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QUALITATIVE STUDY OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION IN LAW ENFORCEMENT

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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

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MA, Walden University, 2022

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

The experiences of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) persons working in law enforcement were examined in this qualitative research. While the workplace is often seen as a collaborative setting and efforts to accomplish shared objectives without discrimination or prejudice, this is not always true for LGBTQ law enforcement personnel. This research focused on gender identity and sexual orientation to highlight the difficulties as well as discrimination and harassment which can negatively impact LGBTQ officers' general well-being. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews from a sample of 11 LGBTQ law enforcement officers in the Pee Dee Region. Date was analyzed by manual coding. The results showed that discrimination and harassment does impact many officers in the workplace. More specifically the experiences of discrimination and harassment in the workplace, coping with the experience, emotions of opening up, and the impact on careers. This study adds to the body of research on LGBTQ discrimination in law enforcement, offering insights that may guide legislative reforms, training initiatives, and support systems to cater to the unique requirements of LGBTQ police. The results of the study may be used to advance a workplace culture in law enforcement that values and accepts all people and provides them with equal chances, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and to contribute to positive social change by increasing acceptance, advocacy, improving rights, developing policies to protect, and normalizing the coming out of LGBT individuals.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who is the head of my life, making all things possible. My mother, Ida Nelson, gave me life and has taught me that regardless of trials and tribulations. My mother taught me to push forward and stay focused on the prize of success. To my father, Louis C Nelson, thank you for the training and for giving me the tools needed to obtain my desires. To my godchild, Amira Wilborn, dreams are bigger than one mind can comprehend. To my cousin Dr. Sabrina Fields, who has been my guardian angel every step of the way on this dissertation journey. To God Be the Glory.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

LGBTQ Community and Workplace Discrimination

Advocating for diversity in the workplace concerning race, gender, and sexuality has come to the forefront as a diversity and inclusion issue (Lanham et al., 2019). Discrimination is a transitory behavior (Ghirardello, 2019). Discrimination, harassment, and exclusion from the working population are frequently experienced due to apparent non-conformity with heteronormativity (the sociocultural belief that being heterosexual is "normal") and prejudices about how women and men should look and interact (Lanham et al., 2019). For example, women who have been regarded to be "masculine" in their behavior or visual appeal or men who are viewed to be "feminine" in their behavior or appearance are frequently subjected to harassment or discrimination (Hoskin, 2019). Many lesbians, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) employees hide their sexual identity for fear of being subjected to discriminatory abuse or violence (Tan et al., 2021). Many LGBTQ employees face difficulties at work, including the unwillingness or inability of their managers to accept them for who they are and what they wear, being demoralized from using restroom facilities that are suitable for their sex, and intensified vulnerability to misuse and bullying coworkers (Smith et al., 2022).

LGBTQ discrimination in law enforcement and need for study to fill gap in literature

Law enforcement is entrusted to protect and serve their communities. Problems faced by people of color and women in law enforcement could offer insight into potential barriers that LGBTQ individuals may face (Mennicke, 2018). For years, LGBTQ law enforcement officers have experienced harassment, discrimination, inequality, and negative feelings (International Labour Organization, 2012; Kite & Whitley, 2016).

Although literature exists on the relationships between the (LGBTQ) community and police officers, there is little on LGBTQ in law enforcement (Mara et al., 2021). This study is intended to add to the current body of literature in bringing awareness to sexual and gender minorities in law enforcement and their experiences. In society, LGBTQ individuals enter a professional career in law enforcement (Geeng et al., 2022), but society often forces the LGBTQ community to remain silent and not disclose their sexual orientation openly within the department or community. Revealing their sexual orientation can result in discrimination, harassment and bias, within the department and the community (Tan et al., 2021).

Background of Study

Law enforcement is a profession dominated by masculine heterosexual males. Police culture is characterized by hegemonic masculinity (Angehrn et al., 2021). Despite this, law enforcement comprises a diverse group of individuals, the LGBTQ community (Collins & Rocco, 2018). However, LGBTQ law enforcement officers experience workplace discrimination due to their sexual orientation (Mennicke et al., 2018). LGBTQ law enforcement officers fear that revealing their sexual orientation will prevent them from promotion and lead to harassment and homophobia in the workplace. Policies and procedures are required to protect LGBTQ in the workplace to provide them with a sense of security from discrimination in the workplace (Mara et al., 2021). Knowledge about techniques in which employees respond to workplace diversity training can help in the organization and delivery of the training (Israel et al., 2017).

In the United States many corporations have enacted nondiscrimination policies for LGBT employees (Steiger & Henry, 2020). But public policy and administration are facing persistent issues against LGBT employees in the workplace (Baker & Lucas, 2017; Hur, 2020).

Although the police department has made changes, there continue to be challenges in creating a fair and diverse work environment for lesbian and gay officers.

Hate crimes against LGBTQ individuals are rarely reported to the police because the suspect seldom is convicted of the crime against the LGBTQ community (Mallory et al., 2021). These encounter stems from, but are not limited to, issues such as hate crime against gays individuals (Gerstenfeld, 2019). LGBTQ individuals have continued to be challenged by persistent homophobic attitudes, even from U.S. law enforcement personnel. The beliefs the police culture has adopted resulted from the under-policing of LGBTQ citizens when victimized but over-policing in places where they are comfortable (Dario et al., 2019). Because of these beliefs, officers who are LGBTQ are experiencing the same continued discrimination that LGBTQ communities face.

Policies to protect LGBTQ individuals in the workplace need to become a requirement in the workplace industry (Tamers et al., 2020). Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits businesses from discrimination based on race, color, religion, and sexual orientation (Bennett-Alexander and Hartman, 2019). However, discrimination by employers based on homosexuality is also a continuous fight (Lund, 2020). Human Resource Management (HRM) techniques have been used in developing protections for LGBTQ individuals to work in an environment free of discrimination and harassment. Although LGBTQ law enforcement officers are protected from such discrimination under these techniques, some agencies believe it is necessary to enact stricter and more specific policies and procedures to protect the rights of LGBTQ officers in the workplace (Garcia & Otto, 2019). Research states that Title VII was upgraded by the US

Supreme Court in 2020 to better protect LGBTQ employees in the workplace from harassment and discrimination, but more is still needed (McMullen & Williams, 2020).

Problem Statement

The problem is that LGBTQ law enforcement officers have experienced harassment and discrimination. Additionally, inequality and negative feelings concern working in the line of duty. Although literature exists on the relationships between the LGBTQ community and police officers, there is little research on LGBTQ officers. Everyone wants to feel safe in their workplace and community, regardless of their sexuality. Harassment and discrimination by law enforcement are already a problem in the United States; however, it is difficult for victimized officers to police their communities from both perspectives effectively. Despite progress in recent years, sexual orientation remains controversial within the law enforcement community, with debates over how it should be protected and recognized within the workplace (McMullen & Williams, 2020). While some argue that sexual orientation is a private matter that should not impact an individual's ability to perform their duties as a law enforcement officer, others say that it is a crucial aspect of an individual's identity that should be recognized and protected (Garcia & Otto, 2019).

The problem of sexual orientation in law enforcement is particularly relevant in light of the ongoing fight for LGBTQ+ rights and equality. Research has shown that LGBTQ+ individuals are more likely to experience discrimination and harassment in the workplace, including in law enforcement. It can lead to higher stress levels and lower job satisfaction, impacting performance and retention (Meyer, 2019). Additionally, evidence suggests that LGBTQ+ individuals may be underrepresented in law enforcement, as they may face barriers to

entry and advancement due to discrimination and bias (Holmes et al., 2020). Given the importance of diversity and inclusivity in law enforcement, it is crucial to understand the extent to which sexual orientation is a factor in hiring and promotion decisions and its impact on the experiences and outcomes of LGBTQ+ individuals within the field.

One of the main arguments favoring protecting sexual orientation within law enforcement is that it can lead to greater diversity and inclusivity within the workforce. Research has shown that diverse organizations are more effective as they can draw upon a broader range of experiences and perspectives (Meyer, 2019). It can be essential in law enforcement, where understanding and relating to different communities is crucial for building trust and cooperation (Galupo, 2020). By protecting sexual orientation, law enforcement agencies can create a more welcoming and inclusive environment, which can help to attract and retain talented individuals from diverse backgrounds. By protecting sexual orientation, law enforcement agencies can establish policies and procedures to address discrimination and harassment, creating a safer and more inclusive environment for all employees (Elkins, 2014). Others argue that it could lead to tension and conflict within the workplace, as individuals with different sexual orientations may have different values and beliefs. Some also say that protecting sexual orientation could limit an individual's freedom of expression, as they may feel pressure to conform to certain expectations or norms (Galupo, 2020).

Despite these concerns, evidence suggests protecting sexual orientation within law enforcement can have positive outcomes. Research has shown that when individuals feel supported and accepted within their workplace, they are more likely to be engaged and committed to their work (Meyer, 2019). It can lead to higher levels of job satisfaction and

performance, as well as lower levels of turnover (Galupo, 2020). Additionally, research has shown that organizations with inclusive policies and practices tend to have higher levels of innovation and creativity, as they can draw upon a broader range of experiences and perspectives. While there are concerns about the potential impact on freedom of expression and workplace dynamics, the evidence suggests that protecting sexual orientation can have positive outcomes, including higher job satisfaction and performance and lower levels of turnover. Ultimately, the decision to cover sexual orientation within law enforcement should be based on careful consideration of the benefits and potential drawbacks, as well as the values and goals of the agency.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand the perceptions of LGBTQ law enforcement officers regarding their experiences of discrimination and harassment in the workplace. Qualitative research provides readers with a representation of enough detail to show that the author's assumption makes sense (Yazan, 2015). The study addresses law enforcement officers with a different sexual orientation. This will be done through in-depth interviews to get a better understanding from the perspective of law enforcement. Conducting interviews with participants involves asking questions and receiving nonverbal and verbal responses (Ross-Sheldrick et al., 2019). Participants were asked a series of questions to gain a better understanding of their experiences.

The study adds to the growing body of literature that addresses challenges and opportunities for creating a more inclusive and welcoming environment for LGBTQ+ individuals in law enforcement through their experiences.

The community and law enforcement should come together, so law enforcement will understand the community and the community can understand law enforcement (Hodge & Sexton, 2020). This study may help the community to understand the benefit of having a police department that reflects the makeup of all members of society. The community may understand that police officers should be allowed to be who they are without malice and should be treated fairly and equally without mistreatment. Law enforcement should reflect the community, and the community encounters officers who reflect the community. Sexual minorities in law enforcement bring uniqueness to the police force and help represent the gay community (Couto, 2018). The department must recognize the quality an openly gay officer will bring to the department. Whereas the gay community may not be receptive to a heterosexual officer, they may embrace a gay officer because the individual feels like they can relate to a situation involving the gay community.

The participants of this study were LGBTQ law enforcement officers employed with the police department or sheriff's department in the Pee Dee Region of South Carolina. The participants were recruited by posting flyers at local law enforcement departments and on social media. Therefore, purposive sampling was used. Sampling is a process where a researcher selects individuals from a specific population to use as participants in research (Gentles et al., 2015). Purposive sampling is used in qualitative research and designed to ensure that participants meet the proper criteria to align with the purpose of the study (Patton, 2014). The LGBTQ officers provided first-hand experience and information related to the research topic. I examined the experiences of LGBTQ officers in the workplace, the types of discrimination they are subjected

to, and their perception of the denial of equal opportunities compared to their heterosexual workers.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided the study are

RQ1: What are LGBTQ officers' perceptions regarding their experiences of discrimination and harassment in the workplace?

RQ2: How do LGBTQ officers cope with harassment and discrimination in the workplace?

The research question must be well defined and aligned with the study. Yin (2016) mentioned that in qualitative research, the research question usually beings with how or what. The question also allows participants to explain their ideas by focusing on one central phenomenon.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of a study is meant to promote research while confirming the allowance of knowledge by providing an incentive and direction to the research review (Adom et al., 2018). Several theories have emerged to explain the relationship between LGBTQ and workplace experience. The Status Inequality Theory, Queer Theory, and Feminist Theory are all valuable frameworks for understanding and addressing the problem of sexual orientation in law enforcement (McMullen & Williams, 2020). Each of these theories offers a unique perspective on the underlying causes and consequences of discrimination and inequality based on sexual orientation and provides insight into how these issues can be addressed and resolved. The three theories combined explain the workplace experience for LGBTQ people. These theories explain how an individual is denied promotion, leadership, fair treatment, and management position

based on race, gender, and sexual orientation. However, for this study the feminist theory was used to better understand LGBTQ law enforcement officers who experienced harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

Inequality Theory

The LGBTQ community continues to experience many types of issues concerning inequalities because of their sexual orientation. Inequality is based on a person's gender, race, or social group (Lanham et al., 2019). Gender inequality is a barrier that could hinder those in the LGBTQ community from attaining promotions in the workplace. There has been a rise in inequality in the workplace, which plays a significant role in organizational diversity (Elias, 2018). The status inequality theory is a sociological framework that explains how social inequalities are maintained and reproduced over time. This theory focuses on how social status and power are distributed within a given society and how these distributions shape individual and group experiences and outcomes (Scanlon, 2017). In the context of sexual orientation in law enforcement, the status inequality theory can be used to understand how unequal treatment based on sexual orientation is perpetuated within the workplace and how it impacts the experiences and outcomes of LGBTQ+ individuals.

Queer Theory

The Queer Theory was developed in the 1990s as a counter-discourse to gay and lesbian studies (Nourie & Harris, 2018). This Theory used a method of analysis called the individual-centric postmodern technique of deconstruction. Also, this approach opened the scope for multiple identities within the LGBTQ community to communicate their positionality and regain the possibilities of sexual liberation (Kuriakose & Kylasam Iyer, 2020). Poststructuralist notions

inform queer theory, but beyond that, it focuses on the borders of sexual identities, politics, and communities. It incorporates social constructionism in its inherent conflict with essentialism by acknowledging that none of the structures it analyses.

Furthermore, the theory is anti-essentialist (Pennell, 2020). Concerning the queer Theory, ability, class, race, and gender cannot be assumed. Each experience may be similar or different; no consistency exists (Nourie & Harris, 2018). Queer Theory is a critical framework that challenges the traditional norms and categories of gender and sexuality and seeks to understand how these norms are constructed and maintained (Brown et al., 2022). This Theory is particularly relevant for understanding the experiences and identities of LGBTQ+ individuals, who may be marginalized or stigmatized due to their non-conforming gender and sexual identities (Brown et al., 2022). In the context of sexual orientation in law enforcement, Queer Theory can be used to understand how LGBTQ+ individuals are impacted by how their identities are perceived and treated within the workplace and how they may resist or challenge these norms and expectations.

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory is a broad framework that seeks to understand and challenge how gender and their roles shape power relations and social norms. This theory is particularly relevant for understanding the experiences and outcomes of LGBTQ+ individuals, as they may be impacted by gender and sexual orientation discrimination (Blithe & Bauer, 2022). In the context of sexual orientation in law enforcement, feminist theory can be used to understand how intersectional identities, such as LGBTQ+ and gender, shape the experiences and outcomes of individuals within the workplace and how these can be addressed and challenged. The theory focuses on

situations viewed through the different perspectives of women versus men. The feminist approach underlines the significance of gender difference; gender difference is the main factor in explaining the violence between females and males (Gaudron-Arlon, 2022). For the LGBTQ community, feminism has supported the mission of the LGBTQ movement. The Feminist Theory states that society is based on patriarchy that favors white, heterosexual men, encourages women to fight for equality in the workforce and the right to vote, and encourages a national discussion about sexual violence (Nourie & Harris, 2018). A feminist lens can be used for understanding and addressing sexual orientation in law enforcement, as it allows researchers and practitioners to examine how gender and gender roles shape the experiences and outcomes of individuals within the workplace. One feminist Theory that can be particularly useful in this context is intersectionality, which feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw developed in the late 1980s (Crenshaw, 2021).

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a framework that recognizes the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender and how these intersect to create unique experiences and outcomes for individuals (Crenshaw, 2019). This Theory is particularly relevant for understanding the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals, who may face discrimination and inequality based on their sexual orientation and gender, race, and other identities (Crenshaw, 2021). By examining the intersections of these identities, researchers and practitioners can gain a deeper understanding of the complexity of LGBTQ+ experiences and outcomes within law enforcement and develop more targeted and effective strategies for promoting inclusivity and equality. Using an intersectional feminist lens to address sexual orientation in law enforcement

can provide several benefits. First, it can help identify how discrimination and inequality based on sexual orientation intersect with other forms of discrimination and oppression, such as racism, classism, and sexism (Crenshaw, 2019). It can be essential in law enforcement, where individuals may face discrimination and bias based on multiple identities, including their sexual orientation, race, and gender (Galupo, 2020). By understanding the intersections of these identities, law enforcement agencies can better target their efforts to address discrimination and inequality and create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for all employees.

Second, an intersectional feminist lens can help to highlight the unique challenges and experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals within law enforcement and inform the development of policies and practices tailored to their needs and concerns (Crenshaw, 2021). For example, research has shown that LGBTQ+ individuals may face unique challenges regarding privacy and disclosure within the workplace (Meyer, 2019). An intersectional feminist lens can help identify these challenges and inform the development of policies and practices that support and protect the privacy and dignity of LGBTQ+ employees.

Finally, an intersectional feminist lens can help identify how LGBTQ+ individuals can be empowered and supported within law enforcement and can inform the development of strategies to promote their advancement and success (Crenshaw, 2019). It can include initiatives such as diversity and inclusion training, mentorship programs, and supportive policies and practices (Galupo, 2020). Using an intersectional feminist lens to address sexual orientation in law enforcement, agencies can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for LGBTQ+ individuals. They can help to promote their success and retention within the field. Overall, an intersectional feminist lens can be a powerful tool for understanding and addressing the problem

of sexual orientation in law enforcement (Nourie & Harris, 2018). By examining the intersections of identities and experiences, researchers and practitioners can understand the challenges and opportunities for promoting inclusivity and equality within the field and develop more targeted and effective strategies for creating a more inclusive and welcoming environment for all employees.

Summary of Framework

By using these three theories in the study of sexual orientation in law enforcement, researchers can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the underlying causes and consequences of discrimination and inequality based on sexual orientation. The Inequality Theory can provide insight into how unequal treatment is perpetuated within the workplace, Queer Theory can shed light on how LGBTQ+ identities are perceived and treated, and Feminist Theory can help to understand the intersectional impacts of discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation. Together, these theories can provide a multifaceted approach to understanding and addressing the problem of sexual orientation in law enforcement and inform the development of policies and practices that promote inclusivity and equality within the field.

