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Testing the Tenets of Minority Stress Theory in Workplace Contexts
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Testing the Tenets of Minority Stress Theory in Workplace Contexts

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The links of minority stressors (workplace discrimination, expectations of stigma, internalized heterosexism, and identity management strategies) with psychological distress and job satisfaction were examined in a sample of 326 sexual minority employees. Drawing from minority stress theory and the literature on the vocational experiences of sexual minority people, patterns of mediation and moderation were tested. Minority stressors were associated with greater distress and lower job satisfaction. A mediation model was supported in which the links of discrimination and internalized heterosexism with psychological distress were mediated by a concealment-focused identity management strategy (i.e., avoiding), and the links of discrimination, expectations of stigma, and internalized heterosexism with job satisfaction were mediated by a disclosure-focused identity management strategy (i.e., integrating). Tests of moderation indicated that for sexual minority women (but not men), the positive association of discrimination with distress was stronger at higher levels of internalized heterosexism than at lower levels. In addition, lower levels of internalized heterosexism and concealment strategies (i.e., counterfeiting and avoiding) and higher levels of a disclosure strategy (i.e., integrating) were associated with higher job satisfaction in the context of low discrimination, but this buffering effect disappeared as level of discrimination increased. The implications of these findings for minority stress research are discussed, and clinical recommendations are made.

Keywords: lesbian, gay, bisexual, minority stress, workplace discrimination, heterosexism

Minority stress theory posits that disproportionate stress related to marginalized status is linked to psychological distress (Meyer, 2003). Specific to sexual minority people (e.g., lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer), minority stress theory outlines experiences of discrimination, expectations of stigma, internalized heterosexism, and concealment of sexual minority identity as four minority stressors that can promote psychological distress (Meyer, 1995, 2003). Support for minority stress theory is accumulating (e.g., Hatzenbuehler, Nolen-Hoeksema, & Erickson, 2008; Lewis, Derlega, Griffin, & Krowinski, 2003; Newcomb & Mustanski, 2010), and this theory was identified by the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies (2011) as a major conceptual perspective to drive the research agenda on sexual minority populations’ health.

Conceptual literature on the vocational experiences of sexual minority people suggests that minority stressors are also linked with vocational outcomes for this population (e.g., Chung, 2001; Croteau, Anderson, & VanderWal, 2008; Ragins, 2008). However, existing vocational research has attended to select minority stressors, focusing mostly on workplace discrimination and identity concealment or disclosure. Thus, there is limited understanding of the concomitant roles of the full set of minority stressors in relation to vocational outcomes. The widespread lack of legal protections for sexual minority people in the workplace (Human Rights Campaign [HRC], 2011) underscores the need to extend the minority stress framework to vocational outcomes. Therefore, based on an integration of the minority stress literature and literature on the vocational experiences of sexual minority people, the present study examines the full set of minority stress variables in relation to a typically considered psychological criterion (i.e., psychological distress) and a workplace criterion (i.e., job satisfaction).

Minority Stressors and the Workplace

Meyer (2003) proposed that sociocultural stigmatization of sexual minority people promotes four minority stressors that are salient to the mental health and well-being of this population. First, sexual minority people are exposed to external environmental conditions such as prejudice, harassment, and hate crimes (referred to as heterosexist discrimination for brevity). Workplace heterosexist discrimination is conceptualized to range from subtle (e.g., exclusion from workplace social events) to overt (e.g., being called a heterosexist slur in the workplace) manifestations (Waldo, 1999). It is also routinely operationalized as an aspect of sexual minority people’s broader experiences of discrimination (e.g., Lehavot & Simoni, 2011; Szymanski & Ikizler, 2012) and yields medium to large correlations with indicators of general heterosexist discrimination (e.g., Lehavot & Simoni, 2011). Second, the context of sociocultural stigmatization can promote sexual minority people’s expectations of stigma, including awareness and vigilance of its potentiality (e.g., Finel, 1999). Third, sexual minority people may experience internalized heterosexism, defined as the internal denigration of sexual minority people and identities (e.g., Newcomb &
Mustanski, 2010). Finally, sexual minority people make ongoing decisions about concealing or disclosing their identity; within the sexual minority vocational literature, these behaviors are delineated as sexual minority identity management strategies (e.g., Anderson, Croteau, Chung, & DiStefano, 2001; Button, 2004; Griffin, 1992).

As posited in minority stress theory, sexual minority people’s perceived experiences of heterosexist discrimination, expectations of stigma, and internalized heterosexism are linked with negative psychological outcomes (e.g., Brewster & Moradi, 2010; Lewis et al., 2003; Newcomb & Mustanski, 2010). Research on identity concealment or disclosure yields inconsistent links with psychological distress and well-being (e.g., Ellis & Riggle, 1996; Lewis et al., 2003), and some links with greater exposure to prejudice and its associated costs (e.g., Battle & Lemelle, 2002; Choi et al., 1999). Thus, heterosexist discrimination, expectations of stigma, and internalized heterosexism each are linked with poor mental health, whereas identity concealment or disclosure may not be simply “good” or “bad” for sexual minority individuals.

Although not specifically grounded in minority stress theory, research on the vocational experiences of sexual minority people supports some minority stress tenets and extends them to vocational outcomes. Theoretical conceptualizations of sexual minority people’s vocational experiences implicate heterosexist discrimination, expectations of stigma, and internalized heterosexism as important factors in job outcomes (e.g., Chung, 2001; Croteau et al., 2008; Ragins, 2008). Indeed, perceived workplace heterosexist discrimination is linked with greater psychological distress and lower job satisfaction (Lyons, Brenner, & Fassinger, 2005; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Waldo, 1999). Moreover, a variable that approximates expectations of stigma (i.e., fear of negative consequences of disclosure) was linked with lower job satisfaction (Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007) in one study, and an indicator of internalized heterosexism was linked with lower job satisfaction and greater workplace anxiety in another study (Griffith & Hebl, 2002).

