



**Gay. Female. Cop.**

**The Intersectionality of Gender and  
Sexual Orientation in Police Culture**

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**Table of Contents**

**Acknowledgement.....4**

**Abstract.....5**

**Introduction.....6**

**Indication of Methodology .....7**

**Police Culture .....8**

*Literature Review .....10*

**Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Intersectionality .....10**

**Women and Policing.....12**

**Recruitment of Female Officers .....13**

**Issues in Recruiting Female Candidates in Ontario .....14**

**Female Police Officers and Gender Issues .....18**

**Police Culture and Sexual Orientation .....19**

**Disclosure of Sexual Orientation.....19**

**Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation.....20**

**Equal Employment Opportunities.....21**

**Professional Support and Mentoring .....21**

**Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Policing.....22**

**Police Culture and Power .....22**

**Methodology .....23**

**Survey Data Analysis .....24**

**Demographics.....24**

**Age .....24**

**Rank.....25**

**Years of Service .....25**

**Organizational Type.....25**

**Discrimination and Harassment.....26**

**Experiences as Female Officers.....26**

**Survey Key Findings – Gender .....27**

**Harassment .....30**

**Sexual Harassment .....31**

**Verbal Abuse.....32**

**Bullying.....33**

**Promotions .....34**

**Training.....37**

**Survey Key Findings – Sexual Orientation.....39**

Harassment .....	39
Harassment From Other Females .....	41
Promotional Opportunities .....	41
Training Opportunities .....	43
Focus Groups .....	43
Focus Group Key Findings .....	45
Discovery .....	45
Positive Hiring Experiences.....	46
Personal Relationship Where They Felt Valued by Peers/Colleagues .....	47
Support of Senior Commanders, Supervisors, and Peers .....	48
Dream .....	50
Greater Acceptance and Use of “Gender Inclusive” Language .....	50
Support “Top to Bottom” for LGBTQ Police Officers.....	51
More Inclusive, Less “All Male, All Boys Club” Police Associations .....	52
Females Supporting and Mentoring Females .....	53
Design.....	55
Standardize “Inclusive” Language in All Parts of the Organization .....	57
Promote More Females into Specialized Units and Senior Ranks.....	58
Culture Change .....	59
Destiny .....	61
Promote Mentors.....	61
Promote Academic and Organizational Research .....	61
Mandatory Training .....	62
Discussion .....	62
Conclusions.....	65
References.....	67

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## Abstract

Police culture has traditionally been defined as heterosexual and hypermasculine in character (Franklin, 2007). Research into the lived workplace experiences LGBTQ police officers consistently identifies challenges in such areas as workplace harassment and discrimination because they do not fit into the police culture's "norm" (Hassell & Brandl, 2009; Jones & Williams, 2013). We posited that female police officers who identify as LGBTQ face additional challenges when compared to their heterosexual, female counterparts because their experiences of LGBTQ female officers is co-determined by their gender and their sexual orientation (Boogaard & Roggeband, 2010). A total of 40 female LGBTQ police officers completed a survey on their lived experiences. Subsequently, 10 survey respondents participated in two focus groups to further consider their lived experiences in these areas. An Appreciative Inquiry model was used to guide the focus group discussions. Our research found that being "female" and being "gay" exposes police officers to some similar challenges in terms of both their gender and their sexual orientation, specifically workplace harassment and having to conform to masculine "norms" (e.g., act tough). However, the research also suggests that these and other challenges in a police environment based on sexual orientation is not as overt as that based on gender. This may be due to one's sexual orientation not being a "visible" characteristic (as gender or race would be) and less subject to overt harassment and other negative workplace experiences.

Key words: LGBTQ, police culture, diversity, gender, sexual orientation, intersectionality.

## Introduction

Policing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has seen an evolution from political control during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century toward a “professionalizing” of police “norms” in the later part of the century and then efforts to promote “community policing” based on cooperation and partnerships between police and the communities they serve (Kelling & Moore, 1988). These changes reflect a progressive increase to police legitimacy (Owen, Burke, Few-Demo, & Natwick, 2017).

Changes in policing structures and operations have led to a greater scrutiny of the culture of the criminal justice sector, including police culture. This recognition of the importance of culture when we talk about police “reform” or “modernization” and the lived experiences of police personnel in North America is reflected in such key studies as the President’s Task Force on the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing, which stated that, “Organizational culture eats policy for lunch. Any law enforcement organization can make great rules and policies that emphasize the guardian role, but if policies conflict with the existing culture, they will not be institutionalized and behavior will not change” (p. 11-12).

Police culture has traditionally been defined as heterosexual and hypermasculine in character (Franklin, 2007) and as the “norm”. Research on the impact of gender and sexual orientation on structured, ordered, and homogenous paramilitary cultures (Burke, 1994) based on masculine and heterosexual norms (Collins, 2014) has examined the experiences of law enforcement personnel who do not adhere to “traditional” norms. With respect to LGBTQ Police officers, research on the lived workplace experiences of such law enforcement personnel consistently identifies challenges in such areas as workplace harassment and discrimination (Hassell & Brandl, 2009; Jones & Williams, 2013).

Unlike other groups that do not fit the traditional police culture norms, sexual minorities are particularly susceptible to discrimination (Thompson & Nored, 2002). The police culture’s

traditional homogeneity and police organizations' continued reliance on paramilitary, hierarchal command structures reinforce norms that can be hostile to LGBTQ officers (Colvin, 2015).

Studying the shared experiences of LGBTQ female police officers offers opportunities not only to examine the workplace climate in which they work and how police organizations may or may not be changing to meet the needs of such members, but also affords an opportunity to examine the intersectional nature of gender and sexual orientation in policing.

## Indication of Methodology

There is little research data about Canadian LGBTQ police officers and their experiences in relation to police culture compared to the body of work in the United States (Armacost, 2004; Charles & Rouse-Arndt, 2004; Chung, 2001; Colvin 2008; Colvin, 2012; Hassell & Brandt, 2009; Miller et. al, 2003; Myers, Forest & Miller, 2008; Sklansky, 2006; Skolnick, 2008) and Europe (Burke, 1993; Burke, 1994; Burke, 1995; Loftus, 2010; Jones & Williams, 2013; Rumen & Broomfield, 2012; Terpstra & Schaap, 2013; Collins, 2014; Galvin-White & O'Neal, 2016).

In order to identify potential LGBTQ female police officers in the Province of Ontario who might wish to participate in this study, the Principle Researchers' professional contacts with senior police leaders in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's "O" Division, provincial, municipal, regional, and First Nations police services were contacted and requested to provide a general invitation (through electronic e-mail messages, organizational directives, etc.) to their members inviting potential research participants to contact the Principle Researcher in confidence. The Principle Researcher also used his relationship with the leadership team of Serving With Pride, a networking group for LGBTQ police officers and other first responders in the Province of Ontario to invite interested LGBTQ female police officers to participate in this research project. This type of "Snowball Sampling Technique" provides, "an established method for identifying and contacting hidden populations" (Atkinson & Flint, 2001, p. 4). It has proven to be particularly

useful with groups who might be reluctant to participate in a study where the subject matter may be sensitive and of a private nature (Rumens & Broomfield, 2012). This technique was successfully employed by the Principle Researcher in a similar project which examined the experiences of LGBTQ police officers in the Province of Ontario (Couto, 2014).

This outreach resulted in a total of 40 LGBTQ female police officers volunteering to complete a qualitative survey. All participants were either currently serving in the Province of Ontario, had recently served in the province and are now working outside Ontario or were currently retired but had served in the province.

Following completion and subsequent content analysis of the surveys by the research team, the survey respondents were invited to participate in one of two focus groups. The focus groups provided participants with an opportunity to discuss their lived experiences as LGBTQ female police officers and make recommendations to address challenges and opportunities identified by survey and focus group participants. A total of 10 survey respondents agreed to participate in two focus groups numbering five participants each. An Appreciative Inquiry model was used to guide the focus group discussions.

## Police Culture

Police culture is highly influenced by its historical ties to military organizational models, which accounts for its emphasis on hierarchal structures, order, and homogeny (Burke, 1994). Loftus (2010) found that police culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century displayed “remarkable continuity” in relation to its traditional roots because, “the basic pressures associated with the police role have not been removed” (p.1).

Law enforcement is based on a “masculinized” culture that is characterized by masculine, male-dominated, and/or gendered work contexts and differentiated by hypermasculine, heteronormative ideals (Collins, 2015). This has traditionally produced law enforcement



organizations which have predominantly been “white, working class, male enclaves” (Miller, Forest, & Jurik, 2003, p. 358). The culture is learned through specific training and covert co-worker socialization (Skolnick, 2002). Research in the area of workplace experiences of individuals who do not fit into the dominant, hypermasculine, heterosexual culture of policing (such as women and LGBTQ individuals) suggests that these individuals often face adverse work experiences (Hassell & Brandl, 2009). For example, the gendered expectations, specific organizational policies, and embedded and often unspoken cultural norms of law enforcement organizations has resulted in LGBTQ police officers reporting clear discrimination within their workplaces (Jones & Williams, 2015).

However, with the greater acceptance of community policing alongside “traditional” policing by North American law enforcement organizations (Russell, 2017), there has been a greater emphasis on the diversification of law enforcement entities to better reflect the communities they serve (Lima, 2010). According to Bradbury and Kellough (2010), the theory of Representative Bureaucracy, which suggests that, “a public workforce representative of the people in terms of race, ethnicity, and sex will help ensure that the interests of all groups are considered in bureaucratic decision-making processes” (p. 697), should result in diversification within law enforcement organizations and the interests of such diverse groups being better considered. However, while female, racialized, and LGBTQ individuals have joined police organizations in greater numbers during the past several decades, the traditional white, male, hypermasculine policing culture that has dominated police organization since the 1950s continues to be dominant. Changes are often incremental and meant to comply with human rights legislation and address public concerns with unacceptable behaviours (sexism, racism, homophobia, etc.). However, informal mechanisms continue to maintain the hegemonic masculine culture (Kurtz et al., 2012; Sklansky, 2006).

## Literature Review

### Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Intersectionality

Given the masculine and heterosexual roots of policing, exploring the intersectionality of gender and sexual orientation provides an opportunity to test the hypothesis that female police officers who also identify as LGBTQ face additional challenges to those of their heterosexual, female counterparts. The hypothesis is based on the theory that the experiences of LGBTQ female Police officers is co-determined by their gender and their sexual orientation (Boogaard & Roggeband, 2010).

Research that looks at policing through an intersectional lens is limited. Boogaard and Roggeband (2010) examined how organizational inequality (gender, ethnic, and organizational identifies) in the Dutch police force are “reproduced”. More common in research is to look at policing and how it impacts external groups through intersectional approaches. For example, Millings (2013) examined the enduring role of the police in young British Asian men’s situated negotiation of “identity” and “belonging”. Daum (2015) used intersectional subjection to analyze the selective enforcement of solicitation laws by American law enforcement organizations on transgender individuals. Gillard-Matthews (2016) studied the intersections between police officers’ race and driver race/ethnicity in relation to how they influenced the frequency in citizens reporting receiving a traffic ticket during a routine traffic stop.

Acker (2006) posited that theory and research on issues concerning inequality, dominance, and oppression in organizations should consider the “intersections” of multiple categories because an intersectional analysis reveals the “complex processes that (re)produces interlocking systems of oppression and inequity within specific organizational settings” (in Boogaard & Roggeband, 2010, p. 54).

