported increased LGBQ activism when compared to LGBQ persons living in states that had no anti-LGBQ legislature on the ballots or had passed them in previous years (Rostosky, Riggle, Horne, & Miller, 2009). Taken together, these studies suggest that heterosexist discrimination may have a causal effect on activist behavior.

Yet, the link between discrimination and activism is likely complex. For instance, whereas many individuals from disadvantaged groups experience discrimination and may be unhappy with their group's status and experience in society, only a small portion of individuals participate in activism (Stürmer & Simon, 2004). In Rostosky et al.'s (2009) sample, for

example, even within the group of individuals who lived in states with anti-LGBQ legislation, there was variability in the amounts of activism. In their review on barriers to activism for women, Radke, Hornsey, and Barlow (2016) posited that individuals don't participate in collective action due to difficulties with: (a) identifying with members of their non-dominant group, (b) perceiving injustice, and (c) recognizing the efficacy of collective action. Thus, it is likely not a simple pathway between experiencing discrimination and participating in activism; there are likely mediating and moderating factors that influence this link.

The purpose of this study was to examine how the link between heterosexist discrimination and LGBQ activism may be better understood by investigating three potential mediators: LGBQ relational connectedness, search for meaning, and heterosexism awareness. In addition, it examined the moderating roles of both LGBQ identity centrality and perceived efficacy for collective action in the direct link between heterosexist discrimination and activism. Finally, it examined a moderated mediation model investigating the moderating or enhancing roles of (a) identity centrality in the link between discrimination and the proposed mediators and (b) perceived efficacy in the link between the proposed mediators and activism. Our conceptual model is illustrated in Figure 1.

LGBQ Relational Connectedness as a Mediator

While general social support appears to play a role in coping for sexual minorities (Levitt et al., 2009), it is also important that individuals have specific in-group support (i.e., support from other sexual minorities; Puckett, Levitt, Horne, & Hayes-Skelton, 2015). This connection to LGBQ others is theorized to emerge in response to experiences of oppression (D'Augelli & Garnets, 1995) and can be seen as an aspect of resilience at the group level (Herrick et al., 2014; Horne et al., 2014). Padilla (2008) argues that stigmatized individuals will seek out similar others

in order to be "off duty" from the vigilance, stress, and anxiety of interacting with the dominant culture.

Connectedness to LGBQ others is a complex construct and has been conceptualized in many ways, including psychological sense of community (e.g., Lin & Israel, 2012; Szymanski & Owens, 2009) or behavioral participation in LGBQ community activities (e.g., Davids, Watson, Nilsson, & Marszalek, 2015; Vanable, McKirnan, & Stokes, 1992). The term "community" adds another challenge, as it often represents an idealized and vague concept of a homogeneous community (Heath & Mulligan, 2008). Because of these complexities, we chose to focus on a more specific and concrete form of connection: LGBQ relational connectedness.

LGBQ relational connectedness is one's satisfaction with one's relationships to other LGBQ people (Hawkley, Browne, & Cacioppo, 2005). Relational connectedness is based on the concept of the relational self, a distinct level of self-representation that differs from both the individual self and the collective self (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). In order to differentiate between the relational (i.e., interpersonal) self and collective self, Brewer and Gardner (1996) explain, "Both interpersonal and collective identities are social extensions of the self but differ in whether the social connections are personalized bonds of attachment or impersonal bonds derived from common identification with some symbolic group or social category" (p. 83). Thus, LGBQ relational connectedness deals with an evaluation of one's personal relationships with LGBQ others, rather than a connection to a more diffuse concept of LGBQ community. Based on the literature regarding connection to LGBQ others, it makes sense that when individuals experience discrimination, they may then turn to similar others for support and encouragement, which may strengthen their momentum for activism and changing social structures for LGBQ others.

Qualitative research affirms that connectedness to other sexual minorities in the face of heterosexism is important for LGBQ individuals, as it serves as a source of acceptance, safety, community, belonging, support, strength, and empowerment (Levitt et al., 2009; Riggle et al., 2008; Rostosky et al., 2010). Some individuals develop tight knit relationships in these communities, often called "families of choice," as many individuals have faced rejection from their families of origin (Dewaele, Cox, Van den Berghe, & Vincke, 2011; Riggle et al., 2008). Similarly, another qualitative study found that Asian and Pacific Islander gay male participants responded to heterosexist discrimination by using social network-based responses, calling on the support of gay friends (Wilson & Yoshikawa, 2004). Although we could find no quantitative research that examined the heterosexist discrimination-LGBQ connectedness link, Padilla (2008) found that the more discrimination Mexican-Americans perceived, the more ethnic loyalty they had (including preference for in-group ethnic friends and romantic partners). In contrast, perceived ethnic discrimination among Asian Americans was unrelated to social connectedness to their ethnic community (Yoon, Hacker, Hewitt, Abrams, & Cleary, 2012).

Whereas the discrimination-LGBQ relational connectedness link is understudied, the LGBQ relational connectedness-activism link has more theoretical and empirical support. In a qualitative study on LGBQ radical street activists, participants described how feelings of connection and mutual support from others, particularly other LGBQ people, helped promote activist behaviors (Jones, 2003). Rostosky et al. (2009) conceptualized that activism itself is a stressful process that requires emotional energy. It may be that activism is an outcome only when there is enough social support from similar others to replenish this emotional toll, receive encouragement in the face of oppression, and continue along the pathway toward activism. Similarly, connection to LGBQ others may help individuals feel supported and efficacious, as it

may be that with this support from similar others, facing oppressive systems through activism feels less overwhelming and distressing (Levitt et al., 2009; Russell & Richards, 2003). Among a sample of Black, Latina, and Asian/Pacific Islander sexual minority women, feelings of connectedness to the LGBQ community were found to be the most significant predictor of sociopolitical activism (Harris, Battle, Pastrana & Daniels, 2015). Similarly, Friedman and Leaper (2010) found that feeling connection to other sexual minorities was strongly predictive of LGBQ activism among a sample of sexual minority women. Participating in LGBQ organizations (a behavioral correlate of LGBQ community connection) was also found to be predictive of LGBQ political activism (Waldner, 2001).

Search for Meaning as a Mediator

Another response to discrimination may be a search for meaning in one's life. Hardships such as discrimination may propel individuals to seek meaning in their lives, as the hardship may encourage individuals to reflect on and make sense of their lives. Meaning in life can be defined as "the sense made of, and significance felt regarding, the nature of one's own being and existence" (Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006, p. 81). People have a sense of "global meaning" which is a schema of beliefs, assumptions, and expectations about their life that gives purpose and order (Lee, 2008; Park & Folkman, 1997). Hardships or other severely negative events, such as discrimination, may challenge these previously held beliefs and assumptions, and propel individuals to actively search for meaning in order to restore meaning and purpose to their lives (Park & Folkman, 1997; Thompson & Janigian, 1988). The search for meaning, then, can be viewed as an active coping response to dealing with stressful events (Park & Folkman, 1997). For example, individuals may wrestle with the question of *why* these stressful events happened to them (Park & Folkman, 1997). The search for meaning in one's life often includes an attempt to

restore order to one's life and gain further understanding, especially if events have challenged or disrupted the individual's original global meaning schema.

Research has looked at the search for meaning as it relates to a variety of hardships. For example, meaning-making coping has been studied in response to distress related to illnesses such as cancer (e.g., Lee, 2008) or stroke (e.g., Thompson, 1991) and to political conflict (Barber, 2008). Wexler et al. (2009) note that LGBQ persons often use meaning-making as a form of resilience to regain power, mobilize action, and resist oppression.

