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# Two Sides of the Same Coin: Gender Harassment and Heterosexist Harassment in LGBQ Work Lives

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This project investigated the incidence, interplay, and impact of gender- and sexuality-based harassment, as experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer (LGBQ) employees in higher education. Unlike much queer empirical research, participants in this study were residents of noncoastal regions of the U.S. that are predominantly White, rural, and conservative (i.e., “red states”). They completed surveys about their harassment experiences (gender harassment-sexist, gender harassment-policing, and heterosexist harassment), perceived support systems (from supervisors and organizations), and job attitudes (job burnout, job stress, and job satisfaction). Results showed that gender harassment—both sexist and policing subtypes—rarely occurred absent heterosexist harassment, and vice versa. Harassment severity (experiencing moderate to high levels of all three harassment types) was significantly associated with greater levels of job burnout (both disengagement and exhaustion) and job dissatisfaction. Even infrequent experiences of harassment related to large increases in the “threat” variety of job stress (i.e., sense of feeling hassled and overwhelmed on the job). Additionally, employees who perceived the lowest organizational support reported the most harassment. We interpret results in light of research on organizational behavior and LGBQ psychology. Moreover, we discuss our findings in the context of Title VII, currently interpreted to protect against harassment based on gender, sex, and sex stereotyping, but not sexual orientation. Our results can inform several possible avenues of expanding gay civil rights in employment: broadening judicial interpretations of Title VII, passing new legislation (e.g., the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, or ENDA), and strengthening organizational supports and policies that protect against sexuality-based abuses.

**Keywords:** LGBQ psychology, sexual harassment, heterosexism, discrimination, employment

“*Queer. Sissy. Dyke. Tomboy.* What do these vulgar terms have in common? Why do they sting? And, perhaps more curiously, why do they carry a common sting?” (Valdes, 1995, p. 5, commenting on the conflation of *gender*, *sex*, and *sexual orientation* in life and law.)

In 2005, police officer Christopher Vickers furnished courts with a 71-page catalogue of his near-daily encounters with verbal and physical bullying on the job. Coworkers frequently exhibited obscene gestures, tampered with his food and personal property, broadcasted vulgar remarks referencing sexual coercion, slung homophobic slurs, and engaged in physical attacks that called into

question Vickers’ masculinity. Vickers filed a complaint under Title VII, which protects against sex discrimination, including hostile work environment sexual harassment. With the judge asserting that “recognition of Vickers’ claim would have the effect of *de facto* amending Title VII to encompass sexual orientation as a prohibited basis for discrimination,” the case was ultimately dismissed (*Vickers v. Fairfield Medical Center et al.*, 2006, p. 6).

Noting that Vickers could not prove that his tormentors displayed sexual desire, that his workplace climate was generally hostile toward men, or that women and men were differentially treated, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit did not construe Vickers’ mistreatment as *hostile work environment* sexual harassment. In other words, the gendered and sexualized nature of Vickers’ abuse did not trigger protection under Title VII. The opinion made numerous references to the ambiguous role that sexual orientation plays in sex discrimination law. Does the plaintiff’s sexual orientation matter? More generally, what role does gender play in cases of sexual orientation harassment? Answers to these questions remain elusive.

This project integrated several lines of research to examine the harassment experiences of LGBQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer-identified) employees. Though recognizing differences in gay, bisexual, and lesbian lives, we refer to this group collectively as *queer*, *nonheterosexual*, and *LGBQ* (transgender persons are often subsumed in that collective, but issues of gender identity are beyond the scope of this project). More specifically, we addressed the following questions: Is workplace harassment of LGBQ em-

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ployees most likely to occur on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, or both? What implications does this have for their professional well-being? Finally, do general workplace supports reduce harassment risk?

The unique contributions of this work were threefold. First, we addressed the joint incidence and impact of sexual orientation harassment and gender harassment in LGBTQ work life; this diverges from most queer workplace research, which focuses exclusively on sexual orientation-based phenomena (e.g., homophobic comments, “lavender ceilings,” “coming out” on the job). Second, we investigated experiences of an especially vulnerable, under-researched population: nonheterosexual workers in rural, conservative, noncoastal regions lacking LGBTQ-protective legislation (“red states,” according to current political vernacular). Third, we tested how general forms of leadership support (not specific to harassment) relate to harassment risk.

### Sexual Orientation in the Workplace

In the United States, approximately 9 million adults identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender; 19 million adults have participated in same-sex sexual behavior; and an estimated 25.6 million adults experience same-sex attraction (Gates, 2011). Nonheterosexual employees therefore comprise “a relatively large minority group” (Pichler, 2007, p. 2) in the U.S. workforce, so it is important to understand their unique workplace experiences.

According to stigma theory, broad cultural perceptions and morals dictate which social groups are valued and which are not. In turn, these attitudes and beliefs result in stigmatization, eventually giving way to prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination (e.g., Goffman, 1963; Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998). It is possible that stigma can operate on an organizational level, such that workplaces, implicitly or explicitly, value different social groups to varying degrees. With respect to sexual minorities, such a system is known as *heterosexism*, or “the cultural ideology that perpetuates sexual stigma by denying and denigrating any nonheterosexual form of behavior, identity, relationship, or community” (Herek, 2004, p. 16).

Thus, heterosexism refers to macrolevel anti-LGBTQ attitudes. We can also examine attitudes and actions toward LGBTQ-identified persons at an individual level. Toward this end, we use the term *heterosexist harassment* to refer to “insensitive verbal and symbolic (but nonassaultive) behaviors that convey animosity toward nonheterosexuality” (Silverschanz, Cortina, Konik, & Magley, 2008, p. 180). Examples of heterosexist harassment include offensive or crude remarks about gay men, lesbians, or bisexual persons; homophobic name-calling (e.g., “dyke” or “fag”); and the telling of “queer jokes” on the job. Note that these acts specifically target minority sexual orientations, but make no explicit reference to gender (or gender-related constructs, such as femininity or masculinity). Estimates vary, but research suggests that many nonheterosexual employees (25–66%) encounter heterosexist harassment at some point during their careers (Eliason, Dibble, & Robertson, 2011; Ragins, 2004; Szymanski, 2009).

Thus, heterosexist harassment of LGBTQ workers is relatively common. The focus in anti-LGBTQ research is typically sexual orientation, but this conduct also relates to gender. That is, behaviors that stigmatize nonheterosexuality often have as much to do with gender identity and expression as they do with sexual orien-

tation (e.g., Herek, 1986; McCreary, 1994; Tomsen & Mason, 2001). As summarized by Silverschanz et al. (2008), “[i]ndividuals who deviate from traditional masculinity and femininity are particularly vulnerable to heterosexist victimization, so it is often interpreted as a punishment for violating gender-normative prescriptions” (p. 179). That is, even though heterosexist harassment makes no overt reference to gender, the behavior is frequently a reaction to (counterstereotypical) gender expression. In line with this view, Konik and Cortina (2008) noted that heterosexist harassment is both cause and consequence of a rigid, hierarchical gender structure. In short, “heterosexism. . . is one of the ways in which strict adherence to gender role stereotypes is enforced, and gender oppression maintained” (Kitzinger, 2001, p. 277). This points to intimate connections, if not convergence, between heterosexist harassment and harassment based on sex and gender.