Intersectionality is a feminist sociological theory first developed by Crenshaw (1989), whose concept of the “double bind of race and gender” was broadened by Hill Collins (1990) to include class and nationality into a “matrix of domination”. In the context of groups that have traditionally been identified as “other” within police organizations – for example, non-White, heterosexual males – intersectionality presents a method of studying the variety of privileges or forms of oppression that those “other” may experience as part of their workplace experiences (Paik, 2017). In other words, intersectionality helps us to consider the wide variety and inseparability of social forces and how they impact individuals’ lived experiences (Rodriguez, Holvino, Fletcher, & Nkomo, 2016) and how such individuals may face bias and discrimination along multiple identity dimensions such as gender, race, and sexual orientation.

The concept of *power* is critical to intersectionality. Power is seen not as something that one possesses, but rather as something that is performed. According to Foucault (1980), “power must be analyzed as something which circulates...Power is employed and circulated through a net-like organization” (p. 98). It is continuously being contested, renewed, altered, and challenged by all those individuals who exercise it.

Dubois (1903) described an individual whose identity is divided into several facets and having “this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (p. 2-3). In a very real sense, “divided” individuals may feel powerless in facets of their lives.

When it comes to LGBTQ female police officers and this research study, we approach the subject of “gender” and “sexual orientation” not as distinct “categories”, but as being permeated by one another. We consider how being both female and LGBTQ in a predominantly male and heterosexual profession impacts these officers and frames their workplace experiences (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013).

## Women and Policing

Women continue to face many challenges when it comes to their place in law enforcement organizations. In a 2001 national survey report, the National Center for Women & Policing in the U.S. found that:

Overall, the number of women in law enforcement has increased at an alarmingly slow rate over the past 30 years and women remain severely under-represented in large, small and rural law enforcement agencies. Worse, this glacial pace of progress has either stalled or reversed in the past few years. Until law enforcement agencies enact policies and practices designed to recruit, retain, and promote women, gender balance in policing will remain a distant reality (National Center for Women & Policing, 2001).

More recently, an international survey of English-language police department websites, annual reports, and other reports in England and Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Eire, the United States, Canada, Australia (eight departments), New Zealand, South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, India, Pakistan, Hong Kong, Papua New Guinea, and Fiji found, “a significant problem with a lack of accountability in relation to reporting on key indicators of gender ratios within police organisations” (Prenzler & Sinclair, 2013, p. 129). The study found, “enormous improvements in the status of women police in numerous departments in the past few decades” specifically related to recruitment rates and in the promotion of women to middle and senior ranks (p. 129). The researchers attributed this to improvements in legislative and policy framework, supportive police leadership, regular equity audits, and learning from the strategies of successful departments. However, they also found that “growth is slowing and that more focused, proactive measures are needed to support women's entry into policing and career development” (p. 129).

Beare (2008) identified distinct decades to illustrate the slow change for females in police organizations. She noted that in the Western world, women have been historically excluded from the policing profession, particularly on the front-lines of policing. When females did start to be employed by police organizations, they were excluded from active duties and relegated to “desk duties” and other “women’s work”. This reflected the dominant cultural perceptions that police work was “man’s work” and internal attitudes within the male-dominated policing world that policing was the “domain for ‘real’ men.” Thus, women’s roles in the 1890s were restricted to being matrons and jail guards for female offenders. The initial arguments against allowing females into “regular” police roles were based on arguments that women could not physically perform the required duties. Beare questioned whether this argument was based strictly on legitimately believing women could not handle the physical aspects of the job or whether, in fact, they were based on fears that females would weaken the “brotherhood” of the masculine policing environment. Eventually, some females were accepted into technical fields such as fingerprint and lab technicians.

In the 1970s, the Ontario Police Commission abolished the rank of “Policewoman” in order to allow females attend the Ontario Police College and attain the rank of “Constable”. In the 1980s, the introduction of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guaranteed equal rights and freedoms to women and men. This included terms of employment, which required employers (including police organizations) to treat all employees the same with the same responsibilities (Beare, 2008).

### Recruitment of Female Officers

In Canada, females account for 14,545 or more than 21% of all sworn officers in 2016, and are increasingly represented in the higher ranks of police services. They represented 13% of senior

officers – the highest proportion ever recorded – compared with 6% in 2006 and less than 1% in 1986 (Greenland & Alam, 2018).

While the number of female police officers has increased, Derks, Van Laar, Ellemers, & de Groot (2016) found that the mere presence in greater numbers of females in police services has not necessarily made police organizations more “feminine”, but instead influenced the way women acted within the organization. Specifically, female officers are prone to adopting the traditional hypermasculine characteristic of police culture by accessing masculine capital and “acting masculine”, which is generally seen as being rewarded through recruitment, retention, and even promotion of “masculine” women (Huppertz & Goodwin, 2013). Derks et al., (2016) also posited that females in leadership positions in law enforcement are particularly susceptible to the “Queen Bee Syndrome”, where they fit into male dominated organizations by adopting strongly masculine characteristics, leadership styles, and distancing themselves from other women.

### Issues in Recruiting Female Candidates in Ontario

While the number of females serving as sworn police officers is increasing, policing remains an overwhelmingly male profession in Ontario and Canada. A 2018 workplace census of the Calgary Police Service found that there is one sworn female member (19.3%) for every five males (80.6%). Female senior officers represented 15.8% compared to 84.2% males. In contrast, females were in the majority of civilian members, with 65.6% compared to 34.5%. The study found that there are greater number of females in finance, strategic services, information management, technology, and respondent services while males continue to dominate traditional areas of policing such as infrastructure services, criminal investigation, and patrol operations, lending credence to

arguments of the on-going masculine character of the sworn officer component of policing even in modern policing (Humphrey, 2018).

The Calgary study echoed the Ottawa Police Service's (OPS) 2012 workforce survey and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's (RCMP) 2012 gender audit. The OPS survey found female officers made up 23% of the Ottawa Police Service. From 2005 to 2012, the percentage of female police officers increased by 1% and were underrepresented in traditional police organization units, such as emergency operations (canine, tactical, etc.). The study posited that female officers' careers suffered because of traditional gender-related issues such as having children and sexism in the workplace. The study concluded that:

- Female sworn officers are more likely than their male counterparts to be single, to have no children, to hold the rank of Constable, and to have spent 20 or more years in their current rank.
- Male sworn officers were more likely than their female counterparts to be married or living with a partner, to have children at home, to hold the rank of Sergeant, and to apply for a promotion.

The study concluded that female officers find it more difficult to combine marriage and parenthood with their duties as a police officer than their male colleagues and their gender significantly impacted career outcomes. It also found that gender plays a role in deciding whether or not to apply for a promotion within the service (Ottawa Police Service, 2017).

The RCMP's 2012 Gender-Based Assessment attempted to "validate whether recruitment and promotion policies are gender neutral and if their applications provide equal opportunity for female Regular Members" (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2012). It also set as an objective the identifying of gender inconsistencies and/or gaps in the service's recruiting and promotional

processes. The study focused on three specific areas: recruitment, the non-commissioned officer promotional process, and the executive/officer development and resourcing promotional process.

The study concluded that over five years, the RCMP increased its female representation within the organization, including at the commissioned officer ranks. It also identified “factors” that prevents both genders from applying for promotions, but which “the majority have a more pronounced impact on females” (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2012), specifically:

- External factors such as mobility, family, and work-life balance;
- Female attrition rates beyond 20 years of service;
- The view of lack of fairness and transparency in the promotional processes at all ranks;
- Gender discrepancies in the success rate for the Physical Abilities Requirement Evaluation (PARE); and
- Support for female members at the Officer Candidate Development Program (OCDP).

More broadly, a 2012 report on gender audits in police organizations prepared for Status of Women Canada found that the bulk of police specific gender assessment and analysis related information identified focused on increasing the representation of women in policing, on reducing barriers to recruitment, retention, placement in specialized positions, and promotion. There was less information found on efforts to identify and overcome cultural barriers and on developing gender sensitive operational policies and practices (Montgomery, 2012, p. 3).

To provide context for the on-going challenges facing police organizations in the Province of Ontario when it comes to attracting female candidates to front-line policing, we examined data from the Ontario Police College (OPC) regarding the percentage of female participants in the College’s Basic Constable Training (BCT) program (R. Morris, personal communications, May



4, 2018). Every individual hired as a Police Constable (PC) in Ontario must successfully complete the BTC upon being recruited and hired as a police officer by a police service.

Statistics show that between 1996 and 2017, a total of 20,612 recruits took the BCT course. Of this total, 4,196 recruits were female for an average of 20.4%. The highest percentage of female recruits occurred in 2015 when 28.6% identified as female (See Appendix A).

In order to provide further still context on females within policing in Ontario, we obtained hiring data from five Ontario police services over the same time period as the OPC data (Appendix B). While the data from each service does not correspond to each year of the OPC data, it does show trends in the hiring of females by these police organizations. While many Ontario police services continue to proactively seek out female candidates in their recruitment initiatives, gender parity in the hiring of females remains an elusive goal or, at best, a far off target. The larger Ontario services varied widely in their percentages of female recruits in their recruit classes. For example, the Ontario Provincial Police's highest percentage of female recruits topped the 30% mark only once between 2012 and 2017 despite concentrated efforts on the part of the service to attract females. The Ottawa Police Service had one year between 2014 and 2017 where their recruits were nearly half female (2014). Peel Regional Police ranged from 17% to 25% from 2008 to 2016. Toronto Police Service's recruit classes from 2005 to 2017 averaged 18.8% of female recruits. Because of a hiring freeze in the latter half of the yearly data sample, 2015 and 2016 had smaller recruit classes, but the percentage of females in these classes were unusually high. Finally, Greater Sudbury Police Service, a mid-sized organization, saw large fluctuations in terms of their percentages (from a low of 0.05% to 33%) from 2007 to 2017.

The data shows the challenges facing police services in Ontario in their quest for gender parity. Police organizations that engage in gender audits typically focus on women's representation in policing. According to Montgomery (2012), "most policing gender audits...

focus on identifying barriers to recruiting and retaining women police officers, and then on developing strategies to increase representation of women at all levels of policing” (p. 5). While the efforts of Ontario police services to attract females to the profession are more frequent and intentional, female police officers will remain a minority in police organizations for the foreseeable future if current trends in police recruiting of females persist.

### Female Police Officers and Gender Issues

Gender is a contested term. It is commonly confused with the binary term “sex”, which refers to the “reproductive differences in the structure and function of the reproductive organs on the ground of which beings are distinguished as male and female” (Torgrimson, & Minson, 2005, p. 785). Gender, on the other hand, can be thought of as the behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with a specific sex. Gender refers to the “social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men.” These attributes, opportunities, and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. (United Nations, 2018).

Females within a traditionally masculine culture like policing must deal with the view that to be a “police officer” has generally meant to be “male”. Like other groups – racialized and LGBTQ individuals, for example – who do not fit the traditional heterosexual and hypermasculine character of policing (Franklin, 2007) and whose organizations have traditionally been “White, working class, male enclaves” (Miller, Forest, & Jurik, 2003, p. 358), women in policing have had to deal with the fact that they have traditionally been thought of as “other” when it comes to the police culture. As de Beauvoir (1989) argued, males in such a culture reflect their society where males are “the Subject” or “the Absolute” while females are “the Other” and “the incidental as

opposed to the essential” (p. xviii-xix). This “othering” may result in a situation where, according to Bikos (2016),

“...policewomen have a bifurcated consciousness, dividing the world as they actually experience it from the hegemonic masculine view they adopt as officers. Since the latter viewpoint strongly devalues the former, women are frequently conflicted, and at times at war with themselves and each other. The results confirm that the hegemonic masculine values perpetuated by the institution of policing influences the way policewomen see themselves, the world, and each other” (p. 1).

