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Assimilative Demands: The Psychological Impact of Legal Decisions on Lesbians' Lives

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Assimilative demands:

The psychological impact of legal decisions on lesbians' lives

by

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Abstract

Covering, a construct that has been absent from the empirical psychological literature, is the pressure to or act of downplaying characteristics associated with a stigmatized identity (Goffman, 1963). This research investigated the covering demand in lesbian-identified women drawing on four related literatures: acculturation, discrimination, stigma, and self-concealment. The objectives of this research were to examine the impact of structural, legal covering demands on psychological domains and develop a grounded understanding of these demands in lesbian women. A mixed-method approach was utilized. Forty-six lesbian-identified women recruited from community venues participated in the quasi-experiment and focus groups, and five also engaged in follow-up in depth interviews. The results showed that the covering demand affects emotional reactions in these lesbian women and that they adopt multiple strategies for coping with these demands in everyday life. These findings provide initial support for the conceptualization of the covering demand as a potential everyday, minority stressor.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Encounters with aspects of oppression, including discrimination and stigma, have become a site of growing psychological research (e.g., Kessler, Mickelson, & Williams, 1999). Such encounters, which have significant implications for individual mental health, are gaining recognition as a salient focus of study in psychology. For example, heterosexist discrimination and hate crimes against lesbian, gay, and bisexual-identified individuals have been related to depression (e.g., Herek, Cogan, & Gillis, 1999; Lewis, Derlega, Berndt, Morris, & Rose, 2001), anxiety (e.g., Kessler, Mickelson, & Williams, 1999; Szymanski, 2006), decreased quality of life, and increased general psychological distress (e.g., Mays & Cochran, 2001).

There is also some evidence that sexual minority groups (i.e., lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and others who do not identify as heterosexual) have higher rates of psychological health problems than do heterosexuals (see Meyer, 2003 for review). For example, sexual minorities have been found to have greater rates of depressive and anxiety symptoms as well as substance use problems (e.g., Gilman et al., 2001). Oppression of sexual minority groups, or *sexual oppression*, has been hypothesized to explain psychological distress and health disparities in lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals. Theoretical frameworks that have used this conceptualization include the minority stress model (e.g., DiPlacido, 1998; Meyer, 1995, 2003) and sexual stigma (e.g., Herek, 2007; 2009). This study addresses the *covering demand,* which is the pressure to downplay or tone down behaviors and characteristics associated with one's minority sexual orientation (Goffman, 1963; Yoshino, 2001), as an aspect of oppression-related experience that may enhance these explanatory frameworks.

The construct of covering can be traced to stigma theory (Goffman, 1963). Although there have been significant developments in stigma theory regarding sexual minority individuals, covering continues to be absent from the psychological empirical literature on sexual minorities. There are theoretical similarities in the construct of covering to aspects of constructs in related literatures. Recently, Herek's (2007; 2009) conceptual analysis of sexual stigma included the component of *felt sexual stigma.* Felt sexual stigma has been defined as the shared knowledge of and reaction to sexual minority identity and same-sex relationships as devalued or stigmatized. Herek (2009) emphasized that this may motivate individuals to utilize self-presentation strategies to avoid being identified as a sexual minority. Covering can be seen as a potential self-presentation strategy. Indeed, in his adaptation of the minority stress model, Meyer (2003) included identity concealment, in addition to other stressors such as heterosexist discrimination and internalized heterosexism, as aspects of minority stress among sexual minorities. Finally, Yoshino (2001) has identified covering demands as they are represented in legal cases.

Individuals may experience oppression and stigma at an individual (e.g., verbal harassment) or structural level (e.g., media messages or discriminatory laws). Consistent with developing theory (e.g., minority stress, stigma), recent research has presented evidence that the legal and political challenges to sexual minority rights impact the psychological health of sexual minority people. A few studies (e.g., Levitt et al., 2009; Rostocky, Riggle, Horne, & Miller, 2009; Russell, 2009; Russell & Richards, 2003) have found that the passage of laws that restrict sexual minority rights are related to psychological distress. The focus in these studies has been on the laws and the surrounding campaigns, which frequently include the portrayal and perpetuation of negative stereotypes and stigmatizing myths about sexual

minorities. Several aspects of these campaigns and legal changes have been noted as related to heterosexism (Russell & Richards) or, more specifically, to minority stress (e.g., Rostocky et al., 2009). For example, in a qualitative study, sexual minority individuals demonstrated psychological distress in response to the constitutional marriage amendments in their states (Levitt et al., 2009). Moreover, in a national sample of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer individuals, those who lived in states that passed these amendments exhibited greater psychological distress (Rostocky et al., 2009). These studies provide initial evidence that structural-level instances of oppression or stigma can negatively impact sexual minority individuals' psychological health.

Building on these studies of oppression and stigma, this study examined the effect of legal changes independently of the surrounding, often negative, campaigns. Specifically, this study investigated how a sample of lesbian women perceived and was impacted by the legal decisions that represent the covering demand.

The purpose of this study was to more fully understand the ways assimilative demands to cover affect an individual. Covering is the social pressure to downplay behaviors associated with stigmatized identites. This research developed an understanding of the impact of assimilative demands on lesbian women in two ways: by a) examining the impact and relevance of structural, legal demands to conform to hetero-centric norms on cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains and b) developing a grounded understanding of the nature, impact, and management of assimilative demands in lesbian women.

A mixed method approach was used to investigate the correlates and psychological impact of assimilative demands. Both methodologies assist in exploring different aspects of the covering demand. Quantitative, quasi-experimental methods are important for

establishing the effects of the covering demand with all other stimulus characteristics controlled. Qualitative methods were used to gather broader information about lived experiences and an understanding of covering in everyday life.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Although pressures to assimilate or conform to social norms may enhance social harmony under particular circumstances, these choices can be posed to individuals as options or as coercions. These pressures are distributed disproportionately, according to the status quo, and burden members of disadvantaged groups. Minority groups may face more or more significant pressures to assimilate in order to fit into the mainstream. For example, West (1994) explained, "As long as black people are viewed as a 'them,' the burden falls on blacks to do all the 'cultural' and 'moral' work necessary for healthy race relations. The implication is that only certain Americans can define what it means to be American – and the rest must simply 'fit in'" (p. 7). Not only are there social-normative and individual expectations to be or to present one's self as consistent with the mainstream (e.g., Duberman, 1991; de Beauvoir, 1953; West, 1994), but Yoshino (2001) also documented legal trends in which members of marginalized groups are coerced to downplay aspects of their subordinated identity in order to maintain their civil rights. Individual characteristics or identities that are labeled deviant, unacceptable, or "other" by the mainstream can be conceptualized in the framework of *stigma*.