Nature of Study

Qualitative research is best used to identify the perspective of others or to answer a question about a specific experience. A qualitative study approach is appropriate when the researcher seeks to explain a social phenomenon based on the participant's perception of the situation (Mays & Pop, 2020). Qualitative research is used to examine the way that people make sense out of their own real-life experiences (Cropley, 2023). The nature purpose of the study was to understand the challenges that LGBTQ law enforcement officers' experiences in the

workplace, which was addressed through interviews. Participants may offer firsthand accounts of the circumstances or problems using a phenomenological approach (Neubauer et al., 2019). To get firsthand information on their experiences and the types of prejudice they encounter in the workplace, the study entails interviewing LGBTQ law enforcement officers. As a result, phenomenological techniques were used to get essential information from participating people to obtain high-quality and trustworthy data.

The population consists of LGBTQ officers from the Pee Dee Region employed in law enforcement in South Carolina and a sample of that population will be used for the study. Sampling strategies for qualitative methods in implementation studies are less explicit and often less evident (Palinkas et al., 2015). It is vital to have a credible and sizable number of participants to come up with enough broad and reasonable results at the end of the research. For this qualitative research only 10 participants were planned or until saturation. Saturation is the most common guiding principle for assessing the adequacy of purposive samples in qualitative research (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). The participants participated in telephone interviews.

Definition of Terms

The definitions explain what LGBTQ means and how studies included the perceptions of barriers associated with the community.

A gender: Consider themselves to be genderless (Casey, 2023)

Bi-sexual: An individual with a sexual attraction to males and females (Maliepaard & Baumgartner, 2020).

Coming out: Refers to an individual who is coming to understand their sexual orientation (Casey, 2023).

Discrimination: Means the unfair treatment of an individual (Eichelberger et al., 2018).

Gay: An individual that has an attraction to the same gender (Koenig, 2019)

Homosexual: Individuals who are attracted to the same sex (Casey, 2023).

Lesbian: A woman attracted to another woman (Orleck, 2022).

Queer: Means that an individual's sexual orientation is not exclusively heterosexual (Casey, 2023).

Transgender: Means an individual that changes their birth gender (Guerin, 2020).

Two spirit: Individuals that identify as both having a masculine and feminine spirit (Casey, 2023).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

The advantage of using phenomenological methodology is that this method can be used to interview individuals with first-hand experience through interviews and surveys. Neubauer et al., (2019), this method allows individuals to tell their stories while allowing others who have no knowledge or understanding of what it is like to be faced with the problem and the opportunity to grasp or feel its weight. However, the challenges are interpreting and analyzing data because there is no way to measure the validity of the data. The data was obtained through participants' first-hand experiences that cannot be measured but are clearly understood. The limitations are that it relies on the information obtained through the information gathered by the participants. The information obtained cannot be collaborated by anyone other than the participants.

The data were collected from the appropriate sample of LGBTQ officers in law enforcement. Interviews did not exceed 60 minutes, and with participants' permission, the interviews were recorded for accuracy and longevity, which were then replayed for research

purposes. Furthermore, participants were reminded of confidentiality; they were also reminded of their right to terminate the interview at any time. I conducted all discussions, and probing questions were asked for additional information to help understand the experiences of LGBTQ officers in law enforcement. Data collected will be maintained as hard copies and electronic files and stored in a locked, secured cabinet at my home. Data can only be accessed through the researcher's unique, protected password. The data collected was not shared in any form with other individuals or participants. Data will be kept for at least 3 years after completing the study. After that, the information will be destroyed. Informed consent forms will be shredded, and electronic files and recordings will be deleted.

Significance of the Study

To advance inclusive and fair practices in the industry, it is crucial to perform qualitative research on sexual orientation in law enforcement. Law enforcement organizations are essential to maintaining justice and preserving public safety. Still, little attention has been paid to the struggles and difficulties that people with different sexual orientations endure while working for these organizations. By investigating the lived experiences, views, and professional difficulties faced by LGBTQ+ people in law enforcement (Shields, 2021), this research seeks to close this gap. This research can help shape policy changes, training programs, and support systems to foster an inclusive environment that values diversity and safeguards the rights and well-being of law enforcement personnel and their communities. It does this by shedding light on the dynamics and obstacles faced by LGBTQ+ officers.

Summary

This research focused on LGBTQ law enforcement officers in the workplace. The study discusses the forms of discrimination these officers encounter in their departments and how they cope. Various forms of homo-negativity and transphobia still co-exist even in countries that have established protections and rights recognition for LGBTQ people (Moreno et al., 2020). In most states, it is legal to refuse service to members of the LGBTQ community due to personal preferences. This discrimination has unfairly affected the employment sector since, due to gender identity, employers can decide not to hire or even fire an individual. The employment nondiscrimination act of 1996 was meant to stop this but failed in the Senate.

The research can be used to design policies and procedures that protect LGBTQ officers from retaliation and discrimination in their place of employment. The research examines the harassment and discrimination of LGBTQ officers in the workplace and how they handle their challenges. The study intends to educate law enforcement agencies about bias among LGBTQ officers and to create a more inclusive and harmonious work environment that will translate to better policing.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter will provide an overview of the literature regarding LGBTQ officers in the workplace, their challenges, and how they cope. Additionally, this chapter will discuss several theories that attempt to analyze and understand the role and experience of LGBTQ officers in the workforce. Despite the large host of literature available, there still is a gap in the literature on this issue.

Literature Search Strategy

Databases will include ProQuest, JSTOR, Core, and SAGE. The literature search strategy will consist of searching empirical literature from the following categories: Criminal Justice, Gender, and Society. The literature search strategy will help with connecting information and add to current research studies. The literature review highlights current and past research to understand better LGBTQ officers facing discrimination in the workplace.

Theories of the LQBTQ Community

The many forms of discrimination that LGBTQ officers face in the workplace was examined and given meaning using the status inequality theory, queer theory, and feminist theory (Cech & Waidzunas, 2022). These interactions are not specific to any one race, gender, or group but instead, address the consequences of those seen by society as odd in the workplace. These ideas clarify how a person's ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation are used to exclude them from leadership positions, promotions, fair treatment, and managerial positions.

Status Inequality Theory

The status inequality theory has been used to determine which individuals were most suitable for a position within the workplace (Cech & Waidzunas, 2022). The theory explains that

an employer would hire employees based on social status and honor. An individual not well known in the community or needing more social status was not considered for promotions or executive positions. The reasoning behind this was that the employee was deemed to not qualify for specific jobs or benefits using social status as a measure. However, inequality based on a person's race, gender, or social group creates discrimination in the workplace (Lanham et al., 2019). This inequality impacts those with a lower social background level and is considered not fitting the image of who society dictates should be occupying that position (Jang, 2020). The theory posits that social hierarchies are created through the unequal distribution of social and economic resources, resulting in the marginalization of certain groups based on their perceived value or worth.

In law enforcement, this theory can be used to understand how LGBTQ officers are situated within a more extensive system that values traditional masculinity and heterosexuality, often at the expense of those who do not conform to these norms. Research has shown that LGBTQ officers often face discrimination and harassment in the workplace, which can lead to lower levels of job satisfaction and higher rates of burnout and turnover (Santos & Reyes, 2023). This discrimination can take many forms, including homophobic and transphobic remarks from colleagues, exclusion from social activities and professional networks, and disparities in promotion and advancement opportunities. Moreover, LGBTQ+ people are more likely to experience police harassment, brutality, and profiling than their heterosexual counterparts (Luhur et al., 2021). This is due, in part, to the power dynamics at play within law enforcement agencies, where those in positions of power are more likely to be heterosexual, leading to discrimination and prejudice against those who identify as LGBTQ+. However, status inequality theory also

suggests that social change is possible through collective action and the redistribution of resources. In the context of law enforcement, this could mean implementing policies and practices that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, such as training programs for officers on LGBTQ issues, creating LGBTQ-specific employee resource groups, and enacting anti-discrimination policies that explicitly protect LGBTQ officers (Police Chief Magazine, 2022). In the current study, applying status inequality theory to studying sexual orientation in law enforcement highlights the systemic inequalities and discrimination faced by LGBTQ+ individuals.

Queer Theory

Queer Theory is derived from gender and sexuality studies. The queer theory challenges the idea of a good versus bad moral wise from a sexual standpoint (Kuriakose & Iyer, 2020). The theory suggests that what is considered normal and morally good for one individual maybe not be customary for someone else, concluding that normality is relative and is based on where a person fits in society (Kureiakose & Iyer, 2020); normal and abnormal preferences are based on individual beliefs. The queer theory also challenges the idea of fixed gender identities and labels, arguing that these are socially constructed and can change over time. It emphasizes the importance of self-identification and individual agency in defining one's gender and sexual identity, rejecting that these identities are determined solely by biology or cultural norms (Kuriakose & Iyer, 2020). The theory also seeks to deconstruct power relations in society and how they relate to gender and sexuality, exploring how these hierarchies are perpetuated through social norms and institutions. For instance, Queer theory demonstrates how hetero-normal sentiments shape management and organization in the workplace for lesbians, gays, transgender,

and bi-sexual individuals, where the difference in normality between the two groups can form a different understanding of what is perceived as usual (O'Brien, 2021; Rumens et al., 2019).

The application of queer Theory to the study of sexual orientation in law enforcement highlights the importance of recognizing and addressing the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals (Santos & Reyes, 2023). This includes creating safe spaces for LGBTQ+ individuals within law enforcement agencies and ensuring that LGBTQ+ individuals have equal access to employment opportunities within these organizations. One example of this approach is the implementation of LGBTQ+ liaison officers within police departments. These officers are tasked with developing relationships with the LGBTQ+ community, providing education and training to other officers on LGBTQ+ issues, and ensuring that the concerns and needs of LGBTQ+ individuals are considered in the delivery of policing services.

Queer Theory challenges traditional notions of sexuality and gender, highlighting how these categories are socially constructed and historically contingent (McCann & Monaghan, 2020). In the context of law enforcement, Queer Theory can be used to understand how LGBTQ officers are subject to norms and expectations that are often premised on heteronormativity and cisnormativity, which can limit their ability to express their identities and experiences fully. Research has shown that LGBTQ officers often need to conceal or downplay their sexual orientation or gender identity to fit in with the dominant culture of law enforcement (Police Chief Magazine, 2022). This can have profound implications for their mental health and well-being, as they may experience isolation, alienation, and self-doubt. However, Queer Theory also suggests that resistance and subversion are possible through defiance and redefinition. In law enforcement, this could mean LGBTQ officers challenging and disrupting dominant norms and

expectations through their actions and behaviors, such as advocating for LGBTQ-inclusive policies and programs, mentoring, and supporting other LGBTQ officers, and modeling authenticity and self-expression in their work (Santos & Reyes, 2023).

Feminist Theory

The feminist theory proposes a structured process to help identify inequality, and leadership roles, in the workplace. The Feminist theory is used to investigate the difference in how men and women are treated in the workforce (Fabbre et al., 2019). The feminist theory illustrates women's challenges in the workplace, such as sexual harassment, low-paying jobs, and discrimination in leadership roles and management positions. The feminist cause has regained momentum due to new ideas regarding gender and sex and an improvement in feminist communication (Buzzanell, 2021). By criticizing patriarchal norms and behaviors that support gender-based discrimination and oppression in the workplace, the goal of feminist theory is to advance gender equality. The feminist theory highlights the prejudices and injustices that impede women from gaining equal representation and opportunity in leadership and management positions by studying the disparities in how men and women are treated. Sexual harassment, which often goes unnoticed and sustains a hostile work environment for women, is also brought to light by the feminist theory. Feminist theory has recently regained popularity and significance in modern culture, which reflects its lasting importance in tackling concerns of social justice and gender inequality (Fabbre et al., 2019). The feminist theory offers a significant viewpoint for understanding and changing the workplace to be more inclusive and fairer for all genders since it is a foundation for studying power relations and social structures.

The lack of leadership roles for women in the workplace identified by feminism theory, also affects LGBTQ officers. The approach can be used to determine the areas where LGBTQ officers face discrimination in the workplace and illustrate how vital it is to protect the rights of all people in the workplace. Applying feminist theory to the study of sexual orientation in law enforcement recognizes the intersectionality of gender and sexual orientation and the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ+ women (Buzzanell, 2021). Research has shown that LGBTQ+ women are more likely to experience adverse outcomes within the criminal justice system, such as harsher sentencing and higher incarceration rates than their heterosexual counterparts (Buzzanell, 2021). To address these issues, feminist theory emphasizes the importance of creating policies and practices that are inclusive of all genders and sexual orientations, including policies that address issues such as workplace harassment, discrimination, and bias (Jang, 2020).

In the context of law enforcement, feminist theory suggests that women and LGBTQ+ individuals, more broadly, may face discrimination due to their gender or sexual orientation. This discrimination can take many forms, including harassment, lower pay, and fewer opportunities for advancement (Police Chief Magazine, 2022). To address the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals in law enforcement, Feminist Theory suggests that the police force needs to adopt a more feminist approach to gender and sexuality (Police Chief Magazine, 2022). This can be done by implementing policies and procedures that protect the rights of women and LGBTQ+ individuals, including policies on sexual harassment, equal pay, and promotion opportunities. The police force can create a more inclusive and equitable environment that values diversity and reduces discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

Various events and circumstances have impacted the LGBTQ community's workplace rights and duties, including (a) the movement regarding gay rights; (b) advancements of principles including culturally as well as political (i.e., AIDS, media, literature); (c) advances in sociology and fields; (d) arguments on marriages of the same-sex; and (e) the 2013 judgment by the Supreme Court repealing a crucial portion of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) as well as its ruling to reject a challenge to it (Stephens, 2018). Although not complete, this list describes the key events and happenings that have influenced LGBTQ workers' attitudes and experiences in their places of work. The first structured LGBTQ advocacy group was known as the Society of Human Rights and was founded in the 1920s by Henry Gerber (Stephens, 2018). This organization was the first of its kind, focusing on advocating for policy reforms and conducting community outreach relating to the rights and privileges of LGBTQ individuals.

LGBTQ employment experiences and rights have had a history of both advancements and losses. The first structured LGBTQ advocacy group was known as the Society of Human Rights and was founded on the 1920's by Henry Gerber, focusing advocating for policy reforms and conducting community outreach relating to the rights and privileges of LGBTQ individuals (Stephens, 2018). While the Society of Human Rights and other early LGBTQ advocacy groups laid the groundwork for future activism, real progress was not made until the modern LGBTQ rights movement.

Throughout the 20th century, homosexuality was considered a deformity, a morally chronic condition, and a transgression of gender norms by sexuality academics (Collins, 2022). The LGBTQ population was viewed as predatory felons and child molesters were motivated to

perpetrate sexual abuse on young males (Tyson, 2019). Further, people who identified as LGBTQ were barred from serving in the U. S. Army during World War II solely based on sexual orientation (Loken et al., 2022). But progress toward equal rights and acceptance has been made over time. In 1969, the Stonewall riots in New York City marked a turning point for the LGBTQ community as they stood up against police harassment and brutality, leading to the emergence of the gay rights movement (Stephens, 2018). The movement sparked a cultural and political shift, advocating for equal rights, protections, and privileges for the LGBTQ community. In recent years, this has included significant changes in the legal landscape, such as the Supreme Court's 2015 decision to legalize same-sex marriage nationwide (*Obergefell v. Hodges*) and the repeal of the "Do not Ask, Do not Tell" policy, which prohibited openly gay, lesbian, or bisexual individuals from serving in the military. However, there is still discrimination and harassment directed at LGBTQ employees, and ongoing advocacy work is required to uphold their rights and promote inclusive workplaces (Stephens, 2018).

In law enforcement, including and accepting LGBTQ officers has also been a slow and ongoing process. Historically, LGBTQ officers have faced discrimination, harassment, and ostracism from their colleagues and superiors (Police Chief Magazine, 2022). However, there have been notable advancements in recent years toward inclusivity and diversity in law enforcement agencies. In 2021, the Department of Justice's Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) released a report on recruiting in the LGBTQ community, highlighting the importance of diverse staffing for diverse communities (COPS, 2021). This report recognizes the valuable contributions that LGBTQ officers can bring to law enforcement agencies and underscores the need for inclusive recruitment practices. Law enforcement organizations must

use inclusive hiring procedures. Law enforcement organizations may better understand and serve the communities they are entrusted with safeguarding by hiring diverse personnel, including individuals who identify as LGBTQ. Additionally, this fosters cooperation and builds trust between the LGBTQ community and the police by removing barriers between them. A more varied and tolerant culture within law enforcement may be achieved in many ways, but inclusive recruiting techniques are vital first steps (COPS, 2021).

Furthermore, the LGBTQ community regarded the years following the end of World War II as some of the most oppressive in American history (Tyson, 2019). From 1940 until 1960, the LGBTQ community in the United States suffered terrible persecution (Yaseen et al., 2022). There were reported cases of misconduct among officers because of their sexual orientation. McCarthyism encouraged homophobia because of a conspiracy theory that alleged a link between homosexuality and communism at the time. As a result, the phrase "commie, pinko, queer" was coined (Johnson, 2023). In the following years, President Eisenhower barred gays from working in the United States in 1953, referring to them as "sexual deviants" (D'Emilio, 2015). Research into the sexuality of females and males, published in 1948 and 1953, raised public awareness of the frequency of the spread of homosexuality among the American population, and this caused panic among the American Population. Police officers who identified as LGBTQ endured a lot of harassment and prejudice at this time, both on the job and off (Johnson, 2023). In addition to being shunned, they often faced arrest and incarceration for being who they were. The strict standards of secrecy that law enforcement organizations imposed also hindered LGBTQ personnel from being authentic and revealing their actual identities. It was hard for LGBTQ police officers to serve their communities without fear of retaliation due to the

discriminatory laws and attitudes of the day, which resulted in the criminalization of homosexuality. This period emphasizes the need for greater understanding and acceptance of LGBTQ people in law enforcement and the continuation of efforts to advance diversity and inclusion in the industry (Daum, 2019).

The increased investigation into homosexuals that had taken place in the preceding years was still in public discourse as various societies proceeded to cleanse a section of the military, the authorities, and the multiple workplaces of those who were suspected of 'sexual deviancy.' The riots of Stonewall were a watershed moment in the history of the LGBTQ community. On June 29th, 1969, officers from the NYPD barged into a homosexual and lesbian club and assaulted a reveler (Johnson, 2023). On witnessing this, other revelers rallied to the person's aid by hurling things at the officers, forcing them to retreat. This event snowballed, and eventually, hundreds of people engaged in combat with law enforcement officers for the better part of six days. As a result of the Stonewall Riots, the LGBTQ community experienced a surge of self-confidence, and demonstrations were conducted across the United States (Daum, 2019). During the 1970s and 1980s, there was a significant upsurge in gay activism, which resulted in the development of groups of advocacies that fought for the LGBTQ community's liberties.

