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# A Comparison of Sexual-Minority Stress in Lesbian and Gay Police Officers

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*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Laura E. Williams

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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Walden University  
2019

Abstract

A Comparison of Sexual-Minority Stress in Lesbian and Gay Police Officers

by

Laura E. Williams

MS, Walden University, 2014

MA, Trinity College, 1988

MEd, St. Joseph College, 1987

BA, Denison University, 1983

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Forensic Psychology

Walden University

February 2019

## Abstract

The original purpose of this quantitative study was to compare 5 self-reported sexual minority stress (SMS) factors experienced by lesbian and gay police officers to discover if lesbian or gay police officers experience more SMS, and which factor, if any, is the biggest stressor for either group as measured using subscales of the Daily Heterosexist Experiences Questionnaire (DHEQ). This study partially incorporated minority-stress theory as applied to sexual minorities. This study used subscales from the DHEQ in anonymous, online surveys. Because of the low response rate, the study changed to compare the group of lesbian and gay police officers' self-reports on levels of feelings of vigilance, harassment/discrimination, isolation, vicarious trauma, and victimization as compared to the established population values. The central research question asked if there was a significant difference between lesbian and gay police officers and the established population on self-reported factors of SMS, as measured by the DHEQ. Two-tailed *t* tests were used to analyze the data. The results showed that lesbian and gay officers reported significantly less SMS as determined by the 5 factors on the DHEQ. The results of this study could provide an impact on how administrators treat lesbian and gay officers and how LGBT policies are created and implemented for internal and external (e.g. LGBT communities) interactions. The results of this study could also provide insight for police psychologists and other mental health practitioners about SMS.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my beloved parents, Dr. Sally Williams and William Fuller, who at first demanded and then encouraged the love of learning and higher and higher education. I cannot possibly express the love and admiration I hold for these two people.

## Acknowledgments

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

Stress is a factor in many occupations, but one of the most stressful jobs is that of a police officer. Added to the occupational hazards of being on the frontline of crime prevention is the stress of being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered (LGBT), which, going forward, will be addressed as a sexual-minority. The topic of this study was to measure and compare the levels of sexual-minority stress (SMS) factors in lesbian and gay police officers as compared to the established lesbian and gay population. There is a need for more research related to SMS in the masculinized industries such as police departments, fire departments, and the military (Burke, 1994a; Charles & Arndt, 2013; Collins, 2015; Collins & Rocco, 2015; Galvin-White & O’Neal, 2016; Gedro, 2013; Hassell & Brandl, 2009; Mennicke, Gromer, Oehme, & MacConnie, 2016). Implications for positive social change are many, including a better understanding of how SMS affects lesbian and gay police officers to improve departmental policies and counseling practices (Collins, 2016; Coleman & Churprakobkit, 2009; Dentato, 2012; Galvin-White & O’Neal, 2015; Hassell & Brandl, 2009; Mennicke et al., 2016; Meyer, 1995, 2003; Waldo, 1999). These improvements may facilitate the creation of supportive environments for lesbian and gay police officers.

### **Background of the Study**

Despite the Civil Rights Act of 1964, The Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972, the abolishment of the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” military policy in 2011 (Department of Defense Directive 1304.26), and the legalization of same-sex marriages

in 2015, lesbian and gay individuals still face discrimination and hostility in traditionally masculinized industries such as police departments, fire departments, and the military (Burke, 1994; Charles & Arndt, 2013; Collins, 2015; Collins & Rocco, 2015; Galvin-White & O'Neal, 2016; Gedro, 2013; Hassell & Brandl, 2009; Mennicke et al., 2016). The police organization has been described as a militaristic and traditionally masculinized society (Burke, 1994; Charles & Arndt, 2013; Collins, 2015; Collins & Rocco, 2015; Galvin-White & O'Neal, 2016; Hassell & Brandl, 2009; Mennicke et al., 2016). Although studies in the last 30 years have addressed the homophobia (Burke, 1994) faced by lesbian and gay police officers, more research needs to be done in this area because discrimination is still directed at lesbian and gay police officers on a daily basis (Burke, 1994; Charles & Arndt, 2013; Collins, 2015; Collins & Rocco, 2015; Galvin-White & O'Neal, 2016; Hassell & Brandl, 2009; Mennicke et al., 2016).

There is a lack of research focused on lesbian and gay police officers (Charles & Arndt, 2013; Colvin, 2009; Galvin-White & O'Neal, 2015). Research exists regarding the stress police officers face on the job (Hassell & Brandl, 2009). There is also considerable research regarding minority stress for sexual-minorities who are not in law enforcement (Bostwick, Hughes, Boyd, West, & McCabe, 2014; Tebbe & Moradi, 2016; Wilson, Gilmore, Rhew, Hodge, & Kaysen, 2016; Zimmerman, Darnell, Rhew, Lee, & Kaysen, 2015). For example, researchers have shown that the result of sexual-orientation based discrimination is often psychological stress, hereafter called sexual-minority stress (SMS), which can lead to poor physical and mental health (Bostwick et al., 2014; Cochran & Mays, 2009; Dentato, 2012; Meyer, 1995; Waldo, 1999). However, there

remains a dearth of studies that concentrate on the stress felt by sexual-minority police officers (Charles & Arndt, 2013; Colvin, 2009; Galvin-White & O'Neal, 2015) as compared to the general sexual-minority population. As a result, the number of the studies cited on lesbian and gay stress for police officers will span a wide range of years in order to adequately cover this area.

This study helped fill the gap in understanding whether lesbian and gay police officers experienced more SMS than the established population of lesbians and gays, as measured by five of the stress factors in the Daily Heterosexist Experiences Questionnaire (DHEQ; Balsam, Beadnell, & Molina, 2013). The results of this study could provide an impact on how administrators treat lesbian and gay officers and how LGBT policies are created and implemented for internal and external (e.g. LGBT communities) interactions. The results of this study could also provide insight for police psychologists and other mental health practitioners about SMS (Coleman & Cheurprakobkit, 2009; Collins, 2016; Dentato, 2012; Galvin-White & O'Neal, 2015; Hassell & Brandl, 2009; Israel et al., 2017; Mennicke et al., 2016; Meyer, 1995, 2003; Waldo, 1999).

### **Problem Statement**

Membership in a sexual-minority population can be kept hidden (e.g. not revealing identity to coworkers), but that does not lessen the impact of offensive humor and harassment that may not be directed at an individual, but can still cause stress in that individual (Burke, 1994a, 1994b; Collins, 2013; Herek, 1989). For example, a gay police officer may be closeted (not out to his colleagues), so offensive humor and harassing

comments could very likely be made in his presence by fellow police officers. Although the comments are not specifically directed at this closeted gay officer, he is likely to be affected by the comments through vicarious trauma (Balsam et al., 2013), possibly leading to SMS. Likewise, a closeted lesbian police officer may face the same discriminatory “jokes” and be affected by feeling victimized (Balsam et al., 2013). What is missing from this scenario is how specific feelings of vigilance, harassment/discrimination, isolation, vicarious trauma, and victimization influence the levels of SMS in lesbian and gay officers as compared to the established lesbian and gay population of nonpolice officers.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The original purpose of this quantitative study was to compare five self-reported SMS factors experienced by lesbian and gay police officers in order to discover if lesbian or gay police officers experienced more SMS, and which factor, if any, stood out as the biggest stressor for either group. However, as discussed in Chapter 4, because of the low response rate, the purpose was changed to determine if lesbian and gay officers experienced more or less SMS than the established population, as determined by research conducted by Balsam et al. (2013). The independent variable (IV) was sexual orientation, which was a dichotomous variable and had two independent groups (police officers, established population), and the dependent variables (DVs), as measured using subscales of the DHEQ (Balsam et al., 2013), were feelings of vigilance, harassment/discrimination, isolation, vicarious trauma, and victimization in the past year, all measured in Likert-type continuous scales.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

Research Question 1: Do the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study experience more or less feelings of vigilance in the past year compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) using the Daily Heterosexist Experiences Questionnaire?

*H<sub>11</sub>*: There is a significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of vigilance in the past year, using the DHEQ.

*H<sub>01</sub>*: There is no significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of vigilance in the past year, using the DHEQ.

Research Question 2: Do the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study experience more or less feelings of harassment and discrimination in the past year compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) using the DHEQ?

*H<sub>12</sub>*: There is a significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of harassment and discrimination in the past year, using the DHEQ.



*H*<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian/gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of harassment and discrimination in the past year, using the DHEQ.

Research Question 3: Do the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study experience more or less feelings of isolation in the past year compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) using the DHEQ?

*H*<sub>13</sub>: There is a significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of isolation in the past year, using the DHEQ.

*H*<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of isolation in the past year, using the DHEQ.

Research Question 4: Do the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study experience more or less feelings of vicarious trauma in the past year compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) using the DHEQ?

*H*<sub>14</sub>: There is a significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian and gay population value

that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of vicarious trauma in the past year, using the DHEQ.

*H<sub>04</sub>*: There is no significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of vicarious trauma in the past year, using the DHEQ.

Research Question 5: Do the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study experience more or less feelings of victimization in the past year compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) using the DHEQ?

*H<sub>15</sub>*: There is a significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of victimization in the past year, using the DHEQ.

*H<sub>05</sub>*: There is no significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of victimization in the past year, using the DHEQ.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

This study partially incorporated minority-stress theory (MST) as operationalized by Meyer (1995, 2003) and further discussed by Alessi (2014), Dentato (2012), Balsam et al. (2013), and Waldo (1999). Meyer (1995) focused MST on the study of

nonheterosexual persons, positing that sexual-minorities suffer more stress than heterosexuals. Mennicke et al. (2016) stated that lesbians, who tend to present in a masculine way as officers, face less discrimination than gay men, who are described as "effeminate" in general; on the other hand, Meyer (2003) stated that lesbians "confront stigma and prejudice related to gender in addition to sexual orientation" (p. 690), while Dewale, Van Houtte, and Vincke (2014) stated that lesbians in general reported more mental distress because women are more vulnerable and "more susceptible to mental disorders and feelings of depression" (pp. 1610-1611); however, not all female officers may agree with that statement. Colvin (2009) recommended that future research look at the differences in experiences between lesbian and gay officers, as did Rumens and Broomfield (2012). Although that was the original intent of this study, because of the low response rate of lesbian and gay police officers, I decided to combine the two groups and compare them to the established lesbian and gay population. See Chapter 4 for more discussion on this change. While there is research stating that sexual-minorities have more stress than heterosexuals and therefore have more health and psychological problems (Cochran & Mays, 2009), especially in the masculinized industry of policing (Dentato, 2012; Waldo, 1999), there is a dearth of quantitative research that confirms whether lesbian and gay police officers experience more SMS as measured by the individual stressors of feelings of vigilance, harassment/discrimination, isolation, vicarious trauma, and victimization, which are subscales of the DHEQ (Balsam et al., 2013). MST and the creation and validation of the DHEQ are discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 2.

### **Nature of the Study**

This comparative, quantitative study used Likert-type scales (Boone & Boone, 2012) in a survey called DHEQ (Balsam et al., 2013) in order to assess lesbian and gay police officers' SMS as per individual stressors. This was a comparative study and the results indicated that lesbian and gay police officers experienced significantly less SMS stress than the established population.

All data were collected through an anonymous online survey. The survey was disseminated through the online site Survey Monkey. Lesbian and gay police officer participants were located through online postings (e.g. Craigslist, Facebook), snowballing through individual contacts, and through contact with gay and lesbian police officer liaison organizations (Collins, 2013), online police organizations such as Police One and Badge of Life, as well as through requests by willing police departments. Originally, the study was intended to analyze the question: Is there a significant difference between lesbian and gay police officers on self-reported factors of SMS, as measured by the DHEQ? A one-way MANOVA was to be used to compare the SMS factors between lesbian officers and gay officers. However, because of the low survey response rate, it was decided to combine lesbian and gay police officers and compare their stress levels to the established lesbian and gay population stress levels. Results were calculated using individual two-tailed *t* tests. The significance level was set to .05.