Stigma is the discrediting of a person's identity due to its deviation from normative expectations or the "disgrace" that follows from such discrediting. Although the use of the word *stigma* can be traced back to a physical mark put upon a person to denote a person's socially unacceptable deviance, contemporary use of the term refers to the metaphorical and social marking of particular identities or characteristics as undesirable and unacceptable (Goffman, 1963). The categorization of differences into stigmatized groups serves the institutional interests that maintain power hierarchies (de Monteflores, 1993).

Oppression is the systematic subordination, disadvantaging, and devaluing of members of particular groups and the privileging of others. While facets of oppression, by themselves, may cause minimal harm, the systematic arrangement of oppression makes it impossible or unlikely to escape (Frye, 1983). One of the consequences of stigmatization is the displacement of unaccepted persons from the benefits of social life and sometimes to mark them as outcasts from the mainstream and place them among the oppressed. "By definition, of course, we believe that the person with a stigma is not quite human. On this assumption, we exercise varieties of discrimination, through which we effectively, if often unthinkingly, reduce [the person's] life chances" (Goffman, 1963, p. 5). Although all stigmas may not fit into current frameworks for understanding oppression (e.g., racism, classism, sexism, anti-Semitism, heterosexism, ableism, ethnocentrism, etc.), the conceptual groundwork of stigma adds a valuable perspective.

In social interactions in which a person possesses a stigmatized identity, the presence of the stigma and its disclosure can create tension between the stigmatized person and non-stigmatized others. Goffman (1963) proposed that persons could manage the information about their stigmatized identity in at least two ways: by passing and by covering. While passing occurs when the stigmatized identity is not known to others and is thus invisible, covering is the downplaying of characteristics associated with a stigmatized identity that is known to others. Passing and covering are ways of managing stigma (Goffman, 1963) and may be considered to be reactions to assimilative demands (Yoshino, 2001).

Covering demands are a subset of assimilative demands. While not all assimilative demands, or demands to be like and to behave according to the mainstream, are coercive, Yoshino (2001) asserted that the pressure to cover has impinged on traditional civil rights in

subtle and remarkable ways. Coercive pressures to cover have been documented in case law, and Yoshino shows how people of color have been punished (e.g., loss of employment) for publicly presenting aspects of their race (e.g., wearing cornrows or having untreated hair), women for behaving too masculine (e.g., not wearing make-up or a stereotypically feminine hairstyle), and lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals for "flaunting" their sexuality (e.g., displaying affection to a same sex partner). The covering demand is so widespread that it both crosses over and extends beyond traditional civil rights groups.

Yoshino (2001) demonstrated how assimilative demands are different manifestations of the same class of pressures and cannot be placed on a continuum of severity. Three types of assimilative demands are often treated as distinct: *conversion*, *passing*, and *covering*. Conversion demands suggest that stigmatized persons change their unacceptable identity to become part of the dominant group. This demand was salient in the early 20th century when health and other professionals attempted to change the sexual orientation of lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals (e.g., Duberman, 1991; Terry, 1999; Yoshino, 2001). Terry (1999) explains, "The kind of assimilationism implied in the dominant version of adjustment therapy neither assumed that homosexuals should be tolerated nor that those of a lower strata [regarding race and class] were readily redeemable" (p. 114). Passing demands arise when the mainstream professes acceptance of the stigmatized identity but when it is still not permissible to disclose the stigmatized identity, except to intimate others (Goffman, 1963). Legally, this has been exemplified in the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy of the U.S. military (Yoshino, 2001). Finally, demands to cover permit the stigmatized identity to be known but require that persons downplay, tone down, or cover the behaviors and characteristics associated with the identity. Although each of these demands may appear distinct, they are

related and may transform into one another in varying contexts (Yoshino, 2001). For example, the requirement for child custody that a gay parent never display affection to a same sex partner in front of his or her child extends so far into intimate, private life that it is equivalent to a passing, if not a conversion, demand. Underlying each of these demands is a lack of acceptance of particular identities, and the pressure maintains the status quo of the mainstream by controlling deviance and its expression. This framework is often used in sexual minority and Queer literatures, but the demand to cover can be universal for any stigmatized identity or characteristic.

Although some acts of assimilation to the mainstream may be desirable on the part of the assimilating agent, a coercive pressure also exists for others, which can exact a personal cost. In the first critique and explication of bicultural racial identity, it was understood that "the underlying assumption of all [previous] assimilation models is that a member of one culture loses his or her original cultural identity as he or she acquires a new identity in a second culture" (LaFramboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993, p. 396). Although not all instances of the adoption of mainstream culture require the loss of one's original culture, Yoshino (2001) asserts that the cost of assimilation is the infringement on authenticity or the genuine expression of one's self. Of concern is the loss or the threat of loss of individuals' minority culture and identity and the freedom to express aspects that may be drawn from it.

Assimilative demands, such as those to cover, and how these demands affect everyday life have not yet been a focus in psychological research. However, four lines of research and theory relate to these issues: stigma, discrimination, acculturation, and self-concealment. First, stigma theory explicates the difficulties and nuances of living with a devalued identity, one that would be subjected to assimilative demands. Second, as part of

the same systems of oppression, assimilative demands can be linked to stigma as well as to discrimination. Third, research on assimilation and acculturation typically assumes varying levels of pressure to conform to the mainstream and examine the manifestations of this contact between dominant and disadvantaged cultural groups in a hierarchical society. Finally, the construct of self-concealment parallels that of passing and covering, and research on sexual minorities establishes self-concealment as a potential response to oppression.

The Psychology of Assimilation

The study of the psychology of assimilation often focuses on the experience of individuals who migrate to a cultural context different from their original or home culture (e.g., immigrants, sojourners, refugees) as well as the context of the culture receiving those immigrants. In the past, the term *assimilation* was used to describe the wide range of individual adaptations to a second culture and focused on unidirectional individual change, while the term *acculturation* predominantly intends to capture the breadth of those experiences and describes the potential for mutual change in the individual as well as the society (Sam, 2006).

In the psychological research on immigrants, Berry (1997; 2001) provided a comprehensive framework for understanding the psychology of acculturation. Acculturation is defined as repeated contact with a second culture, "a process involving two or more groups, with consequences for both: in effect, however, the contact experiences have much greater impact on the nondominant group and its members" (Berry, 2001, p. 616). Although bidirectional change in intercultural contact is theoretically important, the empirical literature on acculturation often focuses solely on the individuals acculturating to a second culture.

Several strategies have been conceptualized as means of adapting to a second or additional culture. Berry (1997) proposed a widely accepted model of acculturation strategies, or individuals' behavioral and attitudinal approaches to adaptation to another culture. LaFramboise et al. (1993) conceptualized similar strategies for acculturation of bicultural individuals who may not have migrated per se but who live in two cultural groups. Underlying these strategies are individual decisions about whether to maintain connectedness to the original culture and whether to participate in and/or accept the dominant or host culture. Assimilation is a strategy in which an individual accepts the dominant culture and loses connection to the original culture (Berry, 1997; LaFramboise et al.). While this was once the assumed outcome of intercultural contact, other forms of adaptation have also been found.