The outbreak of AIDS marked the 1980s. Healthcare experts initially considered AIDS a sickness that only afflicted homosexuals, increasing the stigma among the public directed toward members of the LGBTQ (Rajkhowa et al., 2023). The increased stigma resulted in many LGBTQ individuals being subjected to severe discrimination at work. Approximately a third of homosexual men were questioned at one point or another by human resources or another

department, illustrating instances of discrimination in their places of work that were channeled in their favor (Ng & Rumens, 2017).

Regarding LGBTQ, the 1990s were an era of substantial growth and development. The transgender community grew into a sizable community with a strong representation of voters (Gibson & Nelson, 2021). Management in Fortune 500 companies did not mainly accommodate the terms gay, lesbian, and homosexual in corporate paperwork, which was frustrating for many employees (Rajkhowa et al., 2023). As a result, many LGBTQ individuals were concerned that they would lose their jobs if their employers discovered that they were members of the LGBTQ community. Since the 1990s, the CEOs of Fortune 500 companies have incorporated new terminology that accommodates employees from the community of LGBTQ, as well as policies and procedures that support the nondiscrimination approach of the various firms (Ball, 2019).

The progress made in the 1990s for the LGBTQ community has continued to shape and influence modern-day society. With increased representation and acceptance, many individuals from the LGBTQ community can express themselves openly and live their lives without fear of discrimination. Additionally, with the implementation of inclusive policies in many corporations, more job opportunities have opened for LGBTQ individuals, allowing them to contribute to society and the economy without fear of losing their jobs. However, despite the progress made, discrimination and violence against members of the LGBTQ community still exist (Rajkhowa et al., 2023). It is important to continue advocating for the rights and safety of LGBTQ individuals and to work towards creating a society that is genuinely inclusive and accepting of all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Through education and

continued advocacy, we can work towards a future where every member of the LGBTQ community can feel safe and accepted, both in the workplace and in society.

Workers who identify as LGBTQ do not believe that all organizations are welcoming and provide equal places to work, despite introducing new terminology and policies to address the issue (Huffman et al., 2021). state and federal laws condemn exclusionary employment policies based on 'gender identity and sexual orientation. Scholars claim these safeguards are "insufficient at the national scale, incoherent or absent at the local and state levels, and frequently rarely enforced or unworkable when they do occur at the regional areas or merely as an issue of the policy of the company" (Huffman et al., 2021). As debated, governments must do additional work to shield LGBTQ people fully and legally in the workplace from discrimination. Despite legal protections for LGBTQ individuals in the workplace, discrimination still exists. This can have severe consequences for LGBTQ workers, such as being passed over for job opportunities, receiving lower pay or benefits, or being subjected to harassment or a hostile work environment. This discrimination can also lead to adverse mental health outcomes, such as anxiety and depression.

Organizations need to go beyond simply introducing new terminology and policies to address this issue. They must actively work to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for LGBTQ employees, which includes training for managers and staff on issues related to gender identity and sexual orientation, as well as ensuring that all policies and practices are inclusive and non-discriminatory (Huffman et al., 2021). It is also crucial for organizations to listen to the experiences and concerns of LGBTQ employees and to take action to address any issues or

concerns that are raised. This can include creating safe reporting mechanisms for discrimination or harassment and taking steps to hold perpetrators accountable.

LGBTQ Community Workplace Experiences

Mennicke et al. (2018) emphasize that the criminal justice workplace places significant value on masculinity, and as a result, LGBTQ officers are exposed to adverse experiences. In their study, the authors mentioned before investigated the incidents of members of the LGBTQ community who work in law enforcement. The study discovered that gay men were more often to suffer from overt discrimination and harassment, whereas lesbians are more likely to face discreet discrimination (Mennicke et al., 2018). Upon further reading, the authors argued that gay men in law enforcement felt it necessary to imitate masculine behavior to reduce suspicion concerning their sexual orientation. It is because gay men felt that if their sexual orientation were exposed, they would be subjected to discriminatory inquiries regarding workplace competence.

These LGBTQ officers reported that anti-LGBTQ sentiment in the workplace raised significant safety concerns. The respondents cited that they trusted colleagues who may have harbored homophobic views and were not confident of receiving backup in a dangerous situation. The pressure to conform to masculine behaviors is especially prevalent among gay men in law enforcement, as they feel the need to hide their sexual orientation to avoid suspicion and discriminatory inquiries about their competence (Mennicke et al., 2018). This undermines their sense of identity and authenticity and puts them at risk of being exposed to harmful workplace experiences. The study highlights the safety concerns faced by LGBTQ officers who do not feel confident in receiving support and backup from colleagues who may harbor homophobic views.

This issue poses a significant challenge for LGBTQ officers regarding job satisfaction, career advancement, and overall well-being.

The issue of sexual orientation in law enforcement has been identified as forcing LGBTQ officers into a sort of dual identity (Nixon, 2021). As stated earlier, the criminal justice system is inherently patriarchal and conforms to deeply rooted gendered stereotypes. LGBTQ officers must analyze the pros and cons and decide which is more beneficial, to remain in the closet or come out (Hur, 2020). Officers must weigh personal and institutional considerations such as safety, evaluations, stigma, isolation, and promotions. The painful history of law enforcement and LGBTQ communities exacerbates this situation and culminates in a decision that the officer has to make, which identity is primary, that of an officer of the law or that of a member of the LGBTQ community because traditionally, these two groups are like oil and water. Studies indicate that most LGBTQ officers lead a dual life, their personal lives as members of the LGBTQ and their professional lives in law enforcement (Hur, 2020).

The decision for LGBTQ officers to come out or remain in the closet is a complex one that involves personal and institutional considerations. Studies indicate that most LGBTQ officers lead a dual life, trying to balance their personal and professional identities. This issue is compounded by the patriarchal and gendered stereotypes deeply ingrained in the criminal justice system (Nixon, 2021). The history of law enforcement and LGBTQ communities only exacerbates this situation, making it difficult for LGBTQ officers to reconcile their identities as officers of the law and members of the LGBTQ community. Ultimately, the decision to come out or remain in the closet is one that each officer must make, weighing the potential consequences for their personal and professional lives.

Nelson et al.2019 performed thorough research on discrimination against LGBTQ employees in several workplace settings across the United States. The meta-analysis includes data from 30 random samples that offered information on discrimination in employment in various industries. According to the data, 25 percent of LGBTQ workers were subjected to discriminatory behaviors, and expressions of bias have not lessened because of the discoveries. Of the 30 respondents, 11 paid particular attention to the 34 possible differences between LGBTQ and heterosexual respondents, whereas the other participants did not pay attention to the differences (Policechiefmagazine.org, 2022). According to the research by Nelson reviewed LGBTQ individuals experienced a higher level of workplace prejudice than heterosexual workers, with the difference being statistically significant (Nelson et al., 2019). Their study set out to determine the prevalence and victimization types suffered by the workers in the LGBTQ community in the company. The study investigated whether levels of victimization had changed since 1992 and whether variances depended on gender and ethnicity.

The results of the Nelson et al. (2019) study highlight the ongoing issue of discrimination against LGBTQ individuals in the workplace. The data revealed that despite efforts to address workplace discrimination, a significant portion of LGBTQ employees still experience discriminatory behaviors. The fact that 11 of the 30 respondents paid particular attention to the differences between LGBTQ and heterosexual respondents suggests that there may be a lack of awareness or sensitivity to the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ individuals in the workplace. The statistically significant difference between the levels of workplace prejudice experienced by LGBTQ workers compared to their heterosexual counterparts is concerning and underscores the need for continued efforts to promote equality and inclusivity in the workplace (Nelson et al.,

2019). The study's exploration of victimization types and differences based on gender and ethnicity adds important nuance to the findings, highlighting the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing workplace discrimination against LGBTQ individuals.

The LGBTQ personnel were subjected to victimization at a significantly higher rate than during Franklin's evaluation; increases happened in some categories of victimization (sexual assault and job discrimination), while declines occurred in other types. The study discovered that the number of victims of certain types of victimization rose between 1992 to 2009, but other assaults remained stable (Franklin et al., 2019). Victimization reported by LGBTQ males was slightly higher than that reported by LGBTQ females. Based on the results, it is possible to argue that the LGBTQ community continues to be subjected to a high prevalence of victimization and discrimination. The study by Nelson concluded that there was a disparity in victimization between LGBTQ individuals and heterosexuals that have gotten larger over the years, demonstrating a social issue that needs to be dealt with.

The study's findings highlight the urgent need to address the victimization and discrimination faced by the LGBTQ community. The fact that victimization has increased in some categories and remains stable in others suggests that current efforts to address the problem may not be effective enough. The higher victimization rates reported by LGBTQ males compared to females further emphasize the need for targeted interventions that address the specific needs of different subgroups within the LGBTQ community (Franklin et al., 2019). The results of the study by Nelson also suggest that this is a social issue worsening over time, and concerted efforts are needed to reverse this trend and ensure equal treatment and protection for all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

A study by Jones & Slater (2020) examined the actual experiences of LGBTQ officers in the workplace. The study reported that, among others, LGBTQ officers we often subjected to sexist pejoratives, a humiliation in a professional setting, actual violence, and segregation in that some officers would not want to come nearby. It reported that much of the discrimination LGBTQ officers faced in the workplace was extraordinarily nuanced, and workplace language played a significant role in it (Jones & Slater, 2020). The general banter in the workplace can be designed to exclude LGBTQ people, as hypermasculine banter about sexual and heterosexual conquests is one such example that was identified. Heterosexual officers, on the other hand, did not face any of these challenges. The study's findings by Jones and Slater highlight the urgent need for inclusive workplace policies, especially in the military and law enforcement sectors. Discrimination against LGBTQ officers affects their well-being and career progression and undermines the integrity of the institutions they serve. Leaders and decision-makers must recognize how discrimination can manifest in workplace culture and take proactive measures to address them (Jones & Slater, 2020). Promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace can foster a more positive and productive work environment and improve the organization's overall effectiveness.

These disparities in employment encounters may impact the overall quality of work-life for LGBTQ workers. As opposed to simply creating interpersonal friction, such working experience disadvantages may significantly impact the careers of LGBTQ individuals by influencing the trajectories down which they choose to pursue their careers. For example, unpleasant working encounters may influence the inclinations of LGBTQ workers to leave their positions (Cech & Rothwell, 2020). While not a precise predictor of actual turnover, voluntary

turnover is substantially connected with substantial turnover (Cech & Rothwell, 2020). Exposures to (or worries about the meeting) negative status views may contribute to why LGBTQ workers are more likely than non-LGBTQ coworkers to contemplate leaving their company reasonably soon carefully.

Legislation

Lawmakers in each state can enact and implement non-discriminatory and inclusive policies. Wisconsin passed legislation in 1982 to shield sexual minorities from being discriminated against in the workplace (Carter, 2022). In 2015, fewer than 20 states protected LGBTQ employees in the workplace (Human Rights Campaign Foundation (HRC), 2015). This list includes the following states and the: Maine, California, Minnesota, Colorado; Illinois, New Mexico, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Delaware, Iowa, Nevada, Maryland, New Jersey, Massachusetts; the District of Colombia, Washington, Oregon, and Vermont (HRC, 2015). Several states, including Wisconsin, New Hampshire, and New York, prohibited discrimination on a sexual orientation basis within the workplace. It was also allowed to terminate a person solely on their sexual identity in 29 different jurisdictions as recently as 2015 (HRC, 2015).

The U.S. Supreme Court announced a ruling in 2015 that legally guaranteed the rights of the marriage of spouses of the same sex in the United States (HRC, 2015). According to recent national polls, most Americans accept same-sex marriage and unions (Liptak, 2015). As a result of the judgment in courthouse departments that issue marriage certificates, there has been a resurgence in a myriad of problems in jurisdictions that have before opposed same-sex marriages on religious grounds.

Title VII. Initially, it was felt that Title VII Act did not do an excellent job of protecting the LGBTQ community from discrimination in their respective places of work (Conklin, 2020). In 2020, employees were not completely covered under the Civil Rights Act based on their sexual orientation, identity, or gender. However, it protected 28 forms of discrimination based on culture, racial group, nationality, religion, and sexual orientation (Conklin, 2020). Title VII was, however, expanded in 2020 given the Supreme Court of the U.S.'s landmark decision in Bostock v. Clayton County when the court ruled that sexual orientation and gender identity were encompassed under sex in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (Colvin & Moton, 2021). It means that any employer was thus mandated to consider, on top of sex, an individual's sexual orientation and gender identity before making certain organizational decisions such as hiring, firing, and promotion (Colvin & Moton, 2021).

Do not ask, do not tell. By signing the federal Do Not Ask, Do Not Tell (DADT) legislation, President Bill Clinton hoped to allow LGBTQ service personnel to serve in the military openly. For years before the Defense Appropriations Act, the military believed homosexuality was unsuitable for service personnel. Individuals who came out as LGBTQ or indulged in gay behaviors were dismissed from the service (Foreman, 2020). Over 11,000 service personnel were terminated from the military between 1975 and 1985 because of their sexual preference (Szitanyi, 2019). This updated version of the Defense of Marriage Act allowed LGBTQ individuals to be part of the Military workforce under the condition not to disclose their sexual orientation to any individual, including their colleagues. This bill was viewed as a strong proponent of the dual life many LGBTQ officers reported experiencing. After years of contentious debate, Congress finally abolished DADT in September 2011. Defense Department

officials changed the rules to allow homosexual and lesbian service personnel to serve openly in their country's military.

The Do Not Ask, Do Not Tell (DADT) policy significantly impacted the LGBTQ community within the military. According to Christopher et al., (2016) individuals in the military have several common facets as individuals who are in law enforcement. While it aimed to allow LGBTQ individuals to serve in the military without fear of dismissal, it forced them to hide their sexual orientation from their colleagues. This led to a double life for many LGBTQ officers, causing stress and anxiety. The abolition of DADT in 2011 marked a significant step towards equal rights for LGBTQ service personnel, allowing them to serve openly in the military (Moreno et al., 2020). However, it is essential to acknowledge the harm and discrimination caused by policies such as DADT and work towards creating a more inclusive and accepting environment for all service personnel, regardless of their sexual orientation.

Treaties: A couple of treaties have noted that bias based on gender or sexual orientation is illegal when they apply specific sections of their governing agreements. Even though international treaties with Human rights do not specifically include gender identification, it is becoming increasingly clear that the protections and liberties guaranteed to "all people at all times" under international humanitarian law equally extend to LGBTQ people (Margalit, 2018).

As a result, it was determined that LGBTQ people are safeguarded from arbitrary impairment of life and liberty, as well as mistreatment and other cruel, inhuman, humiliating, and degrading treatment. In addition, it was said that they have the same rights as everyone else, including the right to be treated the same, the right to liberty of affiliation, assembly, assertion,

and more (Margalit, 2018). It simply falls under the notion that LGBTQ individuals are entitled to the same rights as any other person.

Some treaty-based human rights organizations, like the Human Rights Commission and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), have declared that criminalizing homosexuality as well as the same-sex intimate connection between intimate partners violates specific rights guaranteed by their corresponding treaties, including the privacy rights, the restriction against discrimination, as well as the right to protection from violence (Sánchez, 2019). According to the advisory, using fatal force on the grounds of actual or perceived gender or sexual orientation, e.g., enforcement of sanctions by domestic penal legislation, involves an arbitrary restriction of the right to life and is therefore prohibited (Sanchez, 2019). Several States Parties have implemented the death sentence for homosexual acts, condemned by the Human Rights Committee and the Committee against Torture (Sánchez, 2019). These entities have affirmed the privileges of LGBTQ people to life, physical safety, and protection from extradition to a country where they face execution or torture, e.g., Iran. Several humanitarian law bodies have taken the same strategy. People who identify as LGBTQ are protected under the European Convention on Human Rights.

Barriers to the LGBTQ Workforce Community

Barriers obstruct evidence that prevents something from occurring or transforming. A barrier is something that hinders progress or an obstacle that prevents something from happening. A barrier in place causes an individual to lose current progress in a particular activity. It sometimes would require the identification of an alternative route to regain the momentum experienced before the bottleneck. The research by Mennicke et al. (2018) points out that law

enforcement in the U.S. is built on a hypermasculine stereotype as its base. The theory is based on the idea that traditional masculinity is seen as the most appropriate trait in law enforcement, which has become the world's norm. Power dynamics are the main reason behind this, as most believe law enforcement should be intimidating to command authority and respect.

Therefore, gay police officers perceived as outside this patriarchal bubble must work harder to command respect and authority that heterosexual police officers inherently control. The stereotypes about LGBTQ law enforcers being treated differently were true (Mennicke et al., 2018). The idea of law enforcers being masculine has brought many adverse and unique experiences in the workplace. Mennicke et al. (2018) focus on a group of law enforcers who constitute ten law enforcement officers and four more corrections officers in the United States. The study was conducted during the conference held in 2012 regarding LGBTQ criminal justice. According to the research, most people who reported massive discrimination were mainly gay men in the work industry. Their experiences were reported to be severe and overt.

In contrast, for lesbians working in criminal justice, their discrimination was somewhat discrete and not as severe as the men experienced it. Moreover, lesbians were found to be significantly less likely to be victims of sexual harassment and violence as compared to gay men. Considering this, lesbians in law enforcement reported experiencing more instances of tokenism as law enforcement agencies attempt to be more inclusive. It would ultimately mean that lesbian officers had a relatively more straightforward time in law enforcement than gay men and transgender people, with more career advancement opportunities. Additionally, the research stated that for the men in the task force to be respected and treated equally, most of them had to act hyper-masculine. Acting hyper-masculine plays into the dual life that was described earlier. It

means that gay officers had to display a particular façade in the workplace to be treated equally and fairly. The participants in the research added that their partners in the workplace being homophobic created a security concern for them. They believed that if there were any threatening situation, their coworkers who were homophobic would not help them since they found them disgusting and unworthy. Mennicke et al. (2018) concluded that the way LGBTQ law enforcers are treated is wanting. There was a considerable need to create new policies to support them and not condone discrimination. To ensure that LGBTQ law enforcers felt safe and enjoyed their work. The policies additionally must acknowledge the job done by police officers who belong to this group.