While the act of searching for meaning has been linked to some positive outcomes, such as post-traumatic growth (Park, 2010), there has been little research on how the search for meaning may lead to other outcomes, such as collective action. Theoretically, some individuals who experience discrimination and are actively searching for meaning in their lives may turn to activism. As Park and Folkman (1997) note, "traumatic events commonly violate people's sense of control, and their subsequent attempts to regain a sense of control may help to decrease the stressfulness of the situation" (p. 127). One way of regaining a sense of control may be to engage in activism behaviors that attempt to change the status quo in the environment that promotes discrimination and oppression. Activism may be a result of the search for meaning from their negative experiences, so that they are working toward a goal of helping others, changing systems of discrimination, and working toward positive changes for their community.

Heterosexism Awareness as a Mediator

The final hypothesized mediator between heterosexist discrimination and activism is the perception of injustice. This may occur when an individual perceives that one's group is deprived of something relative to other groups (Stürmer & Simon, 2004; van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). Similarly, this perception of injustice may happen when an individual perceives

a discrepancy between reality and one's belief in what one's reality should be or deserves to be (Stürmer & Simon, 2004). For the LGBQ individual, this may include a perception of systemic injustice due to heterosexism, the disadvantaged position within society due to one's non-heterosexual sexual identity. It is through this awareness of group-based injustice that contributes to the need for activism (Stürmer & Simon, 2004), perhaps "because it elevates personal pain into a shared arena" (p. 569; Wexler et al., 2009). Qualitative research indicates that awareness of one's own and others' oppression was a motivator for participating in activism among a sample of LGBQ activists (Jones, 2003).

Research on awareness of injustice as a mediator in the discrimination-activism link is surprisingly limited and remains unclear. Duncan (1999) found that feminist consciousness (e.g., discontent with the power that women have in society and perceptions of the level of discrimination against women within social systems) was positively correlated with experiences of sexual harassment, and mediated the relationship between experiences of sexual harassment and women's rights activism. Curtin (2011) also found a correlation between gender-based discrimination in women and gender-based structural awareness, but found that this gender-based structural awareness did not mediate the relationship between gender-based discrimination and women's rights activism. Other research has supported the link between awareness of injustice and activism. For example, intersectional awareness (the understanding of structural inequality from an intersectional perspective) was positively related to engagement in rights-based activism, intentions to undertake social change behaviors, and attitudes toward taking action to prevent injustice and promote diversity (Curtin, Stewart, & Cole, 2015).

Identity Centrality as a Moderator

One likely moderator of the discrimination-activism link and the links between discrimination and the mediators (i.e., LGBQ relational connectedness, search for meaning, heterosexism awareness) is LGBQ identity centrality. LGBQ identity centrality refers to the extent to which a person's sexual minority identity is central to their overall self-concept (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004; Mohr & Kendra, 2011). When individuals are highly identified with the group, their identity becomes more of a "we" than simply an "I" (Stürmer & Simon, 2004; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Individuals may differ in the centrality of their social identities, depending on their life experiences, emotions connected to the particular identity, and the importance of other social identities (Stürmer & Simon, 2004).

A meta-analytic study indicated mixed findings on whether identity centrality has a buffering effect, no effect, or intensifying effect on the link between discrimination and a variety of mental and physical health indicators (Pascoe & Smart Richmond, 2009). However, little research has been done on its interactive role in predicting outcomes that are not related to health or distress, such as the constructs targeted in this study. We predict that LGBQ identity centrality is likely to moderate or intensify the discrimination-activism link as well as the links between perceived discrimination and the mediators (LGBQ relational connectedness, search for meaning, and heterosexist awareness). That is, the link between discrimination and activism and the link between discrimination and the mediators would be stronger at high levels of identity centrality.

The importance of LGBQ identity, or other collective identities, in predicting activism when faced with discrimination has theoretical roots in the Dual Pathway Model of Collective Action (Stürmer & Simon, 2004) and in a framework for lesbian feminist mobilization (Taylor &

Whittier, 1992). For individuals high in LGBQ centrality, their self-esteem is strongly tied in with the status of the in-group, which may motivate individuals to actions that would advance the group, as it also betters the self (Stürmer & Simon, 2004). For those individuals whose LGBQ identity is very important to their self-concept, the experience of heterosexism may feel particularly threatening to their self-concept, which may provoke distress and may make activism a more likely response in order to restore their self-perceptions.

In contrast, for those individuals with low LGBQ centrality, the experience of heterosexism may be interpreted as less threatening to one's self-concept or be deemed less personally relevant, and thus they may have less motivation to change the situation and would be less likely to participate in activism. Research on the how the centrality of collective identity relates to activism is limited. In samples of women, women's rights activism was related to identification as a feminist (Duncan, 1999) and politicized gender identification (Duncan & Stewart, 2007). Identification with the gay movement has also been linked to activism (Simon et al., 1998).

In terms of the discrimination-mediator links, highly identified group members may respond to a threat, such as heterosexist discrimination, by increasing their connection to the group, while low identified group members would decrease this connection to the group (Major & O'Brien, 2005). In addition, when faced with heterosexist discrimination, LGBQ persons with high levels of identity centrality may be able to feel good about themselves by focusing on the positive aspects and collective strength of their group; thereby, encouraging more contact with them (Szymanski & Lewis, 2016). In contrast, if one's sexual identity is not central to one's identity, individuals may not seek support from other LGBQ people as the discrimination is not as personally relevant or meaningful and the need for support from similar others may be less.

Centrality does appear to be related to connection to similar others. In a study of individuals with HIV, it was found that those who reported HIV was more central to their identity, also reported higher levels of attachment to the HIV community (Brener, Callander, Slavin, & de Wit, 2013). Also, high racial identity centrality in African American students has been linked to more participation in African American organizations (Chavous, 2000).

It is likely that when someone's sexual identity is central their personal identity, and this identity is threatened by heterosexist discrimination, then this would contribute to more disruptions in the person's global meaning (Park & Folkman, 1997). Thus, it is likely that if the aspect being threatened or targeted (e.g., sexual identity) is highly valued or central to the individual, the more likely it will produce distress and propel one to search for meaning (Park & Folkman, 1997).

Similarly, individuals with high LGBQ identity centrality will likely have higher levels of heterosexism awareness when faced with heterosexist discrimination because it is more relevant and salient to their identity. In addition, because high identity centrality often includes a stronger commitment to the LGBQ community and the issues it faces, it might serve to intensify the link between discrimination and awareness of heterosexism (Szymanski & Lewis, 2016). High levels of LGBQ identity centrality frequently involve a more serious understanding and commitment to LGBQ issues and experiences. This may lead to blaming the perpetrators of heterosexism instead of internalizing the negative messages about LGBQ persons that are conveyed by those prejudicial acts; thereby, strengthening the potential positive influences of discrimination on engagement in LGBQ activism through heterosexism awareness (Szymanski & Lewis, 2016). For individuals who are low on centrality, gaining an awareness of heterosexism may feel less important and consequently this relationship between discrimination and heterosexism awareness

will be weaker.

Perceived Efficacy for Collective Action as a Moderator

One likely moderator of the discrimination-activism link and the links between the mediators and activism is perceived efficacy for collective action. Perceived efficacy has been theorized to be an essential predictor of collective action and "refers to a sense of control, influence, strength, and effectiveness to change a group-related problem" (van Zomeren et al., 2008, p. 513). It is the belief that one's group has the agency and ability to activate changes, through a systematic and coordinated response to oppression (Bandura, 2000; Stürmer & Simon, 2004). With perceived efficacy for collective action, people feel capable of altering the situation and outcome for their group (van Zomeren et al., 2008), and believe that social change is possible (Stürmer & Simon, 2004).