There is variability in the ways in which individuals adapt when encountering a second or additional culture. While integration (Berry, 1997) and fusion (LaFramboise et al., 1993) is the acceptance, maintenance, and participation in both original and host cultures, marginalization (Berry, 1997) is the disconnection from both the original and the dominant culture. The strategy of separation describes an individual who withdraws from the dominant culture and maintains connections to her or his culture of origin. LaFramboise et al. (1993) also described the strategy of alternation, or alternating between one's culture of origin and the dominant culture based on the context. Finally, multicultural strategies include an understanding that one's culture is accepted as one of many in the host culture. Each of these strategies describes individuals' experiences of managing multiple cultural contexts.

These individual strategies of cultural adaptation also reflect the attitudes held by the host society. Dominant or mainstream attitudes about how immigrants, refugees, or

ethnocultural groups should manage this contact are manifest in similar strategies with different terminology to reflect the dominant groups' position (Berry, 2001; 2006). For example, when the receiving society believes that new members should maintain their original culture and refrain from participation in the mainstream, this is called segregation. The individual coming into contact with this society who has the same attitude would be said to be exhibiting a separation strategy. The host society's attitudes also have corresponding actions. It is possible for institutions to make policy and practice modifications to facilitate individuals' adaptations. On the other hand, prejudice, discrimination, and other disadvantages may also be institutionalized and impede individuals' adaptations.

Acculturation strategies also parallel the concept of cultural identity, or attitudes and beliefs about one's cultural group (Berry, 2001). In models of racial identity (e.g., Cross, 1978; Phinney, 1990) and sexual identity (e.g., Cass, 1979), individuals are often conceptualized along similar dimensions of accepting and maintaining connection to the dominant cultural group (i.e., white and heterosexual) as well as to the disadvantaged group (e.g., black and lesbian or gay). These models depict individuals' struggles to resolve the tensions that arise out of managing identity and culture in diverse contexts.

Although these strategies are often considered to be individual choices or decisions, the impact of constraining forces is acknowledged (Berry, 1997). By and large, the conceptual frameworks of acculturation assume that individuals make free choices about connectedness to both their original and their host cultures (Berry, 1974). However, in reality, freedom of choice is often restricted. For example, integration strategies require that a second culture allows for and accepts an individual's culture of origin by adapting institutions to meet the needs of all cultural groups. In other words, integration strategies

require a multicultural host society (Berry, 1997). The external constraints of prejudice and discrimination alone foreclose this "option" for many groups.

Bicultural individuals manage to live within two cultures, and their competence in both cultures has been linked to more effective adaptation and greater psychological health (LaFramboise et al, 1993). For Asian American college students, increased self-efficacy, cognitive flexibility, and public regard for one's cultural group has been likened to a greater connection to and competency in one's own and in the dominant culture (Kim & Omizo, 2006). In an extension of research on bicultural competence, Parks (1999) studied lesbian-identified women's alcohol use. In their interviews, Parks found that alcohol use was a component of lesbian subculture and that drinking alcohol was sometimes experienced as a way of effectively adapting to lesbian subculture. Historically, bars have been a place where lesbians could express themselves fully, away from the harassment of the mainstream culture (Israelstam & Lambert, 1983). The legacy of drinking contexts appears to continue to constitute a significant component of lesbian subculture. For many lesbians, to refrain from drinking contexts might result in less connection to lesbian communities.

Not all strategies of cultural adaptations and contexts are equally effective. Indicators of psychological and physical health as well as economic success have been empirically related to individuals' strategies for cultural adaptation. An international study of 13 countries found that integrationist strategies are typically preferred (Berry, Phinney, Sam & Vedder, 2006). Integrationist strategies have also been most frequently related to greater psychological well-being. For example, Indian immigrants with greater integrationist attitudes demonstrated fewer psychological and psychosomatic stress symptoms, while those with greater marginalization attitudes showed greater psychiatric and psychosomatic stress

symptoms. Separation predicted psychosomatic stress symptoms, while assimilation predicted psychiatric symptoms (Krishnan & Berry, 1992). In an examination of the role of self-monitoring in Polish immigrants in Rome, Kosic, Mannetti, and Sam (2006) found that self-monitoring moderated the relationship between acculturation strategies and psychological adaptation; for those who predominantly adopted integrationist or assimilationist strategies, psychological wellbeing or adaptation depended on the role of self-monitoring. That is, the positive relationship between psychological adjustment and integration strategies was stronger for those with higher scores in self-monitoring, suggesting that the positive impact of integration strategies was enhanced by self-monitoring. For assimilation strategies, a different pattern emerged: greater self-monitoring was shown to be detrimental to psychological adaptation for those who used assimilation strategies, and lower self-monitoring was related to better psychological adjustment. Although integration and marginalization strategies have been associated with clear patterns of better and poorer indicators of wellbeing, respectively (Berry, 1997), this study showed that for some individuals, assimilation strategies are associated with detriments in psychological wellbeing.

Although acculturation can be relatively easeful and even positive, conflict and problems may also ensue. Easeful or positive acculturation experiences are classified as behavioral shifts, and problematic acculturation experiences are classified as acculturative stress (Berry, 2005). Acculturative stress is an important factor in studying individuals' psychological health. In a sample of ethnic minority college students, acculturative stress predicted increased negative affect (Paukert, Pettit, Perez, & Walker, 2006). Likewise, Korean immigrants' acculturative stress was positively related to symptoms of depression (Shin, Han, & Kim, 2007). Taiwanese adolescent immigrants' acculturative stress, in this

case depressive-like symptoms related to immigration experiences, was negatively related to their acculturation to the mainstream educational system. However, it is interesting to note that the more acculturated the adolescents were, the more perceived prejudice they experienced (Kuo & Roysicar, 2006).

Acculturative stress is a reaction of an individual to experiences of intercultural contact as conflictual or otherwise problematic (Berry, 1970). Based on the stress and coping framework of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), Berry (2001) conceptualized the process and outcomes of acculturative stress to include group and individual factors as well as cultural, economic, psychological and physical health outcomes. Group level features of this process include those from the society of origin (e.g., political and economic contexts) that are often important factors in individuals' and groups' reasons for migration. These also include features of the society of settlement, such as having a more multicultural or assimilative ideology and varying levels of discrimination. These social level factors affect the individual's experience by way of the intercultural contact. Individual level factors include appraisal and other cognitive processes as well as stress responses (e.g., depression and anxiety) that affect outcomes. This process is hypothesized to depend on the effects of individual moderating factors (e.g., age, health, language) that were present prior to acculturation as well as factors that were present during acculturation. Factors that are present at the time of acculturation include the social support available to the individual, societal attitudes, and acculturation strategies (i.e., assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization) as well as the discrepancy between societal attitudes and the individuals' acculturation strategies.