### Harassment Based on Sex and Gender

*Sexual harassment* is now a common term in both psychology and law. However, Berdahl (2007) advocated for adoption of the alternative phrase *sex-based harassment*, to emphasize the *sex of*, rather than *sexual desire toward*, targeted persons. Berdahl and others (e.g., Leskinen, Cortina, & Kabat, 2011; Kabat-Farr & Cortina, 2013) have also stressed that these umbrella terms subsume gender harassment—an expression of animosity that bears no resemblance to sexual or erotic attraction. For these reasons, in this article we refer to the same larger construct domain interchangeably using the terms *sexual harassment*, *sex-based harassment*, and *harassment based on sex and gender*.

Over half of all U.S. working women and nearly one third of men encounter sex-based harassment (a.k.a. sexual harassment) in employment (Ilies, Hauserman, Schwochau, & Stibal, 2003). To provide guidance on this issue, the U.S. EEOC (1980) (the legal entity charged with enforcing Title VII) developed the following definition, still in use today:

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute *sexual harassment* when this conduct explicitly or implicitly affects an individual’s employment, unreasonably interferes with an individual’s work performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment (p. 74677; emphasis added).

Expanding upon this legal definition, psychologists have identified multiple subtypes of sexual or “sex-based” harassment; these include *unwanted sexual attention* (undesirable expressions of sexual interest); *sexual coercion* (demands for sexual activity in exchange for favorable job conditions); and *gender harassment* (actions that demean, ridicule, or otherwise threaten members of one gender; e.g., Berdahl, Magley, & Waldo, 1996; Fitzgerald, Gelfand, & Drasgow, 1995).

In this article, we focus specifically on gender harassment, which can be further subdivided into facets (Leskinen & Cortina, 2013; Stark, Chernyshenko, Lancaster, Drasgow, & Fitzgerald, 2002). For instance, *sexist* gender harassment refers to overt expressions of antipathy toward men and women (e.g., calling a woman a “bitch” or a man a “dumb jock”). *Policing* gender harassment (also known as *gender nonconformity harassment*) entails “negative treatment for failing to adhere to the traditional norms of one’s gender” (Konik & Cortina, 2008, p. 320); examples

include insults that question a woman's femininity or a man's masculinity. Scholars have identified additional forms of gender harassment, particularly in the work lives of men (e.g., Berdahl et al., 1996; Stockdale, 2005; Waldo, Berdahl, & Fitzgerald, 1998).

We concentrate on the *sexist* and *policing* varieties of gender harassment (as experienced by both women and men), for two primary reasons. First, sexist behaviors are by far the most common subtype of gender harassment (e.g., Langhout et al., 2005; Leskinen et al., 2011). Second, LGBTQ employees might be subject to heightened *gender role policing*, due to their failure to conform to conventional stereotypes for their gender; we elaborate on this reasoning in the paragraphs that follow.

Legal scholar Katherine Franke (1997) defines gender harassment as "a disciplinary practice that inscribes, enforces and polices the identities of both harasser and victim according to a system of gender norms that envisions women as feminine (hetero)sexual objects and men as masculine, (heterosexual) subjects" (p. 693). She continues that gender harassment is:

a kind of sex discrimination not because the conduct would not have been undertaken if the victim had been a different sex, not because it is sexual, and not because men do it to women, but precisely because it is a technology of sexism. That is, it perpetuates, enforces, and policies a set of gender norms at work that seek to feminize women and masculinize men. . . [and further serves to] enforce gender norms when it is used to keep gender nonconformists in line (p. 696).

Sexual minorities might face high rates of gender harassment as a result of deviating from gender norms—norms that mandate not only gender-traditional self-presentation but also heterosexuality. Norms for men, for example, dictate that they display certain traits (e.g., strength, dominance, ambition) *and* that they sexually engage women but not men; in fact, hegemonic masculinity prescribes disdain for "homosexuals" (Mahalik et al., 2003; see also Donaldson, 1993). In other words, dominant masculinity has "hetero-patriarchal parameters," including heterosexual pursuit and objectification of women (Franke, 1997, p. 739; for more on *hetero-patriarchy*, see Valdes, 1995, 1996). Gender norms such as these breed gender policing in employment: stereotypically feminine women and hypermasculine men enjoy positive evaluations and treatment, whereas gender-nonconformists suffer scorn and insult, even assault (e.g., Konik & Cortina, 2008; Franke, 1997; Stockdale, 2005).

To summarize, work environments often demand conformity to traditional notions of masculinity and femininity (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011; Williams, Giuffre, & Dellinger, 1999); personnel who deviate from these gender prescriptions may be "punished" with gender harassment. Because nonheterosexuality is a form of gender nonconformity (e.g., Donaldson, 1993; McLaughlin, Uggen, & Blackstone, 2009), sexual minorities might be at increased risk for gender harassment (in addition to heterosexist harassment). Moreover, gendered mistreatment can sometimes escalate into sexuality-based hostilities (see, e.g., Dunbar, 2006).

In addition to persons, jobs themselves can be subject to gender stereotyping. One classic study found that occupations are "gendered" in the sense that job titles are judged as either masculine or feminine, depending on the perceived (a) gender makeup of the field, and (b) characteristics deemed necessary for the job (Shinar, 1975). More recent research has confirmed that occupational gender stereotypes remain persistent and powerful (e.g., Brescoll,

Dawson, & Uhlmann, 2010; Glick, Wilk, & Perreault, 1995; Heilman, 2001). Sexual minority personnel must therefore contend with stereotypes associated with both their gender group and job title.

LGBTQ employees encounter mistreatment even in "gay-friendly" job settings. Giuffre, Dellinger, and Williams (2008) identified three primary challenges facing nonheterosexual staff: stereotyping, sexual harassment, and gender discrimination. According to one interviewee:

I would get hit on by clients quite frequently, even more so after they found out I was a lesbian . . . I am openly a gay person and some clients find that very interesting . . . no, more of a challenge because they're like, "She's gay and maybe I can get her." (Giuffre et al., 2008, pp. 264–265)

This unwanted sexual attention is a form of sex-based harassment (e.g., Fitzgerald et al., 1995), but it is clearly not rooted in sex alone; sexual orientation is important too. In fact, when an "out" LGBTQ employee is the target of sexual harassment, it becomes difficult to distinguish sex from sexual orientation. That distinction starts to seem bizarre, if not downright absurd.

Given these intimate linkages between sex and sexual orientation, our first research question addressed harassment typology and frequency: do nonheterosexual employees primarily face harassment based on sexual orientation (heterosexist harassment), gender (gender harassment—sexist or policing subtypes), or both? We expected that:

*Hypothesis 1:* LGBTQ employees will be more likely to encounter multiple harassment types, referencing both sexuality and gender, rather than harassment targeting sexuality alone.

### Professional Outcomes of Workplace Harassment

Extensive research suggests that sexual (including gender) harassment undermines employee wellbeing on the job. Consequences include job dissatisfaction, absenteeism and procrastination, and decreased firm loyalty (for a meta-analysis, see Willness, Steel & Lee, 2007). Organizations suffer great social and financial costs as a result (McDonald, 2012).