The stronger one's level of perceived efficacy, the more likely individuals will engage in activism when encountering heterosexist discrimination (van Zomeren et al., 2008). Research indicates that higher levels of perceived collective efficacy contribute to more investment in group tasks, stronger resilience in the face of obstacles, and more participation in social change activities (Bandura, 2000). Group efficacy has also been found to be related to collective strategies to improve group positions (Mummendey, Kessler, Klink, & Mielke, 1999). In experiments with Dutch university students, group efficacy predicted collective action tendencies when the in-group was disadvantaged (van Zomeren, Spears, Fischer, & Leach, 2004).

Qualitative research with LGBQ samples suggests that perceived efficacy is important for activism. Levitt et al. (2009) highlight how engagement in activism is related to one's perception of the extent to which activism has the ability to bring about real change. When dealing with heterosexism, some participants highlighted feeling engaged and hopeful that efforts would

affect social change, whereas other participants displayed feelings that their efforts were futile and contributed to their disengagement from activism (Levitt et al., 2009). In a quantitative study with a LGBQ sample, Swank and Fahs (2013) found that perceived collective efficacy predicted LGBQ political activism, as efficacy beliefs predicted behaviors that advanced the LGBQ rights movement (e.g., voting, signing a petition, and writing a letter to politicians). Similarly, internal political efficacy (i.e., perceptions that individuals could make a difference through political activity on LGBQ issues) was a predictor for LGBQ political participation (Waldner, 2001).

Based on the research linking perceptions of efficacy and activism behaviors, efficacy would also likely moderate the relationships between the mediator variables and activism. Thus, if someone has high levels of perceived efficacy, it would strengthen the LGBQ relational connectedness-activism link, the search for meaning-activism link, and the heterosexist awareness-activism link. That is, high levels of perceived efficacy will enhance these links, as individuals will be more likely to participate in activism if they believe it has the ability to make direct changes. At low levels of perceived efficacy for collective action, these links would be weaker. We did not find any empirical studies that have examined the theorized moderating effects of perceived efficacy of collective action on the links between the mediators (i.e., LGBQ relational connectedness, search for meaning, and heterosexist awareness) and activism.

Current Study

As illustrated in Figure 1, our hypothesized conceptual model consisted of examining three mediators and two moderators in understanding how and when heterosexist discrimination is linked to LGBQ activism. Our specific hypotheses were:

1. The pathway between heterosexist discrimination and LGBQ activism would be mediated by three variables: LGBQ relational connectedness, search for meaning, and

heterosexism awareness. That is, higher levels of heterosexist discrimination would be related to more LGBQ relational connectedness, search for meaning, and heterosexist awareness, which in turn would be related to greater LGBQ activism.

2. Identity centrality would moderate the relationship between heterosexist discrimination and activism, such that the relationship would be stronger when identity centrality is high and weaker when identity centrality is low.

3. Identity centrality would moderate the relationship between heterosexist discrimination and the three mediators. In addition, it would moderate the mediated relations of heterosexist discrimination via our three mediators with LGBQ activism. Specifically, the relationship between heterosexist discrimination and LGBQ relational connectedness, search for meaning, and heterosexism awareness, along with their first stage conditional indirect effects on LGBQ activism, would be stronger when identity centrality is high and weaker when identity centrality is low.

4. Perceived efficacy for collective action would moderate or intensify the relationship between heterosexist discrimination and LGBQ activism.

5. Perceived efficacy for collective action would moderate the relationship between the mediators (LGBQ relational connectedness, search for meaning, and heterosexism awareness) and LGBQ activism. In addition, it would moderate the mediated relations of heterosexist discrimination via our three mediators with LGBQ activism. That is, the relationship between the mediators and LGBQ activism, along with their second stage conditional indirect effects on gay LGBQ activism, would be stronger when perceived efficacy for collective action is high and weaker when perceived efficacy for collective action in low.

Chapter 2

Method

Participants

The initial sample comprised of 966 participants who completed an online survey. Two self-identified heterosexual participants, 39 self-identified asexual participants, and eleven respondents who described being only attracted to members of the opposite sex on the Kinsey type scale were eliminated as they did not meet the criteria of being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer. In addition, one participant residing outside the U.S., 25 participants who reported they were under the age of 18, three participants who responded they only clicked through and did not seriously participate in the survey (Aust, Diedenhofen, Ullrich, & Musch, 2013), six participants who answered two or more of the three validity items incorrectly (e.g. To check that you are playing attention, mark "2- ONCE IN A WHILE"), two participants who left at least one measure completely blank, and 10 participants who were missing more than 20% of items for a particular measure were eliminated from the dataset. This resulted in a final sample of 867 participants.

Our sample size met Weston and Gore's (2006) recommendation for a minimum of 200 participants for path/mediation analysis and 10-20 observations per estimated parameter. For the moderator analyses, Aiken and West (1991; p. 164, Table 8.5) reported sample power analyses suggesting that when moderator and predictor variables are measured with reliability of .80, variance accounted for by the main effects is .20, and inter-predictor correlations are .25, sample sizes of approximately 56, 115, and 797 are needed to achieve statistical power of .80 in detecting an interaction for small, moderate, and large effect sizes, respectively. Thus, our

sample size was large enough to detect interactions with small effect sizes that are typical in social science research (Chaplin, 1991).

Of the 867 participants in the sample, 70% were assigned female at birth and 30% were assigned male. In terms of gender identity, 50% identified as a woman, 25% identified as a man, 14% identified as genderqueer/gender non-conforming, 3% identified as a transman, 3% identified as a transwoman, and 5% identified as a different gender identity (e.g., agender, genderfluid, neutrois). Participants self-identified as lesbian or gay (46%), bisexual (35%), or another orientation (19%; e.g., pansexual, demisexual, queer). Participants' descriptions of their feelings of romantic/sexual attraction on the Kinsey-type scale (ranging from 0 to 6) were as follows: 27% attracted only to the same sex (6), 42% attracted more to the same sex than the opposite sex (5 and 4), 20% equally attracted to both sexes (3), 11% attracted more to the opposite sex than the same sex (2 and 1), and 0% attracted only to the opposite sex (0). Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 87, with a mean age of 27.84 years ($SD = 12.97$). The sample was 84% white/European American, 5% Hispanic/Latino/a, 3% Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander, 2% African American/Black, 1% Native American/Alaskan Native, 5% Biracial/Multiracial, and 1% other.

Fifty-two percent ($n = 452$) of participants were currently enrolled in college, with 25% being first year undergraduates, 19% sophomores, 15% juniors, 18% seniors, 18% graduate students, and 5% other. Of the 48% who were not college students ($n = 415$), 7% attained less than a high school diploma, 30% attained a high school diploma, 11% attained a two-year college degree, 32% attained a four-year college degree, and 21% attained a graduate/professional degree. Self-reported social class categories were 2% wealthy, 30% upper middle, 35% lower middle, 26% working, and 8% poor. Participants' U.S. regions of residence

included 26% Northeast, 27% Midwest, 27% South, and 20% West. Due to rounding, the percentages may not add up to 100%.

Measures

      Heterosexist discrimination. Perceived heterosexist discrimination was measured using the LGBQ version of the Heterosexist Harassment, Rejection, and Discrimination Scale (HHRDS; Szymanski, 2006). This 14-item scale assesses the frequency with which LGBQ people have experienced harassment, rejection, and discrimination due to their sexual orientation within the past year. Examples of items include: "In the past year, how many times have you been treated unfairly by people in helping jobs (by doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, caseworkers, dentists, school counselors, therapists, pediatricians, school principals, gynecologists, and others) because you are a lesbian/gay/bisexual/queer person?" and "In the past year, how many times have you been verbally insulted because you are a lesbian/gay/bisexual/queer person?" Participants respond on a 6-point Likert-type scale, with ratings from 1 (*the event has never happened to you*) to 6 (*the event happened almost all of the time [more than 70% of the time]*). Mean scores were used, with higher scores indicating more experiences with heterosexist harassment, rejection, and discrimination in the past year. Reported Cronbach's α was .90. Validity was supported through exploratory factor analysis; positive correlations with measures that assessed overall psychological distress, somatization, obsessive compulsiveness, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, and anxiety; and through demonstrating this scale was conceptually distinct from internalized heterosexism (Szymanski, 2006; Szymanski, 2009). Cronbach's α for the current sample was .90.

