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Assessing Experiences With LGBT Microaggressions in the Workplace: Development and Validation of the Microaggression Experiences at Work Scale

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ABSTRACT

LGBT people experience microaggressions in the workplace; however, limited research exists in this area partly due to a lack of psychometrically sound instruments measuring the prevalence of LGBT microaggressions in the workplace. To address this gap, an empirical study was conducted and the LGBT-MEWS was created and tested. The LGBT-MEWS is a 27-item self-report scale comprising three subscales. Each subscale conceptually represents a different domain through which microaggressions impact LGBT employees: (1) workplace values, (2) heteronormative assumptions, and (3) cisnormative culture. The results of testing indicated that the subscales demonstrate strong reliability and validity.

KEYWORDS

Workplace discrimination; microaggressions; measurement development; LGBT; sexual minority

Workplace discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans (LGBT) employees is commonplace in the United States. Data show that 27% of lesbian, gay, and bisexual respondents have experienced discrimination at work (Sears & Mallory, 2011), whereas 30% of trans people have experienced workplace discrimination, including being fired or denied a promotion or being harassed or assaulted at work because of their gender identity or expression (James, Herman, Rankin, Keisling, & Mottet, 2016). In the United States, the annual cost of harassment and discrimination in the workplace is $64 billion; in addition, 2 million people leave jobs annually due to "cumulative small comments, whispered jokes, and not-so-funny emails" (Burns, 2007, p. i). Gates (2011) estimated that more than 9 million American adults identify as LGBT, making this both a civil rights issue and a costly workplace issue that deserves attention.

Microaggressions in LGBT populations

In recent years, increased attention has turned to more subtle forms of discrimination called microaggressions. Microaggressions are defined as

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"brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward members of oppressed groups" (Nadal, 2008, p. 23). In their groundbreaking work on racial microaggressions, Sue et al. (2007) categorized microaggressions into three broad types: microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations. Microassaults are most closely aligned with traditional forms of sexual and gender-based prejudice. They are defined as explicit derogation characterized primarily by a verbal or nonverbal attack meant to hurt the intended victim through name-calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions (Sue et al., 2007). Compared to microassaults, microinsults and microinvalidations tend to be more subtle. Microinsults are described as communications that convey rudeness or insensitivity and demean a person's identity (Sue et al., 2007). Although the perpetrator may be unaware of the microaggression, the recipient deems the act offensive. Lastly, microinvalidations are defined as communications that negate or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of the marginalized group (Sue et al., 2007). Microaggressions, especially microinvalidations and microinsults, within the workplace are overlooked in many instances but serve to maintain heterosexist and cissexist norms and marginalize LGBT people.

Though overt forms of discrimination are unjust and should not be tolerated, subtle forms of discrimination often go unnoticed by the people who are committing them and can negatively impact the person(s) they are directed toward (Burn, Kadlec, & Rexer, 2005). Research has established negative psychological consequences for experiencing racial microaggressions in the workplace. For example, anxiety (e.g., dread of going to work), paranoia (e.g., suspicious and mistrustful of others), depression (e.g., withdrawal; isolation from coworkers), and worthlessness (e.g., questioning their value to coworkers) have been identified as common symptoms in response to chronic racial and ethnic microaggressions in the workplace (Root, 2003). Racial microaggressions in the workplace have also been tied to lower job satisfaction (DeCuir-Gunby & Gunby, 2016). These studies, although focused on race and ethnicity, highlight the negative consequences of experiencing microaggressions in the workplace and affirm the need to extend research in this field.

A unique factor to consider when examining LGBT workplace discrimination is the lack of protection for LGBT employees at the federal level. This topic has made national news headlines in recent years and has been addressed by both the current and former presidential administrations. Under the Obama administration, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ruled that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is illegal under federal law (Sheiber, 2015); however, the Trump administration has retracted these protections, declaring that the 1964 Civil Rights Act does

not protect employees on the basis of their sexual orientation (Feuer, 2017; Spencer & Sayre, 2018). LGBT individuals have reacted to the large-scale changes enacted by the Trump administration with increased symptoms of minority stress (e.g., depression and anxiety; Brown & Keller, 2018; Gonzalez, Ramirez, & Galupo, 2018). In addition to placing LGBT employees in a vulnerable position within the workplace, the message from the current administration is one that implies that LGBT people do not deserve the same protections as other Americans and are valued less than heterosexual and cisgender employees.

Many states and individual workplaces have adopted employment nondiscrimination policies; however, 30 states do not have workplace nondiscrimination policies that protect employees on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity ("Maps of State Laws & Policies," 2016). In 30 states, private organizations have the option to choose to protect their LGBT employees from discrimination. For individuals who may work in a state without a policy and in an organization without a policy, the choice to report discrimination to a supervisor or to Human Resources becomes a difficult and uncertain one. The organization could dismiss the claims entirely or they could choose to fire the employee because of the conflict the employee's claims articulated, both of which would be legal. Arguably, the absence of protection at the federal level signals a level of approval for workplace discrimination toward LGBT persons. And even though some research has shown that microaggressions may not be covered under antidiscrimination laws, particularly microinsults and microinvalidations (King et al., 2011), at minimum inclusion of such policy would benefit the workplace environment.

The workplace environment

The values and experiences of dominant groups in society (i.e., White, male, heterosexual, Christian, and cisgender) are considered normative and establish the standard against which all people, ideas, and practices are measured (Ward, 2008). Heterosexual and cisgender hegemony extends to organizational culture. For example, adhering to a formal or informal dress code according to assigned sex is an example of behavior that is supported by the dominant group and endorses cisnormative behavior. A trans employee who dresses according to their gender identity outstide of work may hold back from doing so at work to avoid negative attention.