Quite separate from the literature on sexual harassment have been studies of anti-LGBTQ hostility. Ragins and Cornwell (2001) found that, as "sexual orientation discrimination" rose, LGBTQ employees' job and career attitudes declined. Likewise, Waldo (1999) reported that sexual minority personnel faced with "workplace heterosexism" were more likely to withdraw from their job (via absenteeism, tardiness, etc.) or resign their positions all together. We sought to bridge this small literature on anti-LGBTQ abuse with gender harassment research, determining what results when multiple hostilities occur in tandem in LGBTQ work lives. We focus, in particular, on implications for job attitudes in three domains: stress, satisfaction, and burnout.

Minority stress theory underscores the stress that arises from stigma, prejudice, and discrimination (e.g., Meyer, 2003). For example, experiences of antigay discrimination have been linked to greater psychological distress among gay men (Meyer, 1995). Translated to the LGBTQ employment context, one would expect that, as experiences of identity-based discrimination (harassment) multiply, work in that context should become more stressful and

taxing. In short, *job stress* should increase. Research recognizes two subdimensions of job stress: pressure and threat. *Job stress–pressure type* refers to the sense that work is hectic, fast-paced, and taxing, whereas *job stress–threat type* involves perceptions of work as nerve-racking and overwhelming (Stanton, Balzer, Smith, Parra, & Ironson, 2001).

Related to job stress is *job satisfaction* (e.g., Lambert & Paoline, 2008), conceptualized as “the result of an interaction between the person and his [or her] environment” (Locke, 1969, p. 319). Accordingly, if there are discrepancies between personal values (e.g., importance of a gay identity) and organizational values (e.g., gay-unfriendly HR policies), personnel might become dissatisfied with their organization. Moreover, it stands to reason that employees’ job satisfaction would decrease as they encounter more frequent and varied types of hostility in the job context.

In addition to job stress and job dissatisfaction, we expect harassment to fuel *job burnout*, conceptualized as “a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job” (Maslach, 2003, p. 189). Job burnout also takes two forms: disengagement and exhaustion. *Disengagement burnout* involves decreased motivation and identification with one’s job, and *exhaustion burnout* entails feelings of depleted energy and resources. It seems logical that both types of burnout would increase when one is targeted with harassment on the job—even more so when that harassment becomes frequent and multifaceted. In summary, we predicted that:

*Hypothesis 2:* Employees reporting multiple workplace victimizations (i.e., both heterosexist harassment and gender harassment) will report greater levels of job dissatisfaction, job stress, and job burnout, compared to those facing single victimization or none at all.

### Organizational Buffers Against Harassment

Prior research on sexual harassment has shown that organizational support specific to harassment (e.g., leadership intolerance of harassing conduct, support for victims) is a powerful predictor of lower harassment rates (see meta-analytic results in Willness et al., 2007). Waldo (1999) documented a similar effect of leadership intolerance for heterosexism. We sought to extend that literature by determining whether organizational support in a broader sense (i.e., not specifically addressing harassment) might also be associated with harassment reduction. Put differently, when supervisors and organizations are perceived to “care about” LGBQ employees’ values, goals, and wellbeing, do those employees encounter less harassment?

In work organizations, having a supportive supervisor is critical to thriving (Lim, 2005; Mabe, 2010). Stigma victims often find it helpful to identify “similar others” in whom to confide, lessening the anxiety, ostracism, and solitude associated with being a devalued minority (Deaux & Ethier, 1998; Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007). However, Ragins et al. (2007) argue that supervisors “who do not have the stigma but support those who do” (p. 1106) can be equally influential. Indeed, they found that lesbian, gay and bisexual employees with supportive supervisors feared fewer negative ramifications from “coming out” at work. This suggests that, when supervisors show support for queer personnel, others are less likely to express anti-LGBQ prejudice.

More general than supervisor support, perceived organizational support refers to workers’ “beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being” (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986, p. 501). This support can boost job satisfaction, commitment, and performance and reduce turnover cognitions and behaviors (e.g., Riggie, Edmondson, & Hansen, 2009; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Strong organizational support might be particularly important for nonheterosexual employees. Harassment and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation remain legal according to current interpretations of federal law, but organizations have the ability to compensate. Given the time spent at work, organizational support might even be more critical than federal legislation (Pichler, 2007). In sum, we hypothesized that:

*Hypothesis 3:* Greater perceptions of (a) supervisor support and (b) organizational support will link with decreased harassment prevalence.

## The Current Study

To summarize, our study addressed the incidence, interplay, and impact of gender- and sexuality-based harassment in LGBQ work lives. We focused specifically on heterosexist harassment, “sexist” gender harassment, and “policing” gender harassment. After categorizing employees according to harassment profile, we investigated professional outcomes (job burnout, satisfaction, and stress) and organizational correlates (supervisor and organizational support).

Our study uniquely focused on LGBQ persons outside of so-called “gay neighborhoods.” Geographic region can influence important aspects of daily queer life. For example, sexual minorities living in the southern and rural U.S. have less access to health and other resources than peers in northern and urban areas (Knochel, Croghan, Moone, & Quam, 2010). However, convenience sampling (e.g., at “gay pride” events) has become the norm in LGBQ research, yielding a body of research skewed heavily toward economically stable, White, educated gay men in coastal cities (e.g., NYC, LA, Miami; Meyer & Wilson, 2009; Sandfort, Melendez, & Diaz, 2007). Thus, we sought to extend LGBQ scholarship to nonheterosexuals working in rural, conservative, non-coastal America.

To recap, we hypothesized that LGBQ employees would be more likely to report harassment experiences referencing both sexuality and gender, rather than harassment targeting sexuality alone (H1). We further expected that employees encountering multiple forms of harassment would also experience greater job dissatisfaction, job stress, and job burnout (H2). Finally, we predicted that employees facing higher levels of harassment would also perceive lower levels of supervisor and organizational support (H3).

## Method

### Participants

**Sample 1.** All permanent nonstudent employees at a small, rural, public university were invited to participate; 1,349 returned

complete surveys (56% response rate). For more data collection details, refer to Konik and Cortina (2008).

We focused on data from LGBTQ-identified participants ( $n = 55$ ). Of this group, 3.6% identified as “completely homosexual, lesbian, or gay”; 7.3% as “mostly homosexual, lesbian, or gay”; 12.7% as “bisexual”; and 56.4% as “mostly heterosexual.” We treated “mostly heterosexual” participants as sexual minorities for several reasons. Studies have found “mostly heterosexual” individuals to differ significantly from exclusively “heterosexual” persons in sexual/romantic attractions and fantasies (e.g., Savin-Williams & Vrangalova, 2013). Likewise, Silverschanz et al. (2008) reported that students identifying as “mostly heterosexual” differed from “completely heterosexual” peers on academic and psychological well-being; the “mostly” heterosexuals, however, scored closely to “completely” and “mostly” lesbian, gay, and bisexual students. Finally, in our sample the “mostly heterosexual” employees represented 31 out of 1,349 staff members—a clear numerical minority.

Our subsample was fairly sex-balanced (45.5% female), with ages ranging from 21 to 63 ( $M = 43.49$ ,  $SD = 10.77$ ). Reflecting the ethnic makeup of the region, 89.1% of participants identified as European American/White.