The vocational literature has also advanced understanding of identity concealment and disclosure. As in the research on mental health, there is evidence of negative and positive implications of workplace identity concealment. On the one hand, greater concealment and lower disclosure at work are linked with negative job outcomes such as lower job satisfaction (e.g., Button, 2001; Ellis & Riggle, 1996; Griffith & Hebl, 2002), and on the other hand, sexual minority individuals who disclose at work may experience more stress and negative affect than those who conceal (Huebner & Davis, 2005). Such complexities prompted conceptualizations of identity management strategies that are more nuanced than global indicators of concealment or disclosure (e.g., Anderson et al., 2001; Button, 2004; Griffin, 1992). Building on prior work, Button (2004) identified three workplace identity management strategies: counterfeiting, which refers to presenting a false heterosexual identity; avoiding, which refers to actively dodging references to sexual orientation and maintaining strong boundaries between work and personal life; and integrating, which refers to openly identifying as a sexual minority person. Indicators of counterfeiting and avoiding have been linked to higher stress and lower job satisfaction (e.g., Ragins et al., 2007), whereas integrating has been linked to positive mental health and vocational outcomes (e.g., Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Waldo, 1999).

Potential Mediation and Moderation Patterns

The aforementioned literature supports links of most of the minority stressors with poor mental health and vocational outcomes, with the caveat that counterfeiting, avoiding, and integrating strategies may better capture the nuances of workplace identity management than do measures of global concealment or disclosure. However, this set of minority stressors has not been examined concomitantly in relation to vocational outcomes. Moreover, potential mediation and moderation patterns among minority stressors have received limited empirical attention.

Hatzenbuehler (2009) proposed a mediation model wherein expectations of stigma, internalized heterosexism, and identity management simultaneously mediate the link between perceived heterosexist discrimination and mental health outcomes (see Figure 1, Panel a). This full model has not been tested, but internalized heterosexism and a variable approximating expectations of stigma were found to mediate the link between heterosexist discrimination (including workplace discrimination) and psychological distress (Feinstein, Goldfried, & Davila, 2012; Szymanski & Ikizler, 2012). Moreover, workplace heterosexist discrimination was correlated positively with indicators of expectations of stigma, internalized heterosexism, counterfeiting strategies, and avoiding strategies, and was correlated negatively with integrating strategies; these indicators in turn were linked with lower job satisfaction (e.g., Button, 2001; Lehavot & Simoni, 2011; Ragins et al., 2007). These correlations are consistent with, but do not directly test, the notion that expectations of stigma, internalized heterosexism, and identity management mediate the links of perceived discrimination with criterion variables.

![Figure 1](image-url)  
**Figure 1.** Visual depiction of posited Mediation Models 1 (Panel a) and 2 (Panel b) and moderation model (Panel c).
An alternative mediation pattern is suggested by theoretical frameworks of the vocational experiences of sexual minority people. Such models conceptualize encountered or potential workplace discrimination (parallel to perceived experiences of discrimination and expectations of stigma, respectively) and internal psychological factors, including internalized heterosexism, as antecedents to workplace identity management strategies (e.g., Chung, 2001; Croteau et al., 2008; Ragins, 2004, 2008). As such, identity management strategies mediate the links of workplace discrimination, expectations of stigma, and internalized heterosexism with criterion variables (see Figure 1, Panel b). Consistent with such a pattern, workplace heterosexist discrimination and an indicator of internalized heterosexism were linked uniquely and positively with counterfeiting and avoiding strategies, and negatively with integrating strategies (Button, 2001). Moreover, internalized heterosexism and an indicator of expectations of stigma were associated negatively with workplace identity disclosure (Ragins et al., 2007; Rostosky & Riggle, 2002). In turn, identity management strategies were linked with vocational outcomes such as job satisfaction (Button, 2001). These associations are consistent with, but do not directly test, the notion that identity management strategies mediate the links of heterosexist discrimination, expectations of stigma, and internalized heterosexism with job satisfaction.

Finally, internalized heterosexism and identity management strategies also have been conceptualized as moderators of the links between perceived heterosexist discrimination and criterion variables (see Figure 1, Panel c). In his original formulation of minority stress theory, Meyer (1995) predicted and found some evidence that internalized heterosexism exacerbated the positive link between perceived heterosexist discrimination and some indicators of psychological distress in a large sample of sexual minority men (N = 741). However, support for this moderation was not found in a smaller sample of sexual minority women (N = 143; Szymanski, 2006). Further replication is needed to clarify whether these divergent findings are anomalous, reflect varying statistical power due to sample size differences, or suggest meaningful difference between sexual minority women and men. In the vocational literature, Button (2001) hypothesized that internalized denigration of sexual minority people (akin to internalized heterosexism) reflects a motivation to minimize the importance of equitable treatment and therefore would buffer the discrimination–job satisfaction link; he did not find support for moderation and did not explore potential gender differences. Consistent with conceptualizations of identity management strategies as approaches to coping with discrimination (e.g., Chung, 2001), Ragins and Cornwell (2001) posited that workplace identity disclosure moderates the links between workplace heterosexist discrimination and vocational outcomes (expected direction of moderation not specified), but did not find support for such moderation. Taken together, evidence for the moderating roles of internalized heterosexism and identity management strategies is not compelling. However, available studies are limited by their approaches to operationalizing the moderators (e.g., a proxy for internalized heterosexism, degree of disclosure rather than identity management strategies) and lack of examination of the potential three-way interaction involving gender, internalized heterosexism, and discrimination. Thus, tests of the proposed moderations that address these issues are needed.