LGBQ activism. Following DeBlaere et al. (2014), LGBQ activism was measured through a modified version of the Involvement in Feminist Activism Scale (IFAS; Szymanski, 2004). The IFAS consists of 17 items and was originally developed to assess involvement in a variety of activities that support feminist ideology. DeBlaere et al. (2014) successfully modified this scale to assess sexual minority activism by substituting "feminist" and "women's" with "LGBQ." Example modified items include "I write to politicians and elected officials concerning LGBQ issues" and "I participate in LGBQ demonstrations, boycotts, marches, and/or rallies." Each statement is rated on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*very untrue of me*) to 7 (*very true of me*). Mean scores were used, with higher scores indicating more involvement in LGBQ activism. DeBlaere et al. (2014) reported an alpha of .94 for the modified IFAS for sexual minority activism. Validity of the IFAS was supported through exploratory factor analysis, positive correlations with measures that assessed participation in feminist activities, self-identification as a feminist, attitudes toward feminism, feminist ideologies, and later stages of feminist identity development, and negative correlations to earlier stages of feminist identity development and conservatism (Szymanski, 2004). Cronbach's α for the current sample was .90.

LGBQ relational connectedness. Relational connectedness to LGBQ others was measured by a modified version of the 5-item Relational Connectedness subscale of the Revised UCLA Loneliness scale (Hawkley et al., 2005; Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980), which reflects an individual's "social satisfaction at the interpersonal level" (p. 803, Hawkley et al., 2005). Items were modified to tap into feelings of interpersonal connectedness specifically to LGBQ others, including items such as "There are LGBQ people I feel close to" and "There are LGBQ people who really understand me." Participants responded to each statement using a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*never*) to 4 (*often*). Mean scores were used, with higher scores

indicating more LGBQ relational connectedness. Reported alphas for scores on the relational connectedness subscale were .87 and .86 using two independent samples. Structural validity was supported through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses using two independent samples. Convergent validity was supported by positive correlations to greater amounts of regular contact with friends and relatives, greater number of group memberships, and being religiously affiliated (Hawkley et al., 2005). Cronbach's α for the current sample was .93.

Search for meaning. Search for meaning was measured using the 5-item Search for Meaning subscale of the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Steger et al., 2006), which assesses "the drive and orientation toward finding meaning in one's life" (Steger et al., 2006, p. 85). Sample items include: "I am seeking a purpose or mission for my life" and "I am looking for something that makes my life feel meaningful." Participants respond on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*absolutely untrue*) to 7 (*absolutely true*). Mean scores were used, with higher scores indicating more search for meaning. Internal reliability (range from .82 to .87), one month test-retest reliability (.73), as well as structural validity (via exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses) were supported (Steger et al., 2006). In addition, convergent validity was supported with positive correlations with neuroticism, depression, negative emotions, as well as correlations between self- and informant-reported search for meaning at two time points. Discriminant validity was supported by its non-correlated relationships to social desirability and external religiosity. Search for meaning was found also to be distinct from the presence of meaning in one's life (Steger et al., 2006). Cronbach's α for the current sample was .94.

Heterosexism awareness. The 10-item Heterosexism Awareness subscale of the Privilege and Oppression Inventory was used to measure heterosexism awareness (Hays, Chang, & Decker, 2007). Example items include "Heterosexuals have access to more resources than gay,

lesbian, and bisexual individuals" and "Many gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals fear for their safety." Participants respond using a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). Mean scores were used, with higher scores indicating more awareness of heterosexism. Reported alpha was .81 and two-week test-retest reliability was .86. Structural validity was supported through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. Convergent validity was supported by positive correlations with measures of (a) awareness of privilege and oppression related to race, gender, and religion, (b) comfort and acceptance of cultural similarities and differences, and (c) attitudes that promote equity. Divergent validity was supported by demonstrating that heterosexism awareness was conceptually distinct from social desirability (Hays et al., 2007). Cronbach's α for the current sample was .88.

Identity centrality. The 4-item Importance to Identity subscale of the Collective Self-Esteem Scale (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) was used to measure identity centrality. Items were modified to ask participants to respond based on their identity as a LGBQ person. Example items include: "Being LGBQ is an important reflection of who I am" and "Overall, being LGBQ has very little to do with how I feel about myself" (Reverse scored). Participants respond to the items using a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Mean scores were used, with higher scores indicating more LGBQ identity centrality. Reported alphas ranged from .73 to .86 and 6-week test-retest reliability was .68 (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). Among LGBQ samples, reported alphas were .83 (Mohr & Kendra, 2011) and .79 (Swim, Johnston, & Peterson, 2009). Structural validity was supported by confirmatory factor analyses. Convergent validity was supported by positive correlations with various scales that measure the importance of the collective (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). Cronbach's α for the current sample was .78.

Perceived efficacy for collective action. The 5-item Social Justice Perceived Behavioral Control (SJPBC) subscale from the Social Justice Scale (Torres-Harding, Siers, & Olson, 2012) was used to measure perceived efficacy for collective action. This subscale measures perceived behavioral control, which is described as "the extent to which a person feels it is possible to 'make a difference', or the self-evaluation of whether one can have an impact on existing social conditions" (Torres-Harding et al., 2012, p. 79). Sample items include "I am certain that if I try, I can have a positive impact on my community" and "If I choose to do so, I am capable of influencing others to promote fairness and equality." Participants responded to items on a 7-point Likert-type scale, from 1*(strongly disagree)* to 7*(strongly agree)*. Mean scores were used, with higher scores indicating more efficacy for collective action. Reported alpha was .84. Structural validity was supported by confirmatory factor analysis. Convergent validity was supported by a positive correlation with motivation to engage in public service and negative correlations with symbolic racism, neo-sexism, and a global belief in a just world (Torres-Harding et al., 2012). Cronbach's α for the current sample was .86.

Procedures

Data was collected using a web-based internet survey, using the Qualtrics system, which uses firewall systems, restricted systems design, and secure storage to prevent data tampering and keep survey data confidential. Participants were recruited using online purposive sampling via email research announcements and social media advertisements, inviting individuals who identify as LGBQ, who are at least 18 years old, and live in the U.S. to participate in a study focused on the experiences of LGBQ individuals. The research announcement was sent via email to leaders or organizers of a variety of LGBQ-specific campus and community listservs, organizations, and groups across the nation, asking these designated individuals to forward on

the research announcement to their respective groups, inviting participation in the study. The research announcement was also sent via email to the researchers' professional and personal networks, using snowball sampling. Finally, advertisements for the study were shown on Facebook to individuals who indicated they were over 18 years old, lived in the U.S., and showed interest in keywords related to the LGBQ community (e.g., Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, LGBQ Community). In regard to how the current sample found out about the survey, 80% of participants identified hearing about it from Facebook advertisements, 16% from an LGBQ organization or listserv, 2% from a friend/colleague, and 2% other.