**Sample 2.** To boost statistical power, we recruited a sample of LGBTQ nonstudent university employees in similar states as Sample One. Based on Census and voting data, we identified 20 states that were, at that time: (1) rural, (2) mostly European American/White, (3) primarily Republican, and (4) lacking state legislation prohibiting discrimination against LGBTQ employees. We then utilized websites and listservs of universities in those states to contact LGBTQ staff and faculty groups (e.g., Gay Straight Alliance), providing survey information to share with others in their social networks (i.e., *snowball sampling*, an accepted technique in sexual minority research; Harry, 1990; Sell, 1996). Respondents were mailed surveys and postage-paid return envelopes. These methods culminated in a 64% response rate.

After removing five cases (three participants who identified as neither man nor woman; two who identified as “completely heterosexual”), 212 participants remained. A majority (59.7%) identified as completely homosexual, lesbian, or gay; 28.4% as mostly homosexual, lesbian, or gay; and 11.9% as bisexual. This sample was 66.98% female and ranged from 19 to 70 years of age ( $M = 40.44$ ,  $SD = 10.93$ ). Most (88.7%) identified as European American/White.

We pooled Samples 1 and 2, and Table 1 provides descriptive information for these 267 participants. The two samples differed, however, with respect to “outness” at work (Sample 1:  $M = 2.73$ ,  $SD = 2.25$ ; Sample 2:  $M = 5.88$ ,  $SD = 1.83$ ;  $t(241) = 10.23$ ,  $p < .001$ ) as well as sex,  $\chi^2(1, N = 267) = 8.64$ ,  $p = .005$ . We therefore controlled for sample source in analyses.

**Measures**

Both samples completed the same measures, some abbreviated from their original versions to minimize survey length and maximize response rates. To create scales, we averaged the underlying items, scored such that higher values equal higher levels of underlying constructs.

**Demographics.** Participants self-reported their sex (coded 1 = woman or 2 = man) and race/ethnicity (Asian, Black, Hispanic, Middle Eastern, Native American, White, Other; recoded such that 0 = White or 1 = Person of Color). In two items, participants indicated how open they were about their sexual orientation with their (a) coworkers and (b) superiors, on a scale from 1 (*not at all open*) to 7 (*completely open*). Responses to these two items were highly correlated ( $r = .90$ ,  $p < .001$ ), so we averaged them into a single indicator of “outness” on the job.

**Workplace harassment.** We drew five items from the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ; Fitzgerald et al., 1988, 1995) to assess experiences of *sexist gender harassment* (GH-sexist), revising items as needed to include both men’s and women’s experi-

Table 1  
Intercorrelations for All Study Variables (Full Sample N = 267)

Variable name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Sex	—													
2. Age	-.102	—												
3. Race/Ethnicity	-.006	-.119	—											
4. Sexual orientation	-.076	-.012	.043	—										
5. Outness	-.077	-.040	-.151*	-.594**	—									
6. GH (Sexist)	-.016	-.165**	.108	-.240**	.187**	—								
7. GH (Policing)	-.090	-.103	.107	-.045	.020	.471**	—							
8. HH	-.015	-.127	.026	-.166**	-.037	.642**	.548**	—						
9. Sup. Support	.113	-.092	.004	-.045	.111	-.115	-.141*	-.123	—					
10. Org. Support	.063	-.054	.005	-.137*	.207**	-.131*	-.154*	-.171**	.524**	—				
11. Disengagement	-.001	-.130*	.033	.089	-.114	.156*	.198**	.099	-.488**	-.518**	—			
12. Exhaustion	-.051	.016	-.085	.131*	-.117	.123	.192**	.066	-.282**	-.418**	.565**	—		
13. Job satisfaction	.041	.027	-.055	-.064	.068	-.158*	-.269**	-.137*	.591**	.583**	-.806**	-.558**	—	
14. Pressure stress	-.065	.106	-.133*	-.121	.114	.131*	.060	.129*	-.213**	-.102	.108	.417**	-.206**	—
15. Threat stress	-.156*	.010	-.067	-.168**	.103	.157*	.230**	.167**	-.521**	-.462**	.555**	.501**	-.659**	.421**

Note. For sex, 1 = woman, 2 = man. For race/ethnicity, 0 = White, 1 = Person of Color/Other. For sexual orientation, 1 = completely lesbian, gay, or homosexual, 2 = mostly lesbian, gay, or homosexual, 3 = bisexual, 4 = mostly heterosexual. For all other variables, higher values indicate greater levels of the construct. GH (Sexist) = gender harassment-sexist type; GH (Policing) = gender harassment-policing type; HH = heterosexist harassment; Sup. Support = supervisor support; Org. Support = organizational support. Disengagement and exhaustion are two subscales of job burnout; pressure stress and threat stress are two subscales of job stress.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

ences. With strong empirical validation, the SEQ is the most widely used instrument in sexual harassment research (Arvey & Cavanaugh, 1995; Willness et al., 2007). Following the stem, "During the past year, has any university faculty, staff, administrator, or student . . ." participants rated how often they had encountered each of a list of behaviors (*never, once or twice, or more than once or twice*). Sample items read, "Made sexist remarks about people of your gender"; "Made offensive remarks about your appearance or body." Cronbach's alpha for GH-sexist items was .77.

Using the same stem and response scale, we created three new items to capture *policing gender harassment* (GH-policing): "Questioned your manhood (if you're male) or femininity (if you're female)"; "Treated you negatively because you were not 'masculine enough' (if you're male) or not 'feminine enough' (if you're female)"; and "Criticized you for not behaving 'like a real man' (if you're male) or 'like a woman should' (if you're female)." Alpha was .79.

To measure *heterosexist harassment* (HH), we drew five items from Waldo's (1999) Workplace Heterosexist Experiences Questionnaire that, based on content, were applicable to work in university settings (e.g., "Made you afraid that you would be treated poorly if you were open about your sexual orientation"). We also created three new items to capture heterosexism that employees could experience regardless of their level of outness (e.g., "Displayed or distributed homophobic literature or materials in your office"). The stem and response options matched those used with gender harassment. These eight items had a Cronbach's alpha of .79.

In summary, this survey assessed three varieties of workplace harassment: GH-sexist, GH-policing, and HH. Based on the same sample as the current study, Konik and Cortina (2008) provide theoretical and empirical (factor analytic) support for parsing LGBQ harassment experiences into these three subdimensions.

**Job burnout.** We assessed disengagement and exhaustion burnout using items from the Oldenberg Burnout Inventory (OLBI; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). The original OLBI contained 15 items, of which we selected 12 that: (1) loaded highly onto their respective dimensions in Demerouti et al. (2001), and (2) appeared salient to university work life. Sample items read "I always find new and interesting aspects in my work" (reversed; disengagement; 6-item  $\alpha = .78$ ) and "After work, I usually feel worn out and weary" (exhaustion; 6-item  $\alpha = .79$ ). Response options ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

**Job satisfaction.** With the same 7-point response scale as the job burnout measure, we measured job satisfaction using a 3-item measure developed by Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, and Klesh (1979; e.g., "All in all, I am satisfied with my job"). Coefficient alpha was .92.

**Job stress.** We assessed both the threat and pressure varieties of job stress, using items from the Stress in General scale (SIG; Stanton et al., 2001). Following standard SIG procedures, the scale began: "What is your JOB like MOST OF THE TIME? For each word or phrase, circle 'yes' if the word describes your job, 'no' if it doesn't, and '?' if you can't decide." Participants then rated six descriptors, such as "hectic" (pressure stress, 3 items) and "hassled" (threat stress, 3 items). A "yes" response was coded as 3, "?" was coded as 1.5, and "no" was coded as 0; responses for each subscale were then averaged. Cronbach's alpha value was .69 for pressure stress and .75 for threat stress.