In a broader sense, heterosexism can be defined as "a cultural ideology embodied in institutional practices that work to the disadvantage of sexual minority groups even in the absence of individual prejudice or discrimination" (Herek, 2007, p. 14). Herek further conceptualized heterosexism as playing out through the following two processes: all people are presumed to be heterosexual; and, second, when sexual minorities become visible, "they

are presumed to be abnormal, unnatural, requiring explanation, and deserving of discriminatory treatment and hostility" (Herek, 2007, p. 2). The reproduction and institutionalization of heterosexism by individuals within an environment leads to heteronormative workplace cultures where LGBT employees are marginalized. In their influential work on sexuality in organizations, Hearn and Parkin (1987) described heterosexuality as being normalized in organizations through the following avenues: cultural norms that prevent open discussion of LGBT relationships, formal policies privileging the heterosexual family arrangement, and workplace interactions and behaviors that demean homosexuality. Heteronormative organizations and practices prevent LGBT employees from participating fully in the workplace and undermine the individual's work identity, which encompasses their sexual identity (Priola, Lasio, De Simone, & Serri, 2014). It is important to note that bisexual individuals are uniquely impacted by heteronormative assumptions in the workplace that render bisexuality as invisible (Köllen, 2013; Popova, 2018).

Notions about the heterosexist nature of organizations can be extended to understand how organizations privilege those who are cisgender. Pitcher (2017) discussed cisnormativity as social expectations and special arrangements that are based on the ideogical assumption that all people are cisgender. At the institutional and individual level, cisnormativity allows for a system of rewards and punishments on the basis of one's gender identity (Pitcher, 2017). Organizations typically presume employees identify with their sex assigned at birth and treat gender as binary, allowing employees to self-identify within this binary as male/female only. Examples of the male/female binary included gendered restrooms, he/she pronoun usage on forms and paperwork, and the usuage of legal name on office documentation such as e-mail addresses and nametags. Thus when an employee identifies outside of the male/female binary, they may experience their environment negatively. Because sexual orientation and gender identity are experienced independently, workers may experience their environments as heterosexist, cissexist, or both.

To understand the existence of heterosexist/cissexist work environments, it is important to take into account organizational culture as the mechanism through which organizations work to enact and reinforce broader hegemonic forces. Organizational culture is made up of informal norms and practices such as physical space, humor, and stories in addition to formal structures such as policies and rules (Martin, 2002). Though organizational culture is a broad term and there are many definitions, organizational culture is generally thought of as a set of understood rules shared among members of an organization and is unique to a specific organization and even within suborganizations of a larger organization (Martin, 2002). Schein (1992) provided a definition of culture as:

> A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to these problems. (p. 12)

Thus many of the day-to-day interactions that occur within an organization can be attributed to the organization's culture. Culture guides everything from clothing that is acceptable in an organization to decision-making at the executive level.

According to heterosexist/cissexist principles, when LGBT employees do not conform to heterosexual and cisgender norms, they are subject to adverse consequences. These consequences include microaggressions. Regardless of their intent, microaggressions still impact the person they are directed toward and serve to reinforce dominant cultural norms and work as the vehicle through which hegemony is maintained. The subtle nature of microaggressions aligns perfectly with hegemony's foremost tenet of leading through consent; because they are subtle, people may not even realize they are committing microaggressions. However, as long as microaggressions occur, dominant groups maintain their power and establish the norms by which other behavior is measured.

Statement of the problem

In their comprehensive review of LGBTQ microaggression research, Nadal, Whitman, Davis, Erazo, and Davidoff (2016) pointed to a number of areas in which research in this field is in need of expansion. Systematic microaggressions are named as an understudied area in which LGBTQ people experience microaggressions in multiple contexts (e.g., health care, schools, the workplace), yet little research has been done to investigate these experiences. To date, only one empirical investigation of LGBT workplace microaggressions has been conducted. Galupo and Resnick (2016) conducted an exploratory study to assess patterns of LGBT microaggressions that occur in the workplace. They asked participants to respond to a series of open-ended questions related to their experiences with microaggressions in the workplace, and results from this analysis uncovered three themes: (1) workplace climate; (2) organizational structure; and (3) workplace policy. This research provided a rich data source of the types of microaggressions LGBT employees face in the workplace, however, it provided no insights into how often these events are occurring. Given the negative outcomes associated with experiencing microaggressions in the workplace and the pervasiveness of LGBT workplace discrimination, additional research is needed to assess the frequency of LGBT microaggression experiences that occur in the workplace.

Although scales exist to measure heterosexism in the workplace, LGBQ microaggressions on college campuses (Woodford, Chonody, Kulick,

Brennan, & Renn, 2015), LGBTQ microaggressions experienced by youth (Swann, Minshew, Newcomb, & Mustanski, 2016), and everyday experiences of LGBT people of color (Balsam, Molina, Beadnell, Simoni, & Walters, 2011), these are not designed to measure workplace microaggressions that occur on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. To address this gap and to assist researchers and leaders within organizations, an instrument to measure LGBT microaggressions in the workplace was needed. The current study intended to create a self-report scale that measures LGBT individuals' experiences with microaggressions that occur in the workplace.

The primary goal of the current article is to report the design, testing process, and results of a self-administered questionnaire that assesses the frequency of LGBT microaggressions that occur in the workplace. The questionnaire was developed by first reviewing previous qualitative data and was refined by incorporating feedback from expert reviewers. The items were tested using exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis and were tested for validity and reliability.