According to Lenning et al. (2021), the impact that discrimination against LGBTQ police officers has on an individual and their work is tremendous and cannot be ignored. The authors additionally tackle how harassment affects them and changes the way they do their job. Being discriminated against has a significant toll on people in that it makes people feel as if they do not belong, and that is no different for people who work in law enforcement. The mistreatment of LGBTQ law enforcers is only growing, creating a need for action.

The research shows that the harassment and discrimination of law enforcers because of their sexual preference negatively impact the ability of police departments to do their work effectively (Lenning et al., 2021). The whole idea of discrimination against police officers who belong to the LGBTQ community raises the question of what the implicated police officers would do to criminals who belong to the LGBTQ community. Therefore, the question must be, 'If it is hard not to discriminate against their fellow workers whom they work with daily, what about the people they think are criminals?' The researchers concluded their work by creating a

challenge for law enforcement groups to develop policies that help reduce discrimination against the law enforcers of the LGBTQ community. To combat discrimination against LGBTQ law enforcers, there needs to be a greater focus on promoting diversity and inclusion within police departments. This includes not only creating policies that protect LGBTQ officers from discrimination and harassment but also actively working to create a culture of acceptance and support within law enforcement (Lenning et al., 2021). By valuing diversity and ensuring that all officers feel valued and respected, police departments can not only improve the well-being of LGBTQ officers but also enhance their ability to serve their communities effectively. Police departments must take action to address discrimination against LGBTQ officers in order to create a more just and equitable society.

Holmes (2021) explains the different ideas that people in society and police departments have about police officers who belong to the LGBTQ community. The theory is rather outright and direct since people often create ideas and stereotypes about things they do not agree with or do not understand. Holmes proved that people's ideas about the LGBTQ community affect and change how police officers are regarded, such as the amount of trust accorded to them. With face-to-face surveys from a sample of 365 willing participants, the study showed that the law enforcers from the LGBTQ community receive most of the negative opinions that police officers receive in terms of the quality of their work, respect, and how other officers treat them, and finally, their legitimacy (Holmes, 2021). Police officers who are queer are questioned regarding their legitimacy just because they are queer, and even their partners have trust issues when it comes to them. It is a testament to show that even when talking about public perception, LGBTQ law enforcement agents face discrimination.

Couto (2018) explained that most of the public has in their minds a preset notion and stereotype about how police officers should appear in society, and this is primarily heterosexual. The study stated that as a lesbian police officer, she is exposed to a double layer of discrimination for being gay on top of being a woman. She argues that her situation creates more challenges for her as a policewoman in any law enforcement department. Women are exposed to more harassment of the nuanced and sexual kind, and there will be an expectation from the implicated police officers to force the policewoman to abide by the norms created about masculinity (Couto, 2018). Mennicke states that women are discriminated against at low levels and are not discriminated against outright.

Giwa et al. (2021) examined whether LGBTQ police officers in the queer community prosper in getting raises or were unsuccessful in quitting their jobs. LGBTQ police officers who grow in their workplaces are few. The findings were grouped into four distinct themes, namely: wanting to change career paths, emerging stereotypes and bias in a supposedly supportive environment, whether being LGBTQ is a barrier to law enforcement and career progression, and finally, support for people from the LGBTQ community to join law enforcement. There are opportunities for members of the queer community to join law enforcement, but many challenges limit these people from growing in their careers. The theory about stereotypes is still constant and a considerable menace to members of the LGBTQ community who want to join and prosper in law enforcement (Giwa et al., 2021). Despite this, there is evidence that law enforcement agencies are making significant steps to attract a more diverse workforce, including members of the LGBTQ community.

Nixon (2021), in his paper, challenges the negative experiences that gay police officers face for being open and views the dynamic from a positive standpoint. He argues that queer police officers make it easy to handle queer communities or criminals, thus, creating ease when police work is conducted. It helps improve how police officers respond to members of the queer community. The research was sourced from sixteen phone calls considered semi-structured to police officers who have openly identified as members of the LGBTQ community. The study aimed to determine what makes it easy for queer police officers to do their work (Nixon, 2021).

Fileborn documented that changes in perception and relations occurred with colleagues at work once they mentioned that they were queer. The theory behind this is rather explanatory in that when police officers relate with each other without knowing that one of their members is queer, there are no complications (Fileborn, 2019). It alludes to the dual life mentioned before and what happens when broken. The changes occur when one of the officers says they are gay, and their relationship changes, ruining the dual life.

Meinecke (2018) states that queer police officers must be hyper-masculine to fit in with fellow workers. When that fails, the police officers know that one is gay, and the relationship between the police officer's changes (Fileborn, 2019). Filesborn analyzes the importance of sexual orientation disclosure in the workplace and its effect on other careers. To ascertain the explanation, the author presents a quantitative analysis of the 14 gays and lesbians identified as law enforcement offers and investigates the management of their career choices. There is a decrease in the level of satisfaction after disclosure of their sexual identity. One is said to be satisfied if one can identify with oneself, so they are not discriminated against.

Collins believes the theory in play is how hard it can be for police officers to open about being gay while working in an area where they must be masculine. The subject, in this case, is one officer from Florida, a police department called Mike Verdugo. Collins (2022) conducted a study that involved an ex-police officer's experience and the fear of explaining to the world that he is gay. He fears that he will be discriminated against (Collins, 2022). The study examines the police members who may belong to the LGBTQ who face the challenge of victimization. According to the authors, this victimization can be overcome by developing HRD strategies that can help combat the stigma and stereotypes related to gay identity. While doing this, they should seek to accept the training and career development to learn how to come out in public and feel a sense of confidence (Collins, 2022). The police officer did not come out because he was comfortable; instead, he came out from facing a daily fear of being outed by another person. It intensely explains the challenges people of the queer community must face daily and the torment their brains place on them just for being gay in law enforcement.

The research used a variety of indicators across three significant characteristics of job experiences to assist us in better understanding these non-formal inequities in the place of work. To better understand how workers' daily lives are affected by their work environments, these factors capture a wide range of working experiences. The first dimension of the employment experience is how employees feel about their treatment. Because of the unfavorable status ideas of their coworkers and superiors, LGBTQ workers receive less regard from managers, fewer assistance and tools for their job, and less honest performance reviews as a factor of their employment status (Lewis & Pitts, 2017).

Additionally, they may be less content with their salary, less encouraged in their efforts to manage work and family commitments, and less confident in their jobs of whistleblowing than their non-LGBTQ coworkers (Collins, 2022). It is the second aspect, which is workplace equity. Evidence suggests positive work outcomes, such as increased productivity, rewards, and contented employees, are linked to a positive workplace perception (Men et al., 2020). When confronted with discrimination based on sexual orientation, LGBTQ employees are less likely than their heterosexual counterparts to view their organizations as meritocratic and equitable.

LGBTQ workers may be less inclined to trust merit system advancement methods because past experiences have made them more prone to perceive that their managers are biased. Satisfaction at work is the final workplace element. Poor work contentment has been linked to several outcome variables: health and well-being and staff turnover (Ko, 2021). Dziuba et al., (2020) mentioned that job satisfaction has a big effect on how an employee performs their job and it also influences job safety, employee perception of it, and their commitment to do their job. Employees' self-gratification with their occupations is one factor in determining their overall contentment with their work environment (Zhang & Bian, 2020). Because of the greater possibility that LGBTQ workers may encounter negative biases and the stress of maintaining their status, they may have lower levels of social integration and personal connection to and satisfaction from their job than comparable non-LGBTQ coworkers.

Summary

Literature has shown that through theories such as status inequality, queer, and feminist are all used to better understand the experiences of the LGBTQ community. The phenomenon has brought about attention because of the discrimination and harassment that is associated with

members of this community. Shaw (2020) mentioned that study have shown that in the United States, transgender individuals face persistent and persistent discrimination and violence. There are many suggestions from all cultures that suggest that increased knowledge is needed to improve the relationship with LGBTQ and communities. Sharma (2021) expressed that most of the of the challenges faced by the LGBTQ community are due to lack of awareness and knowledge. Kattari et al., (2016) stated that there is a need for more awareness from educators, social workers, and other human service professionals to decrease discrimination among those in the LGBTQ community.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand the perceptions of LGBTQ law enforcement officers regarding their experiences of discrimination and harassment in the workplace. This information was collected through interviews with individuals who have direct knowledge by experiencing a situation or an issue. The phenomenological methodology allows individuals to tell their stories, providing firsthand experiences of the problem (Neubauer et al., 2019). In this study LGBTQ law enforcement officers were interviewed to gather their experiences and the type of discrimination they face in the workplace. This chapter will provide an in-depth overview of the methodology used for the study.

Research Design and Rationale

In the qualitative study, the approach included phenomenology to better understand LGBTQ officer experiences and answer the research questions:

- RQ 1: What are LGBTQ officers' perceptions regarding their experiences of discrimination and harassment in the workplace?
- RQ 2: How do LGBTQ officers cope with harassment and discrimination in the workplace?

People's subjective experiences are the main emphasis of phenomenological research (Krohne, n.d.). This approach allowed me to acquire first-hand experiences and information from directly affected respondents (Neubauer et al., 2019). Through the interview responses individuals can visualize their experience through the lens of the participants and gain understanding. Phenomenology enabled me to acquire as much experiential evidence as possible, which was done by interviewing a select sample group. For example, a phenomenological study by Moore

(2017) investigated the state of gay and lesbian people in leadership roles. The study had 14 participants who were carefully selected. As a result of the methodology, the study obtained specific and crucial findings that have gone a long way in eliminating the barriers to career progression for LGBTQ people. Similarly, Jang et al., (2022) investigated the experiences that nurses underwent in caring for COVID-19 patients. Concluding that nurses suffered mental and physical stress during the pandemic. This method was thus chosen for context-specific responses and data that can only be obtained directly through experience. Given the nature of LGBTQ experiences with discrimination and harassment, the data were collected to draw accurate conclusions and recommendations.

Role of Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher is considered a data collection tool (Billups, 2021; Mazouz, 2020. As the researcher, is important to explain any biases, assumptions, or risks that may occur during the study. Understanding research bias is important because bias does exist in all research, it can occur at any stage of the research process, and it will impact validity and reliability (Smith & Noble, 2014). Additionally, as the researcher it is important to establish rapport with participants. Building good interpersonal relations between researcher and participant is a significant aspect to be considered especially when a researcher participates in interviews and observations to generate rich data (Lavee & Itzchakov, 2023).

Methodology

A phenomenological approach was chosen for this qualitative study to give insight into the challenges faced by LGBTQ law enforcement personnel and how their sexual orientation influences their application in the community. Face-to-face interviews were used for this study's

investigation. Law enforcement personnel who identify as LGBTQ+ and were willing to discuss their experiences were invited to participate. It is crucial to ensure that the sample reflects the experiences of LGBTQ+ law enforcement professionals and is varied (Valentine, 2020).

Data were evaluated using a phenomenological technique (Valentine, 2020). I coded the data into categories and wrote notes to reflect on the relevance and meaning of these categories, which were then memorized. The final report outlines the common themes and experiences found in the data and provide insight into how LGBTQ+ law enforcement personnel experience serving and safeguarding the community. The paper also covers the results' implications and suggestions for more study.

Research Recruitment

The participants were LGBTQ enforcement officers employed with the police department and sheriff's department in the Pee Dee Region of South Carolina. The LGBTQ officers provided first-hand experience and information related to the research topic. The research examined the struggles of LGBTQ officers in the workplace, the types of discrimination they are subjected to, and the denial of equal opportunities compared to their heterosexual coworkers.

For this study, to recruit participants it consisted of getting authorization from the police departments to post a flyer for participants. Participants who were interested in participating contacted me by email or telephone and scheduled a face to face, Zoom, or telephone interview, Monday through Sunday from 10:00 am until 7:00 pm. The interviews were conducted by telephone.

Also, flyers were posted online so that there were no issues with timing to hinder the researcher and participants from having an opportunity for in-person or phone interviews due to

conflicting schedules (Watson, 2022). It is common for individuals to check emails and social media throughout the day. Therefore, it allowed for faster response time and the opportunity to ask follow-up questions from the researcher or the participants. Email or social media were not limit the geographical areas for participants but broaden the number of participants in the research (Watson, 2022).

This study investigated the perspectives and experiences of serving law enforcement officers who identify as LGBTQ in the Pee Dee region of South Carolina. To do this, interviews were used to gather data from prior studies related to the research topic as data sources. After much deliberation and consultation, the research utilized an optimal sample population of about 5 to 15 respondents. Considering the small population of LGBTQ officers in the Pee Dee region of South Carolina and the resource constraints facing the researcher, the sample size was optimal. The optimum study sample was 5 to 15 participants, however, only 10 were needed for the study or until saturation. The inclusion criteria for participants in this study was that they must serve as law enforcement officers employed with the police department or sheriff's department in the Pee Dee region of South Carolina. In addition, they self-identify as LGBTQ. Some of the reasons that was considered for the rejection of respondents are that some have already retired as police officers and have a vested interest in the results of this research, resulting in a conflict of interest.

Our qualitative research investigated the experiences of law enforcement personnel in Pee Dee, South Carolina, who identify as LGBTQ. A variety of methods were used to find volunteers. First, we emailed local law enforcement agencies and delivered recruiting fliers to them. We also contacted local LGBTQ law enforcement advocacy groups for possible referrals.

We used social media sites like Facebook and LinkedIn to increase our reach. Interested parties were sent to an online survey where they may express their interest in taking part in the screening process. To determine their status, the survey included questions regarding their sexual orientation. To illustrate the recruitment process, flyers, emails, and a survey sample were sent. To ensure adherence to ethical guidelines, we received formal permission from the police agencies to hire and interview their officers.

The purpose of the study was to understand the LGBTQ law enforcement experience and identify discrimination and harassment that they face in the workplace. The study engaged law enforcement officers with a different sexual orientation or gender identity as officers of the law with the responsibility to serve the community. Therefore, the community and law enforcement came together, so law enforcement understand the community and the community understood law enforcement (Hodge & Sexton, 2020). The community should understand that just like other people, police officers are human too and should be allowed to be who they are without malice and be treated fairly. It is what is meant when law enforcement should understand the community, and the community should understand law enforcement. Gays in law enforcement bring uniqueness to the police force, and the community will be able to identify someone who looks to represent the gay community. The department must recognize the quality an openly gay officer will bring to the department (Couto, 2018). Whereas the gay community may not be receptive to a heterosexual officer, they may embrace a gay officer because the individual feels like they can relate to a situation involving the gay community. The audience examined the struggles of LGBTQ officers in the workplace, the types of discrimination they are subjected to, and the denial of equal opportunities compared to their heterosexual coworkers.

Procedure

For this study, participants were interviewed; the interview did not exceed over sixty minutes, and the interview took place in a location selected by the researcher. For this research, semi-structured questions were utilized, and the identities of participants remained anonymous. Also, all interviews were recorded, and field notes will be taken before, during, and after each interview. The interviews were recorded for accuracy of participants experiences. Furthermore, participants were reminded of confidentiality and that they have the right to terminate the interview at any time. All interviews were conducted by the researcher and probing questions will be asked for additional information to help understand the experiences of the participants. If there are any signs of distress then the researcher followed the guidelines of the Distress or Stress Protocol, which are to stop the interview, support and comfort the participant, then ask if they would like to proceed or not. If a participant did not want to proceed, then give further support with consent. This was not an issue in this study.

Data Collection

This qualitative study on sexual orientation in law enforcement gathered data using interviews. The objective is to compile in-depth observations and viewpoints from LGBTQ law enforcement personnel. Unlike quantitative approaches, which largely depend on numerical data, the qualitative data-collecting strategy focuses on obtaining opinions, experiences, and personal knowledge. Interviews were conducted, with each session lasting at most 60 minutes, to ensure a thorough understanding of the participants' experiences. Participants were made aware of the goal of the research, their rights, and any confidentiality policies in place before the interviews start. Participants were allowed to withdraw from the interview at any moment without suffering any repercussions after giving their consent. An interview procedure was created to direct the researcher's talks and guarantee consistency across interviews. A

series of open-ended questions designed expressly to delve into the experiences of LGBTQ law enforcement personnel were included in the procedure.

Participants' express consent was obtained before recording any interviews to ensure an accurate depiction of the talks. The recordings were safely saved and used only for research reasons. I conducted all the interviews and created a relaxed atmosphere that encourages participants to share their experiences. To obtain more data and better comprehend the participants' viewpoints, probing questions were introduced into the interview process. Both hard copy and electronic versions of the interview data are archived. Electronic data was secured by a unique password that the researcher can only access, and hard copies were kept in a locked cabinet at my home. The data was not shared with any other people or participants thanks to strict confidentiality procedures enforced. In the final analysis and reporting, all identifying data remained anonymized to protect the participants' privacy. After the research, the data was kept for at least three years. All information was safely deleted after this period. To guarantee total secrecy and adherence to ethical standards, informed permission forms were destroyed, and electronic information, including recordings, permanently removed (Clark & Veale, 2018).

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the formal interpretation of collected data to create order, elicit meaning and communicate findings (Neville & Whitehead, 2020). Interviews helped the researcher to gain a better understanding of the participants' experiences. Therefore, providing the research with valuable and prevalent information for the study. Monaro et al., (2013) expressed that it is vital to read the interviews, to gain an overall understanding of the texts, identify the meanings and possible themes in the data, review and re-examine the data.

Allocating codes to words in each response will aid in capturing what the reply is about and will allow users to quickly analyze and evaluate the interview findings (El Said, 2017). To

effectively carry out this type of coding, the researcher familiarized myself with the available data context (Saldana, 2021).

In this case, the researcher reviewed the whole interview to help them understand the discussion (Swain, 2018). There are several techniques to consider when applying theme analysis. There is a difference between inductive reasoning and deductive. Inductive reasoning is formulating findings by extrapolating from a specific issue and heading toward a more general discovery (Swain, 2018). A deductive approach is the opposite of an inductive. It begins with specific broad or predetermined themes that you expect to see mirrored in the data based on prior knowledge, and one makes more inferences towards a more straightforward piece. If all this is considered, then the themes of a given context will be easily visualized and brought to light.

For this study data was coded for the interviews to reduce biases. The data was manually coded. The researcher highlighted similarities and important words to create themes and patterns. The transcripts from the interviews were transcribed and read thoroughly to ensure participant responses were interpreted correctly.