In a police context, the hypermasculine culture is perpetuated by recruitment and training where police intentionally or unconsciously look for individuals that have masculine qualities. Galvin-White and O’Neal (2016) noted that many studies (Dick & Jankowicz, 2001; Prokos & Padavic, 2002; Shelley et al., 2011) have found that “...instructors overtly and covertly teach male recruits that women are feeble and do not belong in the ‘in-group’, as well as deliberately belittling the contributions women police officers have made to the advancement and overall success of law enforcement” (p. 255).

## Police Culture and Sexual Orientation

### Disclosure of Sexual Orientation

Many factors influence an individual’s decision to overtly disclose their sexual orientation in the workplace. A study by Galvin-White and O’Neal (2016) using 15 in-depth interviews with lesbian police officers examined interpersonal relationships in the workplace and other factors related to their sexual identity disclosure. While some of the participants in this study reported that their disclosure positively influenced their professional reputation, others discussed the potential benefits of remaining “closeted”, leading the vast majority to be “selectively out” in their

workplace. The decision to selectively disclose their sexual identity was most often motivated by the desire to first prove their worthiness in the workplace, with participants noting that they felt safer to disclose their sexual orientation once a good work reputation was established (Galvin-White & O’Neal, 2016).

Attempts during the past decade by some police organizations to actively recruit LGBTQ candidates has had mixed results. In 2008, the Ontario Police College began to keep data on sexual orientation of recruits attending the Basic Constable Training (BCT) course. As shown in Appendix C, between 2008 and 2017, recruits self-identifying as “lesbian” has averaged 1.4% of the average recruit class (a total of 110 recruits over this nine-year period). Males identifying as “gay” have fared even worse, representing only 0.4% of the average recruit class (a total of 30 recruits). A total of 7,913 recruits attended the BCT course during this period (R. Morris, personal communications, May 4, 2018).

### Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation

Discrimination in the workplace based on one’s sexual orientation is often note focused on firing or demotion and has been found to include severe verbal and sexual harassment such as discriminatory slurs and inappropriate touching. It may also include physical endangerment, harassment or violence and may including such actions as being refused back-up, which places an officer’s personal safety in danger (Sears, Hasenbush & Malory, 2013). In a 2009 study, more than two-thirds of LGBTQ officers reported hearing homophobic comments on the job and more than 50% reported being treated like an outsider by their colleagues (as cited in Sears, Hasenbush & Malory, 2013). Another study found that 54% of gay male officers and 49% of lesbian officers in the United Kingdom reported hearing homophobic talk in the workplace (Colvin, 2015). A 2008 study surveyed Chiefs of Police in Texas and found that more than a quarter would have difficulty

working with a gay man and about half would have difficulty working with a lesbian officer (as cited in Sears, Hasenbush & Malory, 2013). Finally, in a follow-up study to Burke's (1993, 1994) ground-breaking research on the lives of LGBTQ police officers in England and Wales, just under one-fifth of LGBTQ police officers reported experiencing discrimination in their workplaces, with officers in both small and large police services, those in senior ranks and non-uniformed positions, and those who identify as gay male and of an ethnic minority experiencing the highest levels of victimization in training, deployment, and promotion (Jones & Williams, 2015).

### Equal Employment Opportunities

Attitudinal bias against LGBTQ police officers is a significant problem in law enforcement. A study by Colvin (2015) explored the workplace experiences of 243 lesbian and gay police officers in the United Kingdom using an on-line survey. It revealed that lesbian and gay officers face barriers to equal employment opportunities. While lesbian officers reported feelings of "tokenism" more frequently than gay male officers, these male officers reported more barriers to equal opportunities in general than lesbian officers (Colvin, 2015). According to Colvin (2015), gender stereotyping by officers in the traditional majority of officers may be inadvertently benefitting lesbians in the masculine environment of policing, where gay men are seen as feminine and weak and lesbian women as masculine and tough. Additionally, lesbian officers report fewer barriers than gay male officers because of their status as women, as many police forces have been actively engaged in the recruitment and retention of female police officers.

### Professional Support and Mentoring

Perceived personal and professional support from peers and supervisors is a significant factor in one's workplace experience. In a study by Galvin-White and O'Neal (2016), the majority of participants reported that they felt supported by their peers and supervisors. However, informal

and formal discrimination (gender- and sexual-orientation-based) were the most common reasons participants did not feel supported by their peers or supervisors. Barratt, Bergman, & Thompson (2014) found that sexual orientation can be negatively related to career mentoring, where lesbian and bisexual participants received less career mentoring than those who identified as heterosexual. They also found that the interaction between masculinity, femininity, and sexual orientation significantly predicted career mentoring and role modeling. Lesbian and bisexual participants received the most career mentoring and role modeling when high in both masculinity and femininity, whereas heterosexual participants reported receiving the most when low in both masculinity and femininity.

## Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Policing

### Police Culture and Power

Tator & Henry (2006) argued that the “police culture” is actually a “subculture” in that police officers are “first and foremost members of the society in which they live” and influenced by the “standard” dominant culture in which they live and work (p. 93). They also argue that police culture is not “monolithic” but rather “complex and multilayered” and strongly influenced by the multiple and changing roles of police officers today.

Through its recruitment and selection methods, police organizations pass down what is expected of new members. This was succinctly expressed through New Haven Chief of Police James Ahern (1972) when he described police culture thus: “The day a new recruit walks through the door of the police academy, he leaves society behind to enter a profession that does more than give him a job, it defines who he is. He will always be a cop” (p. 168).

Skolnick (1994) posited that this ingraining of a distinct police culture in its members is accomplished via (1) *socialization*, where officers are initiated into a police “brotherhood” as part

of their training, socialize with one another, and tend to exclude non-police from their interaction, and (2) *solidarity*, where officers develop a “brotherhood” where the “blue line” is never betrayed because Police officers are expected to and “having one another’s back”. Carter & Radlet (1999) further argued that this results in police officers being seen as a “cynical, authoritative, and isolated group of people who have low self-esteem and feel they receive little respect” (p. 166). Groups that do not conform to traditional forms of conduct, behaviour, and beliefs through such things as gender, racial, ethnic, and sexual diversity often find negotiating this culture difficult.

## Methodology

This study used data derived from 40 responses to a survey sent directly to volunteer participants in this research project. All participants were police officers or Special Constables who identified as female and LGBTQ. The survey consisted of 28 questions on demographic information (age, rank, etc.) and their perceptions and lived experiences as both “female” and “LGBTQ” police officials.

Following the gathering and analysis of the survey data, two focus group sessions were held comprised of five participants each. An Appreciative Inquiry model was used to guide the discussion of the two focus groups. This allowed participants not only to discuss their past and current lived experiences as LGBTQ female police officers, but also to consider what recommendations they would make for designing a possible future for LGBTQ female personnel in such areas as workplace discrimination and harassment, occupational training and promotions, and general relationships with female and male peers and supervisors.

For both sets of data, we used an Open Coding process based on Constant Comparative Method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), which allows for the, “breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data”, modified to identify respondents’ perceptions and lived experiences and look for patterns of responses (p. 61). We focused on selecting key themes,

systematically relating these themes to categories and individual incidents in the data, validating and invalidating relationships within all related data, and refining themes.

## Survey Data Analysis

### Demographics

A total of 40 participants volunteered to completed survey. These respondents were either serving or retired members of police organizations in Ontario (federal, provincial or municipal police services). Almost all respondents (97.5%) were currently serving members with their police organizations. None of the respondents had worked or were currently working for a First Nations police organization. For the purpose of this study and given the increasingly heightened role of Special Constables within police services in the Province of Ontario under the *Safer Ontario Act 2018* (Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 2018), Special Constables were included in this study. All respondents identified as “lesbian” in terms of sexual orientation, except for one respondent who identified as “bi-sexual”.

Participants were free to decline to answer any questions. The questions included basic demographic information, questions specifically related to both gender and sexual orientation, and an open-ended question regarding suggestions for consideration by the researchers when considering the experiences of LGBTQ female police officers.

### Age

Three-quarters (75%) of respondents were 36-years-of-age to 45-years-of-age and over. One-quarter (25%) of respondents were in the 26 to 35-years-of-age range. The lack of respondents under the age of 26 may be connected to the average age of recruits for Ontario police services, which is 28-years-of-age (R. Morris, personal communications, May 4, 2018).



## Rank

A majority of respondents – 80% or 32 officers – identified as front-line officers:

- Corporal (RCMP) – 3
- Staff Sergeant – 3
- Detective Sergeant – 1
- Sergeant – 4
- Detective – 1
- Detective Constable – 3
- Constable – 15
- Special Constable – 2

A total of eight (8) senior officers took part in the survey:

- Chief – 1
- Superintendent – 3
- Inspector – 4

## Years of Service

Respondents having served between 11 and 20 years and those having served 21 to 30 years were fairly equally represented – 37.5% and 32.5% (or 70% of total respondents). Those serving 10 years and under represented 25% of respondents. A further 5% of respondents had more than 31 years of service in policing.

## Organizational Type

The majority of respondents (80%) served in municipal or regional police services. A further 7.5% worked for the Ontario Provincial Police and 12.5% for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

## Discrimination and Harassment

In order to set a baseline for considering their experiences, respondents were first asked to consider themselves as both female and LGBTQ police officers. They were asked to answer “yes” or “no” to the following question: *“As a LGBTQ female officer, do you feel you have sometimes been treated unfairly or discriminated against because of your sexual orientation or gender identity (e.g., felt excluded, unsupported)?”* Respondents were fairly evenly divided in their responses, with 52.5% answering in the affirmative while 47.5% answered in the negative.

Respondents were then asked to answer “yes” or “no” to the following question: *“As a LGBTQ female officer, have you ever been harassed verbally/emotionally (e.g. called names, been the subject of jokes) because of your sexual orientation or gender identity?”* Respondents again answered equally to the question, with 50% answering that they had faced verbal or emotional harassment because of their sexual orientation or gender and 50% responding that they did not.

We then probed the respondents’ specific experiences first based on gender and then on sexual orientation in three specific areas: promotional opportunities, training opportunities, and organizational protection from harassment.

## Experiences as Female Officers

To consider respondents’ experiences as female police officers, we started with a general question about their overall experience: *“Please consider your experiences as a female police officer. Describe how being a female police officer has affected your experiences (e.g., positively, negatively, not at all, etc.) during your policing career.”* All but one of the 40 respondents answered this question, with 24 respondents indicating that their overall experience as female officers was negative while 12 described their experiences as positive. Three respondents chose to classify their experiences as “neutral” or both positive and negative.

We then asked respondents to consider their experiences in three specific areas of their policing careers: (1) whether they felt they were harassed (we left respondents open to define what they felt harassment meant to them – verbal, physical, sexual, etc.), (2) whether they felt their gender had an impact on promotional opportunities, and (3) whether they felt their gender had an impact on training opportunities.

When asked, *“As a female officer, have you experienced any harassment from your male counterparts or superiors?”*, 27 respondents chose to answer, with 25 responding “yes” to the question, one answering “no”, and one respondent choosing to not answer definitively “yes” or “no”.

When asked, *“As a female officer, have you experienced any challenges or opportunities because of your gender when it comes to promotional opportunities?”*, 33 respondents chose to answer the question. A total of 17 respondents said that they believed their gender posed a challenge (implying that it was a negative factor) when it came to promotions, 12 regarded their gender as enhancing promotional opportunities, one (1) said it posed both challenges and opportunities, while three respondents had yet to go through a promotional process in their career.