### **Definitions**

*Gay*: For the purposes of this study, this term represents homosexual men, as opposed to lesbian women.

*Harassment/Discrimination*: Being verbally mistreated by heterosexuals who think or know the victim is lesbian or gay (based on the DHEQ; Balsam et al., 2013)

*Isolation*: Difficulty finding a partner or someone to talk to because of being lesbian or gay (based on the DHEQ; Balsam et al., 2013)

*LGBT*: Abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender. There are more definitions such as questioning, intersex, and asexual (QIA), but for the purposes of this study, the abbreviation will be kept to LGBT whenever possible as a melding of older articles that may not mention transgender and newer research that may list LGBTIA.

*Masculinized industry*: Generally regarded as a militaristic industry or an industry that historically hired men (e.g. military, firefighters, police; Collins, 2014; Mennicke et al., 2016)

*Minority-stress*: Stress felt by people who are considered minorities, originally created to define stress felt by cultural/racial minorities (Burke 1994a, 1994b)

*Sexual minority*: Any person who is not heterosexual.

*Sexual-minority stress (SMS)*: Stress ascribed to persons who are not heterosexual, based on heterosexist experiences

*Stressor/Factor*: SMS *stressor* is used interchangeably with SMS *factor*. A stressor/factor is based on one of the subscales from the DHEQ, identified as feelings of vigilance, harassment/discrimination, isolation, vicarious trauma, and victimization (Balsam et al., 2013)

*Vicarious trauma*: Hearing about or witnessing victimization or harassment of LGBT people unknown to the participant (based on the DHEQ; Balsam et al., 2013)

*Victimization*: Physical assault at work because of being lesbian or gay (based on the DHEQ; Balsam et al., 2013)

*Vigilance*: Hiding the fact that a person is lesbian or gay from other police officers (based on the DHEQ; Balsam et al., 2013)

### **Assumptions**

For this study, it was assumed that the anonymous surveys would be completed by currently active police officers. Another assumption was that although this was a highly sensitive topic for many, respondents would answer honestly since there would be no way for anyone to discover their identities. Finally, it was assumed that the DHEQ was the appropriate instrument to use for this research, and that individual two-tailed *t* tests were the best statistic to test the data as per the revised purpose and revised research questions.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The scope of this study was limited to lesbian and gay police officers and did not include other sexual minorities (e.g. bisexual, transgender) or other masculinized industries (e.g. firefighters). Therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalized to other sexual minorities or other masculinized industries other than lesbian and gay police officers. In addition, the DHEQ was not be used in its entirety. For example, the family subscale and the HIV subscale are not deemed pertinent to this study, but according to Balsam et al. (2013), using only some of the subscales did not invalidate the results, nor be a limitation.

### **Limitations**

Although the anonymous online survey tool (Survey Monkey) was available to lesbian and gay police officers across the country, because this may have been considered a sensitive topic by sexual minorities in a masculinized industry, the responses appeared to be skewed to more LGBT friendly areas such as the Pacific Zone (California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, Hawaii). Additionally, Collins (2013) stated that research in this area may be difficult because participants who are not out as lesbian or gay at work may not respond to the online survey, and experiences of closeted police officers will be different from openly lesbian and gay police officers. This may have been a limitation in this study, as reflected by the low response rate and the high level of disclosed sexual orientation reported by the participants and discussed further in Chapter Five. Another limitation to this study was that the responses were not in a normal distribution, which is a requirement for a *t* test. This could have made the *p* value less reliable. Additionally, because the responses were anonymous and only general demographic information was collected to assure anonymity (e.g. general location in the United States, size of police force), there was no way to determine whether the police department had negatively entrenched heterosexist attitudes, or if the department was pro-active in supporting sexual-minorities.

### **Significance of the Study**

This research attempted to fill a gap in understanding by comparing the SMS factors in lesbian and gay police officers across the United States compared to the established population. This study attempted to add to the literature on LGBT groups

working in masculinized industries by collecting quantitative data from both lesbian and gay participants in the same study, and by comparing SMS data to the established lesbian and gay population to determine whether lesbian and gay police officers reported more or less SMS, as measured by certain stressors, compared to the established population.

### **Significance to Theory**

Some researchers have shown that sexual minorities have more stress than heterosexuals and therefore have more health and psychological problems (Cochran & Mays, 2009), especially in the masculinized industry of policing (Dentato, 2012; Waldo, 1999). However, there remains a gap in the quantitative research that confirms whether lesbian and gay police officers experience more SMS as measured by the individual stressors of feelings of vigilance, harassment/discrimination, isolation, vicarious trauma, and victimization, compared to the established population of lesbian and gay as determined by the DHEQ study by Balsam et al. (2013). The results of this study intended to help others understand whether a being a lesbian/gay police officer indicated a higher level of SMS than the lesbian/gay population that did not necessarily identify as being a police officer. These results may lead to changes in policy-making and practice in police departments.

### **Significance to Practice**

This study could help mental health professionals better address the different sexual-minority stressors experienced by lesbian and gay police officers versus lesbian and gay persons who are not police officers. Ultimately, supporting lesbian and gay officers (through departmental policies and training, and better mental health counseling)



could improve physical and mental health for sexual-minority police officers (Coleman & Cheurprakobkit, 2009; Collins, 2016; Dentato, 2012; Galvin-White & O'Neal, 2015; Hassell & Brandl, 2009; Israel et al., 2017; Mennicke et al., 2016; Meyer, 1995, 2003; Waldo, 1999).

### **Significance to Social Change**

The results of this study could inform positive social change in several ways. One way would be in providing statistical data that would help law enforcement administrators update departmental policies regarding the harassment and discrimination against lesbian and gay officers (Coleman & Cheurprakobkit, 2009; Collins, 2016; Galvin-White & O'Neal, 2015; Mennicke et al., 2016), especially as younger officers take over the administrative and authoritative roles. Another way this study may impact social change would be to inform the training of heterosexual officers when working with lesbian and gay officers (Coleman & Cheurprakobkit, 2009; Collins, 2016; Israel et al., 2017; Mennicke et al., 2016) and even with sexual-minority community members (Hassell & Brandl, 2009). Finally, learning which stress factors most or least affect lesbian and gay police officers could help police psychologists and other mental health practitioners work with these individuals on serious psychological issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and suicide ideation (Dentato, 2012; Hassell & Brandl, 2009; Meyer, 1995, 2003; Waldo, 1999).

### **Transitional Summary**

Moving forward, Chapter 2 includes an explanation of the search strategies used for this study. The literature review portion covers SMS theoretical foundation. It also

covers an overview of the research on sexual minorities in masculinized industries, focusing on police. Despite the granting of equal rights for sexual minorities, bullying still occurs in masculinized industries against LGBT workers. Studying and comparing the levels of certain SMS factors may result in quantitative data to show how lesbian and gay police officers are experiencing SMS in terms of their feeling of vigilance, harassment/discrimination, isolation, and victimization. Possible implications for positive social change are many, including a better understanding of which of the subscales of SMS most affect lesbian and gay police officers. The data may also help promote social change by informing departmental policy and educating police psychologists who work with sexual-minority police officers, thereby promoting an accepting and positive work environment which, in turn, could reduce SMS.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Introduction

Law enforcement is one of the most stressful occupations, due in part to the fact that they are on the front lines of crime prevention and face the possibility, every day, of being killed in the line of duty (Can & Hendy, 2014; Hassell & Brandl, 2009; Ma et al., 2014; Spielberg et al., 1981; Violanti et al., 2016). Police officers who are LGBT, face the added stress of being a sexual minority in a militaristic and masculinized occupation (Collins, 2013; Collins & Callahan, 2012; Colvin, 2009; Herek, 1989; Mennicke et al., 2016). There is a lot of research about the stress heterosexual police officers face on the job (Can & Hendy, 2014; Hassell & Brandl, 2009; Ma et al., 2014; Spielberg et al., 1981; Violanti et al., 2016). There is also significant research regarding minority stress for sexual minorities (Bostwick et al., 2014; Tebbe & Moradi, 2016; Wilson et al., 2016; Zimmerman et al., 2015). However, there remains a dearth of quantitative studies that combine the two and concentrate on the stress felt by sexual-minority police officers (Charles & Arndt, 2013; Colvin, 2009; Galvin-White & O'Neal, 2015). This study will attempt to fill that gap. The lack of studies in this area is why some of the articles in this literature review are not within a 5-year time-frame.

Some lesbians and gays report discrimination and hostility in the masculinized LE industry (Burke, 1994; Charles & Arndt, 2013; Collins, 2015; Collins & Rocco, 2015; Galvin-White & O'Neal, 2016; Hassell & Brandl, 2009; Mennicke et al., 2016). The result of sexual-orientation based discrimination is often SMS, which can lead to poor physical and mental health (Bostwick et al., 2014; Dentato, 2012; Meyer, 1995; Waldo,

1999). The problem to be examined in this study is that even though sexual-minority status is considered invisible (Rumens & Broomfield, 2012) and can be kept hidden from heterosexual coworkers, that does not lessen the impact of negative factors such as vigilance, harassment and discrimination, isolation, vicarious trauma, and victimization, all of which can cause stress in that individual (Balsam et al., 2013; Burke, 1994a, 1994b; Collins, 2013; Herek, 1989). The main purpose of this quantitative study is to compare these five, self-reported stress factors from the Daily Heterosexist Experiences Questionnaire (DHEQ; Balsam et al., 2012) as experienced by lesbian and gay police officers, in order to discover if lesbian and gay police officers experience more stress than the established population, and which factor, if any, stands out as the greatest stressor for the lesbian/gay police officers. Knowing which stressor is the greatest may help inform the creation of less discriminatory departmental policies and more supportive law enforcement (LE) trainings and mental health interventions.

This literature review begins with an overview of search strategies used, and then moves on to an examination of minority stress theory, which was adapted by Meyer (1995, 2003) for use with sexual-minorities and thus termed sexual-minority stress (SMS). This review continues with a description of how lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) persons fought back against heterosexist acts on the part of the police, which could be viewed as hate crimes. Police actions against LGBT persons was (and still is to a certain extent) due to the fact that LE in America is a militaristic (Bernstein & Kostelac, 2002; Couto, 2014; McMichael, 2016) and masculinized industry (Collins, 2013, 2015; Collins & Callahan, 2012; Collins & Rocco, 2015), that sometimes

perpetuates homophobia (Dwyer, 2015; Lyons et al, 2005; Olivero & Murataya, 2001).

The intersection of sexual-minorities and LE has been found to create conflict between the two groups to this day. This literature review continues with studies about the causes and effects of police stress and a discussion of how stress in LE can be treated, followed by a review of stressors faced by sexual minorities, especially those in LE. The goal of this literature review is to provide an overview of all the components that are related to or contribute to SMS in sexual-minority police officers.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

The primary method for searching for literature related to this topic was through Google Scholar, which was linked to the Walden University database. Google Scholar was generally set to gather articles from the past five years, but when that did not produce enough supporting documentation, the span of years was opened up even to reach back into the 1980s in order to use seminal works. The oldest peer reviewed article in this paper dates to 1980. The need to include much older articles than usually acceptable in a research was because there was a dearth of articles on the topic of minority stress and sexual-minority stress (SMS) and sexual-minority police officers in general. The following are search terms that were included, but not limited to: *masculinized industries*, *sexual-minority stress*, *police officers*, *lesbian police officers*, *gay police officers*.

### **Theoretical Foundation: Minority Stress**

Brooks coined the term *minority stress* in 1981 to describe stressors placed on oppressed and marginalized minorities (Smith & Ingram, 2004). Minority stress is when a minority faces discrimination from a stigmatizing society, which then leads to feelings

of stress on the part of the minority, which, in turn, leads to psychological and physical ill-health (Meyer, 1995, 2003). Meyer (1995, 2003) operationalized the term sexual-minority stress as negative feelings experienced by LGBT persons related to actual discrimination and rejection (including violence), expectations of discrimination and rejection, internalized homophobia, and concealment of sexual-orientation.