Although being the target of prejudice and discrimination has been conceptualized as part of the acculturation process, there are also literatures that focus on experiences of discrimination as central, rather than contributive, phenomena. The literature on discrimination significantly adds to the knowledge provided by the aforementioned acculturation research to enhance understanding of various aspects of assimilative demands.

Relations to Discrimination

Discrimination against members of disadvantaged groups because of their membership status is a facet or a micro-level manifestation of systems of oppression, and as such constitutes a mechanism that maintains the status quo of group inequality (Herek, 1992; Jones, 1997). The psychological literature that focuses on being the target of discrimination provides several operational definitions of discrimination. These include any mistreatment because of group membership including everyday, subtle experiences such as exclusion from social events in a work setting, familial rejection, verbal and physical harassment, and other actions perpetrated against minority group individuals (Essed, 1991; Herek; Jones).

Individual processes and the consequences of being the target of discrimination is a growing field of study in psychology. There is strong evidence that negative psychological outcomes are linked to being the target of discrimination. Allport (1954) first suggested that being the target of prejudice would lead to individual psychological changes and some negative psychological consequences including obsessive concern, denial of group membership, withdrawal, self-hate, and neuroticism.

Contemporary investigations have rigorously explored the psychological effects of being the target of discrimination. Many such studies begin with the theme "discrimination is bad for your health" (King, 2005, p. 202). Discrimination based on a number of group

memberships, including age, sex, race, sexual orientation, and religion, has been shown to be related to anxiety, depression, and decreased general wellbeing (Kessler, Mickelson, & Williams, 1999). Studies of racism, sexism, and heterosexism have also found links between discrimination and increased risk of depression, increased anxiety, substance use, suicidal ideation, and anger (e.g., Diaz, Ayala, Bein, Henne, & Marin, 2001; Herek, Cogan, & Gillis, 1999; Klonoff & Landrine, 1995; Klonoff, Landrine, & Ullman, 1999; Lewis et al., 2001; Martin, Tuch, & Roman, 2003; Meyer, 1995; Szymanski, 2006; Whitbeck, McMorris, Chen, & Stubbon, 2001; Williams, Yu, Jackson, & Anderson, 1997; Yoder, Whitbeck, Hoyt, & LaFromboise, 2006). Large-scale and longitudinal studies have found evidence for the directionality of this relationship. For example, with increases in perceived discrimination, African American women have shown incremental increases in depression symptoms over time (Schulz, Gravlee, Williams, Isreal, Mentz, & Rowe, 2006) and a greater probability of meeting criteria for a clinical depressive diagnosis (Siefert, Finlayson, Williams, Delva, & Ismail, 2007).

The stress and coping framework has been applied to discrimination research in a similar way as it has in the acculturation literature. The stress paradigm has been used to conceptualize the effects of discrimination on individuals, including discrimination based on racism (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999; Outlaw, 1993), heterosexism (Meyer, 1995; 2003), and to some aspects of sexism (Kaiser & Miller, 2004). A conceptualization of the experience of discrimination that utilizes the stress paradigm may be referred to as a *minority stress* model. Outlaw (1993) was the first known author to relate African Americans' racism-related stress to the general stress paradigm, and Clark et al. (1999) later based a biopsychosocial model of the effects of racism on the work of Outlaw and the

general stress framework of Lazarus and Folkman (1984). Clark et al. (1999) theorized that perceptions of racism act as stressor events. The complex interplay of perceived racism, broadly defined to include individual and institutional phenomena, and a number of environmental, constitutional, socio demographic, psychological, and behavioral factors and coping responses, impacts psychological and physical health. In this model, the perception of racism leads to increased psychological and physiological stress responses and decreased wellbeing. Meyer's (1995) premise is that, like members of other marginalized groups, gay men and lesbians experience discrimination-related chronic stress. Three processes of minority stress were proposed: prejudice events, expectations of discrimination, and internalized homophobia. Meyer (2003) later reframed minority stress in terms of a more general stress and coping framework, similar to that of Outlaw's (1993) and Clark et al.'s (1993) models.

Minority stress models suggest that attributions and appraisals are important components of minority stress processes, as has been established in the general stress and coping literature (Clark et al., 1999; Meyer, 2003). Crocker and Major (1989) suggested that making attributions for negative events to prejudice, rather than making internal attributions, may protect marginalized groups' self-esteem, and some support has been found for the protective influence of attributions to prejudice (Major, Kaiser, & McCoy, 2003). King (2005) provided initial evidence of the importance of appraisals. In a sample of African American female college students, the primary appraisal process of centrality[1] mediated the relationship between discrimination and stress. When centrality appraisal was controlled for, discrimination was no longer a significant predictor of stress. Eccleston and Major (2006)

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[1] Centrality appraisal has been operationalized as an individual's evaluation of how much a stressor event has personal significance or as how relevant the stressor is to the individual's goals, commitments, and concerns (King, 2005).

also examined ethnic identification in the appraisal process and found complex relationships and interactions that suggest ethnic identity interacts with appraisals and impacts mental health.

There are at least three ways in which discrimination may relate to assimilative demands as described by Yoshino (2001) and as it has been postulated in the acculturation literature. First, these phenomena can serve larger systems of oppression, each as instances that maintain the status quo through restriction of access to resources (e.g., Herek, 1992; Jones, 1997). Second, acts of discrimination may be related to individuals' experiences of assimilative demands. For example, discrimination may, at times, be a consequence of not conforming to the mainstream when assimilation is demanded. Finally, covering may be a reaction to experienced discrimination. When an individual covers, s/he makes it easier for others to ignore the disadvantaged identity (Goffman, 1963), and so covering may be considered a strategy to reduce the frequency or possibility of being the target of discrimination, albeit a strategy with potential personal costs.

Contributions from Stigma Theory

The term "covering" first appeared in the stigma literature. Goffman (1963) described covering as one way to manage a disclosed stigmatized identity. Although social structural factors were included in the conceptualization of stigma, Goffman's unit of analysis was primarily the stigmatized individual, and he focused on how information about the stigma was managed by that individual. In the current psychological literature, stigma is defined as the mark of devaluation possessed by an individual (Crocker & Major, 1989), while discrimination is defined as the experienced action against the individual based on the possession of that mark. Although there are differences among stigmas (e.g., visibility), there

are similarities in the way people manage them (Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998). Even though stigma and discrimination are conceptually related, the study of stigma is a separate literature and focuses on distinct areas of individual experience.