The Present Study

In the present study, we aimed to extend minority stress theory by investigating the relations of workplace heterosexist discrimination, expectations of stigma, internalized heterosexism, and identity management strategies with psychological distress and job satisfaction, and by examining patterns of mediation and moderation suggested by minority stress and vocational literatures. Our first set of hypotheses involved direct associations of the minority stress variables with psychological distress and job satisfaction. We hypothesized that workplace heterosexist discrimination, expectations of stigma, and internalized heterosexism each will be associated positively with psychological distress and negatively with job satisfaction. We also conducted exploratory tests of the links of identity management strategies with psychological distress and job satisfaction, but given prior mixed findings, did not specify hypotheses for these analyses.

Our second set of hypotheses involved two competing mediation patterns. The first model, grounded in Hatzenbuehler’s (2009) framework, tests the hypotheses that the relations of heterosexist discrimination with greater psychological distress and lower job satisfaction will be mediated by expectations of stigma, internalized heterosexism, counterfeiting, avoiding, and integrating strategies (see Figure 1, Panel a). The second model, grounded in models of sexual minority people’s vocational experiences (e.g., Chung, 2001; Croteau et al., 2008; Ragins, 2004, 2008), tests the hypotheses that the identity management strategies mediate the links of workplace heterosexist discrimination, expectations of stigma, and internalized heterosexism with greater psychological distress and lower job satisfaction (see Figure 1, Panel b).

Our final goal was to explore the potential moderating roles of internalized heterosexism and identity management strategies (see Figure 1, Panel c). Specifically, we tested the possibility that the relations of workplace heterosexist discrimination with psychological distress and job satisfaction will be moderated by internalized heterosexism, while considering potential three-way interactions involving gender (Meyer, 1995; Szymanski, 2006). We also tested the moderating roles of counterfeiting, avoiding, and integrating strategies in the links of heterosexist discrimination with psychological distress and job satisfaction. In light of conflicting or unclear articulations of the direction of moderation, we viewed these analyses as exploratory.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Data for the present study come from a larger data set on the workplace experiences and well-being of 326 sexual minority individuals. Another study, using data from this sample, was published previously (Velez & Moradi, 2012); it tested hypotheses grounded in the theory of work adjustment and included two of the eight variables in the present study (workplace heterosexist discrimination and job satisfaction) along with variables not involved in the present study. Velez and Moradi’s study should be consulted for further information describing the sample’s characteristics, recruitment, data collection, and handling of missing data.
Measures

Workplace heterosexist discrimination. Perceptions of heterosexist discrimination in the workplace were measured using the 22-item Workplace Heterosexist Experiences Questionnaire (WHEQ; Waldo, 1999). Participants were asked to rate the frequency with which they experienced workplace heterosexist discrimination on a 5-point scale (from 0 = Never to 4 = Most of the time). For more detailed information about the WHEQ, please see Velez and Moradi (2012). The Cronbach’s alpha for WHEQ items in the present sample was .94.

Expectations of heterosexist stigma. Participants’ expectations of heterosexist stigma were measured with the Stigma Consciousness Questionnaire (SCQ). The SCQ (Pinel, 1999) is a 10-item, Likert-type scale (from 1 = disagree strongly to 7 = agree strongly) that measures awareness and personal salience of social stigma against one’s group (e.g., “Most people have a problem with viewing LGB people as equals”). Appropriate items were reverse-coded, and item ratings were averaged, with higher scores indicating greater levels of expectations of heterosexist stigma. The SCQ has been modified for use with people of diverse group memberships, including racial and ethnic minority persons; women; and lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons (Brewster & Moradi, 2010; Pinel, 1999). In prior research, SCQ items yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of .81 with lesbian and gay participants (Pinel, 1999) and .80 with a sample of bisexual people (Brewster & Moradi, 2010). In terms of validity, across populations (e.g., women, sexual minorities), SCQ scores were correlated positively with perceived experiences of discrimination (Pinel, 1999). Cronbach’s alpha for SCQ items in the present sample was .82.

Internalized heterosexism. Respondents’ negative views about themselves as sexual minority people were measured with the five-item Internalized Homonegativity (IH) subscale of the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identity Scale (Sheets & Mohr, 2009). An example item is “I am glad to be an LGB person” (reverse scored). Items are rated on a Likert-type scale (from 1 = disagree strongly to 7 = agree strongly). Appropriate items were reverse coded and item ratings were averaged, with higher scores indicating greater levels of internalized heterosexism. Cronbach’s alpha was .79 with a sample of lesbian and gay people (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000) and .85 with a sample of bisexual people (Brewster & Moradi, 2010). Regarding validity, internalized IH scores correlated negatively with self-esteem in a sample of lesbian and gay people (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000) and correlated negatively with life satisfaction in a sample of bisexual people (Sheets & Mohr, 2009). The Cronbach’s alpha for IH items in the present sample was 82.