Meyer (1995) stated that the concept of SMS was “not based on one congruous theory, but is inferred from several social and psychological theoretical orientations” (p. 39). In looking at past research on minority stress, Meyer noted that some researchers had concluded that there was no such thing as minority stress and, therefore, no such thing as sexual-minority stress. For example, Mirowsky and Ross (1980) studied minority stress in ethnic minorities versus Whites, and they concluded that it was not race but socioeconomic status (SES) that determined how much stress a person felt. Those of lower SES felt more stress than those of higher SES, which meant that wealthy ethnic-minorities would not have any minority stress and would therefore experience no negative psychological or physical health effects (Mirowsky & Ross, 1980).

Disputing this conclusion, Meyer (1995) stated that comparisons between two different groups could lead to sampling bias. For example, Meyer noted that in gay-straight sampling, the gay men who would respond to such a survey would likely be more comfortable with their sexuality, and self-acceptance allowed a person to feel less psychological distress. Therefore, comparing self-accepting gay men and heterosexual men was not a valid study because the non-self-accepting gay men who would feel more stress, would not self-select to be part of the study, resulting in a biased sample of gay

men. For this reason, Meyer studied in-group variability in order to “examine the differential effect of minority stress on minority members” (p. 40). Meyer found different levels of stress within a group of gay men who were socioeconomically advantaged, this went against Mirowsky and Ross’s (1980) conclusion that SES was the main cause for stress, while confirming Meyer’s assertion that comparing different groups could lead to sampling bias. However, in a review of the literature in 2003, Meyer acknowledged that lesbians, gays, and bisexuals did feel more stress as compared to heterosexuals, according to research that came after his 1995 study, even when comparing self-assured sexual minorities to heterosexuals.

In a more recent study, Wight, Harig, Aneshensel, and Detels (2015) found a disparity in mental health between sexual minorities (aging gay men) and heterosexuals, and attributed the higher rate of depressive symptoms in the sexual minorities to the stress related to their sexual-minority status, confirming the existence of SMS. In a focus group study of 43 gay, lesbian, and bi-sexual (GLB) participants, Hequembourg and Brallier (2009) found that the participants “reported negative societal perceptions of their sexual identities, stresses associated with disclosure in different venues...and negative outcomes associated with these stressors” (p. 292). Another study showed that LGBT persons who disclosed their sexual-orientation experienced less stress than those LGBT persons who kept their sexual-orientation hidden, and that the process of coming out was conducive to sexual-minority growth and may actually have served as a protective factor against SMS (Vaughan & Waehler, 2010). Never-the-less, SMS was present. Overall, SMS appears to be a valid construct that affects sexual-minorities.

Following this path logically, in 1981 Brooks coined the term “minority stress,” which was the theory that ethnic minorities felt more stress than the dominant culture (e.g. Whites; Smith & Ingram, 2004). Meyer (1995, 2003) then took this theory and transferred it to sexual-minorities, stating that sexual-minorities felt more stress than the dominant sexual culture (heterosexuals), leading to what he termed SMS. However, SMS has not yet been tied to an explanation or a prediction of how lesbian or gay police officers experience SMS on the job, which is why the result of this study may be so important for the research foundations of stress, sexual-minority studies, and police officer stressors.

## **Homosexuality in America**

### **Hate Crimes**

One thing that has led to SMS is that LGBT persons have long been seen as a deviant society and have been the victims of discrimination and violence. Hate crimes are perpetuated against such groups as ethnic minorities, religious minorities, mentally challenged, physically challenged, and people who identify as LGBT (Craig, 2002; Everett, Saint Onge, & Mollborn, 2016; Herek, 1989). *Hate crimes* have to do with bias or discrimination against a person or a group of people as opposed to a *crime of convenience* where a perpetrator attacks a victim who is handy rather than basing the attack on bias against that person’s skin color or sexual-orientation, for example (Craig, 2002; Herek, 1989; Noga-Styron, Reasons, & Peacock, 2012). The victims of sexual-minority hate crimes perceive more psychological distress than those who are victims of nonbiased crimes, and they experience posttraumatic stress for a long time after the event



and show more symptoms of anxiety, depression, and anger (Craig, 2002; Herek, 1989), and that even *perceived* discrimination can lead to increased stress (Everett, Saint Onge, & Mollborn, 2016). Often, hate crimes serve as symbolic assaults, as though the victim were a representative of all members of that group (Craig, 2002). For example, in the harassment of one gay man or a homosexual couple, the gay person/couple becomes the symbol and scapegoat for the entire LGBT group.

The perpetrators of hate crimes may belong to an organized hate group (e.g., the Klu Klux Klan; Herek, 1989), though that has not been found to be the norm (Craig, 2002). However, perpetrators may find themselves in a group where they may not act the way they normally would, but they are caught up in the group mentality. Membership in groups is part of human nature (Woods, 2014). Group membership provides identification such as ethnic groups, family groups, and even work groups, and while group membership fosters positive concepts such as loyalty, it can also promote violence (Woods, 2014). Woods (2014) wrote about criminality in gangs, and while groups of police officers would not be called “gangs,” the buy-in to the group mentality may be exhibited even in a group of police officers. For example, when police are acting together, they may create a perpetrator’s group where each individual officer feels pressured to behave in ways she or he normally would not behave if she or he were not with this group (Craig, 2002). In many instances, it is likely that a single police officer would not act in a physically or even verbally discriminatory way towards an individual; however, when she or he becomes a part of a group of police officers, the officer may feel shame in not going along with the others, or she or he may feel strength in the safety

of numbers (Craig, 2002). There is also the fact that there is a diffusion of responsibility when one person is acting as part of a group (Craig, 2002). An example of this would be LE's excessive use of force (e.g. the Rodney King case), which Alang, McAlpine, McCreedy, and Hardeman (2017) termed a form of police brutality. On the other hand, Ariel, Farrar, and Sutherland (2015) stated that the "rate and frequency" (pg. 514) of excessive force was low.

It has been noted that hate crimes are usually perpetrated by a group of offenders, which, in turn, ruin intergroup relations (Craig, 2002). Cooper (2015) explained that the war on drugs has caused some of the police brutality against Black youth and adults with the institution of the stop and frisk policy and the Special Weapons and Tactic (SWAT) teams. Participants in this study reported "psychological, physical, sexual, and neglectful" (p. 1192) forms of police brutality. Another example of what could be described as a hate crime would be when police officers act as perpetrators against homosexual civilians, which has been a well-documented scenario, resulting in bad intergroup relations between the police and LGBT groups (Armstrong & Cragg, 2006; Herek, 1989; Noga-Styron, Reasons, & Peacock, 2012). It has been noted that victims of antigay hate crimes are less likely to report the crime to the police because of fear of further victimization (Herek, 1989) which are not limited to physical confrontations but can include "verbal assault and psychological intimidation" (Alang, et al., 2017 pg. 662).

### **The Stonewall Inn**

There were other examples of LGBT groups pushing back against police harassment before the famous riots of 1969 at Greenwich Village's Stonewall Inn, which

Lyons, DeValve, and Garner (2008) stated were caused by police harassment and Armstrong and Crage (2006) claimed were caused by police repression. For example, in 1965 there was a raid of a “homophile” (Armstrong & Crage, 2006, p. 733) New Year’s Eve ball in San Francisco, where patrons were intimidated by being photographed by police officers as the patrons entered the ball (the assumption was that these photos would be used against them, possibly by being shown to employers) and a few were arrested. In 1966, a small riot erupted in Comptom’s Cafeteria in San Francisco during a police raid (Armstrong & Crage, 2006). During a 1966–67 New Year’s celebrations in Los Angeles, plainclothes members of the LAPD harassed and then beat homosexual patrons of the Black Cat bar. It was reported that the LA police were aggressive and hostile, and gay rights were not supported or even rarely covered in Los Angeles’ newspapers, so there was not a lot of press about the incident even though there were subsequent demonstrations and lawsuits against police brutality, though nothing came of them (Armstrong & Crage, 2006).

It was not until the Stonewall Inn, however, that LGBT patrons fought back against the intimidating and aggressive oppression of the police with overwhelming unity (Armstrong & Crage, 2006; Noga-Styron, Reasons, & Peacock, 2012). The Stonewall Inn was a homosexual bar in New York City that sold liquor illegally and had no running water (Armstrong & Crage, 2006). While homosexual establishments and patrons were used to being harassed and raided during the 1960’s, this time the LGBT patrons did not simply put up with the humiliating treatment; this time they stood up to their police tormentors, which is why the riots at the Stonewall Inn became a turning point in the gay

liberation movement (Armstrong & Crage, 2006; Noga-Styron, Reasons, & Peacock, 2012).

In the intervening years since the Stonewall riots, police harassment against LGBT people has abated, but it has not completely dissipated (Lyons, DeValve, & Garner, 2008). According to research, some of this antagonism on the part of LE officials can be explained by examining the concept of LE being a masculinized and militaristic industry (Collins, 2015; Collins & Callahan, 2012; Collins & Rocco, 2015; Couto, 2014; McMichael, 2016; Mennicke et al., 2016).

### **Masculinized Industries**

Sklansky (2006) stated that 30 to 40 years ago, American LE used to be “overwhelmingly white, virtually all-male, [and] pervasively homophobic” (p. 1223). The reason for this was that police officers, like firefighter, soldiers, and even carpenters, belong to what has been identified as a *masculinized industry* (Collins, 2015). Masculinized industries employ “men embodying heterosexual work styles” (Collins & Callahan, 2012, p. 456) who also have “a common history requiring for employment – explicitly or implicitly – willingness to do physical labor or face job hazards” (Collins, 2013, p. 245). Based on a militaristic organization, policing is naturally militant and draws its members into a *brotherhood* that is traditionally heterosexist, heterosexual and hypermasculine (Couto, 2014), and is still seen today as militaristic (McMichael, 2016).

Over the years, the military has changed its stance on homosexuals in service. President Harry Truman, in 1950, signed the Uniform Code of Military Justice, which was a ban on homosexuals in the military and which was supported 30 years later by

President Reagan (Bailey, Lee, & Williams, 2013). The fear was that lesbian and gay service women and men would corrupt the moral and cohesion of the unit (Bailey, Lee, & Williams, 2013). President Clinton came up with the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy which allowed closeted lesbians and gays to serve in the military, but banned anyone who was openly homosexual. This policy was not repealed until 2011 at the instigation of President Obama. Polls have shown that the public has become more open to homosexuals in the military on the one hand, but on the other hand, many Americans still hold negative stereotypes of the LGBT community (Bailey, Lee, & Williams, 2013). Baily, Lee, and Williams (2013) did find, however, that the more personal contact a person has with someone in the LGBT community, the more accepting the person will become. However, if an LGBT person is afraid of heterosexism, she or he may remain closeted in order to avoid overt acts of prejudice. The same may hold true for police officers who, while not directly affected by the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy, may decide to remain safely closeted. Despite the more open stance of the military with regards to sexual minorities, many might still consider the military as a masculinized industry, much as policing is described as a masculine industry.

In his literature review, Collins (2015) discussed a masculinized industry as being a White, heterosexual, male-dominated work context. This included LE, though the literature covered other masculinized industries as well. Collins (2015) used thematic analysis in three stages for the 109 articles he found concerning masculinized industries, looking for themes. He found two overarching themes and several subthemes having to do with traditions and customs and policies and practices that may be detrimental to gay

men in masculinized industries. These themes and subthemes were implicit in-groups, ideal manliness, hierarchy of power, and rules for acceptable approach to work (Collins, 2015). For example, ideal manliness has to do with men competing “to validate their own perceptions of the masculine ideal” (Collins, 2015, p. 426). In jobs that require a high amount of physical strength and inherent danger, a man could be seen as being more masculine than a man who works in an office position, for example. And, often, the more masculine the man (and woman) in a masculinized industry, the better off the person will be in terms of pay raises and promotions (Collins, 2015). For example, an openly gay officers may be perceived as less masculine than heterosexual officers, and will therefore become part of the out-group, as opposed to the implicit in-group, “even if they exhibit behaviors and actions generally deemed as masculine in heterosexual men” (Collins, 2015, p. 430).