After participants clicked on the hypertext link provided in the email or social media ad, they were directed to the informed consent page of the survey. Participants indicated consent to take the survey by clicking a button. Then they were directed to the webpage containing the survey. In order to reduce response biases, LGBQ activism was assessed first. This created "psychological separation" of the variables as a means of reducing common method bias and served to decrease the chances that participants' memories of heterosexism could influence their answers to the LGBQ activism scale (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). All of the other measures were randomly ordered in the survey. As an incentive to participate, all participants were given the chance to enter a raffle drawing, awarding a $50 online merchant gift card, to each of five randomly chosen individuals. Participants' contact information was not linked to the survey responses because we used a separate raffle database.

Chapter 3

Results

Preliminary Analyses and Descriptive Data

Analysis of missing data patterns of the 867 participants included in the study indicated that .23% of all items for all participants/cases were missing, and 18.33% of the items were not missing data for any case. Considering individual cases, 89.73% of participants had no missing data. Additionally, no item had 1% or more of missing values. Given the very small amount of missing data, we used available case analysis procedures to address missing data points. This is a type of conditional mean imputation where missing values are imputed from each person's observed scores on the measure where missing points occur. Thus, available data was used to compute scale scores resulting in complete data for all 867 participants. Available case analysis is preferred over mean substitution when dealing with low-level item-level missingness, as mean substitution can produce inflated correlation coefficients among items (Parent, 2013).

The means, standard deviations, and inter-correlations among all variables assessed in this study are shown in Table 1. Absolute values for skewness (range= $.41 - 1.39$) and kurtosis (range = $.21 - 2.70$) for each variable indicated sufficient normality (i.e., skewness < 3, kurtosis < 10; Weston & Gore, 2006). Eleven multivariate outliers were observed (i.e., Mahalanobis distance, $p < .001$). None of these outliers displayed a particular pattern of responses (e.g., selecting "1" for all item level responses). Thus, these outliers were retained as we could not see any justifiable reason to remove them. Furthermore, none of these cases had a Cook's distance greater than 1, indicating that they did not have significant bearing on the overall model (Field, 2013).

Preliminary correlational analysis between age, the only continuous demographic variable assessed in our study, and LGBQ activism revealed that this relationship was not significant ($r = -.02$). Therefore, we did not use it as a covariate in the subsequent analyses. As shown in Table 1, at the bivariate level we found that heterosexist discrimination was associated with search for meaning ($r =.14$), heterosexism awareness ($r = .25$), identity centrality ($r = .15$), perceived efficacy for collective action ($r = .10$), and LGBQ activism ($r = .29$). Heterosexist discrimination was not associated with LGBQ relational connectedness. LGBQ activism yielded significant positive correlations with LGBQ relational connectedness ($r = .33$), search for meaning ($r = .14$), heterosexism awareness ($r = .32$), identity centrality ($r = .34$), and perceived efficacy for collective action ($r = .36$).

Mediation Analyses

To test the mediation model described in Hypothesis 1, we conducted bootstrap analyses for multiple mediation using Hayes (2013) PROCESS SPSS macro (Model 4). Bootstrapping procedures are nonparametric resampling procedures that do not require the assumption of normality in the sampling distribution (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). As recommended, we used 10,000 bootstrapping resamples to produce 95% confidence intervals for the indirect effects (Mallinckrodt, Abraham, Wei, & Russell, 2006). If the confidence interval does not contain zero, this signifies that the mediator is significant (Hayes, 2013).

The results of our mediation model are shown in Figure 2. The test of mediation with bootstrapping analysis revealed that both search for meaning (mean indirect [unstandardized] effect = .02; $SE =.01$, 95% CI [.004, .040], $\beta = .01$) and heterosexism awareness (mean indirect [unstandardized] effect = .09; $SE = .02$, 95% CI [.059, .131], $\beta = .05$) mediated the heterosexist discrimination-LGBQ activism link. No mediated effects were found for LGBQ relational

connectedness (mean indirect [unstandardized] effect = -.03; *SE* = .02, 95% CI [-.068, .009], β = -.02). Finally, the variables in the model accounted for 26% of the variance in LGBQ activism scores.

Moderator and Moderated Mediation Analyses

In order to test Hypotheses 2, 3, 4, and 5, a bootstrapped moderated mediation analysis, using 10,000 bootstrapping resamples, was performed using Hayes (2013) PROCESS SPSS macro (Model 29). Heterosexist discrimination was entered as the predictor variable, LGBQ relational connectedness, search for meaning, and heterosexist awareness were entered simultaneously as multiple mediators, identity centrality was entered as the first moderator variable (between heterosexist discrimination and the mediators, and between heterosexist discrimination and LGBQ activism), perceived efficacy for collective action was entered as the second moderator variable (between the mediators and LGBQ activism, and between heterosexist discrimination and LGBQ activism), and LGBQ activism was entered as the criterion/outcome variable (see Figure 1).

Prior to analysis, predictor and interaction terms were mean centered (i.e., transformed into deviation units by subtracting their sample means to produce revised samples means of zero). While the index of moderated mediation is a common significance test of moderated mediation, we did not use this index because it cannot be provided for Model 29 unless the second stage moderator is dichotomous (see Hayes, 2015). Instead, we used the recommendations of Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes (2007) for examining moderated mediation hypotheses. To do so, we provide evidence of moderation of one of the paths in the theorized causal model along with evidence of the moderation of one of the conditional indirect effects.

For the latter, we report the recommended B (Effect), bootstrap SE, and 95% CI for the conditional indirect effect of X on Y at the values of the moderator.

Results of these moderated analyses are shown in Table 2. Identity centrality moderated the link between perceived heterosexist discrimination and heterosexism awareness (R^2 change = .01; significant F change $p < .05$) link. Follow-up simple slopes analysis revealed that heterosexist discrimination predicted heterosexism awareness for LGBQ persons with low identity centrality ($SD = -1$; $B = .25$), at the mean of identity centrality ($SD = 0$; $B = .18$) and with high identity centrality ($SD = +1$; $B = .12$; see Figure 3). That is, the positive effect of heterosexist discrimination on heterosexism awareness was stronger when identity centrality was low than when identity centrality was high. There was also evidence that the mediation effect involving heterosexism awareness differed as a function of identity centrality. Heterosexism awareness mediated the relationship between heterosexist discrimination and LGBQ activism when identity centrality was low, -1 SD; Effect = .06; bootstrap SE =.02; 95% CI [.03, .10], at the mean (.00); Effect = .05; bootstrap SE = .01; 95% CI [.03, .08], and high, +1 SD; Effect = .03; bootstrap SE =.01; 95% CI [.01, .06] but this relationship was stronger for those with low identity centrality. No other moderated effects were significant.

Chapter 4

Discussion

The present study extends previous research by examining when, how, and for whom heterosexist discrimination relates to LGBQ activism. Our findings revealed that heterosexist discrimination was directly and indirectly (via search for meaning and heterosexism awareness) related to LGBQ activism. Our study suggests that some people, in response to heterosexist discrimination that disrupts individuals' global meaning schema, may cope by searching for meaning in their lives, which may, in turn, contribute to some individuals turning to LGBQ activism to improve their conditions and help them regain a sense of control over their lives (Park & Folkman, 1997; Thompson & Janigian, 1988). This builds upon other studies that have shown that search for meaning is a response to other difficulties like illness or conflict (Barber, 2008; Lee, 2008; Thompson, 1991) and begins to answer calls to examine issues related to meaning-making resilience in LGBQ communities (Wexler et al., 2009).

Likewise, our results on the mediating role of heterosexism awareness support qualitative studies that suggest that this may contribute to LGBQ activism (Jones, 2003) and also fit with a conceptual model that purports the importance of perceptions of injustices in contributing to collective action (van Zomeren et al., 2008). Our study highlights that perhaps activism occurs once the experiences of discrimination are situated into a larger context of systemic heterosexism. Thus, when individuals learn that their experience is not an isolated incident and is related to systems of oppression, they may feel compelled to participate in collective action to begin to change these systems.