**Supervisor support.** To measure *supervisor support*, participants completed the 3-item Perceived Supervisor Support scale created by Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski and Rhoades (2002). On a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), they rated such items as "My supervisor takes pride in my accomplishments at work"; and "My supervisor tries to make my job as interesting as possible." Cronbach's alpha equaled .93.

**Organizational support.** With the same stem and response options as supervisor support, this 3-item scale was also developed by Eisenberger et al. (2002). For each item, we replaced "The organization" with "My university/college," tailoring the scale to higher education employees. Sample items include "My university/college strongly considers my goals and values" and "My university/college really cares about my well-being." Alpha was .90.

## Results

### Descriptive Findings

For descriptive purposes, we began by reviewing incidence rates of the three different forms of harassment. Only 44 LGBQ respondents (16.48%) reported "never" facing any gender harassment (GH) or heterosexist harassment (HH) in the prior year. Among the remaining 203 participants (76.03%) who described at least one harassment episode, 37 (18.23%) experienced "only" GH-sexist conduct; two (0.99%) faced GH-policing; 20 (9.85%) encountered HH; nine (4.43%) reported GH-sexist and GH-policing; 86 (42.36%) underwent GH-sexist and HH; one (0.49%) recounted GH-policing and HH; and 48 (23.65%) endured all three types: GH-sexist, GH-policing, and HH. Put differently, among harassed participants, approximately 24% had experienced gender harassment absent heterosexist harassment; 10% had faced heterosexist harassment absent gender harassment; and the majority of harassed employees (roughly 66%) reported harassment on the basis of both gender and sexual orientation.

### Harassment Profiles

Addressing our first research question (what is the modal harassment experience for LGBQ employees?), we conducted *k*-means cluster analysis, an expectation maximization algorithm that categorizes persons according to similarity on specified variables. The *k*-means analysis seeks to minimize within-group variability while optimizing between-groups variability (see Hartigan, 1975 for more analytic details). Our analysis grouped staff according to amount and type of harassment (i.e., GH-sexist, GH-policing, and HH). We standardized scores of the 203 participants who had faced harassment at least once, and then requested 2-, 3-, 4-, and 5-cluster solutions. We proceeded with the 3-cluster solution, due to both theoretical interest and need for groups large enough for statistical analysis. Figure 1 displays the three cluster profiles.

The largest group that emerged ( $n = 116$ ), which we called "Low Victimization," reported relatively low levels of GH-sexist, GH-policing, and HH. The second-largest group ( $n = 61$ ) comprised individuals who reported a mixed pattern of harassment: low levels of GH-policing, comparatively greater levels of HH, and higher levels of GH-sexist. Thus, we referred to this as the "Mixed Heterosexism/Sexism" group. The smallest cluster group

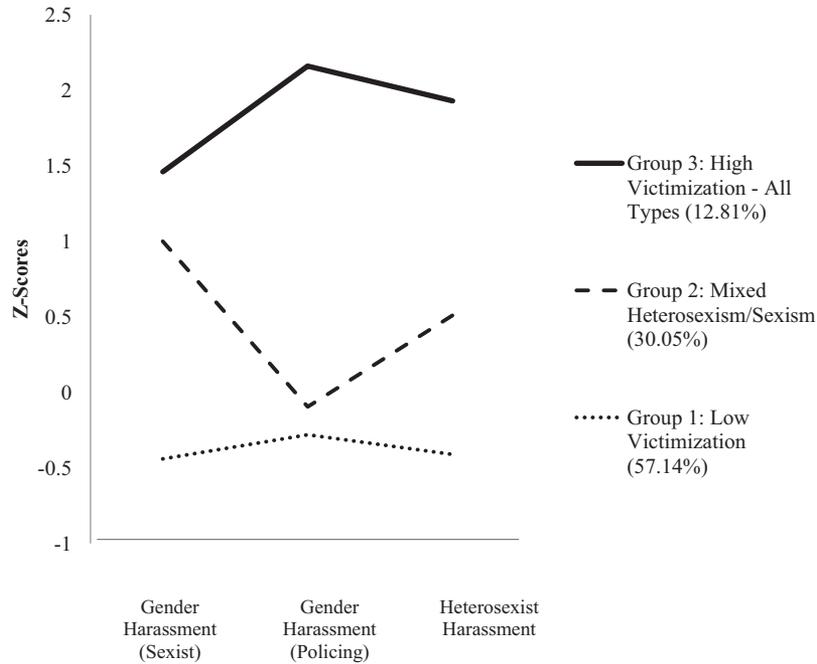


Figure 1. Profiles of harassment (n = 203).

(n = 26) reported the most of all forms of harassment, so we labeled it “High Victimization–All Types.”

Of these 203 participants who reported at least one harassing experience, 43% fell in the Mixed and High groups. Members of these groups reported moderate to high rates of heterosexist harassment, in addition to gender harassment. Critical to our theorizing, no group emerged whose victimization solely consisted of heterosexist harassment. This suggests that, in LGBTQ work lives, harassment on the basis of sexual orientation almost always coincides with gender-based harassment. Incidence rates (described above) further support this conclusion.

After identifying harassment profile groups, we created a fourth “Nonvictim” comparison group (n = 44). These participants (17.81% of the total sample) reported no gender harassment or heterosexist harassment. Across the four profile groups (Nonvic-

timization, Low Victimization, Mixed Heterosexism/Sexism, High Victimization), there were no significant differences in age,  $F(3, 243) = 2.08, p = .10$ , or sex,  $\chi^2(3, N = 247) = .67, p = .88$ . Groups did differ, though, in outness,  $F(3, 223) = 4.12, p = .007$ ; employees in the Mixed group were most likely to be “out” to supervisors and coworkers ( $M = 6.11, SD = 1.78$ ), followed by those in the Low ( $M = 5.31, SD = 2.21$ ), High ( $M = 5.23, SD = 1.96$ ), and Nonvictim groups ( $M = 4.56, SD = 2.75$ ). Table 2 details descriptive data (age, sex, outness, and harassment subscale means) for each profile group.

**Professional Outcomes of Harassment**

Our second hypothesis concerned relations between harassment and professional well-being. To address this, we ran a series of

Table 2  
Descriptive Statistics for Harassment Profile Groups

Profile Group	n	Sex		Age	Outness	Gender harassment (Sexist)	Gender harassment (Policing)	Heterosexist harassment
		Men	Women	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Group 0: Nonvictims	44	15 (34%)	29 (66%)	42.66 (11.37)	4.56 (2.75)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Group 1: Low victimization (All types)	116	45 (39%)	71 (61%)	41.41 (11.00)	5.31 (2.21)	0.30 (0.23)	0.07 (0.24)	0.15 (0.17)
Group 2: Mixed heterosexism/sexism	61	25 (41%)	36 (59%)	38.75 (9.00)	6.11 (1.78)	1.06 (0.37)	0.15 (0.23)	0.49 (0.32)
Group 3: High victimization (All types)	26	9 (35%)	17 (65%)	37.00 (13.00)	5.23 (1.96)	1.30 (0.38)	1.05 (0.49)	1.01 (0.31)

Note. Outness ranged from 1 (not at all open) to 7 (completely open).