These ingrained themes common in masculinized industries do not mesh well with the ideals and actions of sexual-minorities. Collins and Rocco (2015) phenomenologically studied gay male police officers from three large Florida PDs to find out what it was like to be gay in a masculinized industry. They conducted their study through the lens of experiential learning theory (ELT), which posits that adults learn when they reflect on their experiences and thereby construct meaning and internalize this new information in order to use it in future situations. After gathering the data, Collins and Rocco (2015) analyzed the interviews and came up with five themes, which they called the *rules of engagement*. All of the data was discussed in terms of these “rules.” One thing they found was that there is a perception that law enforcement is changing and

that openly gay officers are more accepted than they used to be. However, they also suggested that police training should de-emphasize the heterosexual, White, male image of policing in order to make the police culture more accepting of racial and sexual minorities (Collins and Rocco, 2015).

Mennicke et al. (2016) used focus groups with 14 criminal justice officers who attended an LGBT law enforcement conference, in order to better understand workplace experiences of lesbian, gay, and bisexual officers in the masculinized industry. Mennicke et al. found that expected themes were supported by their data. One theme was that lesbian officers were portrayed as masculine, which was why they fit into the masculinized police culture. On the other hand, gay officers were portrayed as effeminate, and if they were still closeted, acted hyper-masculine to avoid outing. Mennicke et al. also stated that their findings differed from previous quantitative research and that their data showed that gay and lesbian officers faced overt and excessive discrimination such as gay men reporting that they were not hired because of their sexual orientation, or being fired for their sexual orientation. Covert aggressions were reported such as a gay officer's co-workers made the police patch with a rainbow background and sent it out in an email, but did not confront the gay officer personally. Some officers reported that while there were some supportive policies in the department, the policies did no good if the management did not uphold them. This suggested that although federal laws were changing to be more inclusive of sexual-minorities, inclusion was not being supported by individual, heterosexual police officers or management. However, it should be noted that it is impossible to state that all police departments across the United

States foster an anti-gay work environment even with the history of law enforcement being a masculinized industry. In some areas (e.g. San Francisco) there are more open and affirming practices, while in other parts of the country there are undoubtedly police departments with little to no tolerance for sexual-minorities. But no matter the environment of the police department, LGBT individuals will respond to their environments based not only on the prevailing atmosphere of the department, but also on their personal histories. It is beyond the scope of this study to determine all the factors that go into a subjects' responses to the questionnaire used in this research.

Whether an officer is LGBT or heterosexual, *male machismo* (e.g. traditionally masculine and physically challenging) still dominates this masculinized industry (Swan, 2015), and the dangers faced by police officers are very real as they are exposed constantly to violence, aggression, and cruelty. Being a police officer, no matter what her or his sexual orientation, is an occupation where an employee is required to constantly face danger and to put her or his life on the line (Spielberger, Westberry, Grier, & Greenfield, 1981). This constant threat of extreme danger is one of the primary causes of police officer stress, whether the officer is a sexual minority or a heterosexual.

### **Police Stress**

Spielberger et al. (1981) conducted a study of what events and situations created stress for police officers and concluded that police stressors could be divided into three major groups: administrative issues and professional pressure; psychological stress and physical dangers; and a lack of support not only from within the police organization, but from without. The Spielberger Police Stress Survey has been used to measure police



stress in many studies. Violanti et al. (2016), in an analysis of variance comparing mean frequency of occurrence and mean stress ratings, found that four of the top five stressors were related to violence on the job. These stressors were highly rated, even if they had a low prevalence, such as having a partner killed or killing someone in the line of duty (Violanti et al., 2016). Ma et al. (2014), in an analysis of variance and covariance of stressful events based on shift, found that afternoon and evening shift work created more stress than working a day shift. Additionally, police stress is not limited to large departments; even small town police officers face stressors, and they may be at even more risk than large departments because of the lack of support services (Can & Hendy, 2014).

### **Mental Health**

One reason it is important to know what causes stress for *all* police officers is because the information can help police psychologists know how best to approach mental health issues caused by stress. For example, being involved in critical incidents may lead to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD; Ménard, Arter, & Khan, 2016). PTSD, in turn, may lead to substance abuse, physical pain, suicide ideation, or the worsening of an existing psychological disorder (Torchalla & Strehlau, 2017) such as intermittent explosive disorder, all of which could interfere in a police officer's ability to perform her or his job at an optimum level. Because PTSD can interfere with a person's ability to cope, it is important to find successful interventions that mental health workers can use. For example, from their review of the literature, Torchalla and Strehlau (2017) found that eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) was one of the best treatments

for PTSD. Marcus, Marquis, and Sakai (1997) studied EMDR on people with PTSD and found significantly lower symptoms of depression and anxiety. Posttreatment, 77% of the experimental group no longer qualified for a diagnosis of PTSD, providing evidence that EMDR effectively treats PTSD (Marcus et al., 1997). When mental health professionals understand the stressors and the effects of those stressors, they are better able to come up with strategies, such as EMDR, to use when counseling police officers.

### **Alcohol Use**

Stressors on the job can also lead to increased use of alcohol. In a study of police officers from five countries, Ménard et al. (2016) had 1,286 women and men complete the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT). The results of the study showed that younger males from larger communities were associated with higher AUDIT scores and that 25% of the sample was scored as having a drinking problem (Ménard et al., 2016). Negative coping was associated with these AUDIT scores, suggesting that mental health interventions could include positive coping mechanisms (Ménard et al., 2016) in addition to traditional substance-use counseling.

In a multivariate analysis of data from the *Police Stress and Domestic Violence in Police Families in Baltimore, Maryland*, Zavala and Kurtz (2017) found that officers with low self-control were more likely to have problems with alcohol consumption. They also found that exposure to critical events lowered an officer's self-control, which in turn could lead to increased alcohol use (Zavala & Kurtz, 2017). Many other studies show connections between stress and increase alcohol consumption by police officers (Ménard, & Arter, 2013; Weir, Stewart, & Morris, 2012; Zavala & Kurtz, 2016), highlighting a

need for interventions on the part of mental health professionals working with police officers that not only include empirically sound substance use interventions, but also target low self-esteem, work related stress, and suicide ideation, all of which are related to increased alcohol use (Weir et al. , 2012).

### **Suicide**

Suicide (ideation, attempts, and completion) is a mental health issue for police officers (Chae & Boyle, 2013; Mishara & Martin, 2012; Stanley, Hom, & Joiner, 2016). In a review of 63 quantitative studies on suicide with first responders, Stanley et al. found that though there were few studies linking PTSD with suicide, all studies that did found a statistically significant link with regards to police officers. Stanley et al. reported that there is a dearth of research linking PTSD and suicide for first responders. They also stated that along with further studies, there needs to be “greater understanding of mental health among first responders, increased compassion, reduced stigma, and scientifically informed prevention and treatment efforts to inoculate against preventable morbidity and mortality (e.g., suicide)” (p. 41). On the other hand, Aamodt and Stalnaker (2001) did not find a connection between LE and higher rates of suicide. Aamodt and Stalnaker found that although LE suicide rates were at 18.1 compared to 11.4 for the general public, the authors stated that the higher rate was not because the subjects were LE, but the higher rate had to do with the subjects’ gender, age, and race. Never-the-less, as Aamodt and Stalnaker (2001) stated, “even one suicide is too many” (pg. 10), so whether future studies show that LE do or do not have a higher rate of suicide than non-LE, creating

supportive mental health programs to help combat suicide ideation for LE is a win-win proposition.

### **Training Programs**

It is important to know what causes stress for police officers “in order to provide essential information to be used in the development of curricula for stress management training programs for police officers” (Spielberger et al., 1981, p. v). Violanti (2014) stated that organizational support may help police officers deal with stress related to violent events such as seeing dead or abused children. Organizational support can come in the form of departmental trainings to increase resiliency factors and to provide better coping skills (Ménard, Arter, & Khan, 2016). For example, Arnetz, Nevedal, Lumley, Backman, & Lublin (2009), found that relaxation techniques and imagery practices improved coping mechanisms in police officers. Manzella and Papazoglou (2014) found that journaling and mindfulness exercises helped police officers build resiliency and supported coping strategies. Negative coping mechanisms also have to be addressed. For example, anger management training (which could help with intermittent explosive disorder, for example) would provide stress reduction, according to Can and Hendy (2014), because repressed anger was an unhealthy coping mechanism used by officers in their study of 201 small town police officers.

Another training possibility is *The Coherence Advantage* program, which was created to build resiliency and reduce symptoms of stress (McCraty & Atkinson, 2012). In their study, McCraty and Atkinson (2012) found that The Coherence Advantage program provided many benefits, including, but not limited to, reduced anger and

sadness, increased peacefulness, improved work performance, and greater confidence and clarity even when under increased stress. It would be beneficial if police supervisors understood what types of stressors their officers faced and looked for trainings to help their women and men cope in positive ways, thereby increasing productivity and decreasing stress-related incidents such as inappropriate use of force or driving accidents (McCraty & Atkinson, 2012).

Ménard et al. (2016) recommended that all police officers have required mental health services and screenings, just as physical health and firearms competency is assessed throughout a police officer's career. Clearly, it is critical to understand what stressors all police officers face in order to better help them deal with the psychological manifestations of that stress through trainings and individual counseling in order to ameliorate issues such as mental health disorders, substance use, and suicide ideation. All police officers face these stressors and would benefit from these interventions; however, lesbian and gay police officers face stressors above and beyond those faced by heterosexual officers because LE is a masculinized and militaristic industry (Burke, 1994; Charles & Arndt, 2013; Collins, 2015; Collins & Rocco, 2015; Galvin-White & O'Neal, 2016; Hassell & Brandl, 2009; Mennicke et al., 2016), as previously reported.

### **Sexual Minority Stressors in Law Enforcement**

In addition to the stressors faced by all police officers as summarized above, sexual-minorities in a masculinized industry may also experience increased feelings of vigilance, fear of facing harassment and discrimination, feelings of isolation, experiencing vicarious trauma, and feeling victimized (Balsam et al., 2013). All of these

negative stress factors have been shown to play a part in SMS, which can lead to increased psychological risks and physical ailments (Balsam et al., 2013).

### **Vigilance**

Even in states that do recognize sexual orientation as a class protected against discrimination, if lesbian or gay officers are concerned that their heterosexual peers will not accept them, they have to keep their sexual orientation a secret (Collins & Callahan, 2012; Herek, 1989). They might do this by watching what they say around heterosexual officers, pretending to be heterosexual, or not discussing personal events or situations with heterosexual officers (Balsam et al., 2013; Mennicke et al., 2016). For example, an officer might naturally want to share news about the adoption of a child, but if it could lead to questions about why the officer and her or his partner (probably presumed by heterosexual officers as a person of the opposite gender) did not have their own child, it could lead to revealing that the officer is in a same-sex relationship.

### **Harassment and Discrimination**

Sexual-minorities often fear harassment and discrimination (Herek, 1989; Mennicke et al., 2016). For this reason, sexual-minorities take on “gender-appropriate behavior [such as avoiding] certain gestures or clothing styles because they fear being labeled as gay” (Herek, 1989, p. 948). An example of this this might include the stereotypical hand movements of gay men. A gay officer trying to hide his sexual identity might purposely act hyper-masculine (Mennicke et al., 2016) and even go so far as to practice walking in a “manly” way. Harassment and discrimination includes being called names such as “dyke” or “fag,” or people making verbal or visual jokes at the

expense of a sexual-minority (Balsam et al., 2013). A visual joke could include showing a “limp wrist” to indicate a gay man, or prancing timidly to evoke a stereotypical gay persona in order to get a laugh out of others.

*Isolation:* Interpersonal relationships are difficult to form when a sexual-minority is hiding her or his sexual status, which, in turn, can lead to feeling a lack of well-being (Collins, 2013). Colvin’s (2009) research was an attempt to better understand the work lives of gay and lesbian police officers, taken from a survey of 66 officers at a the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference of Gay & Lesbian Criminal Justice Professionals. Colvin (2009) looked at the combined experiences of gay and lesbian officers, and found that the biggest barriers were discrimination against promotion (22%), assignments (17%), and evaluations (16%). The majority of gay and lesbian officers reported social isolation and having to listen to homophobic talk, especially if the heterosexual officers did not know that a gay/lesbian officer was there (e.g. gay/lesbian officer not out).