Contrary to our hypotheses, results indicated that LGBQ relational connectedness did not mediate the link between heterosexist discrimination and LGBQ activism. Our study did not

support qualitative studies that found that LGBQ individuals may turn to similar others for support in the face of discrimination (Levitt et al., 2009; Riggle et al., 2008; Rostosky et al., 2010; Wilson & Yoshikawa, 2004); however, it did support past research that found that LGBQ connectedness is linked to LGBQ activism (Friedman & Leaper, 2010; Harris et al., 2015, Jones, 2003, Levitt et al., 2009; Rostosky et al., 2009; Russell & Richards, 2003; Waldner, 2001). One idea of why it did not mediate the discrimination-activism link is that connectedness to LGBQ others is a highly complex construct and the findings may vary depending on how this construct is conceptualized. For example, we focused on relational connectedness, and it may be that other related but conceptually distinct constructs (e.g., psychological sense of community or behavioral participation in the LGBQ community) are mediators of this pathway. Perhaps it is not the strong relational ties to LGBQ others that explains the discrimination-activism link, but rather the connection to the politicized version of their group, often termed the LGBQ "movement" (Duncan, Mincer, & Dunn, 2016; Duncan & Stewart, 2007; Simon et al., 1998; Stürmer & Simon, 2004). Another explanation is that perhaps there are other moderators not examined in this study that may influence the heterosexist discrimination and LGBQ relational connectedness link. For example, if someone experienced heterosexist discrimination but has high levels of internalized heterosexism, they may avoid being close to LGBQ others as it reminds them of their own "shameful" sexuality. In addition, outness might moderate this relationship; perhaps it is individuals who are more open about their sexual orientation who seek out more LGBQ connection in response to heterosexist discrimination. Finally, it could simply be that heterosexist discrimination is not related to connection with the LGBQ community. Clearly, future examining this link, and its' conflicting findings, is warranted.

In terms of our moderated and moderated mediation models, we found that identity centrality moderated the heterosexist discrimination→heterosexism awareness link and indicated support for moderated mediation via conditional process analyses. More specifically, heterosexist discrimination predicted heterosexist awareness for LGBQ persons with low, moderate, and high identity centrality but the relations were stronger for those with low identity centrality. This was surprising, however, because it was opposite of what we predicted; that the relation would be stronger for those with high identity centrality. One explanation for this is that those with the higher levels of identity centrality may already have high levels of heterosexism awareness as shown in Figure 3. Thus, because this identity is central to them, they may have been previously motivated to learn about heterosexism in society. Consequently, after experiencing heterosexist discrimination, it did not change their levels of heterosexism awareness by very much. In contrast, for an individual with low levels of identity centrality, perhaps it is only after experiencing heterosexist discrimination that they are more motivated to understand heterosexism at large, thereby increasing their heterosexism awareness. This experience of discrimination may have contributed to a larger change in heterosexism awareness for those with lower identity centrality, such that the heterosexism discrimination-heterosexism awareness link was stronger for these individuals.

Although identity centrality was directly linked to more LGBQ activism (see Table 2), contrary to our hypotheses, identity centrality did not moderate the direct relationship between heterosexist discrimination and LGBQ activism. In addition, it did not moderate the link between heterosexist discrimination and search for meaning, and accordingly, did not moderate its associated conditional indirect effect in predicting LGBQ activism. These results suggest that heterosexist discrimination is positively related to involvement in LGBQ activism and search

from meaning regardless of whether a LGBQ persons' sexual orientation is central to their identity. These findings are consistent with other research that has found no consistent moderating effect of identity centrality on the link between other forms of discrimination and other outcome variables, such as mental and physical health (Pascoe & Smart Richmod, 2009). In fact, researchers assert that identity centrality sometimes buffers from these outcomes and sometimes exacerbates these outcomes, depending on interactions with other variables such as coping styles, complexity of identity, and level of discrimination stress (Pascoe & Smart Richmond, 2009).

Although perceived efficacy for collective action was directly linked to LGBQ activism (see Table 2), contrary to our hypotheses, it did not moderate the heterosexist discrimination-LGBQ activism link, nor the links between the mediators and LGBQ activism and their associated conditional indirect effects. Our findings are in contrast to experimental studies among college students that found that group efficacy predicted collective action tendencies when their group was disadvantaged (van Zomeren et al., 2004). Our findings suggest that heterosexist discrimination is positively related to LGBQ activism and that LGBQ relational connectedness, search from meaning, and heterosexism awareness are positively linked to LGBQ activism regardless of a LGBQ persons' perceived efficacy for collective action. Our results suggest that perceived efficacy has a direct link with collective action (Bandura, 2000; Mummendey et al., 1999), but may not act as a moderating influence. One explanation of our lack of moderating effects may be due to the nature of systemic injustices; because of the pervasive and complex nature of structural injustices, systemic change is particularly difficult and people may participate in activism regardless of whether or not they believe that their actions will make a difference (van Zomeren et al., 2008). Perhaps the act of participating in activism

activities is beneficial to these individuals as a coping mechanism, regardless of whether they believe these outcomes will make true systemic changes in society.

Limitations and Future Directions

While our study furthered the understanding of the various components related to LGBQ discrimination and activism, we acknowledge the limitations of our study. This included the use of a cross-sectional, correlational research design, self-report measures, and a convenience sampling method. While we based our conceptualization of mediated, moderated, and moderated mediation relations on past research and theory, due to our research design, we cannot determine causality or directionality in our model. For example, it is plausible that participating in LGBQ activism puts an individual in situations where they face increased vocal opposition to LGBQ rights that may devolve into personal attacks and harassment, thus potentially contributing to further experiences of discrimination. Similarly, it may be that through engaging in LGBQ activism, people may form connections with LGBQ others, seek out meaning in their lives, or increase their level of awareness of heterosexism. Consequently, longitudinal and experimental research is needed to better understand the potential cause and effect relationships between the studied variables. Because of the use of self-report, our study is also potentially affected by social desirability or distorted or inaccurate memories.

Generalizability of our results is also limited by the makeup of our sample, including being primarily white, well-educated individuals in the U.S. Due to the recruitment methods of reaching people through LGBQ-related listservs and those who were connected to LGBQ interests on Facebook, we likely reached those individuals with higher LGBQ identity centrality and higher levels of outness, which also limits our generalizability. One unique feature of our sample was that it also included a large number of bisexual and queer individuals (54% of the

sample) and non-binary individuals (25% of the sample). Nonetheless, more research is needed with LGBQ people of color, individuals from lower social classes and education levels, and individuals who report no sexual attraction (i.e., asexuals). We did not assess regional differences within the U.S. based on geographic region or urbanity/ruralness, but these may also be areas of future research, as these geographic contextual factors are likely important in setting norms regarding conceptualizations of activism and discrimination. Likewise, it is important to assess this model in other countries, as the U.S. is a particularly individualistic culture and these results may not generalize to more collectivistic cultures. Collective coping methods, such as activism, are culturally specific (Kuo, 2013). Engaging in some activism behaviors (e.g., demonstrations/rallies) may be a particularly U.S.-centric, as these are constitutionally protected, and even encouraged, forms of civic engagement within the U.S. It may be that other cultures have different ways of positively coping with discrimination, such as creating alternative welcoming spaces for those experiencing discrimination or engaging in less confrontational modes of activism. Another limitation of our study is that we limited the scope of our study to LGBQ sexual minority activism. It is imperative to also continue research on the components contributing to transgender activism, as the trans community continues to face serious stigma and discrimination in the U.S. (James et al., 2016).