Finally, respondents were asked open-ended questions regarding training opportunities and how their gender may have afforded them with challenges or opportunities in this area of their police work as well as identify areas where police organizations could improve in relation to their female officers.

## Survey Key Findings – Gender

Respondents generally confirmed past research into the experiences of female police officers, which consistently found that female officers tend to experience negative experiences in policing directly related to their gender. Typical “negative” experiences included being made to feel that their gender is somehow not the “norm” in policing, having to “prove yourself” or “work

harder” because you are female, and experiencing overt discrimination from male officers and supervisors.

The overwhelming number of respondents who experienced negative consequences related to gender in the police workplace noted that female officers have and continue to endure discriminatory behavior from their male counterparts. One respondent noted that, *“Being female in a male dominated profession means having to work twice as hard to prove yourself, resulting in many high achieving female officers. Female officers must withstand more scrutiny, more criticism, more ‘testing’ than their counterparts”* (Respondent 11). Another respondent stated that females are more often “labelled” by fellow officers or superiors much more easily than their male counterparts:

*“...we have to work harder than males to prove themselves. I was fortunate to be involved in an incident early in my career that labeled me in a positive light. I have seen the opposite happen other females. Males get chances and breaks before they are labeled.”* (Respondent 15)

Still another respondent felt that, *“This is still a masculine-driven community and I feel that males are more easily welcomed and supported. Being a female, I am also a mother and focus more on family/work life balance.”* (Respondent 26)

Respondents also reported that a female police officer has to “work harder” to achieve career goals or recognition based on the fact that policing “norms” (physical, gendered, etc.) are thought of as “masculine” and that the profession itself remains an “old boys club”:

*“Being a female officer, I have always had to work harder than my male counterparts as I am not part of the boys club. Not only am I a female, I am also short and Asian. So both physically and mentally, I have to work harder than the male coworkers. There is always a Boys Club.”* (Respondent 18)

*“As a female officer, you have to work 200% hard compared to male officers in order to be accepted. When male officer saw that you were a competent officer, they accepted you and never doubted your abilities. However, if they saw you were needy and had difficulty with the job, they would make comments and not accept you as an Officer.”*

(Respondent 19)

*“Within my peer group, I have had to prove myself ... as an individual able to handle physical and high risk situations. I was often overlooked for roles that would lead to physical altercations (foot chases, fights, door breaches) until such time I pushed my way into those positions and even putting myself at higher risk just to prove my capabilities. I have also been discriminated against based on my marital status, sexual orientation, and gender* (Respondent 26)

*“Most male Officers do not want a woman’s input, don’t expect women to engage physically in the requirements of the job when needed. What I’ve experienced most is that when I do go above and beyond the male Officers expectations, they always belittle the work you have done, and trash talk to others about what you do.”*

(Respondent 6)

Some respondents also reported that even if they succeeded, there was always the feeling that such females either “got help” from their male counterparts or supervisors or benefited from favouritism:

*“Being a female, everything you do well is because a male officer helped and everything you do poorly is because you’re a female. Females cannot just work hard, there is always a reason they may get a job or position over a male.”* (Respondent

14)

*“As a female officer, I believe that one has to prove themselves more than the average male Officer. As a female, when selected for a unit, position or promotion, one of the first comments made is, ‘she got it because they need women’, not that she was competent...there are still a few positions within the organization where a female will not be chosen for the spot, regardless of skill level.”* (Respondent 5)

Respondents who reported positive experiences as female police officers felt “respected” and experienced “acceptance” within their workplaces. *“I feel being a female officer has no limitations for myself. I am hard working and well-respected”* (Respondent 9). However, even those respondents who reported generally positive experiences as females within policing tended to highlight some negative experiences:

*“I found it much more difficult in the beginning of my career and then again at the twilight of my career. In the beginning, I felt as though I had to prove myself more than the male recruits. I was often left out of the more physical altercations, etc. As time went on, the male Officers were much more inclusive as I gained their respect and participated in physical activities with them outside of work (i.e. hockey, golf, etc.). As I have risen in the ranks, I find that again I have to spend twice as much energy to prove my worth, and fight against the “boys club” in order to be heard.”*

(Respondent 20)

## Harassment

Workplace harassment is defined in the Province of Ontario’s *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (Part III.0.I: Workplace violence and workplace harassment) as, “engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against a worker in a workplace that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome” (Government of Ontario, 1990, p. 6). Recent public

attention about workplace harassment issues against females has been driven primarily by social media (e.g., the #MeToo movement) and females in such sectors as the entertainment industry, public service organizations, and corporations have raised awareness of workplace harassment in Western society. Heightened awareness of harassment issues within policing are also on the rise (“Female Officer Docked Pay”, 2018; “Police Board Member Investigated for Sexual Harassment”, 2017).

In this survey, we asked respondents to consider their experiences with occupational harassment as female police officers. A total of 27 respondents (67.5%) chose to answer this question. Only one of these respondents replied that she had not experienced any significant harassment in their workplace.

Respondents overwhelmingly identified three types of harassment experienced as female Officers: sexual, verbal, and workplace bullying.

### Sexual Harassment

Some respondents identified sexual harassment as a major part of their experiences within their police organizations:

*“As a recruit, I was peer pressured in to attending a ‘Rookie party’. As rookies, we pay for the alcohol, so it’s important that we show up. I was told we were going out to a restaurant for drinks; the plans suddenly changed and we were going a local strip bar after the restaurant. I was reluctant but felt the need to fit in, as they (male officers) kept insisting and I caved. That night, three officers paid for all my drinks. They also had an end goal of taking me back to my coach officer’s house. Another recruit (male) was present and stood up for me in my intoxicated state. He made sure I reached home safely.” (Respondent 8)*

Sexual harassment for LGBTQ female officers typically took the unique form of not only male colleagues seeking sexual relations with female colleagues, but many seeking to “convert” “lesbian” officers or, as one respondent put it, “*you just need a man.*” (Respondent 4)

*“Yes, remarks are sometimes made on appearance (e.g. how ‘sexy’ I look, that my ‘ass’ looks great in uniform). Although it is known that I am married in have no intentions on having an affair, males colleagues still inquire on their possibilities. The most common remark I get is, ‘How can I convert you back?’ (meaning my sexual orientation) or ‘You just haven’t had the right guy.’”* (Respondent 2)

*“I have when I first came on the job, I had a male counterpart and a supervisor who continuously wanted to date me. When they found out that I was gay, they pushed even harder thinking that they could change who I was and that I would no longer be a gay female.”* (Respondent 19)

*“A S/Sgt. who would grab me and hug me and ask for kisses along with numerous sexual comments at any time. There was a lots of sexual harassment back on the 80’s, but it was just generally accepted that men can say whatever they want.”*  
(Respondent 26)

## Verbal Abuse

Verbal abuse on the job was almost as common for respondents as sexual harassment. Abusive language in the form of what one respondent called “jokes, conversations, and innuendos” (e.g., being called a “dyke”, being harassed for having “indoor plumbing” or being a “carpet muncher”) was a common experience:



*“Most recently I had a male supervisor that was a misogynist. The treatment was so bad that I eventually had to ask out of the unit. I will willing to go back to the road to get away from him. I was part of a small investigative team and the treatment that I received versus my male partner was shocking.”* (Respondent 38)

## Bullying

Harassment in the form of workplace bullying was also mentioned by a number of respondents. One respondent reported that, “In my early years, a male coworker would key the radio so nobody could hear my transmissions.” (Respondent 21)

*“I was bullied for several years when I first got on the job, by another PC (Police Constable). He clearly didn’t like my desire to learn and do good on the job, when I first started. The superiors knew this was going on. Nobody did a thing.”* (Respondent 6)

*“In a Drug Unit, my S/Sgt blew cigarette smoke in my face and said, “You (plural = women) have what we want – they teach you that in wife school, and you hold it against us for the rest of our lives.”* (Respondent 28)

Some respondents experienced multiple forms of harassment, such as this respondent:

*“I was denied supervisory and development opportunities because I am married to another female officer who worked in the same building, but different unit. This was differential treatment because there was another married couple (heterosexual) in the building who did not suffer the same treatment. I have also been verbally harassed through unwanted sexual comments and gender-biased comments. Further, my service*

*experience was discounted by the time I was pregnant (on operational light duties) and on maternity leave, which all resulted in a formal complaint.” (Respondent 25)*

## Promotions

The promotional system within policing organizations is a key factor in the workplace experiences of police officers (Mason, 2010). Because of its hierarchal structure, workplace promotions bring with it not only financial rewards, but also greater responsibilities and status.

When we asked survey participants about whether their gender provided them with opportunities, challenges or both, respondents were fairly evenly divided between positive and negative experiences. Some respondents felt their police organization had to employ a kind of “affirmative action” in promoting females because of legal and public expectations of policing today.

*“They have to promote a certain number of female officers in order to have a ‘fair’ representation, so in that sense it could be seen as an opportunity” (Respondent 5).*

Another respondent said that, *“...being a female police officer in my service is an advantage when it comes to promotional opportunities. The service actively seeks to promote women (or at least that is the verbal messaging put out).” (Respondent 30)*

One respondent who reached a very senior rank noted that police services are moving toward greater transparency in the promotional process, especially at higher ranks, to protect female officers who succeed from charges of favouritism.

*“When I was hired as Chief, our mayor who was on the police services board, insisted that they hold an outside competition. She did so in part because of not wanting the perception of a female mayor giving preferential treatment to a female. I completely*

*agree with her position from a legitimacy, perception, and due diligence.”*

(Respondent 27)

Respondents who have been in policing for a longer period of time also tended to highlight both their poor experiences when they started and the improvement in opportunities for females as services expanded the number of female officers and promoted them.

*“When I started, there was only one female of rank (Sergeant). Lack of mentors, female leaders, etc. I became the second female of rank in this service and that was a great opportunity to show that we are as capable as anyone else. It was difficult at first for other NCOs and senior command to get used to using language for both male and female ranking officers, but as more promotions of females came along, it changed for the better.”* (Respondent 11)

Mentorship was identified as an important factor in motivating and positioning females to successfully achieve promotions.

*“I have been very fortunate in my career because I had what few female officers have...a female mentor. I believe that allowed me to understand the processes, and politics behind the promotions. I believe that I have been overlooked for promotion on occasion because of my gender, but that of course is difficult to prove. When I was first hired, I was told I was only hired because I was a women, later I was only promoted because I was a women. It will be interesting next year as we will likely have a female Chief and I will be competing for the Deputy position.”* (Respondent 20)

Respondents who felt they have been negatively impacted in terms of promotional opportunities often identified the persistent “Old Boys Club” cultural attitudes within policing. As one respondent put it, *“Until recently, the old boys club was always at play. I am the second female*

*in my organization above the rank of constable. Men less qualified and with less experience were promoted long before me.” (Respondent 22)*

*“Yes. Unfortunately, I cannot prove this. However, I applied for a promotion which I have had been in the “acting” position for 2 years and on and off for another few more years. I have had excellent assessments from my supervisors. I had also worked in that unit for 12 years. There was promotion opportunity for 2 vacant positions. I applied and 2 male coworkers got promoted over me. One was only in the unit for 2 years and the other one for 4 years. I had trained one of them. Both males. They lacked the experience I had.” (Respondent 18)*

*“Absolutely, I have seen mostly more male officers being groomed, mentored, and taken “under wing’ to “climb the ladder”. There is a glass ceiling for women in the police service. Only an exceptional few are given the opportunity to rise up the ranks. That is still true today – perhaps to a lesser degree than in the past but still holds very true.” (Respondent 23)*

The idea of a persistent “Old Boys Club” is particularly strong in some units that remain largely the domain of males.