*Vicarious Trauma:* This happens when lesbians or gays hear about other sexual-minorities being ridiculed or treated unfairly (Balsam et al., 2013). A lesbian or gay police officer out on a call regarding a crime against an LGBT person or group could quite possibly experience vicarious trauma on the way to the scene, at the scene, and during any follow up work where a heterosexual officer makes heterosexist jokes and comments.

*Victimization:* According to the DHEQ, victimization is when harassment gets physical and sexual-minorities are assaulted (or the attempt is made) because of their sexual orientation (Balsam et al., 2013).

All of these negative factors lead to SMS (Collins, 2013, Lewis et al., 2002). If lesbian and gay officers were supported in their sexual-minority status and did not fear coming out of the closet, it would free up their energy to help their organization reach its goals (Gedro, 2013), which, in this case, would be to focus on police best practices. In addition, because lesbian and gay officers may be hiding their sexual status from co-workers, they may stay away from work functions and events that are often used as a way to build comradery within a department. Choosing not to participate in these teambuilding afterhours events because of fear of harassment and victimization can isolate lesbian and gay officers even more, leading to greater SMS.

Staying safely in the closet is one way that a lesbian or gay officer might cope with the anticipated negative effects of presenting as a sexual-minority at work (Collins, 2013; Mennicke et al., 2016). Charles and Arndt (2013) conducted a qualitative study that used life history questionnaires and semi-structure interviews of 14 gay and lesbian police officers regarding when and how and why those officers chose to share their sexual orientation with fellow officers. Charles and Arndt (2013) also studied what impact coming out of the closet had on the gay/lesbian officer's careers once they came out. The authors used extended case method (ECM) as their theoretical approach and methodology which, they stated, offered better data collection options than case studies, and which had been used in previous studies with LGBT populations. ECM allowed the authors to present information gathered from the interviews even if it was not frequently brought up, which was different from grounded theory that looked for common themes amongst the interview data. Charles and Arndt (2013) found that participants were



generally happy with their career choice but that sexual identity microaggressions were a negative component of their work and affected their overall satisfaction. The gay and lesbian officers in this study chose to come out depending on the level of microaggressions and the level of institutional support for LGBT officers. The results of this study highlight the importance of creating supportive PD environments where sexual-minority officers feel safe to disclose without fear of harassment or bullying based on their sexual orientation.

Galvin-White and O'Neal's (2016) qualitative study was an attempt to fill the gap regarding literature about lesbian police officers and the degree of disclosure with regards to workplace relationships. The authors conducted 15 in-depth interviews and, using grounded theory, they identified repeated themes. What they found was that sexual orientation and degree of disclosure were less influential on work relationships than job performance, work ethic, and reputation. They also found that disclosing sexual orientation had a positive effect on work relationships with heterosexual co-workers, but the degree of disclosure varied and was an evolving process, influenced by police department climate (Galvin-White & O'Neal, 2016).

In a very straight forward presentation, Rumens and Broomfield (2012) used the stigma-based model for their work, which considered the fact that being gay was an invisible stigma, and that disclosure depended on personal and contextual factors. The choice became whether a person should disclose and possibly face discrimination at work, or live a lie at work and hope not to be outed. Using qualitative data, Rumens and Broomfield (2012) found that gay police officers in the UK chose to come out for three

main reasons: personal integrity; improving workplace relationships; inspiring other gay/lesbian/bisexual officers to come out. The authors also found that there were some supportive police departments and there were still some departments that were more the traditional, masculinized climates that are often described in the LGBT studies (Rumens & Broomfield, 2012).

Hassell and Brandl (2009) quantitatively studied how the interactions of race, sex, and sexual orientation affected officers in the Milwaukee Police Department. The reasoning for this study was that police departments need a more diverse force in order to better work with diverse civilian groups. Hassell and Brandl (2009) reasoned that in order to create more diverse police departments, work climate, which is affected by such things as race, sex, and sexual orientation, needed to be examined. They used existing data from questionnaires filled out in 2004, and they looked at the variables of officer characteristics, workplace experience, and workplace stress. What they found was that White, male officers had the most positive work experience and those with the least representation, such a minority, female, and gay/lesbian officers had the least positive work experiences. If sexual-minorities felt more supported by PD policies, they might be willing to disclose their sexual orientation which, in turn, could lessen some of the effects of SMS.

Lesbians and gays also cope in masculinized industries by trying to fit in and adopting “the characteristics of the prevailing culture” (Loftus, 2008, p. 772), which is to say that gays, who are stereotypically characterized as feminine (Mennicke et al., 2016) and who “tend to be more emotional when dealing with stress” (Collins, 2013, p. 246)

would try to act extra masculine at work. On the other hand, lesbians, who are stereotypically seen as masculine (Mennicke et al., 2016), are perhaps better suited for a job in a masculinized industry. This leads to the question of whether lesbians face more or less stress as police officers than do gay men who are men-gendered, but who are often seen as feminine-acting (Mennicke et al., 2016).

Table 1

*Stereotypes*

Stereotypical police officer	Stereotypical Lesbian	Stereotypical Gay
White	possibly	possibly
male-gendered	no	yes
acts masculine	yes	no

Then again, Gedro (2013) pointed out that people are not stereotypes; in fact, “not all lesbians are masculine, and not all gay men are feminine” (p. 130). There are the lipstick lesbians who are so called because they appear to be the antithesis of the masculine lesbian, and there is the bear sub-culture of gay men who are hairy and cuddly and apparently at ease with being masculine, in contrast to the feminine gay stereotype (Gedro, 2013). Whether lesbians or gays fit the stereotypes or not, staying in the closet is one way to avoid some of the external stressors of being a sexual-minority in a masculinized industry (Collins, 2013; Mennicke et al., 2016). This study attempted to fill the gap in the literature as to whether lesbian and gay officers, no matter what the status

of their disclosure or what the predominant pro-gay or anti-gay atmosphere of their police department, experienced more SMS, as measured by the individual factors of feelings of vigilance, harassment/discrimination, isolation, vicarious trauma, and victimization, according to the DHEQ (Balsam et al., 2013) than the established population.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

As reviewed in this chapter, there is a history of tensions between LGBT groups and the police, though there has been an improvement since the Stonewall Inn riots in 1969. Even with more lesbian and gay officers disclosing their sexual-minority status, some tensions persist. These tensions may lead to SMS for lesbian and gay officers, associated with feeling of vigilance, harassment and discrimination, isolation, vicarious trauma, and victimization (Balsam et al., 2013).

Because it is well documented that sexual-minorities experience more stress than heterosexuals, it was therefore redundant to study homosexual versus heterosexual stress. In addition, because masculinized industries such as policing traditionally are heterosexist, and since heterosexism in the workplace has been shown to produce more stress in lesbian and gay workers (Waldo, 1999), SMS was an appropriate measure to use for this study.

This study built upon previous research by measuring lesbian and gay stress in the past year, as identified by sexual-minority police officers using a portion of the DHEQ (Balsam et al., 2013). It was, however, beyond the scope of this study to take into account racial/ethnic minority status, SES-based stress, time on the job, or if a person was or was not closeted at work, or the prevailing atmosphere at her or his police department.

The main purpose of this study was to compare the self-reported SMS stressors of lesbian and gay police officers to the established population in order to discover if lesbian or gay police officers experienced more SMS than lesbians and gays who did not identify as police officers. The IV was sexual orientation which was a dichotomous variable and had two independent groups (police officers, established population), and the DVs, as measured using the DHEQ (Balsam et al., 2013), were individual measures of feelings of vigilance, harassment/discrimination, isolation, vicarious trauma, and victimization in the past year.

Chapter 3 covers the rationale for the research design as well providing an overview of the methodology, including a description of the population, sampling strategies, and data collection. In addition, Chapter 3 contains a review of the validity of the DHEQ (Balsam et al., 2013) and a discussion of ethical considerations for this study.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

The main purpose of this quantitative study was to compare five self-reported SMS factors that lesbian and gay police officers may experience, to determine if lesbian and gay police officers experience more SMS than the established population. Additionally, this study attempted to discover which factor, if any, stood out as the largest stressor for the police officers. The dependent variables (DVs) were measured using five of the subscales of the DHEQ (Balsam et al., 2013). These subscales included feelings of vigilance, harassment/discrimination, isolation, vicarious trauma, and victimization in the past year, all measured in Likert-type continuous scales. The IV was sexual orientation which was a dichotomous variable and had two independent groups (police officers, established population).

This chapter contains an explanation of the research design, the methodology, the measurement tool, the analysis plan, and ethical considerations. Also reviewed in this chapter is the validity and reliability of the DHEQ instrument.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

There have been several studies of lesbian and gay police officers, but they are predominantly qualitative in nature; in fact, there is a dearth of quantitative studies focusing on stress experienced by lesbian and gay police officers. For this reason, the research design for this dissertation was a quantitative, comparative study of SMS experienced by lesbian and gay police officers. This quantitative study originally planned to use a MANOVA for statistical analysis to interpret the levels of SMS as

indicated by the DHEQ scores (see Chapter 4 for deviations from the plan); however, I determined that independent two-tailed  $t$  tests would be a better fit due to the low response rate. The significance level was set at .05. The results of this study could inform future police policy and could help mental health counselors work with this population.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

After a thorough search of the literature, the following research questions and corresponding hypotheses were created as the best ones to address the concept of SMS for lesbian and gay police officers.

Research Question 1: Do the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study experience more or less feelings of vigilance in the past year compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) using the DHEQ?

$H_1$ : There is a significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of vigilance in the past year, using the DHEQ.

$H_0$ : There is no significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of vigilance in the past year, using the DHEQ.

Research Question 2: Do the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study experience more or less feelings of harassment and discrimination in the past year compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) using the DHEQ?

*H<sub>12</sub>*: There is a significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of harassment and discrimination in the past year, using the DHEQ.

*H<sub>02</sub>*: There is no significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian/gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of harassment and discrimination in the past year, using the DHEQ.

Research Question 3: Do the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study experience more or less feelings of isolation in the past year compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) using the DHEQ?

*H<sub>13</sub>*: There is a significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of isolation in the past year, using the DHEQ.

*H<sub>03</sub>*: There is no significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian and gay population value



that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of isolation in the past year, using the DHEQ.

Research Question 4: Do the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study experience more or less feelings of vicarious trauma in the past year compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) using the DHEQ?

*H<sub>14</sub>*: There is a significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of vicarious trauma in the past year, using the DHEQ.

*H<sub>04</sub>*: There is no significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of vicarious trauma in the past year, using the DHEQ.

Research Question 5: Do the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study experience more or less feelings of victimization in the past year compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) using the DHEQ?

*H<sub>15</sub>*: There is a significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of victimization in the past year, using the DHEQ.

*H<sub>05</sub>*: There is no significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of victimization in the past year, using the DHEQ.

## **Methodology**

### **Population**

For the purposes of this comparative, quantitative survey design dissertation, the target population consisted of self-selected lesbian and gay police officers from small, medium, and large law enforcement agencies across the United States. Inclusion criteria was that the active police officer be lesbian or gay, closeted or out. The only excluding criteria was if the person was heterosexual or identified as bisexual as opposed to lesbian or gay, and/or was not an active-duty police officer. The established population values were taken from the research by Balsam et al. (2013) in their creation of the DHEQ.