For the purposes of our study, we analyzed the experiences of LGBQ individuals as a whole, which ignores potential within group differences in understanding the heterosexism-activism link (Worthington & Reynolds, 2009), such as differences for particular sexual identities, gender identities, racial identities, or other life experiences or personality characteristics (e.g., personal political salience [Duncan & Stewart, 2007]). As scholars have noted, intersectionality research is also needed to address the multiple oppressive factors that

some individuals face along with heterosexism, including sexism, racism, and classism, and the unique ways that these intersect to marginalize individuals (Bowleg, 2008; DeBlaere et al., 2014; Shields, 2008). For example, our study focused narrowly on heterosexist discrimination and LGBQ activism, but this narrow focus may be problematic for individuals who face oppressions on multiple fronts. Future research is also needed to examine other variables that might be related to LGBQ activism such as personality factors, resilience, locus of control, individual coping styles, sexual identity development, outness levels, internalized heterosexism, and perceived social rewards and costs related to engaging in activism. Also, because our methodology used composite scores of heterosexist discrimination and LGBQ activism activities, we were unable to detect potential nuanced or differential relationships between the types of discrimination encountered and types of LGBQ activism pursued. It may be that certain types of heterosexist discrimination (e.g., workplace, familial, or physical violence) are more likely to lead to certain types LGBQ activism (e.g., marches, political causes, conferences). Finally, we did not focus on the systemic impact or outcomes of participating in activism. Research is needed to determine what forms of activism and what circumstances are most impactful to change oppressive heterosexist systems.

Conclusion

The current study adds to the literature on coping with heterosexism by demonstrating that involvement in activism is an important method for dealing with heterosexist discrimination for many LGBQ persons. Furthermore, our results revealed the importance of search for meaning and heterosexism awareness in explaining how heterosexist discrimination is linked to LGBQ activism. Finally, the findings underscore the importance of identity centrality and its interaction with heterosexist discrimination in understanding LGBQ persons' heterosexism awareness and

its' mediational link to LGBQ persons' involvement in social justice efforts. Our findings are

one of the first to identify what specific variables mediate and moderate the links between

heterosexism discrimination and LGBQ activism.

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Appendix

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations for All Study Variables

Variable	M	SD	Possible Range	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Perceived Heterosexist Discrimination	1.89	0.72	1 - 6	---					
2. LGBQ Relational Connectedness	3.45	0.68	1 - 4	-.05	---				
3. Search for Meaning	5.53	1.37	1 - 7	.14**	-.02	---			
4. Heterosexism Awareness	5.16	0.66	1 - 6	.25**	.10**	.18**	---		
5. Identity Centrality	5.34	1.28	1 – 7	.15**	.16**	.09**	.35**	---	
6. Perceived Efficacy for Collective Action	5.86	0.93	1 – 7	.10**	.27**	.12**	.15**	.13**	---
7. LGBQ Activism	4.40	1.21	1 - 7	.29**	.33**	.14**	.33**	.34**	.36**

** $p < .01$.

Table 2

Test of Identity Centrality as a Moderator of Predictor-Mediator, and Predictor-Criterion Links and Test of Perceived Efficacy as a Moderator of Mediator-Criterion, and Predictor-Criterion Links

Predictor variable	Criterion	*B*	*β*	*t*	*R²*	*F*	*df*
	LGBQ Relational Connectedness						
HD		-.07	-.08	-2.28*	.03	9.85**	3, 863
IC		.09	.18	5.19**			
HD X IC		-.00	-.00	-.10			
	Search for Meaning						
HD		.25	.13	3.94**	.03	7.83**	3, 863
IC		.08	.07	2.06*			
HD X IC		-.03	-.02	-.70			
	Heterosexism Awareness						
HD		.18	.20	6.37**	.16	56.58**	3, 863
IC		.16	.31	9.85**			
HD X IC		-.05	-.07	-2.23*			
	LGBQ Activism						
HD		.36	.22	7.35**	.34	40.04**	11, 855
LGBQ Relational Connectedness		.41	.23	7.69**			
Search for Meaning		.04	.05	1.55			
Heterosexism Awareness		.26	.14	4.52**			
IC		.17	.18	5.99**			
PE		.30	.23	7.49**			
LGBQ Relational Connectedness X PE		-.02	-.01	-.31			
Search for Meaning X PE		.05	.06	1.86			
Heterosexism Awareness X PE		-.03	-.02	-.64			
HD X IC		-.02	-.02	-.62			
HD X PE		-.07	-.04	-1.33			