Sexual identity management. The 23-item Identity-Management Strategies Scale (Button, 2004) measures lesbian and gay employees’ strategies of managing their identities at work with three subscales: Counterfeiting (six items), Avoiding (seven items), and Integrating (10 items). We modified the measure to be inclusive of bisexual respondents by changing items with “gay/lesbian” to “LGB.” Responses are based on a 7-point Likert-type scale (from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). An example of a Counterfeiting item is “I actively conceal information about myself in order to appear heterosexual;” an Avoiding item is “I withdraw from conversations when the topic turns to things like dating or interpersonal relationships;” and an Integrating item is “Whenever I’m asked about being LGB, I always answer in an honest and matter-of-fact way.” Appropriate subscale items were averaged, with higher scores indicating a greater usage of that identity management strategy. With a sample of gay and lesbian employees, Button (2001) reported Cronbach’s alphas of .80 for Counterfeiting, .87 for Avoiding, and .90 for Integrating items. Regarding validity, counterfeiting and avoidance strategies were correlated negatively, whereas integrating was correlated positively with openness about one’s sexual identity, and confirmatory factor analyses across two samples supported the posited three-factor structure (Button, 2001, 2004). Cronbach’s alpha for Countering, Avoiding, and Integrating items in the present sample were .85, .90, and .92, respectively.

Psychological distress. Psychological distress was measured with the Hopkins Symptom Checklist-21 (HSCL-21; Green, Walkey, McCormick, & Taylor, 1988). HSCL-21 items were rated on a 4-point continuum (1 = not at all and 4 = extremely). Items assess how much particular problems or complaints (e.g., “Feeling blue”) have distressed respondents. Item ratings were averaged, with higher scores reflecting greater psychological distress. In a sample of sexual minority women, HSCL-21 items yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of .91 (Szymbanski & Owens, 2009). HSCL-21 scores are correlated as expected with other measures of psychological distress (e.g., Kawamura & Frost, 2004), and the HSCL-21 has been used with diverse populations (e.g., Barry & Mizrahi, 2005). Cronbach’s alpha in the present sample was .89.

Job satisfaction. Satisfaction with one’s job was assessed with the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire—Short Form (MSQ-SF; Weiss, Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1967). The MSQ-SF measures individuals’ positive affective reactions to 20 facets of their job (e.g., independence, compensation, moral values). Participants were asked to rate their satisfaction with each of the 20 dimensions of their job using a 5-point scale (from 1 = Very dissatisfied to 5 Very satisfied). For more detailed information about the MSQ-SF, please see Velez and Moradi (2012). The Cronbach’s alpha for MSQ-SF items in the present sample was .92.

Results

Data Screening

Before conducting the primary analyses, the data were screened for univariate normality (i.e., skewness ≤ 3.0 and kurtosis ≤ 10.0; Weston & Gore, 2006). All variables met these criteria, with the exception of workplace heterosexist discrimination (skewness = 3.26, kurtosis = 12.32). A square-root transformation of discrimination scores (after adding 1 to eliminate < 1 scores for square-root computation) resolved the nonnormality (skewness = 2.72, kurtosis = 8.20). Subsequent analyses were performed with the transformed discrimination scores.

Correlations

Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations are presented in Table 1. Cohen’s (1992) guidelines were used to interpret small ($r = .10$), medium ($r = .30$), and large ($r = .50$) effect sizes. As hypothesized, psychological distress yielded positive correlations with workplace heterosexist discrimination, expectations of
stigma, internalized heterosexism, counterfeiting, and avoiding and yielded a negative correlation with integrating. Also as hypothesized, job satisfaction yielded negative correlations with workplace heterosexist discrimination, expectations of stigma, counterfeiting, and avoiding and yielded a positive correlation with integrating; however, the correlation between job satisfaction and internalized heterosexism was nonsignificant. The magnitude of these significant correlations ranged from small to medium.

**Tests of Mediation**

Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2012) was used to estimate the unique direct and indirect links posited in the two mediation models (see Figure 1, Panels a and b), with 95% confidence intervals (CIs) computed to test the significance of indirect effects. Significant mediation is indicated when the 95% CI of the indirect effect does not include zero (Mallinckrodt, Abraham, Wei, & Russell, 2006). Maximum likelihood estimation with standard errors and mean-adjusted chi-square test statistics that are robust to nonnormality (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2012) was used because Mahalanobis distances for 11 cases were significant ($p < .001$), suggesting multivariate nonnormality (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The model in Figure 1, Panel a estimates the indirect relations of workplace heterosexist discrimination with psychological distress and job satisfaction through the mediating roles of expectations of stigma, internalized heterosexism, counterfeiting, avoiding, and integrating; it also included the direct links of workplace heterosexist discrimination with the criterion variables. The model in Figure 1, Panel b estimates the indirect relations of workplace heterosexist discrimination, expectations of stigma, and internalized heterosexism with psychological distress and job satisfaction through the mediating roles of counterfeiting, avoiding, and integrating; it also included the direct links of the three predictors with the two criterion variables.

Both models accounted for 21% of the variance in psychological distress and 23% of the variance in job satisfaction. For both models, fit was perfect (i.e., comparative fit index [CFI] = 1.00, Satorra-Bentler [S-B] $\chi^2$, root-mean-square error of approximation [RMSEA], and standardized root-mean-square residual [SRMR] = 0) given that the models were fully saturated (i.e., all possible direct and indirect paths were estimated). Thus, the Akaike information criterion (AIC) and Bayesian information criterion (BIC) were used to compare models. Smaller AIC and BIC values indicate better fit, with the following specific guidelines for model comparison: AIC differences of ≤ 2 indicate no substantial difference, 3–9 indicate some difference, and > 10 provide strong evidence of difference (Burnham & Anderson, 2002); BIC differences of ≤ 2 provide weak evidence of difference, 2–5 indicate some difference, 6–9 provide strong evidence of difference, and > 10 provide very strong evidence of difference (Raftery, 1995). For the model in Figure 1, Panel a, AIC and BIC were 5590.36 and 5749.41, respectively. For the model in Figure 1, Panel b, AIC and BIC were 5333.88 and 5500.50, respectively. The differences in AIC (256.48) and BIC (248.91) between models provide strong support that the second model is a better fit to the data. Thus, the second model was retained for further examination of unique direct and indirect relations.