*“Absolutely. Certain positions, Major Crime Office, Hold-Up Squad, Guns and Gangs...boys club all the way. I don't put out and I never will, I'm not a drinker and never will. I respect myself too much and my family deserve better.” (Respondent 6)*

One respondent suggested that the promotional process itself is inherently biased toward male candidates.

*In my opinion, and I am basing this upon our current promotional process in which less than 5% of successful candidates are women, I believe that we have established certain processes which are designed (perhaps not by intent) to exclude women and*

*those reflecting diversity. I believe that more challenges have arisen because I am female than because I am gay. To our organization's credit, we are on the cusp of an examination into policies/processes/etc. to determine what, if any barriers are encountered by women. This is the culture of policing – there are those who appear unsupportive of the advancement of women. I believe those (in my organization), our (Chief and Deputies) are more progressive than that.” (Respondent 29)*

## Training

Training (and, in particular, specialized training) is a key factor in the career advancement of Police officers. Brereton (1961) noted that in the United States, a training school was established by the Pennsylvania State Police as early as 1906. In Ontario, the Ontario Police College was established in 1963 (Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, 2018).

Respondents consistently identified “cultural” barriers to obtaining some specialized training that traditionally have led to positions in the service traditionally reserved for male officers, e.g. Rapid Response Units or Tactical Units: *“Yes, overlooked because not one of the boys”* (Respondent 13), *“I had expressed interest in TAC (tactical units) which was denied due to being a female”* (Respondent 14), and *“In my early years, I wanted to be part of the Emergency Response Team, some of the guys on the team expressed they didn't want a female on the team.”* (Respondent 22)

Closely associated with the exclusion of females from certain traditionally all-male units was the idea that females have to “outperform” their male counterparts to even be considered for certain training opportunities.

*“Throughout my career, I have witnessed male supervisors gravitate to and provide more opportunities for their fellow male officers. Myself and other female officers*

*generally had to outperform and 'get noticed' before were are considered. Mandatory training was the exception. I have was offered specialized training if it 'suited'. e.g., the unit needed an officer qualified for domestic violence investigator etc."*

(Respondent 23)

Some respondents also suggested that their smaller physical stature and fear that females will require extended maternity leave played some part in denying training for female officers.

Respondents who received specialized training that paved the way for greater promotional and job opportunities consistently identified pro-active support from their organizations and their superiors as critical to such training opportunities.

*"I have been extremely fortunate in garnering most of the training opportunities that I have sought. Having been the first female in my organization to attend the FBI National Academy. I am not sure if I received this course because of my gender. I had always sought out, and expressed an interest in this course, although I never imagined I would get it. If I were to look at my earlier career, I would answer yes, probably, but it is difficult to pin point. I have not overtly been denied training (to my knowledge)."*

(Respondent 29)

Finally, some respondents emphasized the need for females to "self-initiate" when it comes to training opportunities. *"I have been very fortunate in this regard; however, a large percentage of my training was self-initiated and supported by the organization."* (Respondent 20) This may indicate that while male officers may be provided with training opportunities as a natural part of their career development, females may feel the need to advocate on their own behalf for training opportunities that do not come easily to them given the on-going gendered environment in some specialized (and traditionally male) units (e.g. tactical units, homicide). It should be noted that

some respondents identified that units dealing with domestic violence are overrepresented by female police officers.

## Survey Key Findings – Sexual Orientation

### Harassment

Like members of the broader LGBTQ community, LGBTQ police officers may be subject to multiple forms of harassment because of their sexual orientation (Galvin-White & O’Neal, 2016; Barratt, Bergman, & Thompson, 2014). The traditionally hypermasculine police culture is naturally inclined to promote heterosexual orientation as the “norm” (Franklin, 2007).

An equal number of respondents reported that they did not experience any particular harassment because of their sexual orientation. Indeed, respondents generally suggested that discrimination based on their gender tends to be a bigger issue. Some respondents posited that gender is a “visible” personal trait while “sexual orientation” is “invisible” and more easily “hidden”. This supports the findings of the Principle Researcher’s previous research (Couto, 2014) that gay male officers tend to experience greater overt discrimination from their heterosexual male peers than gay female officers.

Some respondents did note the intersectionality of gender and sexual orientation when it comes to organizational discrimination. As one respondent stated, *“I think men feel like they can make inappropriate comments about women to me because I am a lesbian”* (Respondent 1).

Another respondent noted that:

*“With 13 years of solid experience, including uniform, traffic, school liaison, drugs, I applied for promotion and was told I needed recent uniform experience to be supported. I returned to uniform and, a year later, I reapplied and was ranked lower on the list and still not supported, even though I had a year more experience – in*

*uniform as indicated as the only thing I lacked. I believe it was because I was a woman and gay.” (Respondent 28)*

Respondents who did report experiencing harassment at work attributable to their sexual orientation overwhelmingly identified derogatory remarks, jokes or gossip as the main source of discriminatory behaviours. Respondents reported being called “a dyke” and denied a course (Respondent 12) and not being accepted as part of the team (Respondent 16).

*“There are constant lesbian jokes or questions. Male officer will ask, ‘Who’s the man’, ‘what about scissoring’ among thousands of other comments. My relationship with my wife was announced on parade and we were asked not to attend parade the day it was announced. Not something I have seen in my 16 years for a heterosexual couple that met at work.” (Respondent 39)*

*“Yes, but once again, no prove (sic). As soon as I came out to my supervisors, their attitude towards my work changed. My assessments were not as good. Any recommendations I may have to improve our work, they disproved of. They did not assist me in any promotion opportunities.” (Respondent 17)*

*“Isn't that what this is all about? My wife and I were systematically harassed and discriminated against over a lengthy period (2+years) before we found the evidence and came forward. The RCMP response was to deny, circle the wagons to protect the harassers, and cover up, all while blaming and punishing us.” (Respondent 28)*

*“...I have been the subject to some odd text messages clearly indicating there is a lot of gossip in the service. Example: A brand new officer with less than a year on somehow got hold of my phone number and randomly texted me. His second text message was literally, ‘Is it true you’re bisexual?’ I feel like gay/bi/pan female officers around here are literally just a topic of gossip and fetish for the male officers.” (Respondent 34)*



## Harassment From Other Females

Staines, Tavis, & Jayaratne (1973) posited that females in male-dominated environments can experience what they called the “Queen Bee Syndrome”. This suggests that females who are individually successful and attain positions of high status are more likely to endorse gender stereotypes and tend to view the females they supervise as competitors. Such high attaining females may possess negative attitudes towards other females in the organization, making them more likely to discriminate against female peers or subordinates. To test this theory in relation to female LGBTQ police officers, we asked respondents whether they had experienced harassment from their female counterparts or superiors based on respondents’ sexual orientation.

Survey responses showed an equal number of positive and negative responses to the question as well as a small number of “yes and no” responses.

Respondents who did experience some form of harassment generally identified these as “disapproving glares” or “bitchiness”, being the subject of gossip: *“It’s a big topic of gossip...stories about me going on dates with women that I completely forgotten about but certain females around our service have, for one reason or another, held onto and continue to speak about”* (Respondent 33); the calling of derogatory names, *“Yes, in early years of career. Called names to other colleagues and one woman in particular wouldn’t change if I was in the change room”* (Respondent 15); and avoidance on the job, *“Nothing overt but I do think over the years some female officers have been stand-offish and kept their distance from me”* (Respondent 22).

## Promotional Opportunities

Regarding female police officers experiences in attaining promotions within their male-dominated/gendered workplace environments, we wanted to probe whether the greater presence

of openly LGBTQ female officers in the modern policing workplace posed any problems for these officers.

Respondents overwhelmingly reported that they did not see or experience issues in the area of promotions. In fact, some suggested that being an “out” gay female officer could be an advantage. *“I believe that when it comes to promotion, that yes, there is an ‘advantage’ to being LGBTQ+.”* (Respondent 4)

Organizational support and encouragement for gay females to apply for promotion was reported to be very important: *“I have been very fortunate in garnering promotions throughout my career. I believe that our leadership (Chief and DCs) consistently message the value of diversity to members and community, in action, and in word.”* (Respondent 29) Another respondent said that, *“Being gay has provided insight and the ability to help solve issues within the LGBTQ communities. These are considered assets and I was able to draw upon my experiences during interviews.”* (Respondent 37)

Negative experiences in this area among some respondents seemed to be because of personal biases or attitudes with specific supervisors, as this response illustrates: *“Yes, bad comments from a Staff Sergeant who did not really know me but known to be homophobic.”* (Respondent 13) Another respondent suggested her experience was more systemic in relation to her desire to join one of her service’s units: *“Yes, wasn’t accepted into a specialty unit because I was a ‘dyke’.”* (Respondent 16)

One respondent who has yet to undergo a promotional process reported being worried that a specific supervisor will block her attempts for promotion:

*“There is a straight married female member of administration who uses the word ‘Dyke’ when speaking about other gay female officers. I have not undergone any type of promotional process under her watch, but due to the size of the service, I feel it’s*

*bound to happen at some point. I don't think she will see me equally as the other applicants.” (Respondent 34)*

Another respondent feared that the encouragement she got for entering the promotional process smacked of “tokenism” rather than a conviction that she deserved the position:

*I was approached 6 months ago and asked to enter the competition for Deputy Chief because senior staff wanted to present a candidate to the board who was female and openly gay. They were concerned that the police services board was going to hire from outside the service and wanted to ensure that they presented candidates to them with a diverse set of skills and abilities. I declined to enter the competition.” (Respondent 35)*

## Training Opportunities

Similar to promotional opportunities, we sought to inquire whether LGBTQ female Officers experienced any challenges specific to their sexual orientation. Like promotional opportunities, respondents overwhelmingly reported not experiencing specific challenges based on sexual orientation. Only one respondent specifically identified that her sexual orientation played a factor in her being denied a training opportunity, in her case when she overheard her Sergeant referring to her as a “dyke”. (Respondent 13)

## Focus Groups

Following the completion of the survey portion of this study, respondents were offered an opportunity to take part in small focus groups. A total of ten (10) respondents agreed to participate in two separate focus groups. The goal in conducting the two focus groups was to move beyond the survey findings of past lived experiences (challenges, opportunities, etc.) of the respondents and focus on recommendations for the future of female LGBTQ police officers in their

workplaces. Both groups were asked the same set of questions, which allowed us to derive common themes. Because focus group participants were being asked about their workplace experiences, we employed an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach to conducting the groups. Having identified their lived experiences as LGBTQ female police officers, we sought to ask group participants to “imagine” possible futures where the issues identified through the survey could be proactively addressed.

Appreciate Inquiry is a research process that, according to Stavros, Godwin, & Cooperrider (2016),

“...is about the search for the best in people, their organizations, and the strengths-filled, opportunity-rich world around them. AI is not so much a shift in the methods and models of organizational change, but AI is a fundamental shift in the overall perspective taken throughout the entire change process to ‘see’ the wholeness of the human system and to “inquire” into that system’s strengths, possibilities, and successes” (p. 97).

AI is a change methodology which identifies what an organization wants more of and finds positive aspects already present within an organization or organizational culture that can foster or support positive change. It is a shift away from traditional approaches to change management based on deficit-based change to positively-oriented change. AI engages the entire system of an organization or a culture (such as policing culture) away from what the problems or challenges are and “fixing” them and, instead, focuses on what “works” now and could work in the future. In other words, AI allows people and organizations to move beyond the conditions in which the problem was initially created. It has traditionally been based on a “4D” process of “Discovery”, “Dream”, “Design”, and “Destiny” (Stratton-Berkessel, 2015).