Method

Measures

LGBT-MEWS

Driven by the existing scholarly and empirical literature, the initial LGBT Microaggression Experiences at Work Scale (LGBT-MEWS) contained 64 total items assessing experiences with workplace macroaggressions for LGBT people. The process began with reviewing the qualitative data from Galupo and Resnick's (2016) study, and items were generated based directly from participant accounts of workplace microaggressions that occurred on the basis of their LGBT identity. In addition to creating items based on these qualitative data, items were generated by adapting items from the Daily Heterosexist Experiences Questionnaire (DHEQ; Balsam, Beadnell, & Molina, 2012). Lastly, the remaining items were created from a review of LGBT microaggression literature.

As recommended by DeVellis (2012), an expert review of the initial items was conducted to maximize content validity by ensuring the items on the LGBT-MEWS were representative of LGBT workplace microaggressions. Three expert reviewers were selected based on evidence of research, expertise, and publications in the fields of LGBTQ research, survey methodology, and organization and leadership. Invitations were sent to each reviewer via e-mail with a brief description of the study, information about serving as an expert reviewer, and a link to the scale being reviewed. After being provided with a description of LGBT workplace microaggressions, expert reviewers were asked to indicate the degree to which each item pertains to LGBT workplace

microaggressions. Reviewers then had an opportunity to review each item for clarity, flow, and wording and provide any comments or feedback in a text box provided. At the end of the review, experts had the opportunity to offer suggestions for additional items. No additional items were added based on reviewer feedback; however, items were revised based on the expert panel's feedback regarding clarity, wording, and flow of the item. After making the recommendations from the expert review, 55 items remained on the scale. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *never* (1) to *a great deal* (5), with lower scores indicating fewer experiences with microaggressions in the workplace on the basis of the participant's LGBT identity.

Measures of LGBT identity

Participants completed the Outness Inventory (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000), which is a measure that examines the degree to which sexual minority individuals are public about their sexual identity, as indicated by the degree to which the respondent's sexual orientation is known by an assortment of people. The Outness Inventory contains three subscales, two of which were administered: Out to Family and Out to World. Because the measure was written to address sexual orientation only, the words "sexual orientation" were replaced with "LGBT identity" for this study to include trans participants. The eight-item measure asked participants to rate on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*person definitely does not know about your LGBT identity*) to 7 (*person definitely knows about your LGBT identity, and it is openly talked about*) how open they are about their LGBT identity to members of their social network. The scale includes a response choice *Not applicable to your situation; there is no such person or group of people in your life*, which was scored as 0. Therefore, possible scores on this scale ranged from 0 to 56. When developed with a sample of 590 lesbians and 414 gay men, this scale showed high internal consistency on the Outness to the World subscale (α = .79) and the Outness to Family subscale (α = .74).

Participants also completed the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Positive Identity Measure (LGB-PIM; Riggle, Mohr, Rostosky, Fingerhut, & Balsam, 2014). The LGB-PIM is a seven-item Likert-type measure from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) with a midpoint of 4 (*neither agree nor disagree*) that assesses positive identity, or feeling good about oneself in the context of LGB identity (Riggle et al., 2014). The measure has five subscales, which include self-awareness, authenticity, community, intimacy, and social justice. Of these, the self-awareness and authenticity subscales, with 10 total items, were administered to participants. Possible scores on this scale range from 10 to 70. The LGB-PIM, when administered with a sample of 624 LGB participants, the LGB-PIM sub scales of Self-Awareness (α = .91) and Authenticity (α = .87) provide to be reliable.

Identity salience was adapted from Marcussen, Ritter, and Safron's (2004) five-item scale in order to measure identity salience concerning being a student. For the present study, the words "being a student" were replaced with "being LGBT." For example, "For me, being a student is an important part of who I am" was changed to "For me, being LGBT is an important part of who I am." Response choices were on a 4-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly agree* to 4 = *strongly disagree; No response* = 0) with possible scores ranging from 0 to 20.

Procedure

Recruitment

Participants for this study were recruited by contacting LGBT nonprofit organizations, posting information to research Web sites such as gayresearch.com, Psychological Research on the Net, and SocialPsychology.org, e-mailing LGBT Listservs, posting on relevant social media, and asking participants to forward the survey information to other people who qualify and might be interested in participating. Participation criteria included identifying as LGBT, being at least 18 years old, working at least part-time, and living in the United States. Because this study focused on workplace microaggressions that have occurred in the past 12 months, including only participants who were currently employed ensured this criterion was met. Participants had the opportunity to enter a drawing to win one of four $25 Amazon gift cards as a result of their participation. To preserve participants' anonymity, at the conclusion of the survey participants who wanted to enter the drawing were redirected to another survey where they entered an e-mail address. The survey remained open for one month; when the survey closed, SPSS was used to randomly select the winner of each $25 Amazon gift card.

Participants

Between July 5, 2016 and August 5, 2016, a total of 644 participants were recruited to participate in a Web-based survey. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 70 years old (M = 36.9, SD = 11.4). Regarding sexual orientation, participants identified as gay (30.6%), lesbian (30.0%), queer (16.9%), bisexual (10.6%), pansexual (6.7%), heterosexual (1.9%), asexual (1.1%), and fluid (0.9%). Participants also had the option of indicating "None of the above" and writing in their sexual orientation (1.4%).

Per the recommendation by Tate, Ledbetter, and Youssef (2013), a two-question method was used for assessing participants' gender identity. First, participants were asked to agree or disagree with the following statement: "I identify as transgender AND/OR I have a transgender or transsexual history," A total of 133 (20.7%) participants identified as transgender and/or as having a transgender or transsexual history.