Note. HD = Heterosexist Discrimination; IC = Identity Centrality; PE= Perceived Efficacy for Collective Action; *B*, β and *t* reflects values from the final regression equation; * $p <.05$; ** $p <.01$
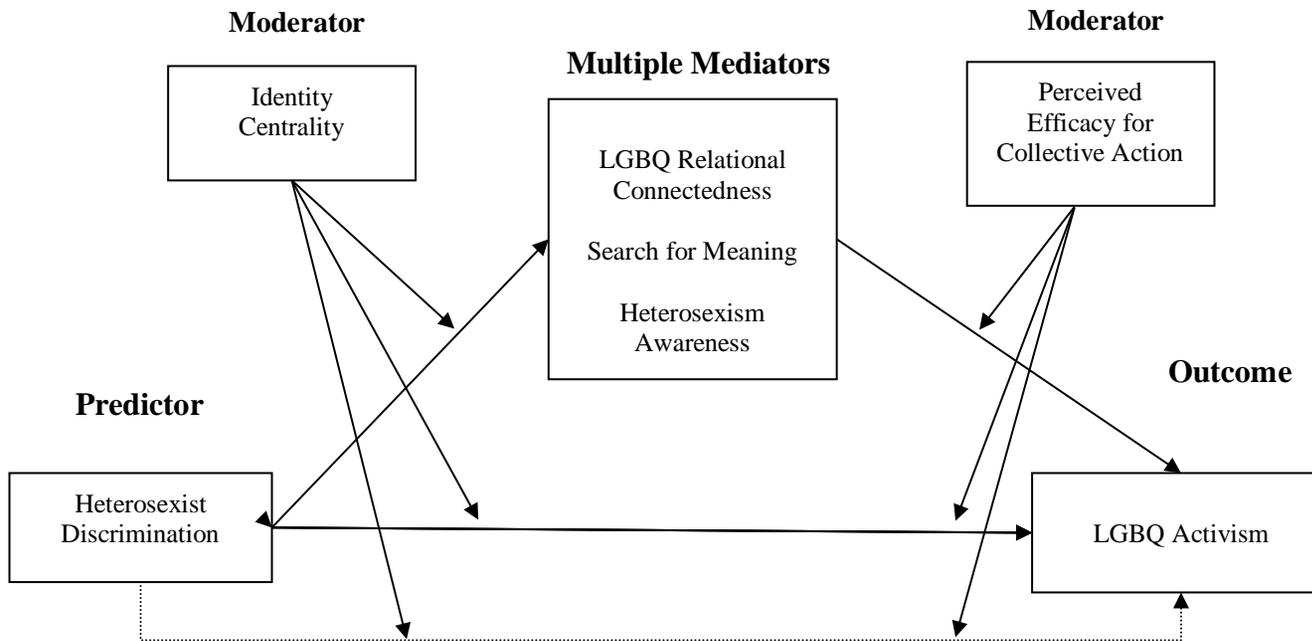
Figure 1. Hypothesized model predicting LGBQ activism. Dashed line indicates conditional indirect effect.
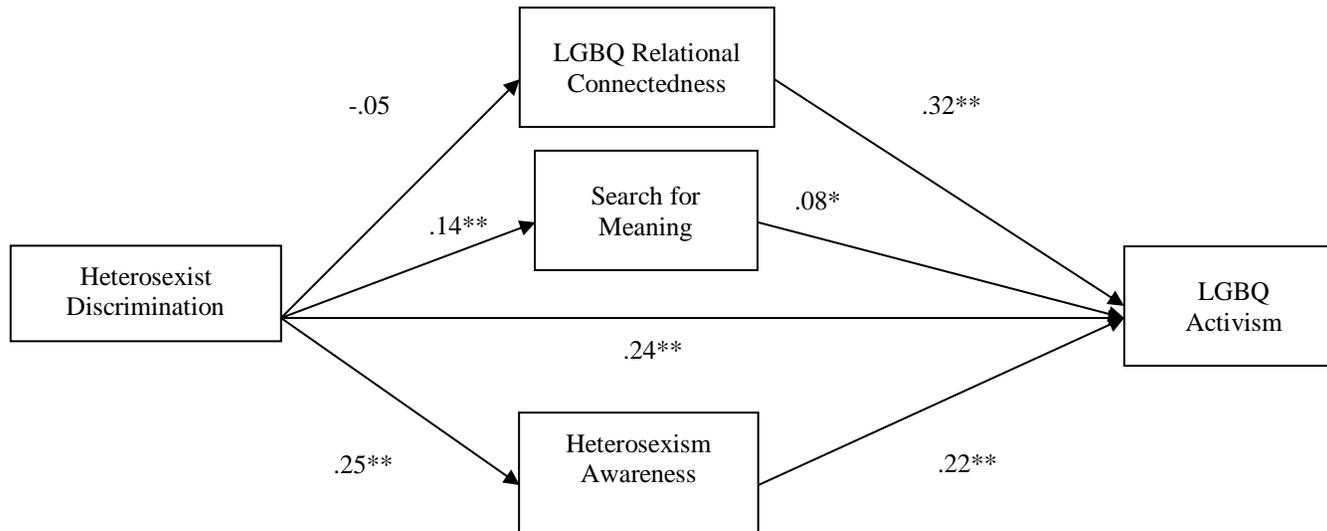
Figure 2. Path model of direct and indirect relations of variables of interest predicting LGBQ activism. Values reflect standardized coefficients. * *p* < .05; ** *p* < .01.
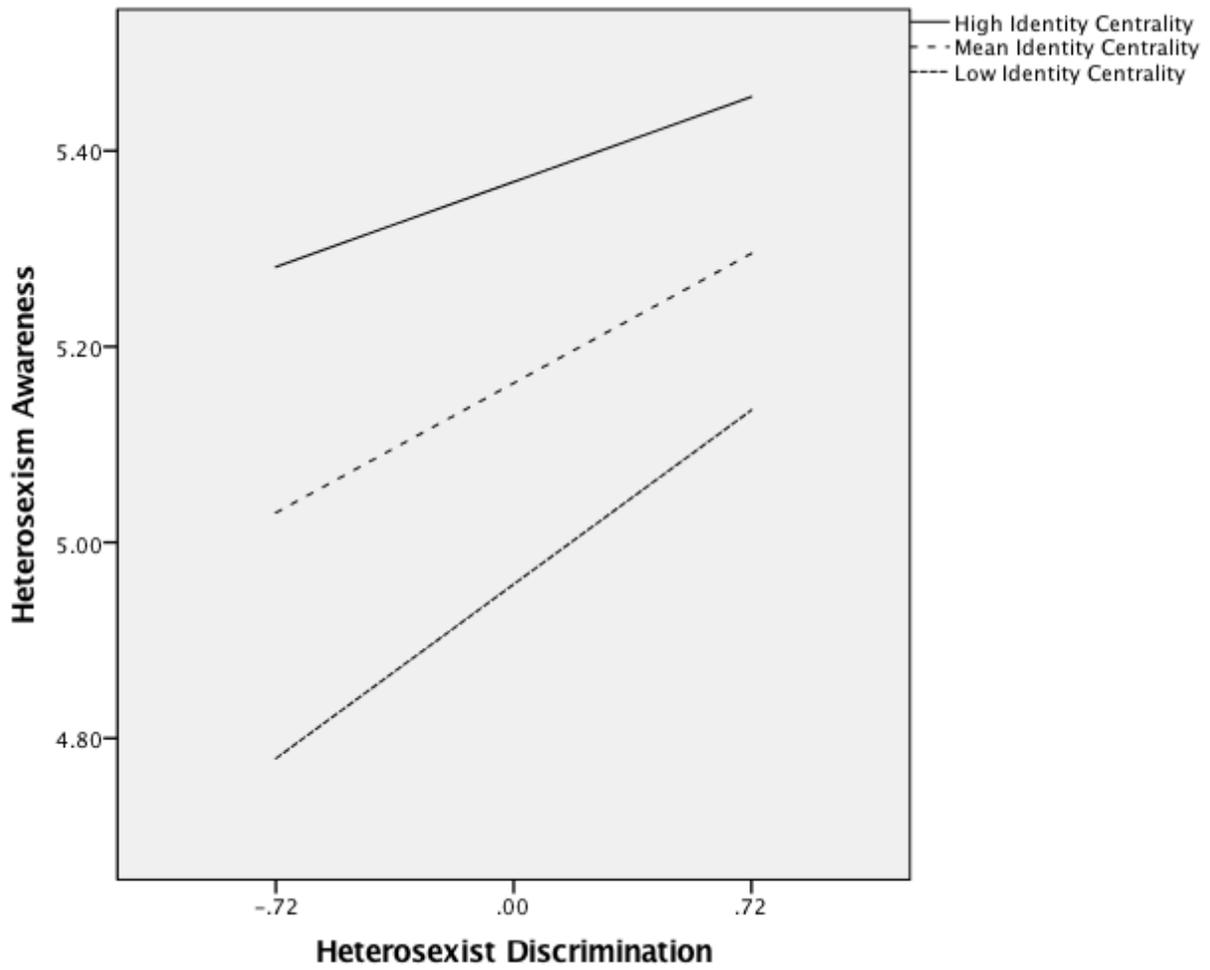
Figure 3. Interaction of Heterosexist Discrimination and Identity Centrality on Heterosexism Awareness.

Vita

Trevor Lee Dunn was born in St. Louis Park, Minnesota to his parents Kelly and Loretta Dunn. He was raised with his sister Natalie in Minnetonka, Minnesota and Hudson, Wisconsin. In high school, he was a Rotary International exchange student to Londrina, Paraná, Brazil. Trevor attended Bethel University in St. Paul, Minnesota for his undergraduate education, where he obtained his Bachelor's degree with Honors and majored in Psychology with a minor in Biology. At Bethel, he received the Webster C. Muck award for being a top student in the Psychology Department. After his undergraduate education, Trevor participated in national service through an AmeriCorps program in Minneapolis, where he worked as a Tutor/Mentor at a high school. He also worked as a special education paraprofessional in an elementary school in Richfield, Minnesota before pursuing graduate training.

In 2011, Trevor began attending the University of Minnesota in the Counseling and Student Personnel Psychology program within Educational Psychology. In 2013, he obtained his Masters of Arts degree from this program. He received a Global Spotlight grant at the University of Minnesota that funded an international research project on mental health among sexual minority men in Brazil. He was also awarded a University of Minnesota Schochet Academic Award for this project addressing LGBTQ Health, Policy, and/or Practice.

In 2013, Trevor continued his graduate education in Counseling Psychology at the University of Tennessee under the mentorship of Dr. Dawn Szymanski. In this program, he participated in coursework, held clinical field placements, taught undergraduate courses, and was a co-investigator for research in Dr. Szymanski's feminist multicultural lab. Trevor plans to graduate from the University of Tennessee in August 2018, following the completion of a year-

long clinical internship at the University of Texas at Austin's Counseling and Mental Health

Center during the 2017-2018 school year.