Trustworthiness

In any qualitative research worked on, trustworthiness is one of the vital factors that any researcher will use to have fruitful persuasion while trying to convince the intended participants to take part in the research or, in this case, answer the questionnaires. This part was additionally used to prove that the findings have not been manipulated, are credible, and worth the audiences' and participants' time. All the steps incorporated in this research were transparent and open for others to see to avoid shady businesses (Maher et al., 2018). Validity and reliability lead to

credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability with study results (Sumrin & Gupta, 2021).

This study ensured that the information collected from participants was valid and reliable to educate other participants, enabling the data collected to be replicated by future researchers. The credibility of the research was validated by triangulation, which used multiple approaches to ensure that the result is the same and that it is well-founded (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Methods that were incorporated to ensure that research is trustworthy include using multiple people for the research and observer checks (Amin et al., 2020). In this case, trustworthiness was achieved by producing an extra party to confirm the answers and asking the participants to countercheck whether the information provided is correct.

Credibility

There should be more than enough confidence in the work done to be described as accurate. It showed that the conclusion will result from the participants' data and that the information will align with what will be recorded. The findings of the research were interpreted as the conclusion made by the researcher. Credibility was based on the participant's information through first-hand interviews through the lens of the participant's experience. The researcher accounted for credibility in this research, which was accounted. Some well-explained steps and facts will be self-explanatory when explaining the limited choices and conclusions made in the research.

There was an evident and concise record that will help keep track of the study, and any other person who is not the work owner will be able to follow through and still come up with a similar conclusion. There were valuable facts about why a specific choice was made and why a

given option will be picked over another. The researcher engaged with other researchers to compare findings in a bid to reduce the bias that may be in the paper.

Transferability

The information collected in this research was passed on and used in different contexts with different respondents and for additional studies. Transferability means stating that the researcher's day has external validity and can be generalized. The information collected was qualified to be used in other studies while still fitting in and matching the research, that is, transferability. The data was collected through logical analysis, and there will be a considerable reduction of bias in the results found. It means that the researcher did not use his own opinion to explain what the participant might have meant but will use relatively accurate sources, such as recordings, to show how the conclusions will be drawn (Ball, 2019).

Dependability

The dependability of the research was assured through consistent information throughout the study. At no point was the information altered to favor the final findings of the researcher? Dependability was based on whether the participant information will be valid, although the data will be obtained through the participants providing information through an interview. The information provided in this research was traced, audited, and criticized before coming up with a conclusion. The research's conclusion was not drawn from the researcher's opinion but rather from the answers provided by the participants, and the responses were collected from the surveys to be given. If additional research is conducted on the same participants after a while, the results were the same, thus showed that the investigation is dependable (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Dependability relates to trustworthiness since when a person intends to use research carried out by a person; they checked whether the sources used can be trusted (Statistics Solutions, 2022).

Confirmability

Confirmability means that other researchers can confirm the research on the given topic, and the specimens and data sources are credible and can be reached. The information provided in this paper was not the researcher's opinion or imagination but instead well-revised and conducted research over time (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Confirmability is the process of corroborating the information obtained from the participant to be true and accurate and can be used by others. The steps to be taken during this research were well stated and followed to the last step. The records were kept showing the stepwise collection of information and recordings of the participants' and researchers' talks during the data collection. The last step ensured the research was trustworthy. The study deemed confirmable if the data provided can be traced to a credible source.

Ethical Consideration

Researchers ensured that data collection and management were addressed in research. Whenever data collection and management are overlooked, the researcher can anticipate ethical issues in the study, whereas the process can affect coding, data analysis, and organizing themes (Cypress, 2018). It was necessary to reassure the participants that their identity and information was confidential, along with storing and destroying documentation.

Summary

The research focused on LGBTQ law enforcement officers in the workplace. The study discussed the discrimination these officers encounter in their departments and how they cope.

The research adds to designed policies and procedures that protect LGBTQ officers from retaliation and discrimination in their place of employment. The research examined harassment and discrimination of LGBTQ officers in the workplace and how they handle their challenges. The study intended to educate law enforcement agencies about bias among LGBTQ officers and to create a more inclusive and harmonious work environment that will translate to better policing.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand the perceptions of LGBTQ law enforcement officers regarding their experiences of discrimination and harassment in the workplace. The study adds to the current body of literature on sexual and gender minorities in law enforcement and their experiences. For this research semi-structured interviews were used to examine the relationship between the LGBTQ law enforcement officers experiencing discrimination and harassment in the workplace. The research question that guided this study were:

- RQ1: What are LGBTQ officers' perceptions regarding their experiences of discrimination and harassment in the workplace?
- RQ2: How do LGBTQ officers cope with harassment and discrimination in the workplace?

Setting

The setting for this research was in a comfortable and safe setting to protect the identity and confidentiality of participants. The LGBTQ community can be sensitive to many topics surrounding their experiences. For sensitive topics, many researchers choose a qualitative design using in-depth interviews (Dempsey et al., 2016). Interviews were collected by telephone so that the information participants shared was kept confidential and the interview did not exceed 60 minutes. Retrieving participants for research can be problematic if the sample is seen as vulnerable or the research topic under investigation is sensitive in nature (Dempsey, et al., 2016). All participants in this study were comfortable giving recorded telephone interviews.

Demographics

The demographics of these participants include age, race, sex, experience of discrimination or harassment, and number of years in profession. This study comprised of 11 LGBTQ law enforcement officers in the Pee Dee area. A summary of the participants' demographic profile can be seen below.

Table 1

Summarized Demographics of Participants

	Age	Race	Sex	Experience of discrimination or harassment	Number of years in profession
P1	61	American Indian	Female	No	20
P2	38	African American	Male	No	8
P3	62	African American	Female	Yes	2
P4	40	African American	Male	No	2
P5	36	American Indian	Female	Yes	4
P6	70	African American	Male	Yes	25
P7	27	Caucasian	Male	Yes	7
P8	28	Caucasian	Male	Yes	3
P9	31	African American	Male	No	1
P10	59	African American	Female	Yes	29
P11	40	African American	Female	Yes	2

The seven participants' ages ranged from 27 to 70 years of age. Figure 1 represents the participants who experienced discrimination or harassment in the workplace. Not all the participants experienced discrimination or harassment in the workplace.

Age of Participants Experienced Discrimination or Harassment

Figure 1

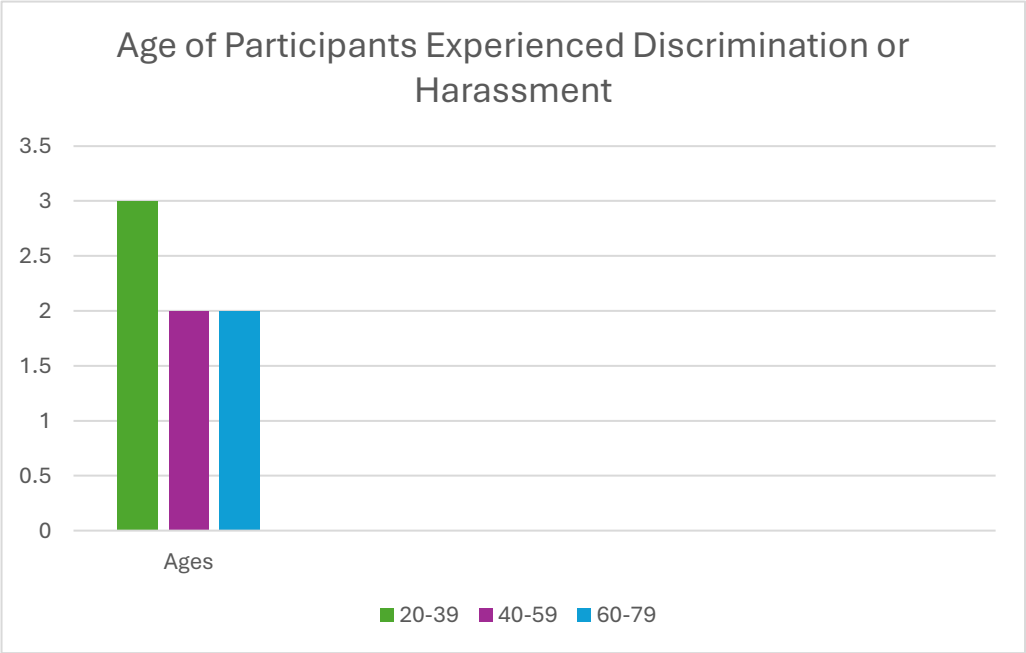
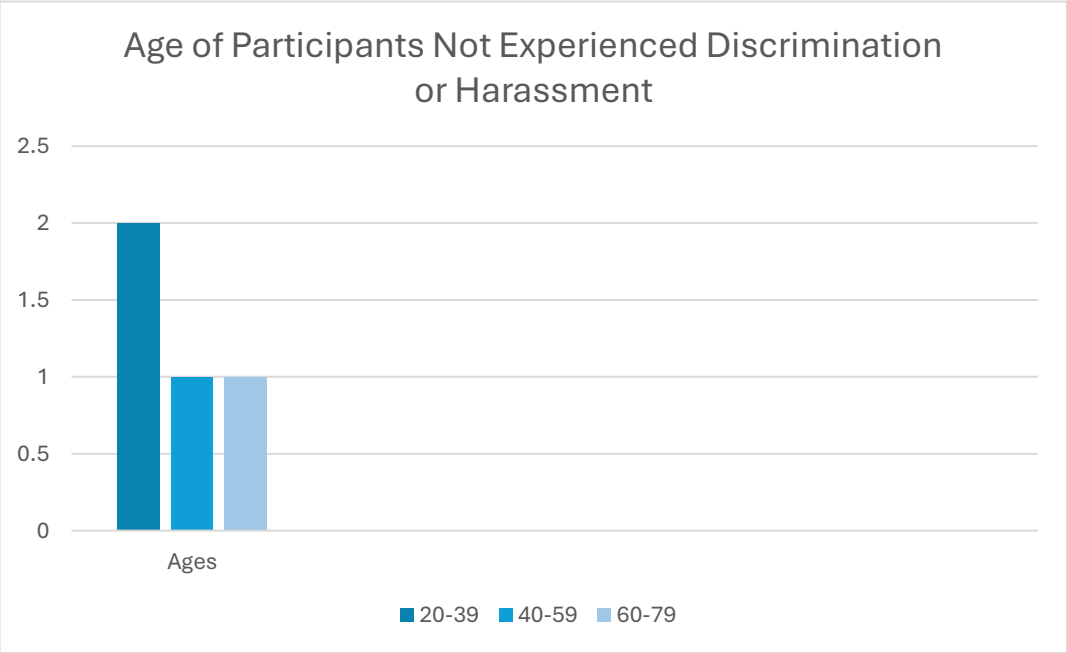


Figure 2 represents the four participants who did not experience discrimination or harassment in the workplace. The ages of those who did not experience workplace discrimination or harassment in the workplace varied. Although the four participants did not experience any type of discrimination or harassment, it was still difficult for them to come out about their sexuality. P1 mentioned that she was nervous about coming out, and P9 mentioned that he had no problems coming out to his coworker

Age of Participants Not Experienced Discrimination or Harassment

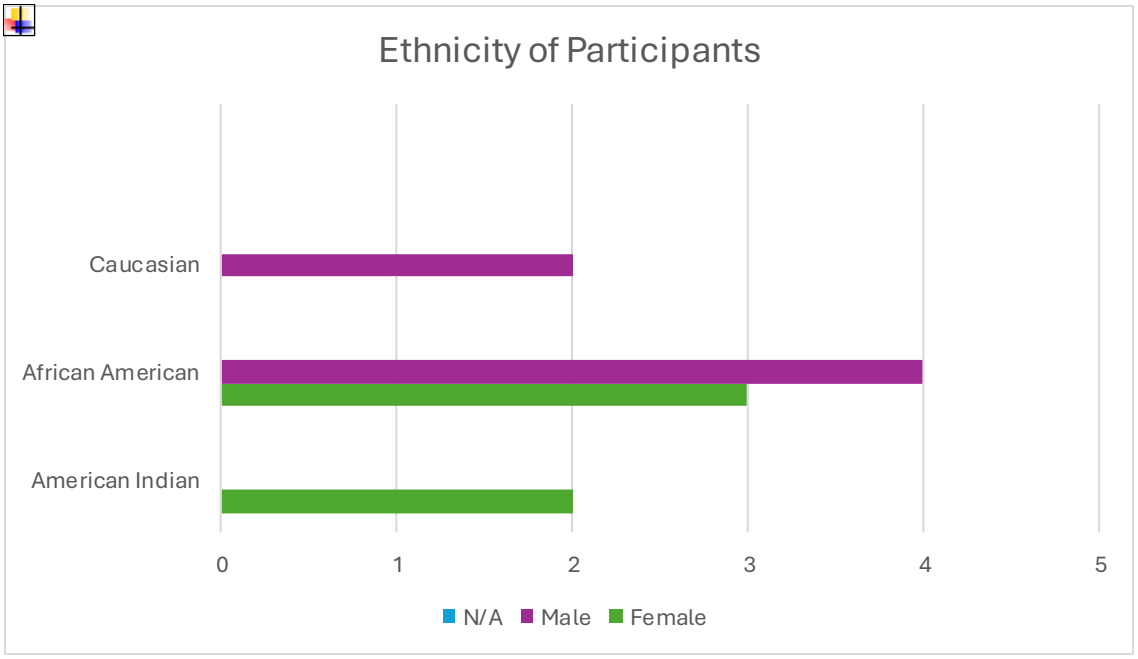
Figure 2



The participants' ethnicity in this research included mostly were seven African American officers (see Figure 3), two Caucasians, and two American Indian shown in Figure 3. Although Fish and Syed (2019) mentioned that discrimination involves treating someone unfairly because they are of a certain race or because of personal characteristics based on their ethnicity or race (Fish & Syed, 2019), a. According to this research discrimination or harassment was experienced by all races of the LGBTQ participants for this research—, Caucasian, African American, and American Indian.

Ethnicity of Participants

Figure 3



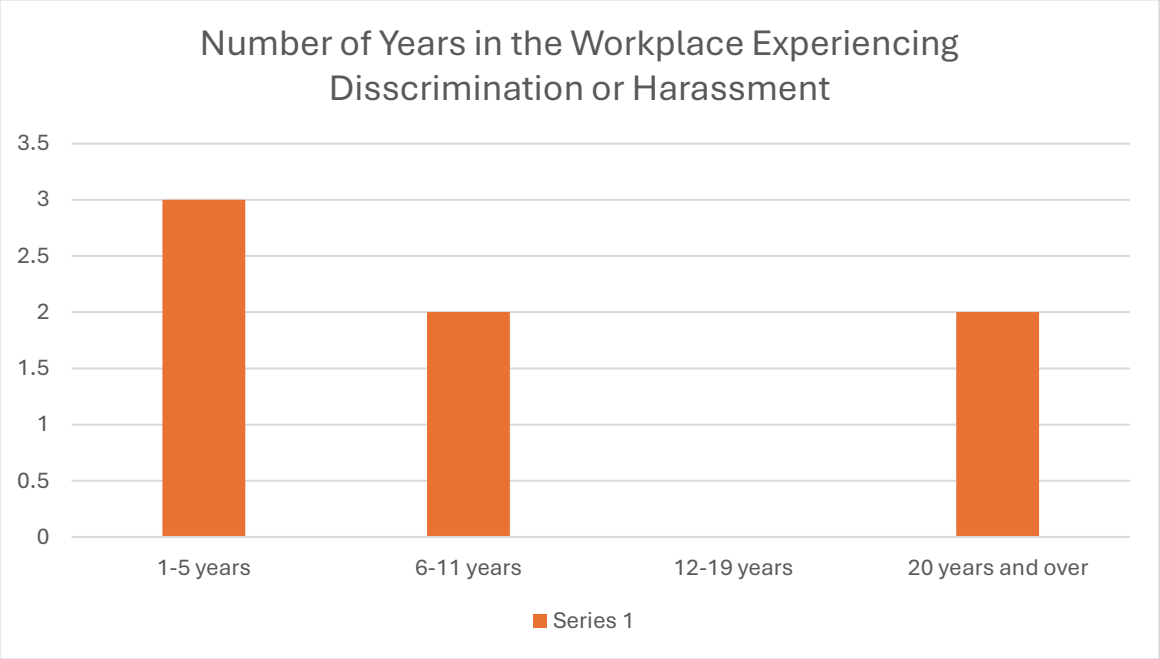
Additionally, the gender of the participants in the study were female (45%) and male (55%). Research reveals that discrimination, or harassment can happen to any gender. However, women are more likely to experience both racism and sexism (Vargas, 2020). More females in this study experienced discrimination or harassment in the workplace than male. Out of the 11 participants, seven (64%) experienced discrimination or harassment in the workplace and four (36%) did not experience discrimination or harassment in the workplace. Additional information revealed that the participants that experience change throughout discrimination or harassment in the workplace ethnicity were three African American, two Caucasians, and one American Indian. Also, participants who did not experienced discrimination or harassment in the workplace ethnicity were three African American and one American Indian.

Discrimination or harassment can impact an individual for years in their workplace. The participants in the study had various number of years in the workplace. The number of years

ranged from 1-29 years in their profession where they did or did not experience discrimination or harassment in the workplace. See Figure 4 for the number of participants who experienced discrimination and harassment. Figure 5 is a representation of the participants who did not experience discrimination or harassment in the workplace and their number of years in the workplace.

Number of Years in the Workplace Experiencing Discrimination or Harassment

Figure 4



Discrimination or harassment can impact an individual for years in their workplace. The participants in the study had various number of years in the workplace. Additional information revealed the number of years the participants were in their professions. The number of years ranged from 1-29 years in their profession where they did or did not experience discrimination or harassment in the workplace. Those participants who did experience discrimination or

harassment in the workplace, P3 had seven years of experience, P5, four years, P6, twenty-five years of experience, P7 had seven years of experience, P8, three years, P10, twenty-nine years, and P11 had two years of experience in the workplace.