Second, if a participant disagreed with this statement, they were asked to select their primary gender identity from the following choices: male, female, other (please specify). If a participant agreed with the statement, they were asked to select their primary gender identity from a list of options. Almost half of the participants identified as women (49.1%), with the second largest group identifying as men (31.7%). The remainder of the participants identified as genderqueer (4.7%), trans woman (3.3%), trans man (1.9%), gender nonconforming (1.7%), agender (1.6%), transmasculine (1.6%), genderfluid (1.1%), FtM (0.6%), two-spirit (0.3%), MtF (0.3%), androgynous (0.2%), and transfeminine (0.2%). An additional 2.2% of participants indicated "other."

Demographic information was also collected regarding participants' workplaces. The majority of participants indicated they worked in education, training, and library occupations (27.3%), with most others working in government and public sector occupations (8.8%), computer, IT, or technology occupations (8.4%), health care practitioner and technical occupations (7.7%), business and finance occupations (5.6%), and community and social service occupations (5.6%). Approximately 18% of participants indicated they had more than one job. In terms of length of employment at their current workplace, participants most often indicated they had been in their job two to five years (24.4%) followed by less than one year (21.3%), one to two years (18.6%), five to 10 years (17.2%), 10 to 15 years (8.0%), and more than 15 years (10.6%). Table 1 provides detailed demographic data related to individual demographics.

Data analysis

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to determine performance of items using principal axis factoring (PAF). Because it was expected that the components would be correlated, a promax rotation was used. The total sample of 644 participants was split in half randomly using SPSS 22.0. Using EFA, the underlying factor structure of the MEWS was investigated. As a result of the EFA, it was determined which items needed to be removed from the measure. After item retention was completed, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted with the remainder of the sample, which did not overlap with the sample used for the EFA. Once the factors were determined, the scale was finalized and subscales were created based on factors that emerged.

Results

Exploratory factor analysis

Data were found to be adequate for factor analysis as signified by a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value .722 and significant for Bartlett's test of sphericity: χ^2

Table 1. Individual demographics.

Characteristic	n	%
Race/Ethnicity		
Asian/Asian American	27	4.2
Biracial/Multiracial	30	4.7
Black/African American	20	3.1
Hispanic/Latino	19	2.9
Native American/Alaskan Native	5	0.8
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	2	0.3
White	528	82.0
No Answer/Other	13	2.0
Education		
Master's Degree	241	37.4
Bachelor's Degree	202	31.4
Some College	76	11.8
Doctoral Degree	74	11.5
Professional Degree (JD, MD)	22	3.4
Associate Degree	17	2.6
High School	9	1.4
Vocational School	2	0.3
Other	1	0.2
Socioeconomic Status		
Middle Class	264	41.6
Upper Middle Class	175	27.6
Lower Middle Class	102	16.1
Working Class	71	11.2
Upper Class	19	3.0
No Answer	4	0.6

(1431, $N = 341$) = 4,351.13, $p < .001$. For the initial PAF, a total of 11 factors emerged with eigenvalues that exceeded 1. Consistent with recommendations by Worthington and Whittaker (2006), factor retention was decided by (1) examining eigenvalues, (2) scree plots, (3) interpretability of the solution, and (4) a minimum loading of three items on each factor, using a minimum factor cutoff of .40 and no cross-loadings with less than .25 difference in magnitude from an item's highest factor loading. After a scree plot test, it was determined that a three-factor solution was appropriate. Inspection of items revealed that the factors conceptually represented in the solution were workplace values, heteronormative assumptions, and cisnormative culture.

A second PAF with forced three-factor extraction was conducted, where the three factors accounted for 55.9% of the variance in the data. Workplace values accounted for 43.7% of the variance (eigenvalue = 23.6), followed by heteronormative assumptions at 6.5% (eigenvalue = 3.5), and cisnormative culture at 5.7 (eigenvalue = 3.1). After a three-factor solution was determined, the MEWS was reduced from 55 to 27 items, with 12 items in workplace values, nine items in heteronormative assumptions, and six items in cisnormative culture (see Table 2). Of the 28 items dropped, 20 displayed complex loadings, five were redundant with other items in the scale, one was double-barreled, and one did not conceptually fit with its

Table 2. Factor loadings from principal component analysis with promax rotation.

	1	2	3
	Workplace Values	Heteronormative Assumptions	Cisnormative Culture
Eigenvalue	23.6	3.5	3.1
% of Variance	43.7%	6.5%	5.7%
Item			
Factor 1: Workplace Values			
1	**.84**	−.30	.13
2	**.78**	−.12	.08
3	**.82**	−.16	.11
4	**.72**	−.08	.07
5	**.78**	.16	−.10
6	**.56**	.10	.08
7	**.51**	.22	−.03
8	**.55**	.17	.07
9	**.76**	.04	.13
10	**.71**	.03	−.06
11	**.65**	.16	−.10
12	**.50**	.18	.28
Factor 2: Heteronormative Assumptions			
13	−.29	**.67**	.27
14	.02	**.81**	−.33
15	.05	**.63**	−.04
16	.21	**.50**	−.01
17	.13	**.60**	−.11
18	.26	**.52**	.02
19	−.11	**.91**	.05
20	.14	**.40**	.10
21	−.48	**.65**	.15
Factor 3: Cisnormative Culture			
22	.24	.06	**.58**
23	−.05	.11	**.83**
24	.30	−.14	**.63**
25	−.12	.12	**.85**
26	−.07	.03	**.93**
27	.16	.23	**.61**

Note. Factor loadings > .40 are in boldface.

aligned factor. All retained items loaded at .50, .40, .58, or higher for the three factors, respectively. A final PAF was performed on the reduced scale and demonstrated that 55.2% of the variance was accounted for by the factors. Workplace values accounted for 36% (eigenvalue = 10.2), heteronormative assumptions accounted for 10.4% (eigenvalue = 2.9), and cisnormative culture accounted for 8.2% (eigenvalue = 2.3). The final items included in the MEWS can be found in Table 3.