In terms of predictor–mediator relations, workplace heterosexist discrimination and internalized heterosexism had significant unique positive relations with counterfeiting and avoiding, and negative relations with integrating; expectations of stigma had a significant unique positive link with integrating but were not associated uniquely with counterfeiting or avoiding. In terms of mediator–criterion relations, only avoiding was associated uniquely and positively with psychological distress, and only integrating was associated uniquely and positively with job satisfaction. Finally, multiple direct predictor–criterion relations emerged as well. Specifically, workplace heterosexist discrimination and expectations of stigma had unique positive links with psychological distress and negative links with job satisfaction; internalized heterosexism had a unique positive links with psychological distress. A trimmed version of this model (see Figure 2) was estimated in which all nonsignificant paths (i.e., expectations of stigma to counterfeiting and avoiding; counterfeiting to psychological distress and job satisfaction; avoiding to job satisfaction; and integrating to psychological distress) were constrained to zero (i.e., eliminated). This model provided excellent fit to the data, S-B $\chi^2$, $p = .46$, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .00, 90% CI [.00, .07], SRMR = .02. A nested model comparison (with S-B

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**Table 1**

**Correlations, Descriptive Statistics, and Cronbach’s Alphas for Variables of Interest**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>α</th>
<th>Possible range</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<td>Untransformed workplace</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>0–4</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heterosexist discrimination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>1–7</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>0.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Square-root workplace</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>1–2.24</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>0.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>heterosexist discrimination</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>1–7</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Expectations of stigma</td>
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<td></td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>1–7</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>1.05</td>
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<td>3. Internalized</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>1–7</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>1.09</td>
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<tr>
<td>heterosexism</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>1–7</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Counterfeiting</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>1–7</td>
<td>5.08</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Avoiding</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>1–4</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Integrating</td>
<td>−.37</td>
<td>−.02</td>
<td>−.41</td>
<td>−.59</td>
<td>−.56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>1–7</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Psychological distress</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>−.17</td>
<td></td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>1–5</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Job satisfaction</td>
<td>−.37</td>
<td>−.30</td>
<td>−.10</td>
<td>−.24</td>
<td>−.23</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>−.31</td>
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*p < .01.  **p < .001.*
scaled χ²) indicated that the trimmed and saturated models did not differ significantly, ΔS-B χ²(7) = 6.68, p = .46. Also, the AIC (5328.62) and BIC (5468.74) were smaller in the trimmed model than in the saturated model. The trimmed model accounted for 20% of the variance in psychological distress and 22% of the variance in job satisfaction, and was retained for tests of indirect relations.

Tests of the significance of indirect links indicated that workplace heterosexist discrimination and internalized heterosexism yielded significant positive indirect links with psychological distress through the mediating role of avoiding (B = .21, 95% CI [.042, .386], β = .08; and B = .01, 95% CI [.001, .025], β = .03, respectively). With job satisfaction as the criterion, workplace heterosexist discrimination and internalized heterosexism yielded significant negative indirect links through the mediating role of integrating (B = −.41, 95% CI [−.648, −.165], β = −.09; and B = −.06, 95% CI [−.089, −.029], β = −.09, respectively). In addition, expectations of stigma yielded a significant positive indirect link through the mediating role of integrating (B = .03, 95% CI [.010, .047], β = .04; see Figure 2). Readers may contact the first author for a supplementary table with greater detail about tests of indirect links.

Tests of Moderation

A series of moderator regression analyses was performed to test each of the four potential moderators (i.e., internalized heterosexism, counterfeiting, avoiding, integrating) in the link of workplace heterosexist discrimination with psychological distress; a parallel set of analyses was conducted with job satisfaction as the criterion variable. For these analyses, workplace heterosexist discrimination and the four moderators were centered (Aiken & West, 1991), and multicollinearity for predictors and interaction terms in each regression equation was evaluated. Absolute correlations above |.90|, condition indices above 30, and variation inflation factors (VIFs) above 10 may be indicative of significant multicollinearity (Myers, 1990; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The highest interpredictor correlation was −.85 (between Workplace Heterosexist Discrimination × Counterfeiting and Workplace Heterosexist Discrimination × Integrating interactions, which were not included in the same regressions), the highest condition index was 6.96, and the highest VIF was 5.85; thus, multicollinearity was not considered problematic.

In each regression equation, the centered predictor and moderator were entered in Step 1, and their interaction was entered in Step 2. To explore potential differences between women and men in the interactions involving internalized heterosexism (Meyer, 1995; Szymanski, 2006), the three-way Heterosexist Discrimination × Counterfeiting and Workplace Heterosexist Discrimination × Integrating interactions, which were not included in the same regressions), the highest condition index was 6.96, and the highest VIF was 5.85; thus, multicollinearity was not considered problematic.