Recently, Herek (2007; 2008; 2009) has put forth a conceptual framework of *sexual stigma*. He defines sexual stigma as "the negative regard, inferior status, and relative powerlessness that society collectively accords anyone associated with nonheterosexual behaviors, identity, relationships, or communities" (2009, p. 33). This conceptualization forms a bridge between sexual minorities and heterosexual agents of prejudice because both are based on the shared cultural knowledge of the stigma. He outlines three manifestations of the structure of heterosexism: enacted sexual stigma, felt sexual stigma, and self-stigma. Enacted sexual stigma is behavioral expression (e.g., discrimination), self-stigma is an individual's acceptance of sexual stigma (e.g., internalized heterosexism), and felt sexual stigma is the knowledge of society's negative regard for sexual minorities and expectations of enacted stigma. The latter most closely parallels covering. Indeed, Herek (2009) notes felt stigma may motivate individuals to alter their self-presentation to reduce the perceived probability of receiving enacted stigma.

Stigma consciousness is conceptualized as the expectation or anticipation of being mistreated because of one's stigmatized identity (Meyer, 1995). Stigma is also conceptualized as a form of minority stress and as a consequence of learning via experiences of rejection and discrimination. In general, members of marginalized groups appear to be more aware of the potential for discrimination than members of dominant groups (Pinel, 1999). Pinel's line of research has also highlighted how increased stigma consciousness about sexism in women is associated with negative interpersonal consequences (Pinel, 1999)

and decreased job satisfaction and leaving one's place of employment (Pinel & Paulin, 2005). In lesbians and gay men, stigma consciousness has also been shown to be related to increased self-consciousness (Pinel, 1999). Correlational research on achievement also shows that African American students high in stigma consciousness show lower achievement than those with low stigma consciousness, while those with low stigma consciousness were indistinguishable from non-stigmatized students (Brown & Lee, 2005). In a sample of gay men and lesbians, stigma consciousness was a predictor of depressive symptoms (Lewis, Derlega, Griffin, & Krowinski, 2003). Although stigma consciousness may be conceptualized as a stable trait, Pinel (2004) has also shown that when expectations of discrimination are cued, women low in stigma consciousness exhibit the same level as those who exhibit greater stigma consciousness without cues. These data suggest that signals that discrimination is likely to occur evoke stigma consciousness.

Stigma consciousness may also interact with other social factors. Lewis, Derlega, Clark, and Kuang (2006) examined the relationships between social constraints, or being able to freely talk about identity-related concerns, and stigma consciousness in lesbians. For those low in social constraints, stigma consciousness had no effect on intrusive thoughts, physical symptoms, or internalized homophobia. However, for those who experienced greater social constraints, greater stigma consciousness was related to all of these negative outcomes. This anticipation of discrimination may be particularly detrimental for those who feel discouraged from expressing concerns around their stigmatized identity. Although it may be adaptive to anticipate discrimination, stigma consciousness appears to accentuate the negative effects of stigmatization.

Being stigmatized is not always detrimental to an individual's wellbeing. An extensive line of research has been developed on stigma, particularly on how stigmatizing experiences affect self-esteem (e.g., Crocker & Major, 1989; Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998; Major & O'Brien, 2005). Although it seems reasonable to hypothesize that possessing a devalued identity would lead to detriments in one's self-esteem, Crocker and Major (1989) broke ground investigating the conditions in which stigma has a negative impact and the conditions in which a person is buffered from injuries to the self. For example, their discounting hypothesis postulates that when a person makes attributions for negative events to discrimination rather than internal causes, the attribution is more external and protective of self-esteem (Crocker & Major; Crocker, Voelkl, Testa, & Major, 1991). Evidence to support this prediction has been provided by Major et al. (2003). As with the literature on discrimination and acculturation, the stress paradigm is used to inform the study of stigma.

The experiences of living with a stigmatized identity have been conceptualized using the stress framework. Drawing from the definition of stress as an internal, external, or combined force that exceeds the adaptation capacities of an individual (Monat & Lazarus, 1991), Miller and Major (2000) conceptualized aspects of stigma as stressors and focused on coping. The stressors of possessing a stigma are unique from all other types of stressors. The direct stressors of possessing a stigma include having awareness of the potential of being the target of prejudice and discrimination, of the specific stereotypes about one's social identity, and that one's identity is socially devalued. The ambiguity surrounding the reasons for others' reactions and treatment or mistreatment of an individual with a stigmatized identity constitutes a stigma stressor. Indirectly, and as with other facets of oppression, individuals with stigma experience restricted access to resources, as well as more "daily hassles," or

minor, chronic stressors, which may contribute to detriments in social support. Psychological responses to stigmatization vary, and different coping strategies may explain when and how an individual's mental health may be protected against the negative consequences of stigmatization.

Attributions and coping are key influences in the theory of stigma as a stress process. These processes have the potential to mitigate the impact of stigma stressors. For example, individuals may not recognize an event as related to stigma or may justify the experience by way of ideologies consistent with an unjust system (Major, 1994; Miller & Major, 2000). Stigmatized individuals may also compare themselves predominantly to other stigmatized individuals, minimizing the visibility of the effects of stigma on their experiences (Crocker & Major, 1989; Miller & Major, 2000). Stigma-related experiences may not lead to stress when they are not experienced as related to stigma or when they are appraised as manageable with available resources.

For those who appraise stigmatizing experiences as stressful, a variety of coping strategies have been explicated (Miller, 2004; Miller & Major, 2000). Two types of coping that have been investigated and integrated into the body of stigma literature are *primary* and *secondary control coping* strategies (Miller, 2004; Miller & Kaiser, 2001). Primary control coping involves efforts to affect events, or other objective factors, in order to gain a sense of control over circumstances, while secondary control coping are attempts to adapt one's self to the stressful event by changing one's attitudes and/or feelings about stressful events. Cognitive restructuring, or attributing negative events to prejudice, is a type of primary control coping that has been shown to protect self-esteem (Major et al., 2003). Devaluing domains in which an individual's stigma relates to negative stereotypes (Crocker et al., 1998)

is also a form of effective primary control coping. Self-stereotyping, or confirming stereotypes about one's stigmatized identity for the sake of social harmony (Sinclair & Hunstsinger, 2004), strategic disconfirmation of stereotypes (Snyder & Haugen, 1995), confronting discrimination (Kaiser & Miller, 2004), and integrating nonstigmatized individuals into social support networks also constitute primary control coping strategies. Secondary control coping may be psychological or situational. Stigmatized individuals may avoid persons or situations in which they expect to be stereotyped or discriminated against (Swim, Cohen, & Hyers, 1998), and they may psychologically disengage from situations they cannot avoid to protect self-esteem and performance (Major, Spencer, Schmader, Wolf, & Crocker, 1998; Nussbaum & Steele, 2007). Finally, stigmatized individuals may conceal their stigmatized identity as a secondary control coping strategy (Miller, 2004). Although the effectiveness of coping strategies is context dependent, in general, primary control coping may have fewer personal costs than does secondary control coping.