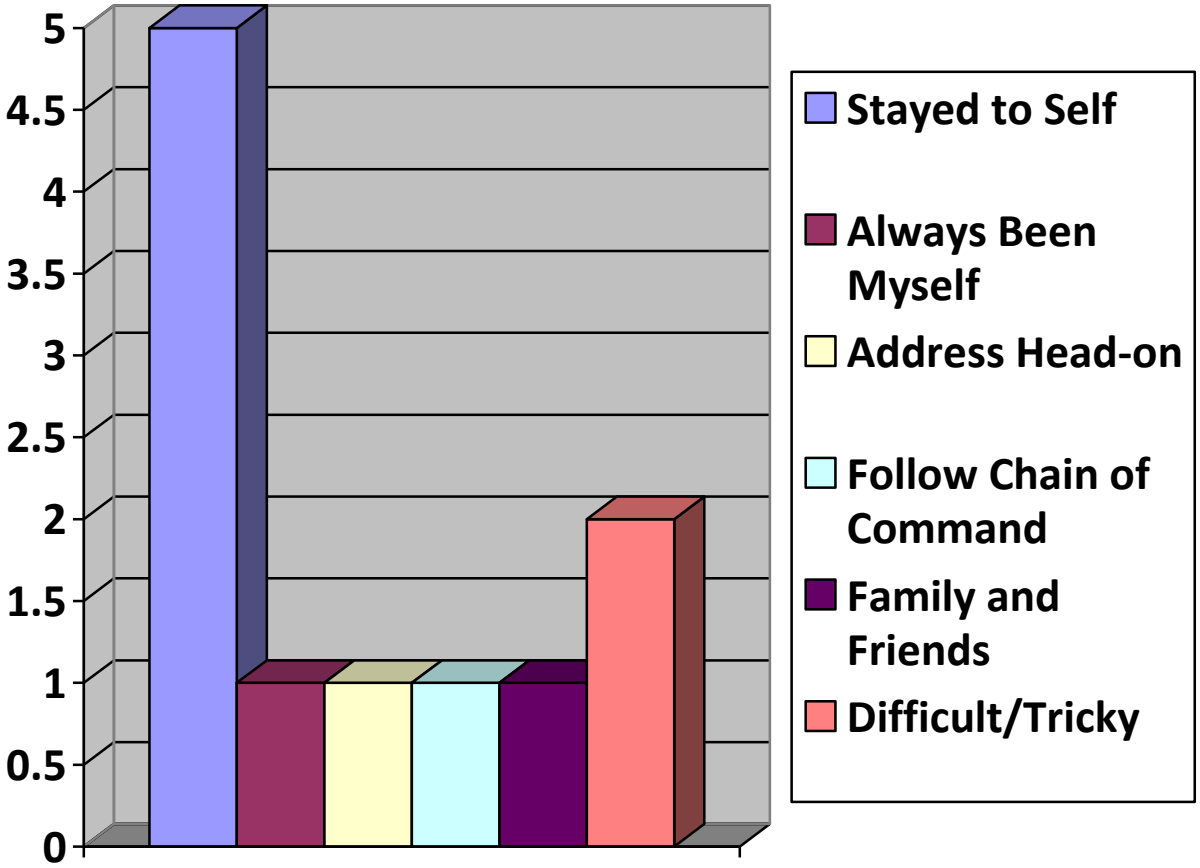
Number of Years in the Workplace Not Experiencing Discrimination or Harassment

Figure 5

Discrimination or harassment can continue for years in the workplace. However, the four participants in the study avoided experiencing this type of behavior. Figure 7 is a representation of the participants who did not experience discrimination or harassment in the workplace number of years in the workplace varied. For this research, P1 had twenty years in the workplace, P2 had eight years, P4 had two years and P9 had one year in the workplace.

Coping With the Experience

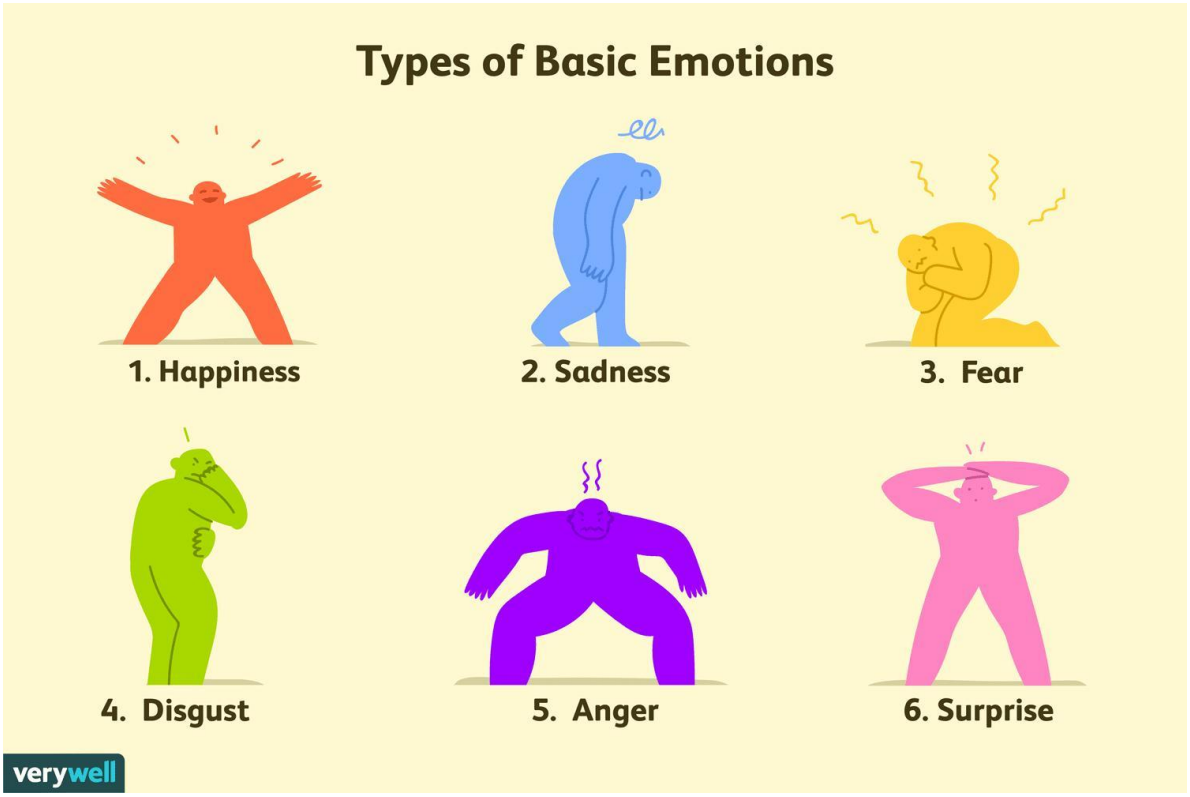
Figure 6



Seven of the participants who experienced discrimination and harassment in the workplace chose to cope with the experience in various ways. The other four choose either not to talk about their sexuality or stay to themselves to avoid any attention drawn to their chosen lifestyles. Overall, most of the participants choose to stay to themselves and not talk about their sexuality.

Emotions of Opening Up

Figure 7

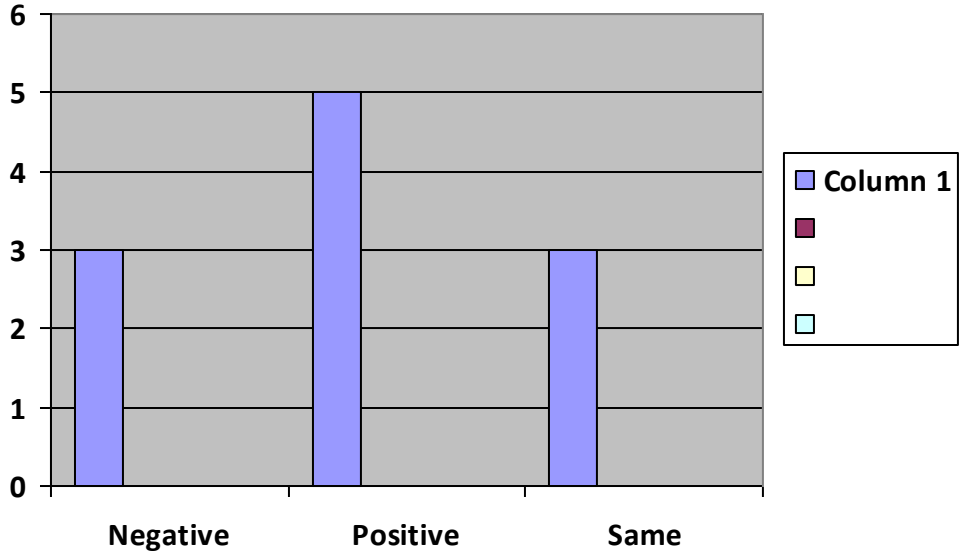


(Cherry, 2024)

The participants in this study revealed a range of emotions after opening up to others about their sexuality. These emotions ranged from feeling anger because they felt like they were being blackmailed to feeling like they could be their authentic selves. P5 reported that she felt good opening up. Similarly, P7 revealed that he could now be his authentic self. Not all participants were reluctant about sharing their sexuality. P1 stated that she felt nervous and P4 revealed he was intimidated. P3 stated that she did not want to share any information about her sexuality.

Impact On Career

Figure 8



Out of the 11 participants 3 experienced a negative impact on their careers for opening up about their sexuality, 5 experienced a positive impact on their careers after opening up about their sexuality and 3 career are the same.

Data Collection

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews. Telephone interviews were scheduled and lasted no longer than 60 minutes. The data collected was then analyzed for interpretation. Ten probing interview questions framed the interview to better understand the experiences of discrimination or harassment of the participants.

- Please provide us with a brief description of your career.
- What does a typical workday look like for you?
- How did it feel opening up about yourself to your workmates?

- Was your experience better before or after opening up?
- Has your decision shaped your career positively or negatively?
- Has your orientation or identity caused you to shift any career goals? And why?
- Have you experienced any workplace discrimination or harassment ever? How much time has passed since then?
- How do you cope with harassment and discrimination in the workplace?
- What strategies did you use to conceal your gender identity or sexual orientation? The findings are reported below.
- Is there anything more you would like to share?

The 11 transcripts were transcribed and coded. The findings are reported below.

Data Analysis

Analysis of data consisted of coding and gathering common themes which were based on the responses from participants interviewed. Coding the information was determined by organizing and categorizing the participants' responses. The themes were then highlighted by hand to develop themes. The recorded interviews were thoroughly transcribed, and the transcripts read to ensure that the information was correctly transcribed to catch to essence of the participants responses. The interview consisted of ten questions, intended as reflective probes to gather information.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

To ensure reliability in this qualitative research it required an accurate interpretation of the experiences of the participants. Adler (2022) mentioned that to be relevant, all research must be trustworthy. The information collected will be reliable for other researchers who intend to

conduct and replicate this research. Moreover, the data collected from the experiences of participants was in-depth and reflected their perspective to help with the understanding of how discrimination or harassment can affect those in the workplace.

Results

A total of four themes emerged from the study. They were: (1) experiences of discrimination or harassment; (2) coping with the experience; (3) emotions of opening up and (4) impact on career. From each of these main categories, other patterns emerged. Table 2 illustrates each theme.

At the beginning of each interview, the participants were explained the aim of the study. Consent to be audio recorded was given before the conversations. The researchers explained that participation was voluntary and that participants could withdraw at any time without consequences. Each interview lasted no longer than 60 minutes. Participants were asked to give a brief description of their career and their experience of discrimination or harassment in the workplace. Semi-structured questions were used to guide the discussions. Participants were asked the following questions:

1. Please provide us with a brief description of your career.
2. What does a typical workday look like for you?
3. How did it feel opening up about yourself to your workmates?
4. Was your experience better before or after opening up?
5. Has your decision shaped your career positively or negatively?
6. Has your orientation or identity caused you to shift any career goals? And why?

7. Have you experienced any workplace discrimination or harassment ever? How much time has passed since then?

8. How do you cope with harassment and discrimination in the workplace?

9. What strategies did you use to conceal your gender identity or sexual orientation?

10. Is there anything more you would like to share?

These questions were used to explore women's views about domestic violence and the management support services barriers. The audio recorded conversations were transcribed after each interview and the collected data was manually examined through thematic analyses. The transcriptions were thoroughly read to attain a general understanding of the transcripts and the participant's responses to the questions and to interpret the key themes from the interviews. The themes were then compared to explain the subthemes. Then, the key themes and subthemes were categorized based on similarities.

Theme 1: Experience of Discrimination or Harassment

Not all the participants in this study experienced discrimination or harassment in the workplace. However, the seven participants who did have interesting responses. Participant 3 expressed that she was discriminated against which caused her not to be promoted. Similarly, P2 stated that she was also discriminated against because of her sexuality which affected her getting a promotion. Participant 5 reported that was discriminated against by her peers that affected her, causing her to leave her employment. Both Participants 7 and 11, both also said that they experienced discrimination from their peers because of the lifestyle that they choose to live. Another participant, P8 stated that his access to various social media platforms was revoked

because of his sexuality. Participant 6 stated that he experienced prejudice which created many problems.

Theme 2: Coping with the Experience

Most of the participants agreed that they had to learn how to cope with living an alternative lifestyle. Some were comfortable sharing that they were a part of the LGBT community, and others were not. Participant 3 reported that she addressed and approached head on. Likewise, P8 reported that he reached out to his friends and family. Participant 10 stated that she did not talk about her sexuality until she was ready. Other participants were not so inviting about sharing their sexuality. Participant 1 shared that she concealed her sexuality. Another participant, P2 reported that she remained silent. P4 stated that he felt like he was being blackmailed.

Theme 3: Emotions of opening up

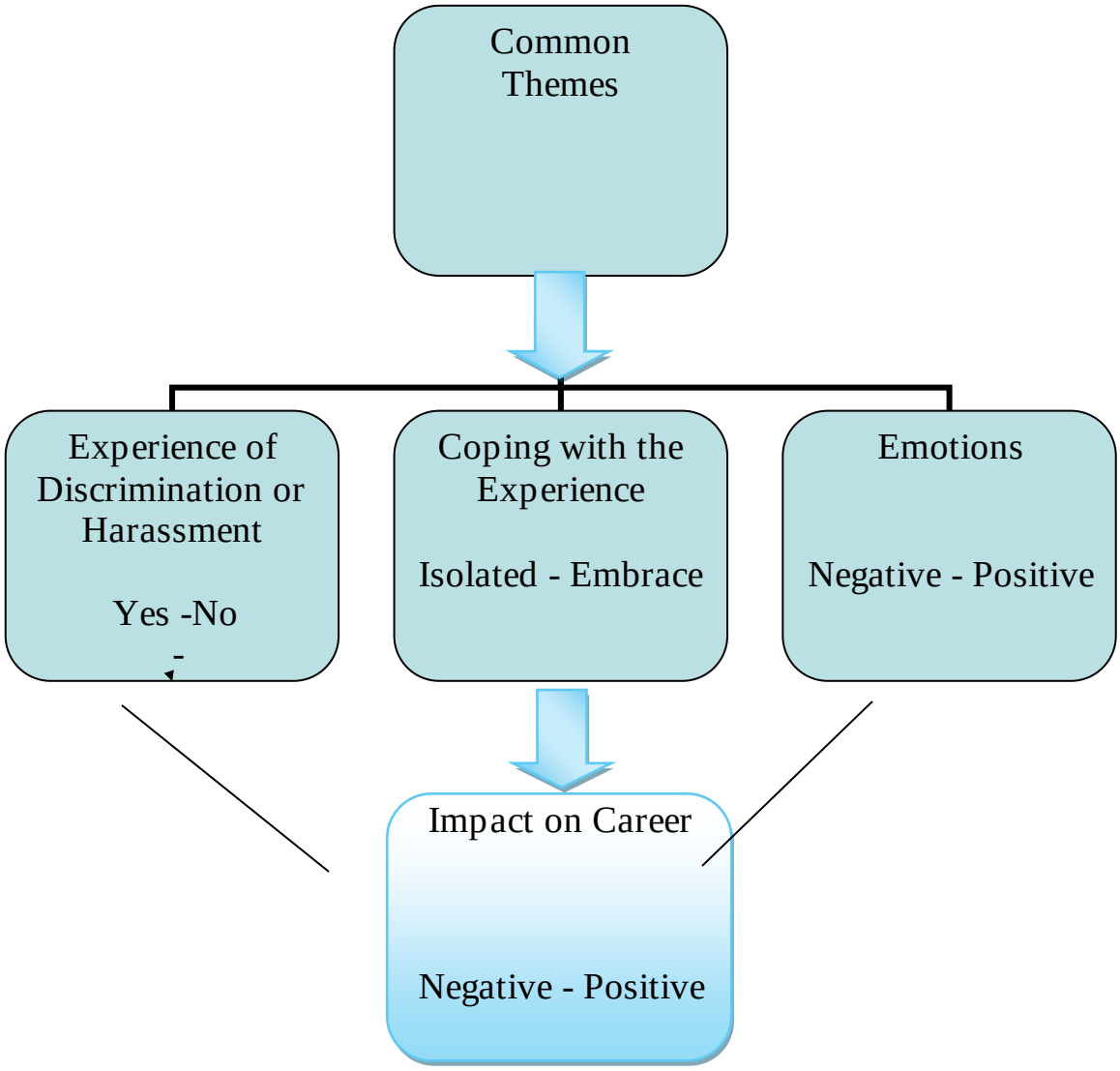
There were many emotions that shaped how the participants handled sharing information about opening up to others or if they chose not to open up. These emotions play a valued part in how they choose to deal with their sexuality. Participant 5 shared that she felt good about opening up because now she can be herself. Likewise, P7 said that he could be his authentic self. Participant 1 stated that she was a little nervous about how the employees would view her. Similarly, P4 reported he was intimidated because he is a gay man in an environment where someone can say that he touched them. Emotions had a positive or negative effect on how the participants chose to share their alternative lifestyles.

Theme 4: Impact on Career

Participants can sometimes feel that if he or she opens up about their sexuality that this can have a negative or positive impact on their careers, however some participants in this study choose to use their life preference as a career enhancement because it did not change, and some changed their careers altogether. One participant, P1, said her career goals stayed the same because of her passion. Similarly, P2 said that her career goals stayed the same. Participant 8 said that his career got better after he quit the job and branched out. Participant 10 stated that her career got worse because people started gossiping about her. Regardless of the choice to tell others about their sexuality, some of the participants gained valuable life lessons and support and some did not.

Table 2

Research Study Common Themes



Theme 1: Experience of Discrimination or Harassment

Theme 2: Coping with the Experience

Theme 3: Emotions of Opening Up

Theme 4: Impact on Career

Participant	Responses
P3	I was not too quick to tell my coworkers about myself. I did not wat to chare anything with them.
P5	I felt good opening up in front of my coworkers. I felt like they accepted me for who I am.
P6	I felt good about the things that I did. I had to make some changes but over the years I realized that people do not change, but I learned how to work through it. I learned how to handle it.
P7	Positively because, because people got to see my authentic self. I do not feel like I'm putting on a fake representation because I'm at work. I can speak and voice my mind openly because people know I'm not putting on a facade.
P8	It was ostracizing to say the least. I did not feel like I necessarily belong.
P10	I felt hesitant because I knew my coworkers would stir clear of me because of my sexual orientation. I felt that my coworkers especially women would feel like I was trying to make a pass at them.
P11	I was comfortable opening up to a friend. It was easy because it was just a normal conversation that led to me expressing how I felt to only a selection of coworkers.