### **Sampling and Sampling Procedures**

Surveys were disseminated through snowball sampling using previously made contacts, social media (e.g. Facebook), and through police organizations as well as LGBT police organizations, all methods of which have been used by other researchers (Collins, 2013). The surveys were confidential and anonymous and submitted by the participants electronically through Survey Monkey. A notice at the beginning of the survey stated that the officer was giving her or his informed consent by completing the survey and submitting it to Survey Monkey. According to G\*Power calculations, 88 participants were suggested for each group for the original study using a MANOVA to calculate the

results; however, because of the low response rate, it was determined that 27 was an appropriate number of respondents for two-tailed independent  $t$  tests. At the conclusion of this dissertation, there are recommendations to future researchers for duplicating this study with more participants.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection (Primary Data)**

Participants were recruited anonymously through snowball sampling and by dissemination through contacts in LGBT police organizations. Additionally, links to the survey were posted on Facebook. Data was collected for three months, much longer than the anticipated four-week limit in the proposal. The low response rate is discussed in the limitations portion of this dissertation.

The survey requested demographic information as to where the participants were located (using a map with the 50 states divided into zones), size of the police department, age, number of years on the job, sexual orientation, and level of “outness.” For example if 90% the participants were from the Northwest, it would not be important to compare this location to the other 10%. On the other hand, if 50% were from the west coast and 50% were from the Northeast, it might be important to see if there were similarities or differences according to geographic location. The same held true for size of police department, age, and number of years on the job. However, this survey did not measure the objective level of heterosexism in individual police departments. This was a self-report survey based on an individual’s subjective feelings of SMS, using a portion of the DHEQ, so were no objective measures of heterosexism in this study.

Part of the survey included an informed consent, describing how the participants were voluntary and anonymous, how the results of this study would only be used for this dissertation, and the names of organizations that support LGBT police officers if counseling was needed. Data was collected in the form of a short version of the DHEQ which consisted of a 26-question survey using a Likert-like scale from 0 (Did not happen) to 5 (It happened, and it bothered me extremely).

### **Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs**

**The daily heterosexist experiences questionnaire.** Balsam et al. (2013) created the DHEQ in order to assess the reactions to discrimination experienced by LGBT persons, which subsequently has been shown to lead to SMS. In fact, part of the title of their study was “Measuring Minority Stress Among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Adults” (Balsam et al., 2013, p. 1); therefore, it is clear that this survey instrument is a measure of SMS. In addition, the authors suggested that the DHEQ could be use in whole or in part and that researchers could “select only subscales relevant to their research purposes or the population being studied” (Balsam et al., 2013, p. 14).

Using 12 focus groups and 17 in-depth interviews, Balsam et al. (2013) constructed a 10-factor, 60 question survey to assess SMS in LGBT persons. Once they had created their survey, the authors conducted a web-based survey validation, whereby they refined the factors and the questions by conducting an anonymous survey of 900 LGBT participants across the United States. This study resulted in the authors changing the survey, which they then disseminated to 1,217 LGBT participants in the United States. This third study resulted in a final survey that now consists of 50 questions and 9

factors of vigilance, harassment and discrimination, gender expression, parenting, victimization, family of origin, vicarious trauma, isolation, and HIV/AIDS (Balsam et al., 2013). The authors found that their final version of the DHEQ had “psychometric properties that show promise for its use in future research” (Balsam et al., 2013, p. 12). Additionally, they found that the overall score as well as the nine subscale scores reflected good internal reliability “as demonstrated by item factor loadings and Cronbach’s alphas” (Balsam et al., 2013, p. 12). Most importantly for the purposes of this study, Balsam et al. (2013) found that “higher scores on subscales were generally related to greater emotional distress and to perceived overall LGBT discrimination” (p. 12).

The authors suggested that the DHEQ could be use in whole or in part and that researchers could “select only subscales relevant to their research purposes or the population being studied” (Balsam et al., 2013, p. 14).

With the permission of the authors (see Appendix A), five factor subscales (vigilance, harassment and discrimination, victimization, vicarious trauma, and isolation) along with their corresponding 26 questions (4 - 6 questions per factor), were used to form the survey for this study (see Appendix B). The responses were measured in a Likert-like scale (Balsam et al., 2013):

0 = Did not happen/not applicable to me

1 = It happened, and it bothered me NOT AT ALL

2 = It happened, and it bothered me A LITTLE BIT

3 = It happened, and it bothered me MODERATELY

4 = It happened, and it bother me QUITE A BIT

5 = It happened, and it bothered me EXTREMELY

Balsam et al. (2013) stated that their survey instrument was flexible and could be used to determine “the extent to which participants are distressed by these [heterosexist] experiences” (p. 14), and since the purpose of this study was only to determine what level of SMS lesbian and gay officers experience, the responses were scored with 0 and 1 recoded to 1 (did not bother). Then a mean score was calculated for each factor, indicating the level of distress experienced by the participant for that particular factor subscale.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS software. Statistical tests included were descriptive and inferential statistics. Demographic variables (geographic location, age, size of PD, years on the job, sexual orientation, and level of “outness”) were reported in terms of frequency and percentages using descriptive statistics. Central tendencies of the dependent variables (factors/subscales of vigilance, harassment and discrimination, victimization, vicarious trauma, and isolation) measured mean, range, and standard deviation. When it was determined that there would be no more than 30 respondents in the allotted time for the survey collection, the statistical test was changed from a MANOVA to independent two-tailed *t* tests (see Chapter Four for more about deviations from the plan).

### **Threats to Validity**

A threat to external validity could have been that any lesbian or gay police officer who responded to a survey may have been more self-confident in her or his sexuality (Balsam et al., 2013), and therefore did report distress over any of the factors in the short-DHEQ. This could have been especially true since these participants were self-selected and self-reporting, which could cause random errors to reliability (Drost, 2011). As for construct validity, Balsam et al. (2013) reported that the DHEQ “showed good psychometric properties including internal consistency, concurrent validity, and construct validity” (p. 11). However, external validity “implies generalizing to other persons, settings, and times” (Drost, 2011, p. 120), and because the responses were not in the normal distribution (see Limitations in Chapter Five), the *p* value was less reliable, therefore external validity was impaired.

### **Ethical Procedures**

The most important ethical issue with regards to this study was to maintain the anonymity of the participants. All the surveys were conducted through Survey Monkey, which is an online survey portal that allowed anonymity of participants. Nowhere in the information gathered was there any identifying information. For example, even the United States was divided into zones rather than cities or states, in order to increase anonymity and hopefully to increase a feeling of security on the part of the participant. As discussed in chapter two, being a sexual-minority in a masculinized industry may cause stress above and beyond the stress of being a police officer and putting her or his

life on the line every day. Despite the delicate nature of this study, according to the Walden University IRB, sexual-minorities are not considered a vulnerable population.

In addition, the survey instrument clearly stated that this was not only anonymous, but that participation was 100% voluntary. Also, the survey instructions stated that participants could choose to withdraw from completing the survey at any time. A list of supportive LGBT police organizations and contact information was provided so that anyone who participated and felt the need for support had an outlet. All data collected for this dissertation will be electronically destroyed and paper copies will be shredded at the time that this dissertation is approved for publication or at the five-year mark, whichever is sooner.

### **Summary**

This chapter covered the research design, the methodology, the DHEQ (including validity and reliability of the instrument), the analysis plan, and any ethical considerations. The purpose of this quantitative study was to compare five self-reported sexual minority stress (SMS) factors that lesbian and gay police officers may experience, in order to determine if lesbian and gay police officers experience more SMS than the established population. The dependent variables (DVs) were measured using five of the subscales of the DHEQ (Balsam et al., 2013). These factors included feelings of vigilance, harassment/discrimination, isolation, vicarious trauma, and victimization in the past year, all measured in Likert-like continuous scales. Chapter four reports the results of this study, while chapter five consists of a discussion, conclusions and pertinent recommendations.



## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The original purpose of this quantitative study was to compare five self-reported SMS factors experienced by lesbian and gay police officers in order to discover if lesbian or gay police officers experienced more SMS, and which factor, if any, stood out as the biggest stressor for either group. However, the purpose of this study changed in order to accommodate the low number of responses to the survey. The purpose of this quantitative study became a comparison of five self-reported SMS factors experienced by lesbian and gay police officers as compared to the established population. The IV was sexual orientation which was a dichotomous variable and had two independent groups (police officers and the established population), and the DV, as measured using subscales of the DHEQ (Balsam et al., 2013), were feelings of vigilance, harassment/discrimination, isolation, vicarious trauma, and victimization in the past year, all measured in Likert-type continuous scales. This chapter includes an overview of the data collection methods, deviations from the original plan due to low participation rate, descriptive characteristics of the sample, a section on data analyses, and a presentation of the result of this study.

### **Data Collection**

On 8/21/2018 the Walden IRB approved this study. The data collection plan consisted of eliciting participants who identified as lesbian or gay and who were also active police officers to answer a short and anonymous survey on Survey Monkey. This was accomplished through snowballing with prior contacts, posting the invitation to

participate on social media, and reaching out to police departments and to lesbian/gay police organizations, all in the United States. The original intent was to use a MANOVA to compare the stress levels of lesbian officers and gay officers. According to GPower calculations, the study would require 88 lesbian participants and 88 gay participants to produce statistically significant results.

The day the IRB approved the study, and for the following few days, the requests for participants were sent out electronically (see Appendix C). On 8/27/2018 there was only one response. By 9/7/2018 there were five responses. On 9/9/2018, Dr. Jana Price-Sharps (dissertation chair) reached out to a colleague in a police department in the Pacific zone who said she would share the survey with her officers. On 9/19/2018 there were still only five participants, but by 9/23/2018 there were 11, and then by 9/26/2018 it was up to 22. On 9/26/2018, Dr. Price-Sharps offered to pass out fliers at the Society for Police and Criminal Psychology annual conference, which she did. On 10/3/2018 the number of participants was up to 26, still a long way from the hoped for 176 participants. On 10/27/2018, every person and every organization that had been contacted on the first request for participants was once again sent an email. On 10/30/2018 the participants totaled 17 lesbian police officers and 13 gay police officers, for a total of 30. That number did not change even up to 11/30/2018.

Table 2 shows that the majority of respondents were openly lesbian or gay ( $n = 23$ ) and the remainder had many coworkers who were aware they were lesbian or gay ( $n = 7$ ). Implications of “outness” for this study and for future studies is discussed in Chapter 5.

Table 3 indicates that the majority of respondents ( $n = 23$ ) came from very large (1000+) departments. The sample for this study was gathered from across the United States (Table 4); however, there was definitely a skew to the Pacific region, likely due to responses from the Pacific zone connection. Five participants did not put in a location because the survey did not include the Western half of the United States until after 9/23/2018 (but they did answer all other survey questions). Table 5 shows that almost half ( $n = 12$ ) of the respondents have been an officer for 11 to 17 years. Table 6 shows that 20 respondents were aged 46 and over.

Table 2

*Frequency Table – Openly Lesbian/Gay*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid many coworkers know	7	23.3	23.3	23.3
I am openly lesbian/gay	23	76.7	76.7	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 3

*Frequency Table – Size of PD*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	very small 1-25	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	small 26-50	2	6.7	6.7	13.3
	medium 51-100	1	3.3	3.3	16.7
	large 101-1000	2	6.7	6.7	23.3
	very large 1000+	23	76.7	76.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 4

*Frequency Table – Location of PD*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	New England	1	3.3	4.0	4.0
	Mid Atlantic	1	3.3	4.0	8.0
	East N. Central	1	3.3	4.0	12.0
	South Atlantic	1	3.3	4.0	16.0
	West S. Central	2	6.7	8.0	24.0
	Western	1	3.3	4.0	28.0
	Pacific	18	60.0	72.0	100.0
	Total	25	83.3	100.0	
Missing	System	5	16.7		
Total		30	100.0		

Table 5

*Frequency Table – Years on Force*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0-2 years	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	3-5 years	2	6.7	6.7	10.0
	6-10 years	2	6.7	6.7	16.7
	11-17 years	12	40.0	40.0	56.7
	18-25 years	7	23.3	23.3	80.0
	25+ years	6	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 6

*Frequency Table – Age of Respondent*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	28-34	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
	35-45	6	20.0	20.0	33.3
	46+	20	66.7	66.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

### **Deviations from the Plan**

The purpose of this data collection was to measure and ultimately compare SMS between lesbian and gay police officer participants. Because the participation rate was so low for this study, it was determined that in order to run statistically significant tests, it would be best to use individual two-tailed *t* tests, and that the dichotomous IV (lesbian, gay) should be combined into one group and then compared as a whole to the established population value of the lesbian and gay community as measured by Balsam et al. (2013),

using their Daily Heterosexist Experiences Questionnaire (DHEQ). Based on these changes, it was calculated that an adequate group size was 27 participants. Therefore, the research questions were changed to fit this new plan. Each DV (vigilance, harassment/discrimination, isolation, vicarious trauma, and victimization) was now a separate variable.