Stigma is the social construction of identities as devalued and the demarcating of a person as less than human (Crocker et al., 1998; Goffman, 1963). The construct of stigma is often used to describe the position of individuals in disadvantaged and devalued groups. In this framework of stigma, researchers study the effects of discrimination (e.g., Mallet & Swim, 2005). Instances of acculturating individuals' experiences of discrimination can also be conceptualized in the framework of stigma. For example, immigrants may be stigmatized because of their immigrant status and country of origin as an instance of xenophobia or ethnocentrism. The stigma literature illuminates aspects of acculturation and discrimination, and like assimilation and discrimination, stigmatization may serve as part of larger systems of oppression (Link & Phelan, 2001). One possible response to stigmatization,

discrimination, and assimilation pressures is to try to make the stigmatized identity invisible to others.

Links to Secrets and Self-Concealment

Definitions of secrets or secret-keeping vary, and these include keeping knowledge of a significant emotional event from others (Finkenauer, 1999), deceptive omission (Lane & Wegner, 1995), and having any personal information an individual does not want anyone else to know (Vrij, Nunkoosing, Paterson, Oosterwegel, & Soukara, 2002). Secret-keeping is an active process that "requires much deliberate mental and behavioral work" (Lane & Wegner, 1995, p. 237). Indeed, the act of secret-keeping makes the secret cognitively more accessible. It also tends to increase intrusive thoughts of the secret, which may develop into obsessive thinking (Lane & Wegner, 1995).

Secrecy has been related to significant health problems. For example, research has shown psychological and physical health detriments as consequences of keeping traumatic experiences secret (Pennebaker, 1989). In an investigation of keeping secrets with the less strict definition of secrets (i.e., anything an individual does not *want* others to know), secret-keepers demonstrated less emotional wellbeing than those without secrets (Vrij et al., 2002). Secret-keepers who describe their secret as serious have been shown to have lower self-esteem and physical wellbeing than those who did not describe their secrets as serious. Moreover, the vast majority of those secret keepers had disclosed their secret to at least one person.

Although secrecy appears to share similarities with the construct of passing because both involve withholding information from others, in the secrets literature, secrecy appears to be a more extreme form of omission that typically refers to a circumscribed event. In

contrast, self-concealment has been conceptualized as more closely related to or as synonymous with passing (e.g., Mohr & Daly, 2008; Oswald, 2007). Self-concealment has also been conceptualized as a minority stressor (Meyer, 2003) and as a coping response to stigma (Miller, 2004). Self-concealment has been operationalized as a general tendency to hide one's identity and, specifically, one's sexual orientation status (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000; 2003). Self-concealment makes others unaware of an individual's stigmatized identity. Although both secrecy and self-concealment include a form of information management about one's self, and, for example, individuals who self-conceal may keep secrets in order to conceal their identity, each has distinct lines of research.

Self-concealment may also have cognitive impacts similar to those found in the secrets literature. Some authors have suggested that chronic self-concealment can exact a cognitive toll on individuals because individuals monitor their behavior and monitor the environment for cues of stigma in order to conceal their identity (Smart & Wegner, 2000). Indeed, at least one research team (Perez,-Benitez, O'Brien, Carels, Gordon, & Chiros, 2007) has studied the physiological effects of self-concealment in Pennebaker's model (Pennebaker, Hughes, & O'Heeron, 1987).

In a general population sample, self-concealment has been related to anxiety and depressive symptoms (Larson & Chastain, 1990). Among sexual minority samples, self-concealment has also been an important variable related to psychological distress and wellbeing. For example, lesbians who reported greater self-concealment tended to perceive having less social support (Jordan & Deluty, 2000). In a sample of lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals, self-concealment was predicted by social anxiety, and social support accounted for the positive relationship between social anxiety and self-concealment (Potoczniak, Aldea,

& DeBlaere, 2007). However, there is some mixed evidence about the relation of psychological distress to self-concealment. For example, there is some evidence that self-concealment is related to detriments in social support but not to psychological distress (Balsam & Mohr, 2007; Oetjen & Rothblum, 2000)

Self-concealment shares many of the aspects of covering, as described by Yoshino (2001) and Goffman (1963). In one of the few studies that examined the frequency of self-concealment of a sexual minority identity, self-concealment was prevalent. For example, 41% of DiPlacido's (1998) sample refrained from discussing a gay-related topic in a public place because of fear that this would disclose their sexual identity. This reason for such concealment is distinct from covering, in which an individual's identity is already known (Goffman, 1963). The covering demand appears to have the potential to capture a broader range of such experiences. Moreover, the self-concealment literature tends to focus on concealment as a response to heterosexism, prejudice, discrimination, or violence. In this way, investigation of the covering demand has the potential to reveal whether concealing or covering occurs in response to a demand for such a self-presentation rather than non-specific threats such as discrimination.

Assimilative Demands and the Stress Paradigm

Yoshino's (2001) theory relates the meta-process of oppression to the individual by analyzing legal and cultural institutions' relationships with the individual. It is also a framework that, unlike many others, acknowledges both the similarities and differences among disadvantaged groups. Although his work has not yet been operationalized for use in psychological research, the commonalities in the psychological literatures and the

phenomena described by Yoshino (2001) are similar to the features in the stress and coping paradigm.

The stress models of acculturation, discrimination, and stigma have differences in emphases but also share similarities. Common assumptions of the minority stress models in the discrimination literature are that minority stress is a form of stress additional to general stress, is relatively stable, and is embedded in social processes and structures (Meyer, 2003). These assumptions are also present in Berry's (2006) acculturative stress model and the stigma as stress model (Miller & Major, 2000). However, Herek (2009) argues that the conceptualization of sexual stigma is broader in scope than the minority stress model because of stigma's inclusion of larger cultural knowledge and all persons' participation in this knowledge, regardless of sexual orientation. Herek (2009) asserts that the two frameworks are compatible.

In the identified minority stress models, there are differences in emphases. While Clark et al.'s (1999) model focused on mediators and moderators in the relationships between racism and health outcomes, Meyer's (1995) model focused more on types of stress processes. For example, prejudice events are considered to be distal while internalized homophobia is thought to be the most proximal minority stress process. The stigma as stress model, on the other hand, contributes a great deal of theory and research on the influence of coping (Miller, 2004; Miller & Major, 2000). Compared to the minority stress and stigma models, the acculturative stress model (Berry, 2006) theorized in more detail about the impact of the institutional level influences in accounting for variations across nations in stress processes. The influences of reasons for immigrating, language proficiencies, and the ideology of the host culture are unique components of the acculturative stress model because

of the migratory status of the individuals they studied. The acculturative stress model identifies the multiple influences of disparate but related factors on the individual in a particular cultural circumstance. Although each literature has emphasized some aspects more than others in their conceptualizations of minority stress, they contain common elements and assumptions. These models are used in combination here to conceptualize assimilative demands.