ANCOVAs, using harassment profile group (including Nonvictims) as the predictor and organizational outcomes as dependent variables. We controlled for age and sex, because younger individuals and women are at higher risk for being targeted with gender-based hostility (see Das, 2009). As noted earlier, we also controlled for data source (i.e., Sample 1 or Sample 2) due to qualitative differences between our two samples.

**Job burnout.** Table 3 presents outcome means by profile group. Predicting that increased harassment would link with increased disengagement burnout, we found an overall significant effect of harassment profile group,  $F(3, 234) = 3.81, p = .011$ . Post hoc pairwise comparisons (using Nonvictims as a comparison group) showed that members of the Mixed and High Victimization groups reported significantly greater levels of disengagement,  $p = .036$  (Cohen's  $d = 0.46, CI [0.05, 0.97]$ ) and  $p = .002$  ( $d = 0.82, CI [0.36, 1.50]$ ), respectively.

We observed a similar effect when we examined the exhaustion subscale of job burnout,  $F(3, 232) = 4.58, p = .004$ . Members of the Low Victimization group reported significantly greater exhaustion than did nonvictims,  $p = .025, d = 0.40, CI [0.06, 0.80]$ . Similarly, members of the Mixed and High Victimization groups reported significantly greater levels of exhaustion than did nonvictims,  $p = .002$  ( $d = 0.61, CI [0.24, 1.08]$ ) and  $p = .001$  ( $d = 0.79, CI [0.36, 1.40]$ ), respectively.

**Job satisfaction.** In line with our prediction that harassment would relate inversely to job satisfaction, we found an overall effect of profile group,  $F(3, 233) = 4.76, p = .003$ . According to pairwise comparisons, the Low Victimization group reported marginally poorer job satisfaction compared to Nonvictims,  $p = .072, d = 0.34, CI [-0.04, 0.92]$ . Members of the Mixed and High groups described significantly poorer job satisfaction than Nonvictims,  $p = .017$  ( $d = 0.53, CI [0.14, 1.20]$ ) and  $p < .001$  ( $d = 1.04, CI [0.59, 1.93]$ ), respectively.

**Job stress.** Finally, expecting that greater harassment would come with greater job stress, we found a significant effect of harassment profile group on threat stress,  $F(3, 234) = 4.005, p = .008$ , but not on pressure stress,  $F(3, 235) = 0.688, p = .56$ . Pairwise comparisons showed that, contrasted with nonvictims, victims reported significantly greater threat stress: this was true for members of the Low Victimization ( $p = .005, d = 0.53, CI [0.11, 0.61]$ ), Mixed Heterosexism/Sexism ( $p = .011, d = 0.61, CI [0.09, 0.65]$ ), and High Victimization ( $p = .002, d = 0.84, CI [0.23,$

$0.89]$ ) groups. Note that all of these differences in job stress came with large effect sizes—even when comparing infrequent (Low) victims to nonvictims.

### Support as a Buffer Against Harassment

Our final hypothesis involved workplace support as a buffer against harassment risk. We conducted two ANCOVAs, with harassment profile group as the predictor and either supervisor or organizational support as the criterion. Means on support by profile group appear in Table 3. We predicted that greater perceived support would coincide with less experienced harassment, and all supervisor support means were in the expected direction. However, we found no significant difference in supervisor support by victimization profile,  $F(3, 234) = 1.39, p = .247$ .

Perceived organizational support, however, did vary by profile group,  $F(3, 227) = 6.61, p < .001$ . Post hoc comparisons revealed that Highly Victimized employees reported significantly less organizational support than their Nonvictimized peers,  $p = .002$  ( $d = 0.82, CI [0.42, 1.88]$ ). A similar pattern was significant for the Mixed Heterosexism/Sexism group contrasted with Nonvictims,  $p < .001$  ( $d = 0.81, CI [0.42, 1.69]$ ). The Low and Nonvictim groups, however, did not differ,  $p = .215$ .

## Discussion

Our focus was the relationship between gender and sexuality in employment, specifically with respect to harassment of queer-identified workers in rural, conservative America. Few empirical studies have examined the simultaneous manifestation of conceptually distinct forms of identity-based mistreatment. Even fewer have focused on the unique work experiences of sexual minorities. Here we review key findings and their implications.

### Profiles in Harassment

Our first hypothesis concerned the typology of workplace harassment. Specifically, we predicted that LGBQ employees would be more likely to face harassment on the basis of both gender and sexual orientation, rather than sexual orientation (or gender) alone. Most participants (76%) had encountered at least one episode of harassment on the job. Cluster analyses revealed that they fell into

Table 3  
*Organizational Outcomes and Supports by Harassment Profile Group*

Outcome measured	Group 0: Nonvictims	Group 1: Low victimization (All types)	Group 2: Mixed heterosexism/sexism	Group 3: High victimization (All types)
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Job burnout (Disengagement)	2.87 <sub>a</sub> (1.00)	3.02 <sub>ab</sub> (1.13)	3.23 <sub>b</sub> (1.18)	3.69 <sub>bc</sub> (1.33)
Job burnout (Exhaustion)	3.33 <sub>a</sub> (1.15)	3.54 <sub>b</sub> (1.03)	3.70 <sub>bc</sub> (1.04)	3.93 <sub>c</sub> (1.04)
Job satisfaction	5.87 <sub>a</sub> (1.11)	5.57 <sub>ab</sub> (1.35)	5.39 <sub>bc</sub> (1.38)	4.79 <sub>c</sub> (1.38)
Job stress (Pressure)	1.96 <sub>a</sub> (0.93)	2.13 <sub>a</sub> (0.74)	2.27 <sub>a</sub> (0.74)	2.17 <sub>a</sub> (0.86)
Job stress (Threat)	1.05 <sub>a</sub> (0.57)	1.46 <sub>b</sub> (0.71)	1.48 <sub>b</sub> (0.63)	1.67 <sub>b</sub> (0.81)
Supervisor support	5.20 <sub>a</sub> (1.50)	4.99 <sub>a</sub> (1.61)	4.76 <sub>a</sub> (1.74)	4.49 <sub>a</sub> (2.08)
Organizational support	4.28 <sub>a</sub> (1.36)	4.24 <sub>a</sub> (1.55)	3.62 <sub>b</sub> (1.37)	3.55 <sub>b</sub> (1.47)

*Note.* Within each row, means that do not share a subscript differ at  $p < .05$  using Least Significant Difference comparisons. Job burnout (both disengagement and exhaustion subscales), job satisfaction, supervisor support, and organizational support ranged from 1 to 7, whereas job stress (both pressure and threat subscales) ranged from 0 to 3. Across these organizational outcomes, greater values indicate higher levels of the underlying construct.

three groups, each of which endured harassment on the basis of both gender and sexual orientation. As descriptive statistics demonstrate, heterosexist harassment rarely occurred in the absence of gender harassment (<10%), and vice versa (<25%).

This finding has important implications for discrimination research. Typically, scholars who study heterosexism (e.g., behavior that disparages minority sexual orientations) focus on LGBTQ populations, and pay little attention to sex and gender. Similarly, those who study sex-based harassment (e.g., behavior that disparages one gender group) generally ignore the role of sexual orientation. Our results, however, suggest an intimate connection between gender and sexuality in the hostile work experiences of LGBTQ employees. According to Konik and Cortina (2008) as well as Silverschanz et al. (2008), heterosexual individuals are also common targets of heterosexist harassment. We therefore recommend that researchers of sexism and heterosexism join forces, and that this be the norm rather than the exception. Each group can learn from the other and borrow each other's theoretical and methodological tools. This combined effort could yield innovative insights and new solutions to the problem of workplace harassment.