According to Bushe (2011), the “Discovery” phase of the AI process involves participants reflecting on and discussing the best of “what is” concerning the subject matter. Participants are then asked to “Dream” or imagine their organization at its best and identify the common aspirations of organizational members. Having put a shared “dream” in place, participants are asked to develop “concrete proposals for the new organizational state” during a “Design” phase of the process. Finally, the “Destiny” phase invites participants to consider what will sustain and inspire those things that emerged from the “design” phase of the inquiry (p. 2-4).

Some theorists such as Boje (2016) have criticized AI as being, “one-sided, focusing exclusively on the positive stories” and taking a “vacuous ‘positivity’ approach lacking negative stories’ content, and thoroughly opposed to any sort of dialectical method of change” (p. 2). However, given that the 40 respondents to this project had already focused on identifying the “negative” in their lived experiences as LGBTQ female police officers during the survey phase of this study, we believe that AI provides a “bridge” for focus group participants to consider the “positive” in their lived experiences and “imagining” a possible future.

## Focus Group Key Findings

### Discovery

During this phase of the focus group discussions, participants were asked to reflect on and discuss the best of “what is” about their police organizations and their lived experiences as LGBTQ female police officers. Four main themes were identified: positive hiring experiences, personal relationships where they felt valued by peers/colleagues, support of senior commanders and supervisors, and recognition and respect as police officers.

## Positive Hiring Experiences

Participants with positive experiences during the recruitment and/or hiring process indicated that it sets the tone for future positive experiences in their careers.

*“So starting right out of the gate, when I went through the hiring process, I was like, ‘I’m not lying about who I am’ and I got hired...that’s score one for the Toronto police service. And both the recruiters that did my interview didn’t bat an eye.”* (Toronto Focus Group participant)

*“When I got hired, well, I was an Auxiliary Officer with my service for about a year and a half and then a Constable position – or a Special Constable position came up. And I wasn’t really – it’s not that I hid who I was, but I wasn’t really open about who I was dating. Being a volunteer and looking at a career in policing, I was like ‘Should I really be open about it or is it going to hinder my future career?’ But actually one Sergeant that I had a good rapport with just called me one day, he’s like, “Hey let’s go over your interview before you go for your Special and just want to talk about a few things’. And we met at Tim Horton’s and he basically said, ‘There was a rumor that you have a girlfriend’ and I said yes, and he was like ‘Okay, nobody cares, everyone likes you, you have a good respect with the service so just be open about it in your interview’. And not that I wouldn’t have said it in my background, because that’s being, you know, you’re lying about who you are, but it gave me comfort going into that interview just being me.”* (Toronto Focus Group participant)

## Personal Relationship Where They Felt Valued by Peers/Colleagues

Focus group participants generally agreed that being valued by peers or colleagues contributed to the sense of “belonging” as a police Officer. This corresponds to the strong sense of “solidarity” that has traditionally played a significant role in policing (Skolnick, 1994).

One participant described being surprised that so many colleagues would come out to a traditional bridal shower thrown for her when she got engaged. *“I got married and my office staff took me out and we had like a bridal shower for me...I had no idea that they were going to do it, and they’re a very supportive bunch of people.”* (Toronto Focus Group participant)

Another participant also experienced positive peer support through a similar pre-marital gathering:

*“I got married six years ago now and I had – instead of a ‘Jack and Jill’ we had a ‘Jackless Jill’ and I sold tickets around, you know, my police service and that, and like you, I was shocked at who actually bought a ticket and actually came out. There was about like almost 30 people from my service and we only had about 100 people, so I was – it made me feel good that a lot of the people came to support us at our function.”*

(Toronto Focus Group participant)

Similarly, another participant highlighted a baby shower thrown by colleagues, attended by some peers who the participant would not have thought would have been comfortable being there:

*“So, we have two kids and I’m married as well and when I first had my kids, they had the same sort of thing, they had the baby shower thing. And there were people who showed up there that I would have never thought would have showed up. Like guys showed up and girls that I hadn’t talked to – women who I hadn’t talked to in years and stuff. So I felt – that made me feel really good.”* (Toronto Focus Group participant)

(Toronto Focus Group participant)

Participants also suggested that the concept of “solidarity” within policing can cut through any bias, at least at a surface level. One participant described how female or racialized members of her police service are generally accepted upon entry into traditionally male units such as Criminal Investigations Bureau (CIB), but individual biases tend to play a stronger part later on as the member begins to interact with the rest of the team:

*“We have those clear struggles we each identified but when you look at whether let’s say you got a group of middle-aged, White males that are in CIB and then you have a female come in, or you have somebody from the minority group, I think first and foremost you are accepted being in that group, right? So, there is a level of respect and acceptance, but then the struggles would come up and whether that is individual personality taking over what not but I think there is that surface level appearance right off that you are part of that team and for the most part your coworkers accept you...once you get into that throes of it, it’s the individuality that takes over (and) any bias or discrimination comes out.”* (Oakville group participant)

However, other participants felt that this initial acceptance is not applicable to all police services, but that it depends on the organization.

*“I would agree with what you are saying, when I was in (police service A). In (police service B), I would not agree with that you are saying. (Police service B) is very ‘out for me and only me’, doesn’t matter the team.”* (Oakville group participant)

### Support of Senior Commanders, Supervisors, and Peers

Focus group participants consistently highlighted the value of support and mentoring by senior command and sees this as a positive experience for them. This support was seen as a critical part to a positive workplace experience and advancement or promotional opportunities. One



participant said that command support for participation in her city's Pride Parade made her feel valued and showed support for LGBTQ Officers:

*"We have a lot of support from my Deputy Chief...and she let us take a car into the pride parade a couple years ago and decaled it all up and took a lot of flak from some people for it. So those kinds of things make me feel good."* (Toronto Focus Group participant)

*"About 10 years being on the service, I transferred from one division to 52 division after there was a like an incident where I was outed at my old division. So, I was transferred to downtown 52 division. So, I went into that environment, which was very old school and you had a lot of vet(ern) officers working out of there, so I didn't know how – what to expect. But I was received pretty much with open arms. I was confronted my very first day by asking if I was – the rumors are that I'm a lesbian, and I said, 'Yeah' and they're like, my partner that I was working with, he said, 'Well, I don't care, I'm not going to judge you on that', which really, you know, made me feel very comfortable. So, I knew I was there and I could be myself and everybody knew, I didn't have to hide anymore."* (Toronto Focus Group participant)

Two participants from the same police service described how the backing of two Deputy Chiefs was key to helping launch an Internal Support Network (ISN) in their workplace that supports LGBTQ police personnel similar to internal networks for females, racialized/ethnic groups, etc. This was particularly important because they did not necessarily receive strong support from their colleagues:

*"Both our deputies actually are very supportive. So, we had meetings with them over the past year and that kind of thing. To help kind of guide what we want in our*

*organization as far as we started training for languages and that kind of the thing; we felt even though maybe not from the membership but at least from the Deputies we felt we were being supported in what we wanted to do.”* (Oakville Focus Group participant)

## Dream

During the “Dream” phase of the focus group discussions, participants were asked to imagine their organization at its best and identify the common aspirations of organizational members. Common themes which emerged were:

### Greater Acceptance and Use of “Gender Inclusive” Language

Focus group participants overwhelmingly agreed that “language matters”. Virtually all experienced or heard derogatory language directed at LGBTQ individuals and emphasized that if such language is allowed or accepted with the police environment, it makes their workplace experiences and environment negative. A participant summed this up by stating that, *“We need to change the language. We need gender inclusive language.”* (Toronto Focus Group participant)

Another participant said that,

*“The language around and within policing, whether it be forms or whether it be person-to-person, has to change. And that’s hugely reflective of helping somebody come out, right. For somebody...gender language is huge, is absolutely huge”* (Toronto Focus Group participant). Still another noted that, *“Language is important. They (other officers) may be just joking around; those are called microaggressions. It’s not that in your face, ‘I hate you because you are’, but it is more like, ‘Haha. Isn’t that funny?’”* (Oakville Focus Group participant).

One participant noted that as a veteran police officer, she has learned the value of “educating” fellow officers on language, making it is less confrontational and focusing on getting people to “learn” and pay attention to what they are saying:

*“Back in the 80s when I came on, you know, you would never confront people, like if somebody said ... ‘That’s so gay’, you would never confront them, you’d never say, ‘You shouldn’t say that’ and ‘This is why you shouldn’t say it’. And I think that, over the years, that I’m much more comfortable with – not really, I guess confronting, that’s sort of a bad word, but educating maybe.”* (Toronto Focus Group participant)

Participants also suggested that “language” isn’t just about the words used within a police context, but also the images communicated in such things as recruitment campaigns. For LGBTQ police officers, seeing themselves as representative of their organizations is important:

*“When any service does any kind of hiring piece, marginalized communities obviously are visible; like we’re the only invisible visible minority, if that makes sense. So, I think we also have to do a specific campaign to attract LGBTQ, within the women piece. And that takes people to be courageous enough to be out but I really do think – I mean we have a huge conversation around trans women right now, it’s not reflected in our service at all. So how do we attract them to policing?”* (Toronto Focus Group Participant)

### Support “Top to Bottom” for LGBTQ Police Officers

Similar to what participants highlighted during the “Discovery” phase of the focus groups, participants again highlighted the critical nature of visible support by senior or command staff for LGBTQ police officers. This support must be “verbal and visible” and more than just “public

relations”: *“Yeah, it can't just be one time I showed up to this one thing and then its ‘poof!’, you don't see them anymore.”* (Toronto Focus Group Participant)

Another participant noted that the command leadership in a police service are the ones that can hold the staff and “middle managers” accountable for how organizational policies that impact LGBTQ females and other groups of employees are followed through:

*“I think what goes hand-in-hand is leadership, and if people at the top level hold their command staff to be accountable for their actions because I find that at our senior command level...know what the expectations are to be perceived by people and how they have to act. It's the middle (managers where) it gets lost in and I still find that there is such a lack of accountability for things.”* (Oakville Focus Group Participant)

#### More Inclusive, Less “All Male, All Boys Club” Police Associations

Focus group participants highlighted the challenges related to groups that represent them within police organizations such as police associations (labour unions). While such groups may be outwardly supportive of their female and LGBTQ members, it was noted by some participants that they are not seen as reflecting the diversity of members who are LGBTQ and female as well as racialized groups.