Confirmatory factor analysis

A CFA was conducted using Mplus v. 7.31 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998) to evaluate the three-factor structure established in the EFA using the 27

Table 3. LGBT microaggression experiences at work scale (MEWS).

Instructions: The following is a list of experiences that LGBT people sometimes have in the workplace. Please read each one carefully, and then respond to the following question:

*During the past **12 months** in your workplace, how often have the following experiences occurred with a colleague, clientele, or your work environment?*

1. Not getting paid as much because of your LGBT identity.
2. Being overlooked for a promotion based on your LGBT identity.
3. Not being given credit for an idea because of your LGBT identity.
4. Having it implied that you were only given your position because of your LGBT identity.
5. Having your job security threatened because of your LGBT identity.
6. Having your job duties adjusted because of your LGBT identity.
7. Having a colleague, who knows the status of your significant other, refer to them as a 'friend'.
8. Hearing a colleague or a customer being called names such as "fag," "dyke," or "tranny."
9. Having your behaviors mimicked in a joking way due to your LGBT identity or expression/presentation.
10. Being accused of being attracted to a colleague because of your LGBT identity.
11. Having a colleague ask you about your sex life (e.g., How do you have sex?) because of your LGBT identity.
12. Having a harassment complaint ignored because of your LGBT identity.
13. Having colleagues or customers assume your sexual orientation based on your appearance.
14. Having a colleague presume you are heterosexual by asking about your "wife or girlfriend" or "husband or boyfriend."
15. Disclosing your LGBT identity to colleagues and having them respond in a surprised manner.
16. Being asked to provide an opinion on behalf of other LGBT people.
17. After disclosing your LGBT identity, being told you do not conform to cultural stereotypes of LGBT people.
18. Hearing the phrase "That's so gay!" at work to describe something or someone.
19. Not fitting in at work because of your LGBT identity.
20. Being "tokenized" at work on the basis of your LGBT identity.
21. Having no one on your organization's leadership team who identifies as LGBT.
22. Having your name assigned at birth and not your own name appear on official office documents such as a nametag, e-mail address, or nameplate.
23. Having people address you using incorrect pronouns.
24. Having people make comments about the clothing you wear because it does not conform to gender norms.
25. Not having a bathroom at work that you feel comfortable using.
26. Being addressed using gendered language that is not aligned with your gender identity such as "ma'am" or "mister."
27. Being expected to wear clothing that does not align with your gender identity or gender expression.

Note. Items should be randomized for presentation in a survey. Recommended response scale: 1 = *never*, 2 = *rarely*, 3 = *occasionally*, 4 = *a moderate amount*, 5 = *a great deal*.

Subscale scores are computed by averaging subscale item ratings: Workplace Values (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12), Heteronormative Assumptions (13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21), and Cisnormative Culture (22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27).

Possible ranges for each subscale are as follows: Workplace Values (12 to 60), Heteronormative Assumptions (9 to 45), and Cisnormative Culture (6 to 30).

retained items. Data from the 303 participants who did not overlap with the EFA subsample were used. Items were estimated to load on their intended factors on the basis of their EFA loadings, and the three factors were allowed to correlate. Model fit was assessed with the root mean square estimate of approximation (RMSEA) and the standardized root-mean residual (SRMR; Hu & Bentler, 1995; Weston & Gore, 2006). Based on Weston and Gore's (2006) review of guidelines for assessing model fit, the following criteria for

an adequate fit model were used: CFI ≥ .90, SRMR ≤ .10, and RMSEA ≤ .10. CFA fit statistics for the 27-item MEWS suggested that the three-factor model suggested acceptable fit to the data: χ^2 (321, N = 303), = 1226.30 $p < .001$, CFI = 0.76, SRMR = .087, RMSEA = .097, 90% [.091, .102]. CFI is a frequently used goodness-of-fit statistic; however, finding an exact fit, which χ^2 measures, is rare (Weston & Gore, 2006). Further, Weston and Gore (2006) postulated that though almost all researchers include χ^2 in their findings, researchers typically consider additional fit indices to determine model fit acceptability. Thus, though the CFI was slightly under the recommended value, in conjunction with the SRMR and the RMSEA confidence interval under .10, the badness of fit test was rejected.

Internal consistency of items

The subsamples from the EFA and CFA were combined to assess internal reliability and validity (N = 644). Internal consistency reliability for MEWS was assessed using Cronbach's α = .93. The MEWS subscales reliability values were .90 for workplace values, .82 for heteronormative assumptions, and .91 for cisnormative culture. Based on Ponterotto and Ruckdeshel's (2007) matrix for understanding Cronbach's alpha, these values are in the moderate range for the heteronormative scale and the excellent range for the workplace values, cisnormative culture, and total MEWS scales.

To address the potential for aggregation bias based on combining the responses of sexual and gender minorities, reliability analyses were run without transgender participants. Although the overall Cronbach's alpha for cisgender sexual minorities was slightly lower (α = .90) when compared to the larger sample (α = .93), it still fell within the excellent range. The subscale reliability values for workplace values (α = .90) and heteronormative assumptions (α = .82) were identical to the larger sample, falling within excellent and moderate reliability ranges, respectively. For the cisnormative culture subscale, reliability was lower for cisgender sexual minorities (α = .88) when compared to the larger sample (α = .91). Although lower, reliability for this subscale was still acceptable and fell within the moderate reliability range.