In addition to advancing research, our findings can inform legal understandings of sex discrimination in employment. We found that gender-based and sexuality-based harassment combine in LGBTQ work lives: where there is one, you will typically find the other. Moreover, in factor analyses of the same sample, Konik and Cortina (2008) reported a very high correlation ( $r = .85$ , after partialing out measurement error) between these two phenomena. We maintain that both acts constitute tools of a larger "technology of sexism" (Franke, 1997, p. 696), pressuring employees to conform to narrow, rigid, heterosexual gender stereotypes. Those who do not conform incur punishment. These gender stereotypes and strictures are at the heart of heterosexist harassment, which acts as social retribution for flouting hetero-gender norms. In short, "the sex of one's sexual object choice is a 'powerful constituent' of one's gender, and antigay discrimination fundamentally disadvantages people for deviating from gender expectations" (Halley, 2004, p. 190). This has direct bearing on discrimination law.

According to *Price Waterhouse v. Hopkins* (1989), Title VII prohibits discriminatory employment practices based on gender stereotyping. This case revolved around firm partnership being withheld from Ann Hopkins, despite her strong qualifications and performance as a senior manager. To increase chances of future promotion, leadership advised Hopkins to "walk more femininely, talk more femininely, dress more femininely, wear make-up, have her hair styled, and wear jewelry." These and other comments implied that the firm had placed Hopkins' candidacy on hold because her behavior and appearance had violated the prescriptions of traditional femininity. The U.S. Supreme Court ultimately ruled that the adverse employment decision had resulted from gender stereotyping (which they termed "sex stereotyping"), in breach of Title VII. If, as we and others have argued, heterosexist harassment is also motivated by (heterosexual) gender stereotyping, then it too warrants coverage under Title VII.

Also, heterosexist harassment violates Title VII according to the jurisprudence of "but for" causation, established by the D.C. Circuit in *Barnes v. Costle* (1977). Following "but for" logic, harassment becomes impermissible sex discrimination when the harasser would not have engaged in the conduct "but for" the biological sex of the victim. This applies to many—if not most—

instances of workplace heterosexism. For example, when colleagues hurl antigay epithets at a male coworker (as in the case of Christopher Vickers, discussed earlier), they attack him for intimacy (real, assumed, or insinuated) with men. Rarely would they vilify a female colleague for being intimate with men, because that conduct is expected of women. "But for" the victim's maleness, he would not have suffered the abuse. In this way, heterosexist hostility discriminates "because of" a victim's biological sex, contravening Title VII (Case, 1995; Valdes, 1995; Waldo et al., 1998). However, as Catharine MacKinnon (2006) argues "... courts want to make such harassment sexual orientation harassment, rather than sex-based harassment, as if sexual orientation is not sex-based. If sexual orientation is not based on sex, what is it based on? Same-sex orientation is an orientation toward people of the same sex: it is based on sex . . ." (pp. 233–234).

Relevant to this argument, the U.S. Supreme Court took up a case of male-on-male harassment in *Oncale v. Sundowner Offshore Services* (1998). Joseph Oncale, an offshore oil rig employee, alleged verbal, physical, and sexual assault by male coworkers. By ruling this to be sex discrimination, the Court broadened prevailing interpretations of Title VII to cover same-sex harassment, even in the absence of apparent sexual motives. However, the decision largely skirted the issue of sexuality, and all parties to *Oncale* claimed to be heterosexual.

Since then, lower courts have shown reluctance to protect against same-sex harassment when it invokes nonheterosexuality. For example, the majority opinion in *Vickers* rejected the argument that antigay harassment boils down to gender stereotyping, adding that "a gender stereotyping claim should not be used to bootstrap protection for sexual orientation into Title VII" (quoting *Dawson v. Bumble & Bumble*, 2005). One judge dissented, seeing sufficient evidence of gender stereotyping in Vickers' complaint, but still agreed that "Title VII does not prohibit workplace discrimination or harassment based on sexual preference." In other words, some courts continue to carve out a distinction between gender- and sexuality-based abuses in employment. This distinction is more myth than reality, according to our empirical data: harassing acts targeting sexual orientation (heterosexist harassment) and gender nonconformity ("policing" gender harassment) are virtually indistinguishable for LGBTQ employees. The federal judiciary is conjuring up a boundary that has no counterpart in real life.

Notably, the U.S. EEOC ruled in 2011 that, when lesbian, gay, and bisexual federal employees allege hostile work environments based on sex-stereotyping, they may be entitled to relief under Title VII. Citing this logic, the EEOC has instructed federal agencies to process (rather than dismiss) such complaints under Title VII, and also granted complainants the right to file civil actions in federal court (see *Veretto v. U.S. Postal Service*, 2011; *Castello v. U.S. Postal Service*, 2011). These EEOC rulings are significant, attempting to provide LGBTQ workers with a national remedy based on Title VII.

Beyond Title VII, legal reform is possible via legislative intervention. More specifically, Congress has considered the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) every term since 1994 (except the 109th). If passed, this Act would ban employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (and possibly gender identity). Some judges may be waiting for such legislative action before further expanding the scope of Title VII. Promisingly, ENDA passed the U.S. Senate on November 7, 2013.

Although prognosis is currently poor for passage in the House of Representatives, perhaps that will change with mounting popular support for gay civil rights.

### Professional Outcomes of Harassment

Our second hypothesis addressed job attitudes that correlate with harassment experiences. Although prominent studies have documented how mistreatment relates to lower job satisfaction and higher stress among nonheterosexuals (e.g., Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Waldo, 1999), those investigations concentrated specifically on anti-LGBQ prejudice. In addition, those studies drew all participants from openly LGBQ-identified groups and settings (e.g., national gay rights organizations, gay community events). Members of these LGBQ-focused entities may be more “out” about their minority sexual orientations, more active in the LGBQ community, and possibly more engaged in LGBQ rights activism, compared to rural samples such as ours. Our study, in contrast, addressed experiences of employees who are less open and presumably less activist about their minority sexual orientations.

In a separate literature, some studies of sex-based harassment have focused on *sexual advance* forms of mistreatment (e.g., USMSPB, 1981, 1988, 1994; Woodzicka & LaFrance, 2005), with little attention to the strictly *gender-based derogation* that may be more common within LGBQ work lives. Other sexual harassment researchers have investigated outcomes of gender harassment (e.g., Leskinen et al., 2011), but still they have rarely considered abuse based on sexual orientation. Our study therefore makes novel contributions by bridging two literatures, to demonstrate the incidence and outcomes of simultaneous gender- and sexuality-based harassment. Not only is this “mixed” form of victimization a common occupational hazard for LGBQ workers, it undermines their professional wellbeing.