*“I could just say one thing that's really become very apparent to me with our service...it's not all rosy; our entire Toronto Police Association is all men, all our representatives are men, always have been. I don't ever recall there ever being a woman. But they sent out a magazine and I have like a huge issue with this, although some of the folks I know they do good work, was like a centerfold of all of them with a Christmas tree and little Christmas balls with all their faces on it and my partner says to me, ‘Where are the women and where are the people of colour?’ and I'm like ‘This*

*is, you know, this is our TPA'. And so that's an old boys club, and those are the people, and they've been really supportive of our ISN and everything, but those are the folks that represent our membership, so I really think that, you know, not only does it have to start with command, but it also has to start with our association too, and they have to, you know, think about do they reflect the diversity of our membership as well."*

(Toronto Focus Group Participant)

One participant noted that the challenge for female police officers is, *"we have to encourage more women to step up and apply for those spots and campaign, and we have to help them campaign... we as women need to encourage them and to help promote them and vote for them"* (Toronto Focus Group Participant). Another participant said that *"it starts right there, with the recruiting women and then, you know, you're going to get a higher percentage of lesbians recruited just by if you're recruiting women."* (Toronto Focus Group Participant)

#### Females Supporting and Mentoring Females

Participants highlighted the need for female police officers to provide greater support and mentorship to potential and new recruits. For many, this type of support would benefit female Police officers in general and LGBTQ female officers in particular:

*"It starts right there with the recruiting women and then, you know, you're going to get a higher percentage of lesbians recruited just by if you're recruiting women."*

(Toronto Focus Group Participant). Another participants noted that, *"people don't necessarily have to be termed role models, but being out and visible really is so super important."* (Toronto Focus Group Participant)

Support and mentorship were seen as particularly important when it comes to assisting female and/or LGBTQ police officers gain promotion and countering a “settle in” aspect among some LGBTQ female officers who lose any ambition for promotion after attaining a certain level within their services:

*“I’ve talked to a few staff sergeants who are very intelligent, female, gay and I’m kind of encouraging them, the next step is Inspector. And they’re like, ‘No, I’m stopping right here’, like why would you stop? I know two people that...have the capabilities of moving on and, you know, even effecting change and they’re like, ‘No.’ They just want to settle as Staff Sergeant. They’re quite content, they’re just happy that they made it to that level and then when they put in their time they’re gone, and they don’t have any aspirations to kind of continue the movement.”* (Toronto Focus Group Participant)

*“We talked for a long time about how guys get promoted. They get mentored by their male counterparts, they go golfing with them, they build houses with them, they drink beer with them, they play hockey with them, and they build a relationship and they go forward and they get opportunities that maybe others wouldn’t and they have male mentors. And we say with women, it’s the same thing, we have fewer mentors to bring us along. And I think when you put the gay part into it, there’s even less mentors. So what ends up happening is people who, whether they’re out of whether they’re partly out or whether they’re totally in the closet or may not have that same social interaction because they’re keeping to themselves and keeping their families a secret, and they don’t have that same interaction so they’re not doing those things to build those relationships and to have those ‘coattails’, if you will, to come up with.”* (Toronto Focus Group Participant)

Specific to LGBTQ female police officers, participants agreed that officers need greater support for “coming out” earlier in their career in order to encourage others to do the same because some LGBTQ female police officers fear that it will hurt their chances for promotion to command ranks (referred to as a “White Shirt”):

*“With \_\_\_\_\_, you know, she didn’t comfortably come out until she got her white shirt. Everybody – a lot of people knew but she didn’t come out herself because she wanted that white shirt first because she didn’t want anything to keep her back. And I think that she probably thought that was going to keep her back. And even with \_\_\_\_\_, you know, she didn’t come out until she was a Superintendent.” (Toronto Focus Group Participant)*

## Design

During the “Design” phase of the focus group discussions, participants were asked to consider how the “dreams” they identified could be put into action. Suggestions put forward included:

The concept of “safety” featured prominently in the discussion of how to design police organizations that make LGBTQ female police officers feel welcomed.

*“I don’t mean ‘safe’ as in physically safe, I don’t think they worry about that. I think ‘safe’ in the sense that you feel that people aren’t going to talk behind your back or you’re not going to go to a line up and they’re not going to call you names or they’re not going to maybe even get pigeonholed in your career. Though I think it’s more about how your peers are going to react. Especially when people come on – I say come on straight, I came on straight, I was engaged to a man at the time when I was hired and then throughout my career I came out. But I think those people who come on and*

*people don't know their sexual orientation and then they don't want to come out in the middle of their career because they're afraid that they might lose some of the respect that they already have or, I guess, yeah. So it's just not a comfortable place to be coming out anywhere, whether it's in policing or not, but it just seems worse in policing..."* (Toronto Focus Group Participant)

*"It's about the person feeling safe, so there has to be assurances that, you know, if there's any kind of harassment or whatever that it will be dealt with and I know a lot of people I think – it might, maybe in the bigger services it's not such a big problem, but in a smaller service, maybe even where you are, the community can find out about you and if you're not out to your community, because you live in a smaller community, then like where does that leave you? So now you're out at work and you're not feeling comfortable and safe, maybe the environment just doesn't feel right, and then, you know, that information gets spread into your community about you as well, the community that you have to live in..."* (Toronto Focus Group Participant)

Part of being "safe" for participants was ensuring that supervisors took workplace harassment based on gender or sexual orientation seriously. One participant told a story related to this:

*"I was at work at headquarters in full uniform and there was me and my friend having lunch and we went onto the patio and we were sitting there and I heard this loud catcall whistle right and I am looking around because there's no one and it's a roofer whistling at me and I thought, 'Are you kidding me?', so I went from 0 to 60. I was so mad at the principal of it so I went over and dealt with the roofer and, you know, they said all the right things and made sure the foreman*



*was advised and etc. and I told my supervisor... as a supervisor he should be concerned with what his role is, and what his accountability (is), not just, 'You good with it, you dealt with it.' I don't think the conversation went anywhere else.*" (Oakville Focus Group Participant)

Another participant noted that having a supervisor “neglect” their responsibility to create safe workplace environments discourages female police officers from confronting harassment at work:

*“They always put it on female and ensure that they are fine, but you don't want to do anything and move on and kind of neglect their responsibility as a supervisor do. Because they say, 'Oh, if you tell a supervisor and they have to act but they don't act they'll just say that's last year.' It will be fine and off you go again, it takes such courage for women to stand up for themselves and policing and most often they don't.”* (Oakville Focus Group Participant)

#### Standardize “Inclusive” Language in All Parts of the Organization

For focus group participants, words matter. As one participant noted, *“I can't stress that language will change everything...that's the biggest piece, for me anyways.”* (Toronto Focus Group Participant)

*“I think they have to change the language and the educational piece is big. And I don't think it's all up to all women either, I think it's, you know, the men that we do have out there to have more of a voice as well. I'm not saying gay men, I'm just saying men in general that are allies for both women and LGBTQ.”* (Toronto Focus Group Participant)

Participants also highlighted the challenges that bisexual and transgender females in policing face when it comes to language:

*“But I also think there’s more of a comfort level for gay women that identify as being gay or queer, but I would say bisexual women still aren’t feeling comfortable and trans women still aren’t feeling comfortable. So there’s not that space of safety, whether it be for an individual or physically safe. And again, that comes down to the gender inclusivity piece too, the gender and the language and changing all that. But the bisexual community in general doesn’t get much support to be completely honest.”*

(Toronto Focus Group Participant)

#### Promote More Females into Specialized Units and Senior Ranks

Participants stressed the importance of promoting female (including LGBTQ) police officers into specialized units such as tactical and canine units. They also insisted that such promotions not be just “token” appointments. This means LGBTQ and other female police officers must receive appropriate training opportunities to qualify for such promotions.

*“I’d like to just see more out gay females and hopefully in positions of rank, senior officers. Because I think that when – if gay officers see those people in those ranks, it will give them that safety and they’ll see well look, if she made it to deputy chief, or whatever, then why can’t I?”* (Toronto Focus Group Participant)

*“I’d like to see more females in specialized units. We still have the token females in probably every single major crime unit in the city. You’re not going to probably find more than one female in each office unless it’s sexual assault.”* (Toronto Focus Group Participant)

*“In every aspects, certain tact(ical) units for instance, or mobile surveillance, there are generally units that exclude women essentially for gender...it is just considered not for women. We can’t follow someone because we’re going to be noticed, it’s what the excuse they give you, guys notice pretty girls, so if you are following them, you can’t do mobile surveillance, so just kind of equal opportunities.”* (Oakville Focus Group Participant)

### Culture Change

Some participants noted the need to change/promote a more inclusive, less “military” approach to the policing culture in police services as well as other policing organizations such as the Ontario Police College.

*“Well, it’s interesting you say OPC, because as much as we’re talking about in our individual forces, we need some changes at OPC, because they’re a little bit far behind.”* (Toronto Focus Group Participant)

*“I think that our general policies are not restrictive when it comes to gay women. I think maybe mentoring policies, if you somehow change those, but the policies themselves I don’t think would hinder gay women in our police service in general. It’s more about recruiting more gay women, it’s about having the women who are coming into a service – because I can tell you right now, I know there are more gay women in \_\_\_\_\_ police (service), it’s just that they’re not out, just like I wasn’t out for the first four or five years. I mean I think – I don’t know if it’s a policy change as opposed to a culture change, like it’s about the culture and I mean you keep bringing up the language thing, which is totally about the culture...”* (Toronto Focus Group Participant)

Part of the culture change starts with supervisors leading by example and making all members of a police organization accountable for a fair and safe workplace for everyone, themes which reoccurred through the focus group discussions:

*“It has to be accountable supervisors, right? So many times you’re in parade, were in 2018, and ‘fag’ gets dropped, ‘pole smoker’, and everything else in a group setting and the bosses say nothing and so you’re sitting there uncomfortable, whatever it is your feelings are, and nothing (is) said and best they might leave the room and say, ‘Oh, got to go but it is absolute complacency.’”* (Oakville Focus Group Participant)

Some participants raised the need to promote broader diversity within the services, not just when it comes to LGBTQ and gender issues.

*“You’ve got to remember people’s intersectionality within that too, right, if they identify as LGBTQ, perhaps male and then identify within like the black community, it just becomes like a whole different – and that’s still happening for women, you have LGBTQ, you have being a mom, and possibly being part of a marginalized community.”* (Toronto Focus Group Participant)

*“I’ve had a conversation with a male black gay man in the service and his issue is that they don’t feel included, so they walk in, even if they walk downtown to one of the bars and they walk in, they don’t feel like they’re part of the community because they walk in and there’s nothing in their surroundings that they see that represents them.”* (Toronto Focus Group Participant)

## Destiny

In the final phase of the focus group discussions, participants were asked to consider what might “sustain” and inspire those things that emerged from the “design” phase of the inquiry.

Participants identified the following:

### Promote Mentors

*“I think if we had mentors throughout the service that can be, you know, everybody’s not going to work in recruiting, right, but if we had a list of people who want to be mentors and if a gay woman wanted to speak to, you know, maybe we could have like an orientation night, where, you know, where we have gay officers or LGBTQ officers running it and then promote it to the community and then they can feel comfortable coming and speaking.”* (Toronto Focus Group Participant)

### Promote Academic and Organizational Research

*“I don’t know like how we measure – like we’re doing surveys about this transformational task force, when, in fact, I think that we could also run a parallel survey like you’ve just done, a study with the LGBT officers, you know. I don’t know if you would do it anonymously or not, but it would be a voluntary thing. Like what do you think can change – try and figure out how many officers we have that are LGBT, what they identify as and what, like, okay. And then fast forward five years, do we have more women, do we have more of a representation, what were our numbers in senior command or like in levels of promotion, where are we at, is there an increase. We can also check out things like, you know, is there less complaints about harassment or whatever. You can do a survey five years fast forward with the same people even and say have you seen a decrease in the number or incidence of*

*derogatory language being used. So I think it's measurable, if that's where we want to be. I mean we absolutely have to start targeting women in policing, there's just – like 20 percent is.”* (Toronto Focus Group Participant)

### Mandatory Training

*“I think it's really hard to get a baseline when you don't know how many gay female officers you have, like we don't know. I can tell you in my service I'm it. I know one other person, one other female, than has come out to me, but not anybody else, so two in Kingston Police. I know I suspect some people but I don't know, so how do you get that baseline to begin with? Like how do you know?”* (Toronto Focus Group Participant)

*“I know with our in service training this year, they are doing trans awareness, but we have never talked about lesbian, gay, bisexual. Just trans awareness, which I find is interesting.”* (Toronto Focus Group Participant)

### Discussion

The goal of this research project was to explore the lived experiences of female police officers who also identified as LGBTQ. We took an intersectional approach in considering such experiences. Looking at lived experiences through intersectional lens presupposes that the experiences of police officers who identify as “female” and as “LGBTQ” are not exclusive; that they somehow “live” their gender and their sexual orientation “separately” in their law enforcement workplace. While individuals may choose to “manage” their identities in the workplace, particularly those with “invisible identities” such as sexual orientation (as opposed to “nonvisible identities” such as gender or race), an intersectional approach to identities posits that

being female *and* LGBTQ produces unique experiences for police officers operating in a police culture where the “norm” has been and continues to be identified as heterosexual and hypermasculine in character (Franklin, 2007).