Figure 11.

Data matrix for interview participants' responses to research Question 1: What are LGBTQ officers' perceptions regarding their experiences of discrimination and harassment in the workplace? Participants who experienced discrimination or harassment in the workplace.

Although not every participant in this study experienced discrimination or harassment in the workplace. Participants did share their perceptions of how it felt to "coming out" to coworkers as LGBTQ. The following figure reflects their responses.

Participant	**Responses**
P1	Well, I was a little nervous about the employees, how they would view me.
P2	I have not opened up to all of my coworkers but those who are aware are fine with my sexuality. I feel like it's a do not ask don't tell type of situation because you know those that are going to support you.
P4	I was a little intimidated. I think as a gay man working in an environment where I have a responsibility that requires me to conduct cavity checks, I did not want my sexuality to be an issue or affect how people would perceive me as a professional.
P9	Coming out to my coworker was easy, I had no problems.

Figure 12.

Data matrix for interview participants' responses to research Question 1: What are LGBTQ officers' perceptions regarding their experiences of discrimination and harassment in the workplace? Participants who did not experienced discrimination or harassment in the workplace

Participant	Responses
P1	I would bring it to the captain.
P2	I have been grateful not to experience any harassment but if I did, I would make it known that the action is not right and take it to the supervisor so that the complaint is documented.
P3	I kind of address it, approach it head on. I let the person know I do not like what they said and if it continues, then I go to the supervisor.
P4	Because I have not come out yet. For me, I live 30 minutes away from where I work to reduce the risk of experiencing any discrimination at my workplace. I try to stay professional and give nobody any ideas.
P5	I just didn't talk much about my personal life, I gave people less information about me until I felt comfortable opening up to them. I am proud of who I am, but I feel that I don't have to shout it to the world who I am.
P6	I treat people how I want to be treated. Whether you like it or not I'm going to be that person, I'm not trying to change my lifestyle for anyone.
P7	I'll say the best way to deal with it, I learned is to kind of address the person directly receiving the microaggressions or the discrimination and address them directly. I feel safe speaking to human resources, specifically because I feel that they are for the company. In many of those situations. I've had better luck talking directly to my higher ups about how I feel when they need certain things.
P 8	I think community is important. I reached out to my friends and my family, to kind of see where my head and asked what do you think about it? So, reaching out to my community of people was how I dealt with workplace harassment or workplace discrimination.
P9	I have not experienced any workplace discrimination or harassment, but I would go to my immediate supervisor about it.

P10	By being knowledgeable about my job, by reading literature, going to training and voicing my opinion about work-related matters, policies, and promotions.
P 11	I'm basically trying to detach myself from it emotionally as far as the job. As far as coping, I talk about it with friends and family outside of the job and just try to keep my work life separate from my personal life.

Figure 13.

Data matrix for interview participants' responses to research Question 2: How do LGBTQ officers cope with harassment and discrimination in the workplace?

Research Question 1

What are LGBTQ officers' perceptions regarding their experiences of discrimination and harassment in the workplace?

The first research question sought to find out the perception of LGBTQ officers regarding their experience of discrimination and harassment in the workplace. It was interesting because seven out of the eleven participants experienced some type of discrimination or harassment in the workplace that ranged from various forms which led them to experience different emotions from feeling intimidated, difficult, nervous, or not being able to be their authentic selves in the workplace.

Research Question 2

How do LGBTQ officers cope with harassment and discrimination in the workplace?

Although not all the participants experienced discrimination and harassment in the workplace, they all shared ways of coping with discrimination and harassment in the workplace. Which ranged from solutions such as taking the issue to the supervisor, connecting with family and friends, not speaking about it, or detaching themselves from the situation. Learning to cope with living an alternative lifestyle was challenging for some of the participants but not all. Regardless, of participants making the choice to share their sexuality with coworkers, they all shared important and valuable ways of expressing that discrimination or harassment is not appropriate and how you choose to live your life is your choice.

Summary

Four themes were identified from the transcribed interviews: their experience of discrimination or harassment, coping with the experience, emotions of opening up, and the impact on their career. The participants of this study revealed a range of shared experiences. The purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand the perceptions of LGBTQ law enforcement officers regarding their experiences of discrimination and harassment in the workplace. The findings of this study revealed that most of the participants in this study experienced some type of discrimination or harassment in the workplace, from not getting promotions to feeling like they were being blackmailed. The findings of this study added to the growing literature to provide an understanding of how discrimination and harassment in LGBTQ community can have a positive or negative experience in the workplace. This study reveals how the participants chose to share or not share their alternative lifestyle with those in the workplace and their family and friends. Insight has been provided through this study of the importance of treating everyone equally in the workplace regardless of their sexuality. Additionally, because of their stories, hopefully many more individuals will be encouraged to live their lives comfortably.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter reviews the findings of the study and presents recommendations for future study. The purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand the perceptions of LGBTQ law enforcement officers regarding their experiences of discrimination and harassment in the workplace. The study addresses law enforcement officers with a different sexual orientation. Based on the interviews, the research provided a better understanding of discrimination and harassment in the workplace. The problem is that law enforcement officers who have chosen a nontraditional lifestyle have experienced harassment and discrimination (International Labour Organization, 2012). The specific problem is the sexual orientation in law enforcement is particularly relevant considering the ongoing fight for LGBTQ+ rights and equality. By sharing their experiences, the participants can increase awareness in the workplace and in the community. The participants were interviewed using semi-structured questions in alignment with the purpose of the study. The study allowed LGBTQ law enforcement officers to share their personal experiences about being in law enforcement and whether they experienced discrimination or harassment in the workplace. The findings align with previous research on sexual orientation and law enforcement. For example, even though they are both LGBTQ, more women experienced discrimination than men (Colvin, 2015; Mennicke et al., 2018).

Interpretation of the Findings

In this study, four themes emerged: experiences of discrimination or harassment; coping with the experience; emotions of opening up and impact on career. From each of these main categories, other factors surfaced. These factors are discussed from each category in this study, what literature stated and the similarities and differences of this study's findings to literature.

Experiences of Discrimination or Harassment

This study was based on two research questions. RQ 1 was What are LGBTQ officers' perceptions regarding their experiences of discrimination and harassment in the workplace? and How do LGBTQ officers cope with harassment and discrimination in the workplace?

The findings of this study showed that more than half of the participants experienced discrimination or harassment in the workplace. Seven out of the 11 participants in this study did experience discrimination or harassment in the workplace and four out of the 11 participants did not experience discrimination or harassment in the workplace.

Coping With the Experience

The findings of this study showed most of the participants in the study chose to use a coping strategy to help them deal with discrimination or harassment in the workplace. Five participants revealed that they chose to stay to themselves or just did not talk about their sexuality. One participant said that they addressed it head on and another participant said that they followed the chain of command. Also, one participant stated that it was very difficult for them, and another participant expressed that they were always themselves.

Emotions of Opening Up

The findings of this study showed that for some participants it was easy for them to open up about their sexuality, but others were not as susceptible to opening up which caused them to feel nervous. P5 expressed that she can now be herself. It felt goof opening up. P6 stated that it was no problem, he felt good about the things that he did. P10 was hesitant and P7 stated that it felt weird. Similarly, P1 stated that she was nervous about the employees, how they would view her.

Impact On Career

The findings of this study showed that five of the 11 participants had a positive experience after they decided to share their sexuality with coworkers. Three said that their career stayed the same after opening up about their sexuality. However, three participants also revealed that by them opening up it had a negative impact on their careers. P1 mentioned that her career goals stayed the same because she has a passion for her job and P10 stated that her career got worse because people started to gossip about her.

Limitations of the Study

The study included women and men from the Pee Dee area and did not cover any other counties. Since the study only consisted of 11 participants, it was limited only to those participants perspectives, more participants perspectives from other areas may have changed the findings. Other limitations of the study were that it was only in the state of South Carolina and not in any other state. Further, the participants were only from three ethnic groups: African American, American Indian, and Caucasian.

Recommendations

Based on the four main themes of the study, those who are in the workplace must stress the importance of eliminating discrimination and harassment in the workplace. It is recommended that a future study be conducted on LGBTQ members in all workplace environments. Discrimination and harassment affect individuals of different genders, race, economic status, and religion; therefore, a study using different races and work environments is certainly needed. In this study, the participants were in law enforcement and were either African American, American Indian, or Caucasian.

Implications

The intended outcome of the study is to provide professional information on how to support those who are LGTBQ. The findings from this study highlight the importance of acknowledging and addressing discrimination and harassment in the workplace. This can help those in law enforcement as well as other agencies and workplace setting to bring awareness and enhance their knowledge.

Conclusion

Discrimination and harassment have affected many people. There need to be effective strategies implemented to assist those who choose to live alternative lifestyles to feel more comfortable in the workplace. There are many people who continue to hide the true person they are because of a fear of retaliation or fear of not getting the promotion that they deserve. The participants' experiences provide insight on the strategies they used to help them deal with sharing who they are to help others who feel trapped or afraid to be themselves. A confidential plan needs to be implemented in the workplace for each person who feels that they want to share information about their personal lives.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

The first step is the collection of demographic information.

Interview Questions:

1. Please provide us with a brief description of your career.
2. What does a typical work day look like for you?
3. How did it feel opening up about yourself to your workmates?
4. Was your experience better before or after opening up?
5. Has your decision shaped your career positively or negatively?
6. Has your orientation or identity caused you to shift any career goals? And why?
7. Have you experienced any workplace discrimination or harassment ever? How much time has passed since then?
8. How do you cope with harassment and discrimination in the workplace?
9. What strategies did you use to conceal your gender identity or sexual orientation?
10. Is there anything more you would like to share?

Appendix B

RECRUITMENT AND INVITATION FOR RESEARCH

Invitation For Research

Caption: There is a new study about the experiences of law enforcement officers who have experienced discrimination or harassment in the workplace. For this study, you are invited to describe your experiences.

About the study:

- One 30-60 minute phone interview that will be audio recorded (no videorecording)
- To protect your privacy, the published study will not share any names or details that identify you

Volunteers must meet these requirements:

- 18 years old or older
- Identify as LGBTQ
- Has experienced discrimination or harassment in the workplace

This interview is part of the doctoral study for Ruby Brockenberry, a Ph.D. student at Walden University. Interviews will take place during February 2024.

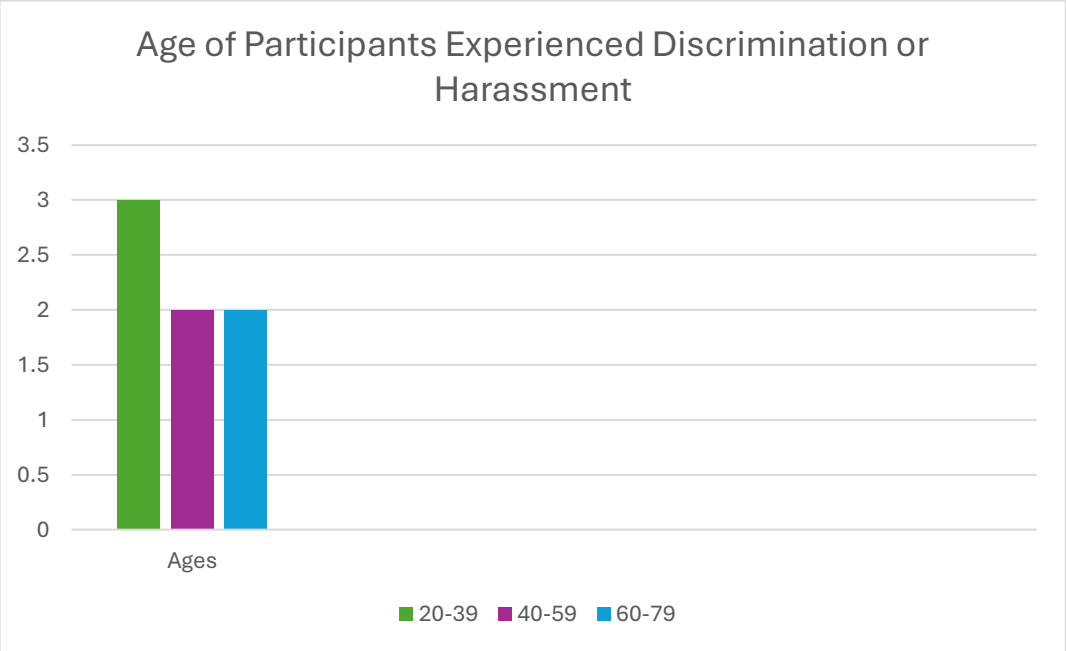
Appendix C

Summarized Demographics of Participants

	Age	Race	Sex	Experience of discrimination or harassment	Number of years in profession
P1	61	American Indian	Female	No	20
P2	38	African American	Male	No	8
P3	62	African American	Female	Yes	2
P4	40	African American	Male	No	2
P5	36	American Indian	Female	Yes	4
P6	70	African American	Male	Yes	25
P7	27	Caucasian	Male	Yes	7
P8	28	Caucasian	Male	Yes	3
P9	31	African American	Male	No	1
P10	59	African American	Female	Yes	29
P11	40	African American	Female	Yes	2