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As indicated in Table 2, none of the two-way interactions predicting psychological distress was significant. However, the three-way Workplace Heterosexual Discrimination × Internalized Heterosexism × Gender interaction was significant, accounting for 2% of incremental variance in psychological distress. Follow-up probing of this three-way interaction indicated that, for men, the discrimination–distress link was significant and positive at both low levels of internalized heterosexism, $\beta = .43$, $t(131) = 4.32$, $p < .001$, and high levels of internalized heterosexism, $\beta = .22$, $t(131) = 2.75$, $p < .01$; these slopes did not differ significantly as indicated by a nonsignificant Workplace Heterosexual Discrimination × Internalized Heterosexism interaction for men, $\beta = -.10$, $t(131) = -1.87$, $p = .06$. For women, the discrimination–psychological distress link was not significant at low levels of internalized heterosexism, $\beta = .16$, $t(162) = 1.33$, $p = .19$, but was significant and positive at high levels of internalized heterosexism, $\beta = .50$, $t(162) = 4.53$, $p < .001$; these slopes differed significantly from each other as indicated by a significant Workplace Heterosexual Discrimination × Internalized Heterosexism interaction for women, $\beta = .17$, $t(162) = 2.09$, $p < .05$. Thus, for men, the link between workplace heterosexual discrimination and psychological distress was similar and positive across levels of internalized heterosexism, whereas for women, the positive discrimination–distress link was significant only at high levels of internalized heterosexism.

As indicated in Table 2, internalized heterosexism, counterfeiting, avoiding, and integrating were each significant moderators of the link between workplace heterosexual discrimination and job satisfaction, accounting for 5%, 3%, 4%, and 2% of incremental variance in job satisfaction, respectively. The moderating role of internalized heterosexism was not modified by gender. Decomposition of the significant two-way interactions was conducted to probe the simple slopes at high and low levels of the moderator. In each case, the significant interaction term from the moderator regression analysis (see Table 2) indicates that the slopes at high and low levels of the moderator differ significantly from one another. For the Workplace Heterosexual Discrimination × Internalized Heterosexism interaction, the significant negative link between workplace heterosexual discrimination and job satisfaction was stronger for individuals with low levels of internalized heterosexism.

### Table 2

**Regression Analyses Testing Moderation Hypotheses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$B$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$\Delta R^2$</th>
<th>$\Delta F$</th>
<th>df</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Square-root workplace heterosexist discrimination</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5.99***</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>20.26***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internalized heterosexism</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3.82***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender ($0 = \text{men}, 1 = \text{women}$)</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Discrimination × Internalized Heterosexism</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discrimination × Gender</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internalized Heterosexism × Gender</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Discrimination × Internalized Heterosexism × Gender</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.77***</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>7.69***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Square-root workplace heterosexist discrimination</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4.63***</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>28.03***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counterfeiting</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3.19**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Discrimination × Counterfeiting</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-1.57</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>2.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Square-root workplace heterosexist discrimination</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.95**</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>30.46**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoiding</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.20**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Discrimination × Avoiding</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>2.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Square-root workplace heterosexist discrimination</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5.18***</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>24.01***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integrating</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-0.86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Discrimination × Integrating</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-0.30</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Criterion: Psychological distress**

**Criterion: Job satisfaction**

$B$, $\beta$, and $t$ reflect values from the final regression equation. Steps 2 or 3 $R^2$ may differ slightly from the total of $\Delta R^2$ due to rounding. Because participants who identified as transgender or who did not report their gender are excluded from analyses involving gender, the associated df$s$ are lower. $^p < .05$. $^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$. 

Note. $B$, $\beta$, and $t$ reflect values from the final regression equation. Steps 2 or 3 $R^2$ may differ slightly from the total of $\Delta R^2$ due to rounding. Because participants who identified as transgender or who did not report their gender are excluded from analyses involving gender, the associated df$s$ are lower. $p < .05$. $^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$. 

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erosexism, $\beta = -0.56$, $t(322) = -7.67$, $p < .001$, than those with high levels of internalized heterosexism, $\beta = -0.26$, $t(322) = -4.37$, $p < .001$. For the Workplace Heterosexist Discrimination $\times$ Counterfeiting interaction, the significant negative discrimination-job satisfaction link was stronger for individuals with low levels of counterfeiting, $\beta = -0.61$, $t(322) = -6.41$, $p < .001$, than those with high levels of counterfeiting, $\beta = -0.32$, $t(322) = -5.25$, $p < .001$. For the Workplace Heterosexist Discrimination $\times$ Avoiding interaction, the significant negative discrimination-job satisfaction link was stronger for individuals with low levels of avoiding, $\beta = -0.64$, $t(322) = -6.69$, $p < .001$, than those with high levels of avoiding, $\beta = -0.32$, $t(322) = -5.57$, $p < .001$. Finally, for the Workplace Heterosexist Discrimination $\times$ Integrating interaction, the significant negative discrimination-job satisfaction link was stronger for individuals with high levels of integrating, $\beta = -0.50$, $t(322) = -5.55$, $p < .001$, than those with low levels of integrating, $\beta = -0.26$, $t(322) = -4.75$, $p < .001$. The nature of these interactions was such that low (relative to high) internalized heterosexism, counterfeiting, and avoiding and high (relative to low) integrating were associated with greater job satisfaction when discrimination was low. However, the stronger discrimination-job satisfaction links at low internalized heterosexism, counterfeiting, and avoiding and high integrating meant that these buffering effects disappeared when discrimination was high. Readers may contact the first author for a supplementary example figure that illustrates the nature of these interactions.