Validity of measure and subscales

Bivariate correlations were calculated to assess construct validity of MEWS scores. Table 4 presents the correlations and significant test measures for this study. The significant intercorrelations support the interrelated nature of the subscales; however, the intercorrelations are low enough to support the interpretation that the subscales are measuring differing dimensions of LGBT workplace microaggressions.

As seen in Table 4, results demonstrated discriminant validity between subscales. First, there were differences in the significance of associations between subscales and the outness to the world measure. The MEWS heteronormative assumptions scale was associated with outness to the world, whereas the MEWS values and MEWS cisnormative culture were not. The MEWS heteronormative assumptions scale was the only subscale associated with the PIM authenticity scale. As anticipated, associations between the LGBT-MEWS subscales and the convergent validity measures were confirmed. All three MEWS subscales were positively associated with self-awareness and negatively associated with identity salience. Outness to family was not expected to be associated with any of the MEWS subscales and it was not, establishing divergent validity for the scale.

General discussion

As discrimination toward LGBT people has shifted over time from overt displays to covert behavior that is rooted in unconscious bias, workplace discrimination toward LGBT people has also reflected this change. If organizations want to attract and retain a diverse group of employees, they need to first understand experiences of minority group members within the organization. Thousands of workplaces across the country list values that include commitment to diversity and actively try to create organizational climates that are welcoming to everyone, but they are still failing to make all employees feel included. As such, to help organizations detect and address LGBT microaggressions that occur in the workplace, a new scale was developed.

Nadal et al. (2011) emphasized that although microaggressions are conceptualized as being "micro"—small, interpersonal slights—their power comes with their pervasiveness or the culmination of many events. Recent research has suggested that microaggressions experienced in a specific context, such as interpersonal relationships, can be more hurtful because of the importance of the relationship (Galupo, Henise, & Davis, 2014; Pulice-

Table 4. LGBT microaggression experiences at work scale (MEWS).

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	*M(SD)*	*α*
1. MEWS: Values	-	.61**	.44**	.01	.03	.19**	.06	-.12**	16.50(7.3)	.90
2. MEWS: Heteronormative		-	.35**	-.15**	-.05	.25**	-.09*	-.20**	22.82(8.1)	.82
3. MEWS: Cisnormative			-	-.06	-.07	.19**	-.01	-.15**	8.07(6.0)	.91
4. OI: To the World				-	.46**	.19**	.48**	-.18**	19.46(6.0)	.81
5. OI: Family					-	.13**	.36**	-.07	20.22(6.5)	.87
6. PIM: Self-Awareness						-	.37**	-.46**	29.79(5.2)	.91
7. PIM: Authenticity							-	-.24**	30.74(4.5)	.85
8. Identity Salience								-	8.11(2.8)	.78

* Indicates correlation significant at $p < .05$, **Indicates correlation significant at $p < .001$

Farrow, Brown, & Galupo, 2017; Pulice-Farrow, Clements, & Galupo, 2017). This may be particularly relevant to workplace microaggressions because of the organizational hierarchy that exists within these environments. Indeed, one of the themes uncovered from Galupo and Resnick's (2016) study of workplace microaggressions was related to organizational structure, where microaggressions were often experienced within an employee–supervisor or employee–client relationship, and at times the microaggression affected job expectations and/or performance evaluation. Workplace microaggressions are of particular interest because of their pervasiveness within organizations and the impact they can have on productivity and interpersonal dynamics.

LGBT-MEWS

By examining the factors that emerged from LGBT-MEWS, organizations have three concrete areas to explore LGBT employees' experiences with microaggressions. The workplace values factor is related to the overall value system of an organization. Because organizational values can be considered the deepest level of organizational culture (Schein, 1992), the items on this scale represent the broad and overarching experiences of employees within the organization. Microaggression experiences related to this factor were associated with the employees' interpersonal interactions with their colleagues in addition to their status within the workplace related to hiring, promotion, pay scale, and job security. Workplace values items were distinct from other items in that these items reflected more blatant acts of aggressions, which Sue et al. (2007) coined as *microassaults*.

The heternormative assumptions dimension of LGBT workplace microaggressions describe the everyday heterosexism employees experience in the workplace. Often, when committing heteronormative assumption microaggressions, employees may not realize they are marginalizing their LGBT colleagues. However, regardless of the intent, the message is one that serves to invalidate or denigrate the experiences of the LGBT employee. Many of these microaggressions seem innocuous—for example, "Being asked to provide an opinion on behalf of other LGBT people." It may very well be the person asking for the opinion did not mean to marginalize their LGBT colleague; however, the request denotes that all LGBT have the same experience and should be able to speak on behalf of the entire population. This assumption, however, discounts the unique experiences of each individual based on all of their identities, including the individual's LGBT identity. Because these microaggressions are deeply ingrained into our workplaces and often occur unconsciously, they may be harder to recognize and change. In addition to being deeply ingrained, these types of microaggressions may be harder for employees to detect (Sue et al., 2007). An employee might feel uncomfortable when asked to provide an opinion on behalf of other LGBT

people, but they may not recognize it as discriminatory. Often, because these microaggressions go unaddressed, they continue to occur and the person who commits the microaggression thinks it is acceptable to continue with the behavior.