Based on the psychological literature (e.g., Berry, 2006; Clark et al., 1993; Major & Crocker, 1989) and Yoshino's (2001) work, assimilative demands are defined here as minority stressors and manifestations of stigma. Assimilative demands are conceptualized here as messages communicated individually (e.g., verbally) or institutionally through implicit or explicit policies and practices (e.g., definitions of "professional" dress and legal precedence) that may be suggestive or coercive but are always externally derived. Assimilative demands describe the external pressures on the self or identity. These demands do not operate alone but in reaction to, and reciprocally with, the expressions and wishes for expression from an authentic or subjectively "true" self or identity. In Yoshino's (2001) conceptualization, based on feminist philosophy, this represents the weak performative model of the self. Rather than identity being considered as either inherent or socially constructed, the weak performative model recognizes the influence of both essentialist and social processes. Yoshino's model is consistent with the stress and coping frameworks that assume an underlying identity that is affected by the environment (e.g., discrimination contributes to depressive and anxious symptoms). The stress frameworks also assume that individuals encountering stress have agency and affect their environments (e.g., by coping or avoiding situations in which an individual may be likely to be the target of discrimination).

Whether imbued with an essence or constructed, each framework emphasizes that individuals are both affected by, and affect, the world around them.

The merging of Yoshino's (2001) model and the psychological stress paradigm can be illustrated by examining the hypothesized process of legally derived assimilative demands. For individuals who belong to the applicable stigmatized group, legal decisions that mandate their assimilation to the dominant mainstream can be seen as threats. Either individuals comply with assimilative demands or they lose their civil rights. Legal decisions can also be seen as direct stressors as described in the stigma as stress model (Miller & Major, 2000). That is, legal decisions that demand assimilation may increase targets' awareness of stigma and stereotypes as well as the potential to be the target of discrimination. These are signals to the target that the identity in question is devalued or unacceptable. External influences such as access to resources (e.g., financial and educational) and the extent of one's connection to the mainstream as well as to their stigmatized social groups might mitigate the experience of assimilative demands and the subsequent individual response process (Berry, 2006; Clark et al, 1999; Miller & Major, 2000).

Primary and secondary appraisal processes determine whether this threat is experienced as a stressor. In primary appraisal, an individual assesses the extent to which the event (e.g., legal decision) is subjectively stressful. In secondary appraisal, the determination is made as to whether this stressor exceeds coping resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). If the individual experiences the event as stressful, an array of coping responses influences the psychological and physical impact of the stressor (e.g., Miller & Major, 2000). The coping response of covering is one that is highlighted both in Yoshino's (2001) work as well as in stigma theory. Other responses to assimilative demands that may affect the potential

cognitive, emotional, and social impacts of covering include self-concealment (e.g., DiPlacido, 1998) and secrecy (Jordan & Deluty, 2000).

The pressure to, and act of, covering overlaps visible and concealable identities because it describes a domain of distress and contention in stigmatized individuals' behavior and appearance. Yoshino (2001) outlined four domains in which individuals may cover their stigmatized identity in response to assimilative demands. *Appearance* may be manipulated so that an individual's physical presentation does not display signs of membership in a disadvantaged group. Not engaging in *activism* or depoliticizing an identity is another way in which individuals may cover. Choosing friends, spouses, and colleagues who are not stigmatized allows individuals to cover through *association*. Finally, *affiliation*, or identification with one's disadvantaged group, may be manipulated in order to cover. Even for visible social identities such as race and gender, behavior and appearance can be the target of assimilative demands. Hair styles (e.g., braids), dress (e.g., a sari), speech (e.g., slang or "activist" speech), and other features of appearance (e.g., make-up) may be deemed stereotypically and unacceptably Black, Asian, female, and so on. Stigmatized individuals can choose to express or to withhold these from mainstream audiences.

The extant literature suggests that concealing a devalued characteristic produces psychological distress (e.g., Larson & Chastain, 1990). Goffman (1963) suggested that managing the visibility or the attention drawn to one's stigma causes tension in interpersonal contacts. From the view of the stress and coping paradigm, the act of covering may be conceptualized as a type of secondary control coping. Although it may be the best available coping mechanism for particular situations, the personal cost of concealment is high (Miller, 2004).

The overarching goal of the present study was to examine the psychological effects of assimilative demands in a lesbian sample. A mixed method approach was used to investigate the correlates and psychological impact of assimilative demands. In Study 1, a sample of lesbians reviewed two legal cases in which lesbians were mandated by law to cover their minority sexual orientation in order to preserve their legal rights (i.e., employment and child custody). The cases were manipulated so that half of participants reviewed legal decisions that suggest lesbians should cover (i.e., the Assimilative Demand/Negative Outcome condition), and others reviewed the same legal cases but in this condition the cases concluded with decisions that support the full expression of lesbian identity (i.e., the Multicultural/Positive Outcome condition). Other features of the study are described below. In Study 2, individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of lesbians selected from Study 1 to further explore the phenomena and effects of assimilative demands and covering.

Hypothesized Affective and Cognitive Consequences of Assimilative Demands

1. Participants in the Assimilative Demand/Negative Outcome condition (i.e., presented with legal cases that suggest lesbians should cover) were expected to report negative emotional reactions about the case and to appraise those cases as more stressful than those in the Multicultural/Positive Outcome condition (i.e., presented with the same legal cases that support the full expression of lesbian identity). That is, a main effect for condition on negative emotional reactions was expected.

2. It was hypothesized that those in the Assimilative Demand condition would exhibit greater negative affect (i.e., anxious, depressive, and angry affect) and lower collective self-esteem than those in the Multicultural/Positive Outcome condition, and

appraised stressfulness of the cases would account for the relationship between condition and distress. In other words, appraised stressfulness was expected to mediate the relationship between condition and wellbeing.

3. Appraised stressfulness was also expected to account for the relationship between condition and performance on a cognitive task. That is, appraised stressfulness was expected to mediate the relationship between condition and cognitive performance.

4. A decrease in mood was expected post-condition compared to pre-condition for those in the assimilative demand condition only. In other words, an interaction was expected for feeling thermometer ratings by condition and time of measurement. The feeling thermometer ratings were also evaluated following a focus group in which participants discussed the legal cases. The impact of these discussions was examined by within and between subject comparisons as described above.

Hypothesized Relations of Assimilative Demands to Discrimination

5. Participants in the assimilative demand condition were expected to show increased expectations for discrimination compared to those in the multicultural condition, demonstrating a main effect for condition on stigma consciousness.

6. Based on the literature reviewed (e.g., Szymanski, 2006), a main effect of heterosexist discrimination on affect was expected. The measure of heterosexist discrimination was used as a covariate in analyses including outcome variables significantly related to heterosexist discrimination.

Exploratory Hypotheses about Covering Identity and Affiliation

7. It was hypothesized that participants would be more likely to cover their affiliation to their minority sexual orientation group in response to assimilative demands.

Participants were asked to select among lesbian-focused and mainstream magazine subscriptions. Those in the assimilative demand condition were expected to choose a mainstream subscription more frequently and a lesbian-focused magazine subscription less frequently than those in the multicultural condition.