**Discussion**

In the present study, we aimed to extend minority stress theory by investigating the relations of workplace heterosexist discrimination, expectations of stigma, internalized heterosexism, and identity management strategies with psychological distress and job satisfaction. We also examined patterns of mediation and moderation suggested by minority stress and vocational literatures (e.g., Button, 2001; Croteau et al., 2008; Hatzenbuehler, 2009; Meyer, 1995). To our knowledge, this is the first study to explore the relations of the full set of minority stressors with both mental health and vocational outcomes.

At the broadest level, the present findings were consistent with hypotheses and with prior literature (e.g., Button, 2001; Meyer, 1995, 2003; Waldo, 1999) in linking the minority stressors with psychological distress and job satisfaction. Bivariate correlations between the predictor and criterion variables ranged from small to medium in magnitude and generally linked high discrimination, high expectations of stigma, high internalized heterosexism, high identity counterfeiting, high identity avoidance, and low identity integrating with greater psychological distress and lower job satisfaction. One exception to this pattern was the nonsignificant negative correlation between internalized heterosexism and job satisfaction. Beyond these bivariate relations, the tests of mediation and moderation patterns suggested distinctive roles for the various minority stressors in relation to psychological distress and job satisfaction.

Tests of the competing mediation models—the first grounded in minority stress literature and the second grounded in sexual minority vocational literature—yielded better fit for the latter model wherein identity management strategies mediated the links of workplace heterosexist discrimination, expectations of stigma, and internalized heterosexism with psychological distress and job satisfaction (see Figure 2). However, tests of indirect relations suggested honing such a model. That is, avoiding one’s sexual minority identity at work was the primary identity management strategy through which workplace heterosexist discrimination and internalized heterosexism were associated with greater distress, whereas integrating one’s sexual minority identity at work was the primary strategy through which workplace heterosexist discrimination and internalized heterosexism were linked with lower job satisfaction. There was also a nuanced pattern involving expectations of stigma: Such expectations were associated directly with lower job satisfaction, as expected; but expectations of stigma were associated with greater integrating, which in turn was linked with greater job satisfaction.

Taken together, these findings have several implications for minority stress theory and models of sexual minority employees’ vocational experiences. First, the indirect relations of minority stressors with psychological distress appear to occur primarily through avoiding strategies, and the indirect relations with job satisfaction appear to occur primarily through integrating strategies. Thus, these specific mediators (rather than the full set of posited mediations) may be fruitful foci for theory, research, and intervention. Second, these findings reveal potential countervailing processing in the relation between expectations of stigma and job satisfaction, such that heightened integrating in the face of expected stigma may counter the negative direct link of expectations of stigma with job satisfaction. Finally, the unique direct links of the minority stressors with psychological distress and job satisfaction suggest that these factors may play direct and indirect roles in psychological distress and job satisfaction. Also, additional mediators beyond identity management strategies (e.g., workplace social support, differential access to resources and compensation; Ragins, 2004) may be involved in linking workplace discrimination, expectations of stigma, and internalized heterosexism with outcomes.

Turning to the moderation analyses, results suggested minimal support for moderation when psychological distress was the criterion, but more support when job satisfaction was the criterion. Identity counterfeiting, avoiding, and integrating strategies did not moderate the link between workplace heterosexist discrimination and distress. However, a three-way interaction of Discrimination $\times$ Internalized Heterosexism $\times$ Gender indicated that the positive discrimination-distress link was significantly stronger at high versus low levels of internalized heterosexism for women (for men, the magnitude of these slopes did not differ significantly). Thus, consistent with prior findings (e.g., Meyer, 1995; Szymanski, 2006), heterosexist discrimination was associated with greater distress in general, although the three-way interaction suggests that high levels of internalized heterosexism may place women at particularly high risk for psychological distress associated with workplace heterosexist discrimination.

We suggest cautious interpretation of these results because, like much of the prior literature with sexual minority samples (e.g., Mohr & Fassinger, 2000; Waldo, 1999), the mean levels of internalized heterosexism and perceived discrimination in the present sample were relatively low (see Table 1). Thus, the present and prior studies testing Discrimination $\times$ Internalized Heterosexism interactions tend to reflect moderation at the low end of these variables’ continua (i.e., differences between low and lower), and
research is needed with samples with high levels of internalized heterosexism. Moreover, the emergence of some significant interactions in Meyer’s (1995) study with men but not in Szymanski’s (2006) study with women could be shaped by the much larger sample size and statistical power to detect moderation in the former study \((N = 741)\) than in the latter study \((N = 143)\); the present sample size lies in between, offering more power than Szymanski’s study to detect interactions with women. In light of such conceptual and methodological considerations, it is important to interpret the three-way interaction of Workplace Heterosexist Discrimination \(\times\) Internalized Heterosexism \(\times\) Gender cautiously and with a call for replication. It is also important to note the broader pattern that workplace heterosexist discrimination was associated with greater psychological distress for both women and men.

In contrast to the minimal evidence of moderation with psychological distress as the criterion, all four hypothesized moderators—internalized heterosexism, counterfeiting, avoiding, and integrating—were supported in relations with job satisfaction. Specifically, the negative relation between workplace heterosexist discrimination and job satisfaction was weaker for those with higher internalized heterosexism, higher counterfeiting, higher avoiding, and lower integrating (relative to the counterparts of these groups). The nature of these interactions was such that contexts of low discrimination were associated with more job satisfaction at low internalized heterosexism, low counterfeiting, low avoiding, and high integrating; but, contexts of high discrimination were associated with comparably poor outcomes across low or high levels of the moderators. These results parallel findings that, for African American women, low internalized racism buffered psychological distress when discrimination was low, but this buffering effect disappeared when discrimination was high (Szymanski & Stewart, 2010). Taken together, these results offer qualified support for moderations posited by Meyer (1995) and Ragins and Cornwell (2001), suggesting that low internalized heterosexism and low concealment-related identity management strategies (i.e., low counterfeiting, low avoiding, high integrating) may have a protective function when discrimination is low but not when discrimination is high.