The research questions were:

Research Question 1: Do the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study experience more or less feelings of vigilance in the past year compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) using the Daily Heterosexist Experiences Questionnaire?

*H<sub>1</sub>*1: There is a significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of vigilance in the past year, using the DHEQ.

*H<sub>0</sub>*1: There is no significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of vigilance in the past year, using the DHEQ.

Research Question 2: Do the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study experience more or less feelings of harassment and discrimination in the past year compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) using the DHEQ?

*H<sub>12</sub>*: There is a significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of harassment and discrimination in the past year, using the DHEQ.

*H<sub>02</sub>*: There is no significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian/gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of harassment and discrimination in the past year, using the DHEQ.

Research Question 3: Do the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study experience more or less feelings of isolation in the past year compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) using the DHEQ?

*H<sub>13</sub>*: There is a significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of isolation in the past year, using the DHEQ.

*H<sub>03</sub>*: There is no significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of isolation in the past year, using the DHEQ.

Research Question 4: Do the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study experience more or less feelings of vicarious trauma in the past year compared to

the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) using the DHEQ?

*H<sub>14</sub>*: There is a significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of vicarious trauma in the past year, using the DHEQ.

*H<sub>04</sub>*: There is no significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of vicarious trauma in the past year, using the DHEQ.

Research Question 5: Do the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study experience more or less feelings of victimization in the past year compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) using the DHEQ?

*H<sub>15</sub>*: There is a significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of victimization in the past year, using the DHEQ.

*H<sub>05</sub>*: There is no significant difference between the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) in feelings of victimization in the past year, using the DHEQ.



### Procedures for Recruitment, Participation Study Results

According to the directions written by Balsam et al. (2013), on scoring the DHEQ, the survey scores of 0 and 1 were combined as a 1 = *It happened, and it bothered me not at all*. The rest of the scores remained as they were on the survey: 2 = *It happened, and it bothered me a little bit*; 3 = *It happened, and it bother me moderately*; 4 = *It happened, and it bothered me quite a bit*; 5 = *It happened, and it bothered me extremely*. Descriptive statistics analysis was conducted on the five DVs as summarized in Table 7. The mean level of feelings of vigilance in the past year was 1.67 ( $SD = .92$ ). The mean level of feelings of harassment and discrimination was 1.75 ( $SD = .93$ ). The mean level of feelings of isolation was 1.80 ( $SD = .88$ ). The mean level of feelings of vicarious trauma was 3.22 ( $SD = 1.18$ ). The mean level of feelings of victimization was 1.07 ( $SD = .16$ ).

Table 7

#### *Descriptive Statistics Mean Levels of Feelings*

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean
Vigilance	30	1.67	.92	.17
Harrass. & Discrim.	30	1.75	.93	.17
Isolation	30	1.80	.88	.16
Vic. Trauma	30	3.22	1.18	.22
Victimiz.	30	1.07	.16	.03

The results of the DHEQ (Balsam et al., 2013, pg. 25), which were used as the established population values, were reported by gender (male and female), and they were

also reported by sexual identity categories of Lesbian/Gay or Bisexual. Lesbian and Gay were not divided out, so this study compared all 30 lesbian and gay participants to the DHEQ established population values. In other words, it was not possible to try to compare this study's lesbian participants to the DHEQ lesbian population (which probably would not have been a statistically significant  $t$  test because of low sample size, but which may have been interesting, nonetheless).

A two-tailed  $t$  test was conducted on each DV to determine if there was a significant difference between feelings that lesbian and gay police officers reported as compared to the established lesbian and gay population value (see Table 8). There were five DVs, so there were five hypotheses tested.

RQ 1. In the case of RQ 1, Do the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study experience more or less feelings of vigilance in the past year compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) using the DHEQ?, there was a significant difference in what lesbian/gay police officers reported ( $M = 1.67$ ) as compared to the established population value of 3.01 ( $t(29) = -7.96, p < .05$ ). Since the  $p$ -value was less than the alpha value of .05, the null hypothesis was rejected.

RQ 2. In the case of RQ 2, Do the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study experience more or less feelings of harassment and discrimination in the past year compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) using the DHEQ?, there was a significant difference in what lesbian/gay police officers reported ( $M = 1.75$ ) as compared to the established

population value of 2.70 ( $t(29) = -5.58, p < .05$ ). Since the p-value was less than the alpha value of .05, the null hypothesis was rejected.

RQ 3. In the case of RQ 3, Do the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study experience more or less feelings of isolation in the past year compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) using the DHEQ?, there was a significant difference in what lesbian/gay police officers reported ( $M = 1.80$ ) as compared to the established population value of 3.00 ( $t(29) = -9.11, p < .05$ ). Since the p-value was less than the alpha value of .05, the null hypothesis was rejected.

RQ 4. In the case of RQ 4, Do the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study experience more or less feelings of vicarious trauma in the past year compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) using the DHEQ?, there was a significant difference in what lesbian/gay police officers reported ( $M = 3.22$ ) as compared to the established population value of 4.49 ( $t(29) = -5.91, p < .05$ ). Since the p-value was less than the alpha value of .05, the null hypothesis was rejected.

RQ 5. In the case of RQ 5, Do the lesbian and gay police officer participants from this study experience more or less feelings of victimization in the past year compared to the established lesbian and gay population value that was measured by Balsam et al. (2013) using the DHEQ?, there was a significant difference in what lesbian/gay police officers reported ( $M = 1.07$ ) as compared to the established population

value of 2.26 ( $t(29) = -40.87, p < .05$ ). Since the p-value was less than the alpha value of .05, the null hypothesis was rejected.

As reviewed above, for every hypotheses tested, there was a significant difference ( $p < .05$ ), in which case all null hypotheses were rejected. This meant that there was a significant difference between the levels of feelings of vigilance, harassment and discrimination, isolation, vicarious trauma, and victimization compared to the established population values determined by Balsam et al. (2013), using the DHEQ. Because all the results were statistically significant with the alpha set to .05, it was determined that a post-hoc test for significance was not needed. In addition, the capitalization on chance was 23%.

Table 8

*Results of Two-Tailed T Tests*

	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
VIGILANCE test value: 3.01*	-7.959	29	.000	-1.33778	-1.6816	-.9940
HARRAS/DISCR test value: 2.70*	-5.575	29	.000	-.95000	-1.2985	-.6015
ISOLATION test value: 3.25*	-9.117	29	.000	-1.45833	-1.7855	-1.1312
VICAR. TRAUMA test value: 4.49*	-5.909	29	.000	-1.27333	-1.7140	-.8326
VICTIMIZ. test value: 2.26*	-40.871	29	.000	-1.19333	-1.2530	-1.1336

Note: \* denotes DHEQ subscale mean from Daily Heterosexist Experiences Questionnaire (Balsam et al., 2013)

### **Summary**

This chapter reviewed the original intentions of this study, the data collection process, and an explanation of the deviation from the original plan due to the low participation rate. The data was explained in terms of demographics and descriptive analyses. The revised purpose of this study was to use a comparative, quantitative approach to determine if lesbian and gay police officers felt more or less SMS compared to the established population value of five subscales from the DHEQ. For each of the research questions based on those subscales (vigilance, harassment and discrimination, isolation, vicarious trauma, victimization), the data showed that the null hypotheses could be rejected. In other words, lesbian and gay police officers' levels of vigilance, harassment and discrimination, isolation, vicarious trauma, and victimization significantly differed from the established population.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

The original purpose of this quantitative, comparative study was to measure five self-reported SMS factors experienced by lesbian and gay police officers in order to discover if lesbian or gay officers experienced more SMS. The IV was sexual orientation which was a dichotomous variable and had two independent groups (lesbian and gay), and the DVs, as measured using subscales of the DHEQ (Balsam et al., 2013), were feelings of vigilance, harassment/discrimination, isolation, vicarious trauma, and victimization in the past year, all measured in Likert-type continuous scales. The revised purpose of this study was to use a comparative, quantitative approach to determine if lesbian and gay police officers, as a group, felt more or less sexual minority stress (SMS) compared to the established population value on five subscales from the DHEQ (Balsam et al., 2013). For each of the research questions based on those subscales of feelings vigilance, harassment and discrimination, isolation, vicarious trauma, and victimization, the data showed that the null hypotheses could be rejected. According to this study, lesbian and gay police officers' levels of vigilance, harassment and discrimination, isolation, vicarious trauma, and victimization significantly ( $p < .05$ ) differed from the established population values.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

Law enforcement (LE) is one of the most stressful occupations because police officers are on the front lines of crime prevention, daily facing the chance that she or he could be killed in the line of duty (Can & Hendy, 2014; Hassell & Brandl, 2009; Ma et

al., 2014; Spielberger et al., 1981; Violanti et al., 2016). Officers who are LGBT, face the added stress of being a sexual minority in a militaristic and masculinized occupation (Collins, 2013; Collins & Callahan, 2012; Colvin, 2009; Herek, 1989; Mennicke et al., 2016) and some lesbians and gays have reported discrimination and hostility in the LE industry (Burke, 1994; Charles & Arndt, 2013; Collins, 2015; Collins & Rocco, 2015; Galvin-White & O'Neal, 2016; Hassell & Brandl, 2009; Mennicke, Gromer, Oehme, & MacConnie, 2016). Researchers have shown that sexual-orientation based discrimination often leads to SMS, which can then lead to poor mental and physical health (Bostwick et al., 2014; Dentato, 2012; Meyer, 1995; Waldo, 1999).

Sexual minority status is considered invisible (Rumens & Broomfield, 2012) and presumably can be hidden from heterosexual coworkers. However, it is only invisible if lesbians and gays stay in the closet, which may entail a lot of trouble to maintain this invisible status. For example, in a study in Norway, Malterud and Bjorkman (2016) found that lesbians and gays used “a broad range of strategies...to conceal their sexual orientation” (p. 1343). Invisibility was maintained by such actions as “blunt denial” (p. 1343), changing the pronoun of a partner, or even going so far as to “having flings with persons of the opposite sex to conceal a homosexual orientation” (p. 1350). Invisibility is not a cloak, but can become a way of life, full of challenges that can have negative impacts on people.

The problem that was examined in this study was that even though sexual-minority status was considered invisible (Rumens & Broomfield, 2012), that invisibility did not necessarily lessen the impact of negative factors such as feelings of vigilance,

harassment and discrimination, isolation, vicarious trauma, and victimization, all of which are part of SMS (Balsam et al., 2013; Burke, 1994a, 1994b; Collins, 2013; Herek, 1989). Five subscales of the DHEQ were used to assess SMS that lesbian and gay police officers reported, in order to compare those scores to the established population values that were determined by Balsam et al. (2013). The established population values were based on 715 LGBT persons from across the United States who self-identified as LGBT (Balsam et al., 2013). The data in that study (Balsam et al., 2013) did not include information on occupational choice because that was not the focus of the study; therefore, it was unknown if any of the established population came from LE. The purpose of this current study was for lesbian and gay police officer to self-report feelings on the five subscales from the DHEQ (Balsam et al., 2013). For each of the five subscales (feeling of vigilance, harassment and discrimination, isolation, vicarious trauma, and victimization) the participants in this study reported significantly ( $p < .05$ ) less stress than the established population values. It is difficult to speculate why police officers reported feeling less SMS than the established population, considering that studies have found that police officers appeared to experience more stress than the general population (Can & Hendy, 2014; Hassell & Brandl, 2009; Ma et al., 2014; Spielberger et al., 1981; Violanti et al., 2016). It seemed logical then that lesbian and gay police officers would report higher levels on each of the five SMS subscales of vigilance, harassment and discrimination, isolation, vicarious trauma and victimization, not less.