Our research found that being female and being LGBTQ exposes police officers to some similar challenges in terms of both their gender and their sexual orientation. When participants were asked in the survey portion of the research first as females and then as LGBTQ police officers about their workplace experiences, they identified significant challenges in two specific areas: *workplace harassment* and having to *conform to masculine “norms”* (e.g., act tough).

When it comes to workplace harassment (both as females and as LGBTQ individuals), respondents consistently spoke about facing derogatory remarks, jokes, and other types of “microaggressions” because of both their gender and sexual orientation. Furthermore, sexual and verbal violence were also identified as challenges for such officers. However, some participants suggested that the harassment based on sexual orientation was not as overt as that based gender. This may be due to one’s sexual orientation not be a “visible” characteristic (as gender or race would be) and thus less subject to overt harassment.

Survey respondent suggested that where harassment intersects with sexual orientation occurs in such circumstances where male police officers attempt to “convert” LGBTQ female officers or heterosexual females see their female LGBTQ colleagues as a “threat” (first based on their gender as “competition” for promotion, power, etc. or sexual orientation e.g., not “norm”).

In relation to the focus group discussions where participants were invited to “dream” about a positive future for female, LGBTQ police officers, some common themes also emerged; themes that seemed to be more intersectional in nature than those from the survey part of the study. Participants “dreamed” of greater levels of workplace acceptance from supervisors and peers in general (e.g., entry into traditionally male units and greater opportunities for mentorship to

promote career advancement). They also emphasized promotion of gender inclusive language for both women and for LGBTQ people in general.

In the design (or building) portion of the focus group discussions, common themes for both gender and sexual orientation revolved around creating “safe” work environments (from verbal as well as sexual abuse/violence), again promoting inclusive language, and generally promoting “culture change” (one that counts both is more inclusive and equitable for females in general and LGBTQ individuals). One key theme of the “culture change” argument for both gender and sexual orientation was the need for police organizations to be more “intentional” in the recruitment of females and members of the LGBTQ community.

Finally, in the “destiny” portion of the focus groups, participants identified mandatory training for police personnel on gender and sexual orientation issues as a priority. They also suggested that more research (including obtaining better statistics on gender and sexual orientation within police workplaces) is needed.

On some key issues explored in this study (e.g., the impact of gender and sexual orientation identities on workplace factors of particular importance in police workplaces such as training opportunities and promotions), participants told us that gender identity had a much greater bearing on their challenges and opportunity in these areas. For example, participants indicated the need for workplace recognition and respect for females, for more support from supervisors and more female mentors for female police officers, and the need to place more females in specialized units (those regarded as “male” domains such as Tactical Units).

One possible explanation for the tendency of participants to give higher priority to gender in “operational” matters such as training and promotions may be the tendency for workplace participants to distinguish between “visible” and “nonvisible” characteristics. According to Clair, Beatty, and Maclean (2005), “visible characterizes include gender, race, age, ethnicity, physical



appearance, language, speech patterns, and dialect while nonvisible characteristics include differences religion, occupation, national origin, club or social group memberships, illness, and sexual orientation.” (p. 78). In highly “masculinized” workplace cultures characterized by masculine, male-dominated, and/or gendered work contexts (Collins, 2015) such as those in police organizations, visible characteristics of personal identity such as gender may be seen as more important in terms of negotiating one’s workplace experiences than nonvisible characteristics such as sexual orientation. In such a scenario, female LGBTQ police officers may feel that gender trumps sexual orientation.

## Conclusion

The female LGBTQ police officers in this study indicated that they generally supported the structure and goals of policing as a profession. This indicates that what Skolnick (1994) described as “socialization” of police officers into a police “brotherhood” and the “solidarity” of police officers remains strong even for female, LGBTQ Officers. Such officers in gendered workplaces desire to see “change” for female officers as well as LGBTQ police personnel (both females and males). Seeing the intersectionality of their gender and sexual orientations as part of this change remains a challenge for LGBTQ female officers who, like their heterosexual, male counterparts, tend to identify with their profession in a deeply personal manner (Ahern, 1972). These officers understand the power relations within police organizations that continue to be based on the police culture’s traditional homogeneity and paramilitary, hierarchal command structures (Colvin, 2015). They also understand the need to contest and challenge the police culture’s power structures that have traditionally reinforced the heterosexual and hypermasculine character (Franklin, 2007). As the police culture changes to more closely reflect more inclusive and equitable social attitudes,

female LGBTQ police officers may become more intentional in viewing every aspect of their workplace experiences through intersectional lens (Boogaard and Roggeband, 2010).

Research into LGBTQ police officers in Canada is limited (Couto, 2014). While this research project offers insights into the lived experiences of female LGBTQ police officers in the Province of Ontario, further research into other intersectional characteristics that of their lived experiences (for example, the impact of racial or ethnic origins) of such officers would provide further insights.

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## Appendix A – Ontario Police College Basic Constable Training, Male and Female Recruits,

**1996-2017**

**YEAR of INTAKE \* Sex Cross Tabulation**

			Sex		Total
			Female	Male	
YEAR of INTAKE	1996 (Sept only)	Count	47	213	260
		% within YEAR of INTAKE	18.1%	81.9%	100.0%
	1997	Count	143	426	569
		% within YEAR of INTAKE	25.1%	74.9%	100.0%
	1998	Count	196	662	858
		% within YEAR of INTAKE	22.8%	77.2%	100.0%
	1999	Count	263	1162	1425
		% within YEAR of INTAKE	18.5%	81.5%	100.0%
	2000	Count	222	915	1137
		% within YEAR of INTAKE	19.5%	80.5%	100.0%
	2001	Count	200	945	1145
		% within YEAR of INTAKE	17.5%	82.5%	100.0%
	2002	Count	243	1137	1380
		% within YEAR of INTAKE	17.6%	82.4%	100.0%
	2003	Count	227	896	1123
		% within YEAR of INTAKE	20.2%	79.8%	100.0%
	2004	Count	210	740	950
		% within YEAR of INTAKE	22.1%	77.9%	100.0%
	2005	Count	181	724	905
		% within YEAR of INTAKE	20.0%	80.0%	100.0%
	2006	Count	229	1171	1400
		% within YEAR of INTAKE	16.4%	83.6%	100.0%
	2007	Count	282	1109	1391
		% within YEAR of INTAKE	20.3%	79.7%	100.0%
	2008	Count	219	991	1210
		% within YEAR of INTAKE	18.1%	81.9%	100.0%
	2009	Count	261	1097	1358
		% within YEAR of INTAKE	19.2%	80.8%	100.0%
	2010	Count	187	641	828
		% within YEAR of INTAKE	22.6%	77.4%	100.0%

2011	Count	141	549	690
	% within YEAR of INTAKE	20.4%	79.6%	100.0%
2012	Count	146	495	641
	% within YEAR of INTAKE	22.8%	77.2%	100.0%
2013	Count	82	312	394
	% within YEAR of INTAKE	20.8%	79.2%	100.0%
2014	Count	169	633	802
	% within YEAR of INTAKE	21.1%	78.9%	100.0%
2015	Count	207	518	725
	% within YEAR of INTAKE	28.6%	71.4%	100.0%
2016	Count	171	540	711
	% within YEAR of INTAKE	24.1%	75.9%	100.0%
2017	Count	170	540	710
	% within YEAR of INTAKE	23.9%	76.1%	100.0%
Total	Count	4196	16416	20612
	% within YEAR of INTAKE	20.4%	79.6%	100.0%

### Appendix B – Female Applicants/Hires, Selected Ontario Police Services

Year	OPC	% year of intake	OPP	% year of intake	Ottawa	% year of intake	Peel	% year of intake	Sudbury	% year of intake	Toronto	% year of intake
2005	181	20									63	17.1
2006	229	16.4									67	14.3
2007	282	20.3						1	0.05		53	19
2008	219	18.1					25	17.4	3	17.6	66	18.1
2009	261	19.2					28	20.4	0	0	73	20.9
2010	187	22.6					24	24.5	1	0.08	39	18.5
2011	141	20.4					12	17.1	1	14.2	N/A	N/A
2012	146	22.8	27	30.7			17	27.4	0	0	7	8.6
2013	82	20.8	40	20.5			15	25.4	2	33.3	9	15
2014	169	21.1	52	29.1	9	40.9	17	19.1	2	16.6	41	16.9
2015	207	28.6	30	25.2	8	19	20	22	4	21	34	37.7
2016	171	24.1	38	21.5	13	23.6	23	22.1	0	0	8	53.3
2017	170	23.9	26	24.3	9	31	15		2	50	2	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2445</b>	<b>20.4</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>25.2</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>28.6</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>21.7</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>13.8</b>	<b>462</b>	<b>18.8</b>

**Appendix C – Ontario Police College Basic Constable Training, Male and Female Sexual Orientation Self-Identification, 2008-2017**

**YEAR of INTAKE \* How would you identify your sexual orientation? Cross tabulation**

			How would you identify your sexual orientation?											Total
			Straight/ Heterosexual	Lesbian	Gay	Bisexual	MSM (man who has sex with men)	Trans-sensual (person attracted to transsexual or transgendered people)	Two-sprited	Asexual	Unsure	Other, please describe	Pansexual	
YEAR of INTAKE	2008	Count	1139	17	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	1168
		% within YEAR of INTAKE	97.5%	1.5%	0.4%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	100.0%
	2009	Count	1309	11	4	6	0	0	0	1	0	0	13	1344
		% within YEAR of INTAKE	97.4%	0.8%	0.3%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%	100.0%
	2010	Count	796	7	3	5	0	1	0	0	1	0	8	821
		% within YEAR of INTAKE	97.0%	0.9%	0.4%	0.6%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	1.0%	100.0%
	2011	Count	661	13	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	682
		% within YEAR of INTAKE	96.9%	1.9%	0.3%	0.4%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	100.0%
	2012	Count	619	9	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	634
		% within YEAR of INTAKE	97.6%	1.4%	0.5%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	2013	Count	374	7	2	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	387
		% within YEAR of INTAKE	96.6%	1.8%	0.5%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	2014	Count	786	8	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	798
		% within YEAR of INTAKE	98.5%	1.0%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	100.0%
	2015	Count	694	15	3	6	1	0	0	0	0	5	0	724
		% within YEAR of INTAKE	95.9%	2.1%	0.4%	0.8%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	100.0%
	2016	Count	668	11	1	3	0	0	0	0	1	9	0	693
		% within YEAR of INTAKE	96.4%	1.6%	0.1%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	1.3%	0.0%	100.0%
	2017	Count	625	12	4	10	0	0	1	0	1	7	2	662

	% within YEAR of INTAKE	94.4%	1.8%	0.6%	1.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.2%	1.1%	0.3%	100.0%
Total	Count	7671	110	30	39	2	1	2	2	3	22	31	7913
	% within YEAR of INTAKE	96.9%	1.4%	0.4%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.4%	100.0%