Taken together, these findings suggest the importance of attending to minority stressors in clinical practice with sexual minority employees. Clinicians may wish to directly assess levels of these minority stressors and their potential links with psychological distress and job satisfaction. The pattern of direct and mediated relations suggests the potential benefits of interventions that can reduce perceived workplace heterosexist discrimination, expectations of stigma, internalized heterosexism, and avoiding strategies in relation to psychological distress, and interventions that can reduce perceived workplace heterosexist discrimination, expectations of stigma, and integrating strategies in relation to job satisfaction. The patterns of moderation also have implications for practice. For example, the significant interactions may indicate that sexual minority employees who hold more positive views of their sexual identity (i.e., low internalized heterosexism) and are open about this identity at work (i.e., low counterfeiting, low avoiding, high integrating) are caught in a Catch-22: These employees may enjoy higher job satisfaction than their counterparts when discrimination is low, but they may experience steeper declines in job satisfaction when discrimination is high. Perhaps employees who are positive or open about their sexual minority identities experience workplace heterosexist discrimination as direct and personal attacks on valued identities known to coworkers, supervisors, and others (e.g., “They know I am bisexual, and they are discriminating against me”). Thus, individual-level interventions designed to reduce internalized heterosexism or encourage identity integrating (e.g., providing unconditional positive regard regarding minority sexual orientations) may be beneficial in low-discrimination contexts, but not in high-discrimination contexts. This is of particular concern, given that only 21 states and the District of Columbia prohibit discrimination of employees on the basis of sexual orientation (HRC, 2011).

Such findings underscore the importance of clinicians also considering systemic interventions that do not place the entire onus of change on clients. Clinicians may engage in outreach to promote awareness about the links of minority stressors with psychological and vocational outcomes, inform themselves and their clients of state or organizational protections available to targets of discrimination, and consult with organizations about ways to reduce workplace discrimination and make climates more affirmative of sexual minority employees.

A number of limitations and directions for future research also deserve mention. The cross-sectional nature of the present data precludes causal conclusions. Thus, although our findings are consistent with the patterns posited in minority stress and sexual minority vocational literatures, they do not directly confirm the implicit directional relations. For example, in addition to the possibility that more experiences of discrimination lead to less identity integrating, it is also possible that greater identity integrating leads to fewer experiences of discrimination or that there is a recursive relation between these variables. Prior research with sexual minority samples has documented prospective links of perceived discrimination, state-level institutional discrimination, expectations of heterosexist stigma, and internalized heterosexism with various indicators of distress (Hatzenbuehler, McLaughlin, Keyes, & Hasin, 2010; Hatzenbuehler et al., 2008). Building on such research and on the present findings, future research can examine whether experiences of workplace heterosexist discrimination, expectations of stigma, and internalized heterosexism predict subsequent use of identity management strategies, which in turn predict subsequent mental health and job outcomes.

In addition, we used self-report measures in the present study of the minority stress variables. Prior research has documented the effects of factors such as affect, knowledge of discrimination, and perpetrator characteristics on self-reported experiences of discrimination (Barret & Swim, 1998; Sechrist, Swim, & Mark, 2003). It is important to acknowledge that minority stress experiences are in part grounded in targets’ subjective experiences, and these experiences are the primary source of data in clinical practice. Thus, research on self-reported experiences of minority stress serve a valuable function for informing theory and practice. However, future studies may contribute to the literature by using multiple sources of data as indicators of the propensity for workplace discrimination (e.g., antidiscrimination laws or organizational policies, coworker and supervisor attitudes toward sexual minority populations). Such indicators may complement assessments of the targets’ subjective experiences.

We used Internet-based data collection in the present study. Although this strategy is useful for sampling sexual minority
people from diverse geographic locations and may reach those who are not comfortable being out to researchers in-person, it also limits participation to individuals with access to computers and the Internet. In turn, this may have shaped the demographics of the sample (see Velez & Moradi, 2012), in which 76% of participants identified as White/Caucasian and 48% had a professional degree (e.g., master’s, doctorate). Also, as discussed previously, the present sample reported low average levels of workplace heterosexist discrimination, internalized heterosexism, and counterfeiting identity management strategies. In addition to potentially attenuating relations between variables, such distributions may not adequately capture the range of minority stress experienced by the broader sexual minority population. Thus, future studies could attempt to reproduce the results of the present study with individuals from more diverse backgrounds and minority stress experiences (e.g., intentional sampling of individuals in hostile workplace environments).

It is also important to note that much of the literature on minority stress and sexual minority vocational issues does not explicitly address intersectionality (e.g., the influence of racial identity attitudes on sexual orientation identity management strategies; see Fassinger & Arseneau, 2007) or the unique experiences of transgender populations (e.g., Brewster, Velez, DeBlaere, & Moradi, 2012; Dispensa, Watson, Chung, & Brack, 2012). However, the frameworks drawn from this literature and tested in the present study may accommodate the integration of such factors in future research that moves toward capturing a more complete and inclusive picture of the diversity of sexual minority people’s vocational experiences.

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Testing Minority Stress Theory

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