One possible reason that lesbian and gay police officers reported less stress on the five SMS subscales was because of the level of “outness” reported by this study’s



participants. Mennicke et al. (2016) stated that lesbian and gay officers might not take a survey or be honest on a quantitative survey, for fear of losing their jobs. This appears more likely for those officers who were “in the closet” at work. However, recalling *Table 2*, 23.3% of the participants in this study stated that “many coworkers know I am lesbian/gay,” and 76.7% stated “I am openly lesbian/gay,” with the mean at 3.76 ( $SD = .43$ ). None of the 30 participants in this study stated “no one knows I am lesbian/gay” or “only my closest co-workers know I am lesbian/gay.” On the other hand, according to the Balsam et al.(2013) study, the general population value reported the following levels: 21.5% low level of being out; 57.1% medium level of being out; 21.4% high level of being out.

While staying “in the closet” is a way that lesbian or gay officers may cope with the anticipated negative effects of presenting as a sexual-minority at work (Collins, 2013; Mennicke et al., 2016), Galvin-White and O’Neal’s (2016) found that disclosing sexual orientation had a positive effect on work relationships with heterosexual co-workers, which could then lead to the lesbian and gay officers feeling less SMS. Vaughan and Waehler (2010) found that LGBT persons who disclosed their sexual-orientation experienced less stress than those LGBT persons who kept their sexual-orientation hidden. The process of coming out was conducive to sexual-minority growth and may have served as a protective factor against SMS (Vaughan & Waehler, 2010). In an older study, Meyer (1995) found that gay men who would respond to a survey were more likely be more comfortable with their sexuality. These reasons may account for the significantly lower levels of stress reported by the 30 lesbian and gay police officers as

compared to the established population values. It appeared that level of “outness” was related to level of stress (Collins, 2013; Galvin-White & O’Neal, 2016; Mennicke et al., 2016; Meyer, 1995; Vaughan & Waehler, 2010).

Another reason for the lower stress scores of this study’s lesbian and gay participants as compared to the established population values could have had to do with police training. Perhaps police training was a protective factor for lesbian and gay officers. For example, in a study of resiliency across many occupations as defined by O\*Net, Kossek and Perrigino (2016) highlighted the importance for “proactive education or stress-related interventions prior to exposure to the occupational risk” (p. 756) in police work. They also stated that police officers must be “allowed to take a work leave and have time for recovery. Such proactivity will reduce the costs to the individuals, co-workers, their families...as opposed to doing nothing and taking a laissez-faire approach to the risks of cumulative stress” (Kossek & Perrigino, 2016, pp. 756-757). One could consider that police departments have been proactive in these areas and the results are that lesbian and gay officers exhibit more resiliency and less stress than the established population.

### **Limitation of the Study**

The most important limitation to this study was the low number of participants (17 lesbian, 13 gay). Because of the small sample size, generalizability to the larger population of lesbian and gay police officers would be hard to support. In addition, because a lot of participants were from an urban city in the Pacific zone, which may be considered more “LGBT friendly,” the responses could be considered skewed and not as

valid as they would have been if all the participants were spread evenly across the United States. The results of this study cannot be generalized to all lesbian and gay police officers.

Another limitation to this study was that the responses were not in a normal distribution. A normal distribution is one of the requirements for a *t* test and which could make the *p* value less reliable. Again, a much larger sample size would have helped to alleviate this limitation to the study.

As noted in the previous section, the level of “outness” by the participants in this study may have skewed the levels of stress reported by the police officers because LGBT persons who have disclosed their sexual orientation may feel less stress (Balsam et al., 2013; Galvin-White & O’Neal, 2016; Meyer, 1995; Vaughan & Waehler, 2010). It would be helpful to find a way to sample lesbian and gay police officers and get a full range of “outness,” or even to conduct a study comparing officers who are out against officers who are closeted.

### **Recommendations**

A key recommendation for future studies would be to get a larger sample size. One way to do this would be to establish contact with more LGBT police organizations well in advance of starting the survey as well as possibly getting the required permissions from police departments across the country before starting the survey. Police departments sometimes need to see university IRB approval prior to asking its officers to participate in a survey. Additionally, police personnel are very busy and it can take a month or more for a request to be noticed. Therefore, permissions could take up to

several months, so preplanning with enough lead time would be a key to success.

Another way to get a larger sample size might be to offer some type of remuneration for filling out the survey.

Another recommendation is to try to include lesbian and gay officers who are *not* “out” to their co-workers. These officers may experience higher levels of SMS as compared to officers who are out and as compared to the established population. Additionally, future research could include bi-sexual and transgender police officers.

## **Implications**

### **Significance to Theory**

Although research has shown that sexual minorities tend to report more stress than heterosexuals (Cochran & Mays, 2009; Meyer, 1995, 2003; Wight, Harig, Aneshensel, & Detels, 2015), especially in the masculinized industry of policing (Dentato, 2012; Waldo, 1999), there was a gap in *quantitative* research to confirm or deny whether lesbian and gay police officers experienced more SMS than the established population. According to the results of this study, lesbian and gay police officers experienced significantly less SMS than the established population; however, that statement comes with severe limitations, as discussed in the previous section. Those limitation included skewed recruitment for participants as well as the high “outness level” of the participants.

### **Significance to Practice**

One goal of this study was to help determine what sexual-minority stressors impacted lesbian and gay police officers in order to help guide mental health

professionals in working with them. Despite the fact that this study showed that the participants self-reported significantly less SMS than the established population, mental health professionals who work with police officers should be aware that the lesbian and gay officers who are still in the closet may feel much higher levels of SMS, which was why they were not willing to participate in a survey about SMS. If a police officer confidentially reports an LGBT status, mental health practitioners could use portions of the DHEQ (Balsam et al., 2013) as part of an initial assessment, in addition to asking the officer her or his level of “outness.” It should be kept in mind that officers who are more “closeted” may experience much higher levels of stress than those who participated in this study.

### **Significance to Social Change**

One goal of this study was to collect data that law enforcement administrators could use to help them update departmental policies regarding the harassment and discrimination against lesbian and gay officers and to better reflect the diversity within the ranks and out in the community (Coleman & Cheurprakobkit, 2009; Collins, 2016; Collins & Callahan, 2012; Galvin-White & O’Neal, 2015; Mennicke et al., 2016). Another goal of this study was to help inform the training of heterosexual officers in working with lesbian and gay officers and community members (Coleman & Cheurprakobkit, 2009; Collins, 2016; Hassell & Brandl, 2009; Israel et al., 2017; Mennicke et al., 2016). There needs to be an increased awareness of LGBT co-workers, community members, and organizations that must start with senior management (Collins & Callahan, 2012; Gedro, 2013). The results of this study showed that the lesbian and

gay participants who were moderately to highly “out of the closet” self-reported lower levels of SMS than the established population. This may mean that lesbian and gay police officers who are “out” to their colleagues may be a good source of information for creating anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies and for training heterosexual officers about lesbian and gay officers and community members.

### **Conclusions**

This study attempted to fill the gap in knowledge about SMS and lesbian and gay police officers. Despite the fact that studies have shown that lesbian and gay police officers experience more stress than the general population (Dentato, 2012; Waldo, 1999), the data from this study showed that lesbian and gay police officers reported significantly ( $p < .05$ ) lower levels on feelings of vigilance, harassment and discrimination, isolation, vicarious trauma, and victimization as compared to the established population values. This could be because the majority (76.7%) of the participants stated “I am openly lesbian/gay” and the rest (23.3%) reported that “many coworkers know I am lesbian/gay,” with the mean at 3.76 ( $SD = .43$ ). Future studies should attempt to survey not just the officers who are out of the closet and willing to answer anonymous surveys, but especially those who may be afraid to come out of the closet for fear of experiencing distressing levels of vigilance, harassment and discrimination, isolation, vicarious trauma, and victimization. Future studies should not be limited to only lesbian and gay officers, but could also include bisexual and transgender officers. More studies on SMS for all LGBTQIA (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning or queer, intersex, and asexual or allied) police officers should

be conducted in order to better inform police policy, police trainings, and mental health interventions for all officers.

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## Appendix A: Permission to Use DHEQ

Re: the DHEQ

KB

Kimberly Balsam &lt;kBalsam@palou.edu&gt;

## Reply

Thu 10/12/2017, 9:57 AM

You

Flag for follow up. Start by Tuesday, October 17, 2017. Due by Tuesday, October 17, 2017.

You forwarded this message on 10/12/2017 1:52 PM

The Daily Heterosexual Experiences Questionnaire (DHEQ).pdf  
87 KB

## Download

Save to OneDrive - Personal

You are welcome to use it, just cite appropriately and let me know your results.

---Kimberly F. Balsam, Ph.D.

Past President, American Psychological Association's Division 44

Professor

Director, LGBT Area of Emphasis

Co-Director, Center for LGBT Evidence-Based Applied Research

Pacific Graduate School of Psychology

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Pronouns: She/her/hers

Commonwealth Club lecture on 9/22/16,

At the Crossroads: Oppression and Resilience in Diverse LGBT Communities.

Podcast can be found at:

<https://www.commonwealthclub.org/events/2016-09-22/crossroads-oppression-and-resilience-diverse-lgbt-communities>

On Tue, Oct 10, 2017 at 1:39 PM, Laura Williams <[malaurawriter@hotmail.com](mailto:malaurawriter@hotmail.com)> wrote:

Dear Dr. Balsam,

I am starting my dissertation for Walden University in forensic psychology, and I am going to study the stress levels of gay police officers versus lesbian police officers. I read your article "The Daily Heterosexist Experiences Questionnaire: Measuring Minority Stress Among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Adults" with a lot of interest, and I would like to be able to use portions of this questionnaire in my anonymous, online study.

Is there a process I need to go through in order to use the DHEQ in part or in its entirety? Is there a fee?

I look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely,

laura

*Laura E. Williams, LMHC, CSAC*

*PhD Forensic Psychology student*

[860-306-6118](tel:860-306-6118) (Hawaii time)

Appendix B: Portion of DHEQ Used in Survey

**Daily Heterosexist Experiences Questionnaire (DHEQ)**

The following is a list of experiences that LGBT people sometimes have. Please read each one carefully, and then respond to the following question: How much has this problem distressed or bothered you during the past 12 months? Please answer these questions from the point of view of your experiences on the job as a police officer.

0 = Did not happen/not applicable to me

1 = It happened, and it bothered me NOT AT ALL

2 = It happened, and it bothered me A LITTLE BIT

3 = It happened, and it bothered me MODERATELY

4 = It happened, and it bothered me QUITE A BIT

5 = It happened, and it bothered me EXTREMELY

1. Difficulty finding a partner because you are LGBT
2. Difficulty finding LGBT friends
3. Having very few people you can talk to about being LGBT
4. Watching what you say and do around heterosexual people
5. Hearing about LGBT people you know being treated unfairly
6. Hearing about LGBT people you don't know being treated unfairly
7. Hearing about hate crimes (e.g., vandalism, physical or sexual assault) that happened to LGBT people you don't know
8. Being called names such as "fag" or "dyke"
9. Hearing other people being called names such as "fag" or "dyke"
10. Hearing someone make jokes about LGBT people
11. Feeling like you don't fit in with other LGBT people
12. Pretending that you have an opposite-sex partner to people
13. Pretending that you are heterosexual
14. Hiding your relationship from other people
15. People staring at you when you are out in public because you are LGBT
16. Being verbally harassed by strangers because you are LGBT
17. Being verbally harassed by people you know because you are LGBT
18. Being treated unfairly in stores or restaurants because you are LGBT

19. People laughing at you or making jokes at your expense because you are LGBT
20. Hearing politicians say negative things about LGBT people
21. Avoiding talking about your current or past relationships when you are at work
22. Hiding part of your life from other people
23. Being punched, hit, kicked, or beaten because you are LGBT
24. Being assaulted with a weapon because you are LGBT
25. Being raped or sexually assaulted because you are LGBT
26. Having objects thrown at you because you are LGBT