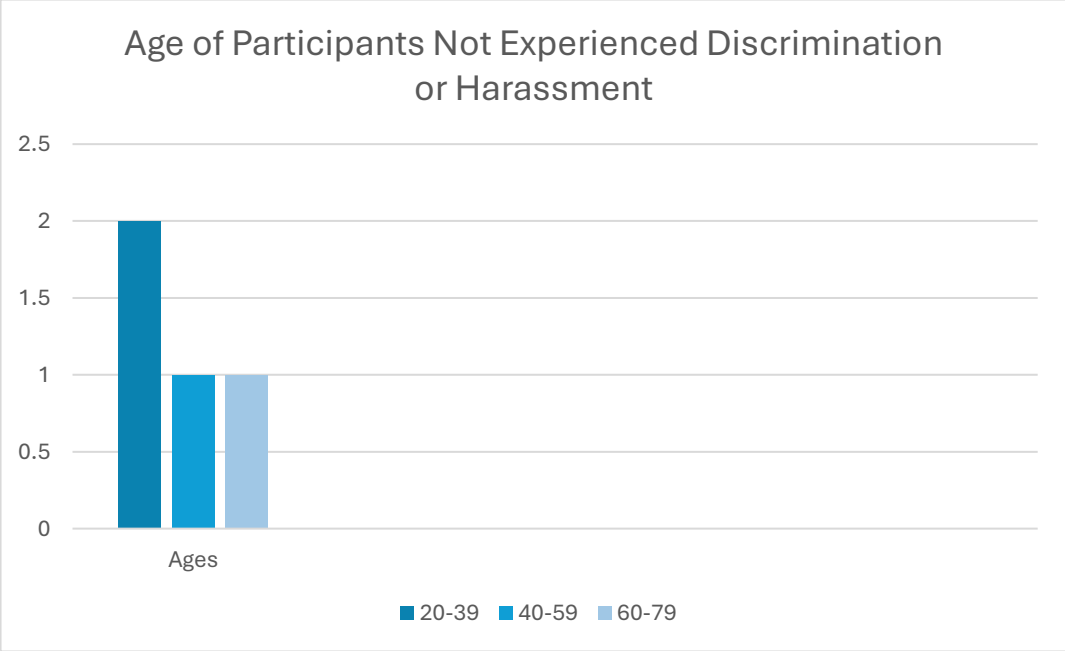
Appendix D

Age of Participants Experienced Discrimination or Harassment



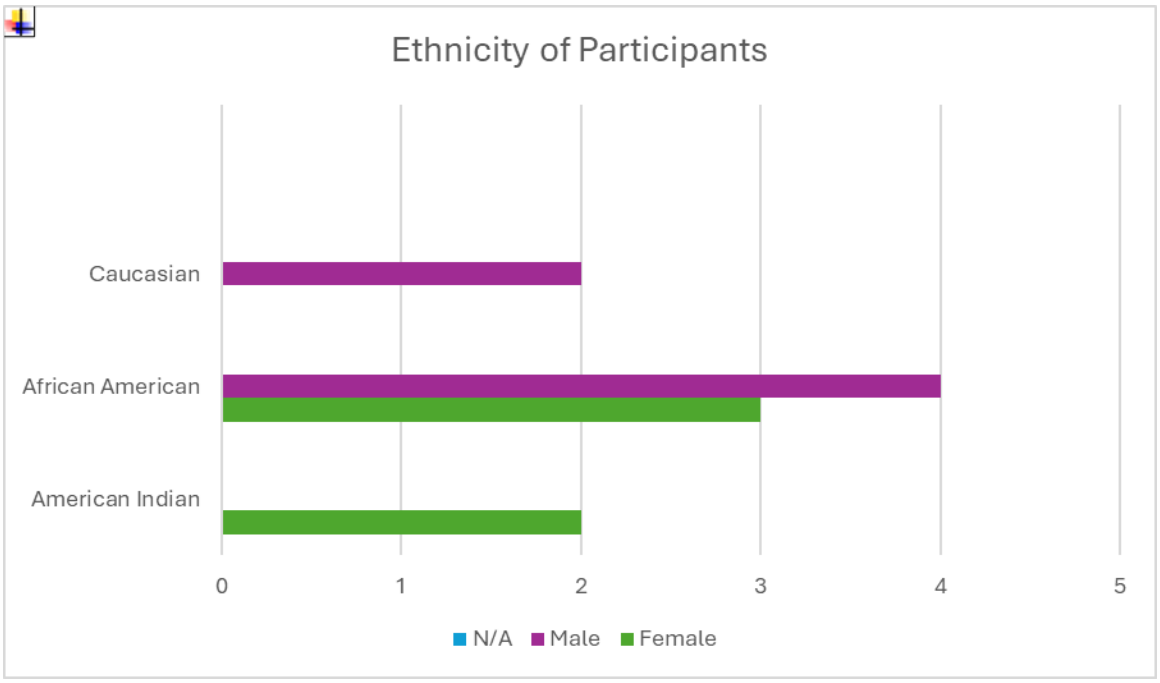
Appendix E

Age of Participants Not Experienced Discrimination or Harassment



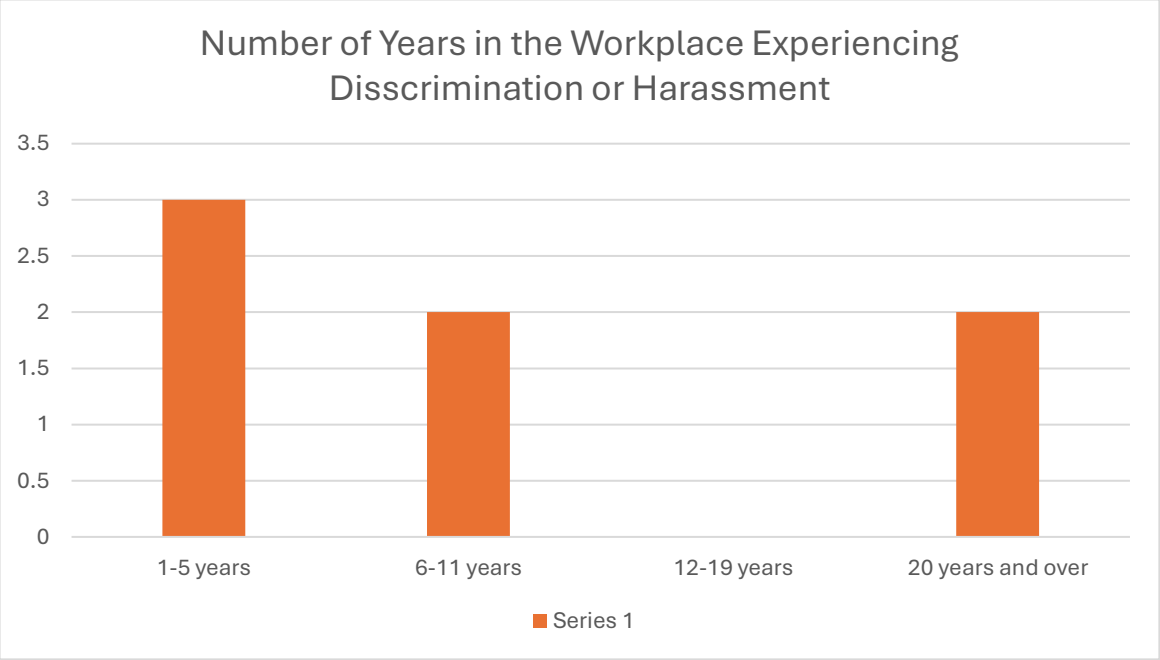
Appendix F

Ethnicity of Participants



Appendix G

Number of Years in the Workplace Experiencing Discrimination or Harassment

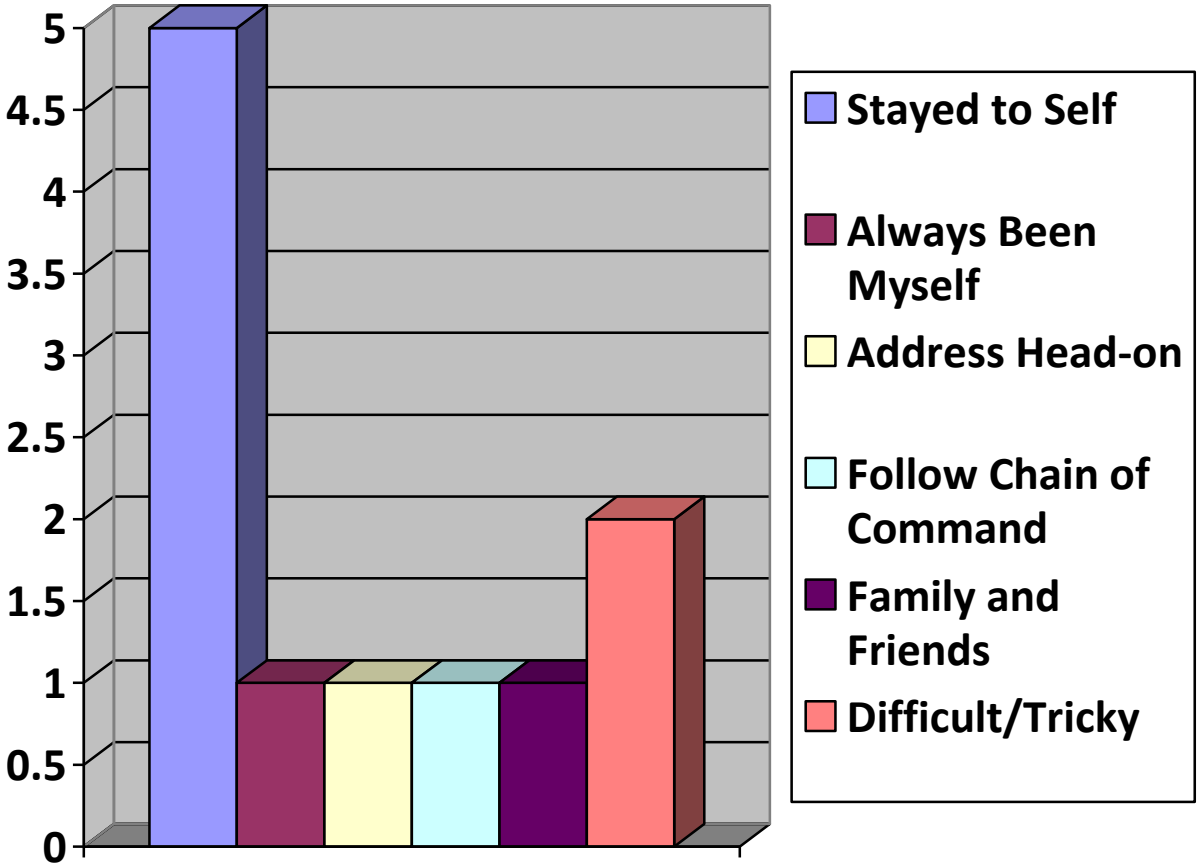


Appendix H

Number of Years in the Workplace Not Experiencing Discrimination or Harassment

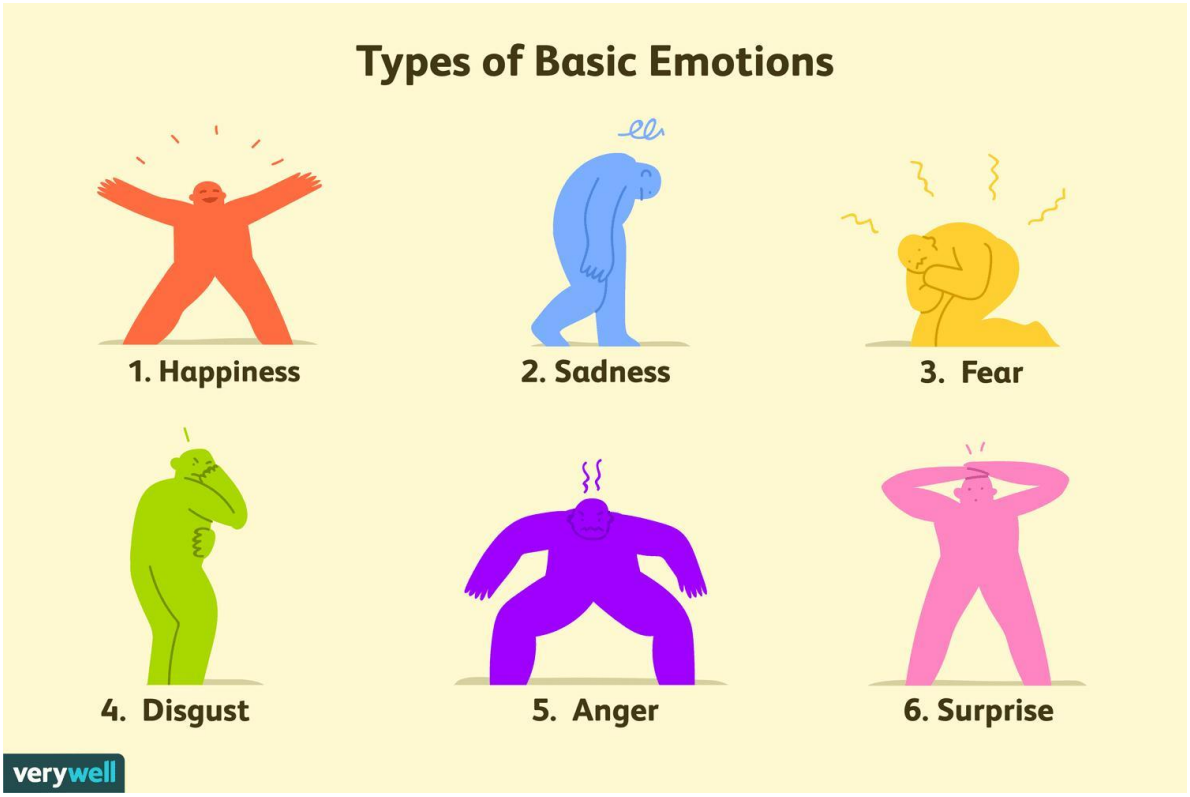
Appendix I

Coping With the Experience



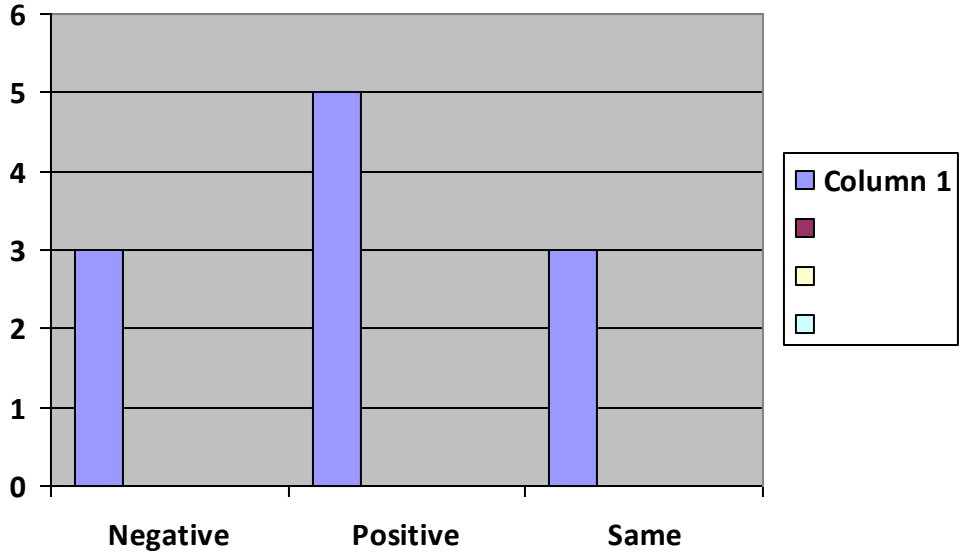
Appendix J

Emotions of Opening Up



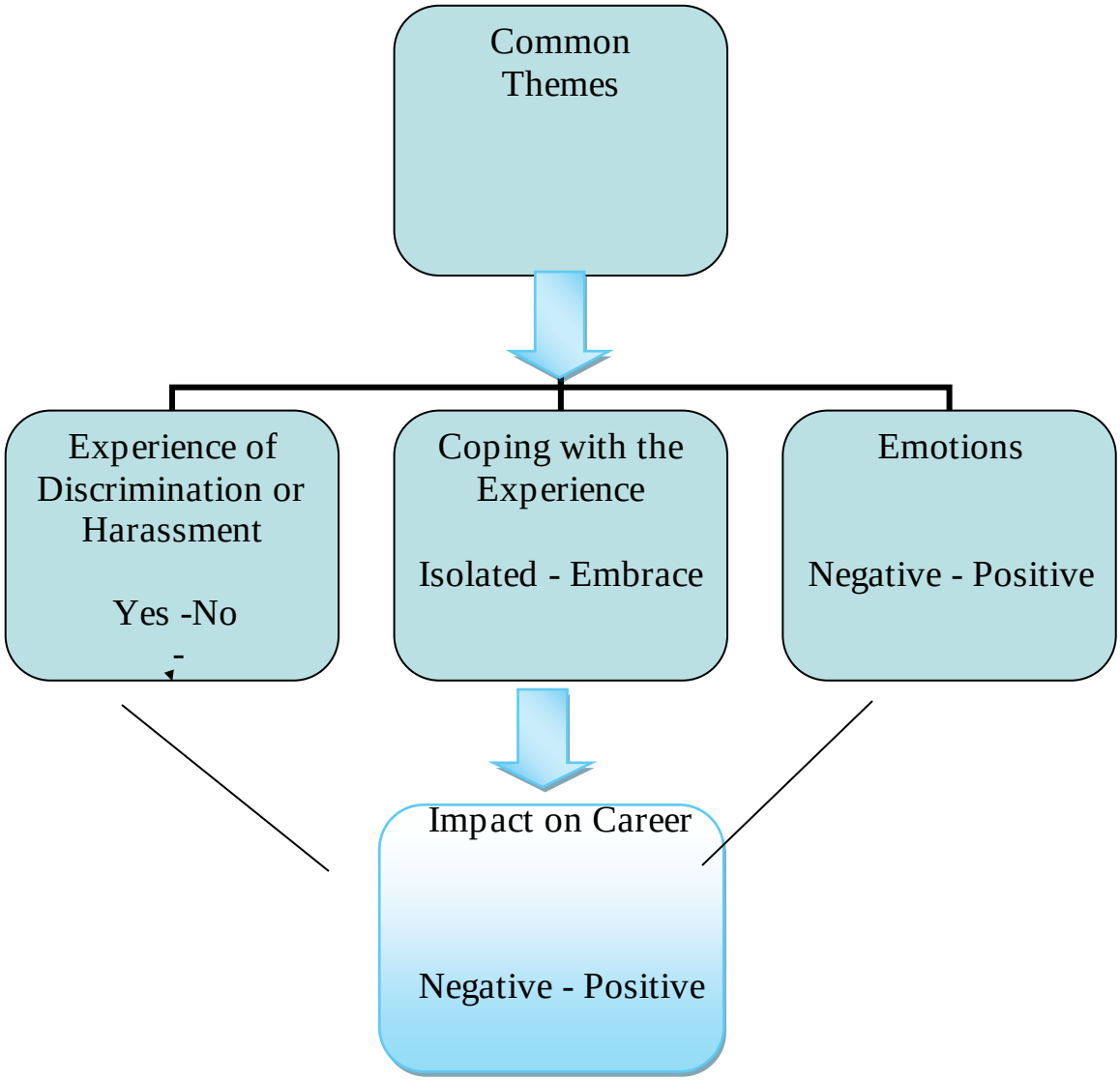
Appendix K

Impact On Career



Appendix L

Research Study Common Themes



Theme 1: Experience of Discrimination or Harassment

Theme 2: Coping with the Experience

Theme 3: Emotions of Opening Up

Theme 4: Impact on Career

Appendix M

Participants Responses

Question 1: What are LGBTQ officers' perceptions regarding their experiences of discrimination and harassment in the workplace? Participants who experienced discrimination or harassment in the workplace.

Participant	**Responses**
P3	I was not too quick to tell my coworkers about myself. I did not wat to chare anything with them.
P5	I felt good opening up in front of my coworkers. I felt like they accepted me for who I am.
P6	I felt good about the things that I did. I had to make some changes but over the years I realize that people do not change, but I learned how to work through it. I learned how to handle it.
P7	Positively because, because people got to see my authentic self. I do not feel like I'm putting on a fake representation because I'm at work. I can speak and voice my mind openly because people know I'm not putting on a facade.
P8	It was ostracizing to say the least. I did not feel like I necessarily belong.
P10	I felt hesitant because I knew my coworkers would stir clear of me because of my sexual orientation. I felt that my coworkers especially women would feel like I was trying to make a pass at them.
P11	I was comfortable opening up to a friend. It was easy because it was just a normal conversation that led to me expressing how I felt to only a selection of coworkers.

Figure 11.

Data matrix for interview participants' responses to research Question 1: What are LGBTQ officers' perceptions regarding their experiences of discrimination and harassment in the workplace? Participants who experienced discrimination or harassment in the workplace.

Appendix N

Participants Responses

Question 1: What are LGBTQ officers' perceptions regarding their experiences of discrimination and harassment in the workplace? Participants who did not experienced discrimination or harassment in the workplace

Participant	**Responses**
P1	Well, I was a little nervous about the employees, how they would view me.
P2	I have not opened up to all of my coworkers but those who are aware are fine with my sexuality. I feel like it's a do not ask don't tell type of situation because you know those that are going to support you.
P4	I was little intimidated. I think as a gay man working in an environment where I have a responsibility that requires me to conduct cavity checks, I did not want my sexuality to be an issue or affect how people would perceive me as a professional.
P9	Coming out to my coworker was easy, I had no problems.

Figure 12.

Data matrix for interview participants' responses to research Question 1: What are LGBTQ officers' perceptions regarding their experiences of discrimination and harassment in the workplace? Participants who did not experienced discrimination or harassment in the workplace

Appendix O

Participants Responses

Question 2: How do LGBTQ officers cope with harassment and discrimination in the workplace?

Participant	**Responses**
P1	I would bring it to the captain.
P2	I have been grateful not to experience any harassment but if I did, I would make it known that the action are not right and take it to the supervisor so that the complaint is documented.
P3	I kind of address it, approach it head on. I let the person know I do not like what they said and if it continues, then I go to the supervisor.
P4	Because I have not come out yet. For me, I live 30 minutes away from where I work to reduce the risk of experiencing any discrimination at my workplace. I try to stay professional and give nobody any ideas.
P5	I just didn't talk much about my personal life, I gave people less information about me until I felt comfortable opening up to them. I am proud of who I am, but I feel that I don't have to shout it to the world who I am.
P6	I treat people how I want to be treated. Whether you like it or not I'm going to be that person, I'm not trying to change my lifestyle for anyone.
P7	I'll say the best way to deal with it, I learned is to kind of address the person directly receiving the microaggressions or the discrimination and address them directly. I feel safe speaking to human resources, specifically because I feel that they are for the company. In many of those situations. I've had better luck talking directly to my higher ups about how I feel when they need certain things.
P 8	I think community is important. I reached out to my friends and my family, to kind of see where my head was and asked what do you think about it? So reaching out to my community of people

	was how I dealt with workplace harassment or workplace discrimination.
P9	I have not experienced any workplace discrimination or harassment, but I would go to my immediate supervisor about it.
P10	By being knowledgeable about my job, by reading literature, going to training and voicing my opinion about work-related matters, policies, and promotions.
P 11	I'm basically trying to detach myself from it emotionally as far as the job. As far as coping, I talk about it with friends and family outside of the job and just try to keep my work life separate from my personal life.

Figure 13.

Data matrix for interview participants' responses to research Question 2: How do LGBTQ officers cope with harassment and discrimination in the workplace?