Heternormative assumption microaggressions occur because of the presumption that an employee is heterosexual. Therefore, the employee does not need to disclose their orientation to experience the microaggression. Items on this scale such as "Having no one on your organization's leadership team who identifies as LGBT" would occur regardless of an employee disclosing their identity, but it may still have a negative impact on the employee. This is consistent with the subtler nature of microaggressions as they may be occurring regardless of the perpetrator being aware of the individual's identity or they may occur with the individual's work environment.

The factor related to cisnormative culture is also important in framing LGBT workplace microaggressions as these items were found to be related to the employee's gender identity and/or gender expression and how this is experienced in a workplace context. Items on this scale included employees' experiences related to their name ("Having your name assigned at birth and not your own name appear on official office documents such as a nametag, e-mail address, or nameplate"), gendered language ("Having people address you using incorrect pronouns"), clothing ("Being expected to wear clothing that does not align with your gender identity or gender expression"), and bathroom usage ("Not having a bathroom at work that you feel comfortable using"). These microaggressions are consistent with Nadal, Skolnik, and Wong's (2012) taxonomy of transgender microaggressions in the following categories: use of transphobic and/or incorrectly gendered terminology, endorsement of gender normative and binary culture or behaviors, and systematic and environmental microaggressions.

Nadal et al. (2012) also conceptualized the way that microaggressions are experienced for trans people systematically and environmentally. They described these microaggressions as insidious because they are generally experienced in systems that are hard to avoid. Participants in this study cited four subthemes of systematic and environmental microaggressions, including (1) public restrooms, (2) the criminal legal system, (3) emergency health care, and (4) government-issued ID. The present study extends on this work by describing how trans people experience microaggressions in the workplace setting. The idea underlying this factor is that organizations are structured to reinforce the notion that people identify with the sex they are assigned at birth rather than including the multitude of gender identities and expressions that exist in the world.

The emergence of the cisnormative culture subscale has implications for how microaggressions are measured across the LGBT community. In particular, it provides evidence that trans people experience a unique set of

microaggressions in the workplace on the basis of gender identity, which are different than sexual orientation microaggressions. The MEWS was written using "LGBT" in the items to capture both sexual orientation and gender identity microaggressions; however, the items specific to gender identity loaded separately on the cisnormative culture subscale. And while sexual orientation and gender identity microaggressions can be measured together, it is important for researchers to understand the unique set of microaggressions that one may face because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or both. Nadal et al. (2016) argued that there is an increased need for research that approaches the LGBT community with increased sensitivity and specificity so as not to oversimplify the diversity of identities within the LGBT community.

Implications for organizations and leaders

In recent years, organizations have become increasingly diverse. Implementing diversity practices can have a positive impact on both the organization and employees, including financial gains such as increased profitability in addition to learning, creativity, flexibility, successful adjustment to fluctuations in the market, and overall individual and organizational growth (Thomas & Ely, 1996). On the other hand, McKay et al. (2007) found that employee turnover from underrepresented groups is especially high if members from these groups perceive that the organization is not supportive of diversity practices. Thus maintaining an organizational culture of inclusivity where LGBT employees feel welcome and are free from discrimination can benefit both the organization and the employee. Because of the harmful impact microaggressions can have on employees (Galupo & Resnick, 2016), the MEWS presents as an important tool for employers to assess both the nature and degree of LGBT microaggressions in the workplace. Assessing microaggressions will allow employers to develop targeted trainings and interventions to increase productivity and job satisfaction in relation to workplace values, heteronormative assumptions, and cisnormative culture. The MEWS can be used as a part of a comprehensive plan toward developing a a sustained culture of inclusivity within the organization. In fact, just assessing workplace culture through the use of the MEWS is likely to signal to employees that the organization is committed to diversity, inclusive of LGBT individuals.

On top of expressing commitment to diversity, organizations need take action to show they are invested in diversity practices. This is done through establishing a mission, vision, and values that are reflective of a diverse workforce and by supporting diversity through different avenues, including policies, benefits, training, and employee resource groups. Another way to successfully include diverse employees is to expand the definition of diversity

to include pluralistic, trans, and genderfluid identities. By recognizing these identities, employees who identify in these groups will feel more included in the workplace, which could lead to being more authentic at work. Lastly, examining the state of workplace climate and addressing issues that come up is one way to foster a more inclusive environment for diverse populations. Specific to the present population, research has shown support encountered at work by LGB employees is positively related to work and personal outcomes (Huffman, Watrous-Rodriguez, & King, 2008); therefore, it is in employers' best interests to ensure they are providing support to LGBT employees if they want to retain diversity in their organization.

The present findings have implications for workplace policy. Though organizations may have little to do with influencing policy at the state or national level, they do have control over policies that exist within their own organizations. That is, even if an organization is located within a state without workplace protections for LGBT people, the organization can be autonomous and push back against the broader norms in the state by enforcing policies that protect LGBT employees. While policies may not cover all workplace microaggressions, the inclusion of a policy and a verbalized message of inclusivity as an espoused value signifies to employees the type of behavior that is expected in the organization—that is, the cultural norms are established.

One of the difficulties in addressing microaggressions is that many times, the person committing the microaggression is unaware of how their actions are hurtful. Even if the person's intention was not to discriminate against their colleague, it is important to address as the behavior may persist if left alone. Addressing these behaviors might start with educating employees about what microaggressions are and by providing examples of such behavior. One way to accomplish this is to tie in training about microaggressions into existing opportunities within the organization such as sexual harassment training or diversity training. Organizations may also look to the higher education sector, which has attempted to address unconscious bias that occurs on campuses. Many colleges and universities have created bias response teams, which are generally made up of administrators and provide support and advocacy to those who have experienced bias in addition to disciplining offenders and educational prevention (Snyder, 2016). In mid- and large-size organizations, it may be feasible to implement such a team where microaggressions are reported and the team is able to both educate the perpetrator and provide validation to the person who experienced the microaggression.