Compared to nonvictims, participants in our High Victimization group—who had faced frequent heterosexism, sexism, and gender policing—reported much greater job burnout (both exhaustion and disengagement), “threatening” job stress, and job dissatisfaction. These differences were not trivial in magnitude, having a large average effect size (average Cohen’s  $d = .76$ ). This was also true of the Mixed and Low victimization groups: job outcomes were generally worse than those of nonvictims. The sizes of these effects were most striking on threat stress (i.e., sense of feeling hassled and overwhelmed on the job), with employees in the Low and Mixed groups reporting much more of this stress than nonvictims (average Cohen’s  $d = .66$ , which is large). These last findings suggest that harassment need not escalate to frequent and severe levels before employees suffer; even occasional experiences of sexism and heterosexism are associated with large increases in job stress.

Recall that, in its now-famous guidelines, the EEOC (1980, p. 74677) stated that conduct constitutes sexual harassment when it “affects an individual’s employment, unreasonably *interferes with an individual’s work performance*, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.” (emphasis added). In *Harris v. Forklift Systems, Inc.* (1993, p. 21) the U.S. Supreme Court clarified that “Title VII comes into play before the harassing conduct leads to a nervous breakdown. A discriminatorily abusive work environment, even one that does not seriously affect employees’ psychological well-being, can and often will *detract from*

*employees’ job performance, discourage employees from remaining on the job, or keep them from advancing in their careers*” (emphasis added). Our results suggest that gender and heterosexual harassment—even when infrequent—link with deterioration in job attitudes (i.e., lowered satisfaction and greater stress and burnout). Such attitudes, according to extensive research, undercut job performance, motivate employees to leave their jobs, and derail careers (e.g., Fried, Shirom, Gilboa, & Cooper, 2008; Taris, 2006; Whitman, Van Rooy, & Viswesvaran, 2010). These attitudinal outcomes, in other words, can trigger a cascade of additional professional outcomes, including those that may be relevant to Title VII claims.

### Moving Forward: Organizational, Legal, and Legislative Avenues of Reform

Given the potential professional and legal costs of harassment on the job, it is important to identify factors that can prevent it. Our third hypothesis therefore investigated the role of supervisor and organizational support systems as potential buffers against harassment. The data partially supported our predictions: compared to harassed employees, nonvictims described more supportive organizations. That is, they viewed organizations as a whole as caring more about their values, goals, contributions, and wellbeing.

We suggest that highly supported and valued employees may be harassed less by others on the job. This falls in line with extant literature, which finds that organizations have less gender-based harassment (e.g., Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997; Kakuyama, Tsuzuki, Onglatco, & Matsui, 2003; Williams et al., 1999) and heterosexist harassment (Waldo, 1999) when leaders take harassment grievances seriously and support complainants. We extend that research by proposing that harassment-reduction may emerge even with more general forms of organizational support, not specific to harassment. Perhaps other employees are less likely to prey on LGBQ staff who are well-supported, looked after, and nurtured by management. This assumes that the support came first, and harassment reduction followed. Though our correlational data do not permit definitive causal conclusions, they are consistent with this possibility.

With these results we do not mean to suggest that, to create an LGBQ-friendly work environment, leaders need only support and value their LGBQ employees. Active prevention of mistreatment is also imperative. That is, organizations must still develop and enforce strong policies against employment discrimination based on sexual orientation (e.g., heterosexist harassment). According to King and J. M. Cortina (2010), they have a social and ethical obligation to do so, and there are financial costs to failing to provide such supports for LGBQ employees. Given these social and economic liabilities, it behooves employers to incorporate sexual orientation into antidiscrimination and diversity policies, allow LGBQ and transgender employees to “come out” to colleagues, establish resource groups and mentorship opportunities for these employees, and extend benefits to their families (King & J. M. Cortina, 2010). Many organizations have heeded this call: to date, 88% of Fortune 500 companies include sexual orientation protections within their nondiscrimination policies (Human Rights Campaign, 2013). According to Martinez, Ruggs, Sabat, Hebl, and Binggeli (2013), this is an example of Edelman’s (2005) *theory of endogeneity of law*, in which “organizational leaders take an am-

biguous law and legitimize it by forming and shaping organizational policies” (p. 4). It is important to note that organizations need not wait for Congress or the courts before taking action.

### Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions

A unique feature of the present study is the sample: over 250 sexual minority employees working in rural, conservative, and predominantly White states that lack LGBQ-protective legislation. Although this did not represent the U.S. nonheterosexual population writ large, it reflected an understudied subpopulation. In the current U.S. legal climate, there are many discrepancies among federal statutes, state laws, municipal ordinances, and organizational policies. Sexual minority employees are typically nested within multiple levels of conflicting protections. We recommend that future research on workplace harassment and LGBQ psychology pay particular attention to the role of geography, especially as it intersects with the law.

As with all research, our study had limitations. First, our data were cross-sectional in design, limiting causal conclusions. While it seems likely that hostile work experiences can influence job satisfaction, job stress, and job burnout, it is possible that these vocational attitudes were poor prior to encountering harassment. Similarly, it is unclear whether the presence of organizational support resulted in decreased harassment prevalence, or if low harassment base rates boosted employees’ perceptions of organizational support. That said, prior experimental and longitudinal studies suggest that poor attitudes and performance follow sex-based harassment, not vice versa (e.g., Munson, Hulin & Drasgow, 2000; Woodzicka & LaFrance, 2005). Research has also shown that employee perceptions of supportive leadership (e.g., zero-tolerance practices) and harassment prevalence have bidirectional effects: each influences the other reciprocally over time (Glomb, Munson, Hulin, Bergman, & Drasgow, 1999).

Second, our data were all survey-based. It would have been helpful to cross-reference employees’ responses with supervisor ratings or human resources data. For example, knowing whether or not supervisors were supportive of the experiences and career goals of LGBQ employees could pinpoint targets of interventions. Additionally, an interesting supplement to our quantitative survey would have been focus groups or in-depth interviews. Our behavioral assessment of gender- and sexuality-based harassment indicates that they typically occur in conjunction, but it is unknown how LGBQ employees appraised this conduct. Did these victims evaluate the behavior as hostile or abusive, as would be necessary to establish a hostile work environment claim? This question requires more detailed assessment.

Finally, due to limitations of statistical power, we were unable to conduct analyses separately according to participant sexual orientation, race, or occupation. The LGBQ community is diverse in many respects, which likely affects harassment experiences. For instance, viewing heterosexist harassment as a vehicle for sexism, it is possible that gay male employees are mistreated for different reasons than their lesbian colleagues. Likewise, queer personnel of color face distinctive forms of abuse, with sexual harassment meaning different things depending on the race of the perpetrator, victim, and social context (Franke, 1997). It is also likely that harassment of queer workers varies depending on occupational gender typing; gay men, for example, might be at heightened risk

for harassment in highly “masculinized” jobs, due to perceived lack of fit. Many questions therefore remain about LGBQ work lives, especially as specific sexual identity (i.e., lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer) intersects with other identities, occupations, and the law.

### Conclusion

Fifty years following the passage of Title VII, employees can still be fired and denied employment because of sexual orientation in 29 U.S. states (Human Rights Campaign, 2012). Adding to these vocational injustices, we found that both gender harassment and heterosexist harassment are common, concurrent, and detrimental experiences for LGBQ workers. Like other social scientists (e.g., Franke, 1997; Halley, 2004; Silverschanz et al., 2008), we interpret these gender- and sexuality-based hostilities as intertwined mechanisms of sexism. They regulate and enforce gender-stereotypical behavior on the job, consistent with a Title VII violation. With studies such as this, we shed new empirical light on the policing of hetero-gender ideals in employment.

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