One area where the present research makes a particularly strong impact is related to the experience of trans employees. Some of the microaggressions that appear on the MEWS cisnormative culture subscale can be addressed through policies that govern a gender transition and/or policies related to

clothing, bathroom usage, and pronouns. Sawyer, Thoroughgood, and Webster (2016) made recommendations for trans-inclusive workplaces; these recommendations addressed the microaggressions uncovered in the present study. First, organizations should have proper name change policies for employees; employee data may exist in many databases and/or tracked in different ways, making it difficult to ensure the employee's proper name is documented in all areas of the organization. Second, it is suggested that there are degendered spaces and/or gender-neutral bathrooms to facilitate comfortable work environments for trans employees. Third, organizations should adopt a gender-neutral dress code that outlines professional clothing without assigning styles to particular genders. Fourth, education related to trans issues as well as the construct of gender identity may help employees better understand the importance of trans inclusivity, as well as the social construction of gender overall.

An additional suggestion is to have employees include gender pronouns in places such as e-mail signatures, nameplates, and nametags. This not only lets people know which pronouns they should use when interacting with the employee, but also sends a message to external constituents that the organization is inclusive and others can indicate the pronouns they use. These guidelines are meant to be proactive; that is, if organizations implement these recommendations, the hope is that microaggressions specifically, and oppressive workplace climates generally, will be diminished as a result of these guidelines being in place.

Limitations and directions for future research

Although the development of the MEWS represents an important contribution to the literature and tool for organizations, this research is not without it limitations. The sample for this study was recruited through snowball methods and included self-identified LGBT individuals who currently work at least part-time. The sample was more educated than the general population, and racial/ethnic minorities were underrepresented in this sample. Therefore, caution should be used when making generalizations from this sample to other samples, especially samples of non-White respondents and at the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum. Relatedly, because recruitment was focused on LGBT venues such as nonprofits and LGBT research sites, it is likely these participants are more connected to the LGBT community and may be more open about their sexual and gender identities than those who did not participate.

The sample for the present study was diverse in terms of gender, sexual identity, and geographic location. However, 82% of participants identified as White. This is consistent with recent LGBT microaggression research, where over 70% of participants have identified as White (Woodford,

Howell, Silverschanz, & Yu, 2012; Wright & Wegner, 2012); however, it is not consistent with overall U.S. LGBT people of color demographics. Gates (2014) published LGB/T demographic data from four large, national population-based surveys, which showed 60%–69% of the population identifies as White. Across these surveys, 11%–16% of the population identified as African American and 13%–20% identified as Hispanic. Given that LGBT people of color experience microaggressions uniquely on the basis of both race/ethnicity and LGBT identity (Balsam et al., 2011), the results of the present study should be interpreted with caution given the lack of racial/ethnic diversity in the present sample. As LGBT microaggression research gains traction and the importance of studying intersectional identities is continually highlighted as an area for expansion (e.g., Nadal et al., 2016), it is vital for researchers to understand the challenges related to recruiting a diverse group of participants. Methodologically, low participation of diverse LGBT people, including in the present study, is limiting in terms of analysis, as comparisons between specific groups (i.e., Black trans women, Latino bisexual men) cannot occur without adequate representation from different groups. In addition to being statistically important, the challenge of recruiting LGBT people of color points to a more pressing issue in the real world. The lack of response from LGBT communities of color may reflect a sense of disengagement with the broader LGBT community. Because most LGBT studies use online recruitment methods, which have been helpful in providing privacy and anonymity to LGBT participants (Riggle, Rostosky, & Reedy, 2005), and these methods have been associated with educated, middle-class, White samples (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009), researchers may need to explore different recruitment methods that would expand the diversity among LGBT participants.

An additional limitation to the present study is that recruitment notices called for participants who identify as LGBT. Using "LGBT" to recruit participants was used broadly with the intention of recruiting nonheterosexual and noncisgender identities; however, this terminology may not have resonated with some individuals. As sexual orientation identities become more diversified and expands past "LGBT," recruitment notices should be focused more broadly to include "sexual minorities" as this term is more general and does not label identities specifically. Though the term *sexual minority* may also not resonate with people, it may be more inclusive than using *LGBT*, which refers to specific identities. Lastly, the participants in the present research are those who are present in the work environment and do not include those who left the workforce or those who chose not to participate. Given that approximately 5.6% of lesbian and gay professionals/managers in the U.S. have left a job due to workplace unfairness (Burns, 2007) and LGBT people report facing discrimination in the hiring process (Pizer,

Sears, Mallory, & Hunter, 2011; Tilcsik, 2011), there may be LGBT people who are not represented in the present study because they are not currently in the workforce.

Because the purpose of the present study was to develop and validate the MEWS, a large nonprobability sample was appropriate. However, without focusing on an explicit industry (e.g., higher education institutions) or an explicit type of organization (e.g., religiously affiliated organizations), the results cannot be applied to specific organizations. Future research may home in on different types of organizations to examine LGBT workplace microaggressions in organizations that have similar characteristics.

The development of the MEWS represents a positive step toward understanding the workplace experiences of LGBT employees. Future research focusing on outcomes related to experiencing microaggressions in the workplace would provide a deeper understanding of the impact of microaggressions on the employee and on organizations. For example, the MEWS can facilitate advancements in understanding LGBT employees' experiences related to job satisfaction and wellbeing. For organizations, the hope is that the MEWS can assist with understanding workplace outcomes such as employee absenteeism and the financial cost of experiencing microaggressions in the workplace.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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