8. The relation between assimilative demands and sexual orientation was explored. Using continua to describe their sexual orientations, participants in the assimilative demand condition were compared to those in the multicultural condition on levels of identification as lesbian, attraction to women, and sexual activity with women. It was expected that participants in the Assimilative Demand/Negative Outcome condition might rate their sexual orientations as less lesbian than those in the Multicultural/Positive Outcome condition.

Chapter 3: Method

Study 1

Sample

Individuals who identified as lesbians were recruited from communities in Michigan. A snowball-type sampling methodology was utilized to recruit 46 participants. Initial contacts in the community were recruited via announcements on lesbian focused LISTSERVS (i.e., Autsocial, Women Out and About weekly news, Lesbian Moms Network, qweeraswewannabe2, Lansing Area Human Rights), newspaper ads (i.e., in What Helen Heard and Between the Lines), and fliers posted in public places. Each participant who contacted the researcher about her participation was asked to invite other lesbian-identified peers for participation.

A total of 46 lesbian-identified women participated in Study 1. They participated in one of 10 group meetings scheduled between 5/13/08 and 3/18/09. Participants were asked to name the person who referred them to the study to nominate that person for an additional entry for the cash raffle prizes. Thirty-four (74%) participants were either named as a reference or provided one. Named references were coded as a variable and tracked so that networks could be identified, and nine unique networks consisting of between 2 and 12 participants were identified. Twelve participants indicated no relation to a reference.

Table 1 presents summary statistics of sample characteristics. The mean age of participants was 42 years. The majority of participants identified as European-American (91%) and as only lesbian (70%), while some identified as mostly lesbian (26%) and bisexual (4%). Approximately half the sample (52%) had a Bachelor's or Master's degree and 11% reported having an advanced graduate or professional degree. The majority also described

themselves as either religious or spiritual (83%) and without a disability (83%). Participants

also indicated their partner status, and the majority were either married or living with a

partner (61%). Some participants noted that they were married to their female partner in a

state or country other than Michigan, U.S.A.

Stimuli

The legal cases of Robin Shahar v. the Georgia State Department of Law (as cited in

Yoshino, 2001; 2006) and Mary Ward v. John Ward (as cited in Navarro, 1996) were

presented to participants (see Appendix A). Participants were asked to read the accounts of

these cases. In reality, these cases consisted of appeals processes and decisions both for and

against Robin Shahar and Mary Ward. Participants in the Assimilative Demand/Negative

Outcome condition read the cases in which the ending was at a point when the court decision

mandated covering or punished a lack of willingness to cover a lesbian identity. Those in the

Multicultural/Positive Outcome condition read the same accounts but with different final

decisions. In this condition, the description of the cases ended at the time when the court

decisions supported the full expression of lesbian identity (i.e., in favor of Robin Shahar and

in favor of Mary Ward).

Instruments

Demographics. Participant age, socioeconomic status, education level, race, sexual

orientation, partner status, ability status, and religion or spirituality were asked in a

combination of open ended items and multiple choice responses (see Appendix B).

Table 1

Sample characteristics by condition

		Multicultural Condition	Assimilative Condition	Total
		% (*n*)	% (*n*)	% (*n*)
Sexual identity	1 (only lesbian)	65.0% (13)	73.1% (19)	69.6% (32)
	2	20.0% (4)	26.9% (7)	23.9% (11)
	3	5.0% (1)	0	2.2% (1)
	4 (bisexual)	10.0% (2)	0	4.3% (2)
Sexual attraction	1 (exclusively women)	40.0% (8)	50.0% (13)	45.7% (21)
	2	55.0% (11)	46.2% (12)	50.0% (23)
	3	0	3.8% (1)	2.2% (1)
	4 (women and men equally)	5.0% (1)	0	2.2% (1)
Sexual behavior	1 (exclusively women)	0	19.2% (5)	10.9% (5)
	2	40.0% (8)	34.6% (9)	37.0% (17)
	3	15.0% (3)	0	
	4 (women and men equally)	35.0% (7)	23.1% (6)	28.3% (13)
	5	10.0% (2)	19.2% (5)	15.2% (7)
Race	European-American	100% (20)	84.6% (22)	91.3% (42)
	African-American	0	7.7% (2)	4.3% (2)
	Latina	0	3.8% (1)	2.2% (1)
	Multi-racial	0	3.8% (1)	2.2% (1)

Table 1 *continued*

		Multicultural Condition % (*n*)	Assimilative Condition % (*n*)	Total % (*n*)
Education	High school	0	11.5% (3)	6.5% (3)
	Some college	45.0% (9)	19.2% (5)	30.4% (14)
	Bachelor's	35.0% (7)	23.1% (6)	28.3% (13)
	Master's	10.0% (2)	34.6% (9)	23.9% (11)
	Advanced/graduate	10.0% (2)	11.5% (3)	10.9% (5)
Dis/Ability	Able	85.0% (17)	80.8% (21)	82.6% (38)
	Disability identified	15.0% (3)	19.2% (5)	17.4% (8)
Religious	Religious	15.0% (3)	26.9% (7)	21.7% (10)
	Spiritual	60.0% (12)	61.5% (16)	60.9% (28)
	Neither	25.0% (5)	11.5% (3)	17.4% (8)
Partner Status	Single, not dating	10.0% (2)	15.4% (4)	13.0% (6)
	Single and dating	15.0% (3)	15.4% (4)	15.2% (7)
	Partnered, not living together	15.0% (3)	7.7% (2)	10.9% (5)
	Partnered, living together	35.0% (7)	46.2% (12)	41.3% (19)
	Married	25.0% (5)	15.4% (4)	19.6% (9)
		M (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)
Age		37.5 (6.17)	44.7 (12.38)	41.59 (10.69)

Judgment task. Participants were asked to evaluate and then to render their judgment on two legal cases. After presentation of each case and at the conclusion of the study, participants were asked to answer the question: "Do you find in favor of [the plaintiff] or [the defendant]?" Items that assessed the importance of the verdict to participants, the relevance of the cases to the participant, and how these cases might affect future cases were also presented (see Appendix C). These items were used to assess whether a participant agreed with or consented to the assimilative demand depicted in the cases.

Emotional Reactions. Participants were asked about their emotional reaction to the presented legal case, "How would you describe your reaction to this case?" Response options included angry, happy, frustrated, anxious, inspired, sad, and hopeless, and participants responded using a Likert type scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely). Positive items were reverse scored. Responses to Shahar's (Shahar Reaction) and Ward's (Ward Reaction) cases were summed and examined as separate scales (see Appendix D).

Appraised Stressfulness. Consistent with the stress and coping frameworks and following the format of similar scales (e.g., Klonoff & Landrine, 1995; Landrine & Klonoff, 1996), two items were created that ask participants to appraise the stressfulness of each legal case: "Thinking about when you were reading (Shahar's/Ward's) legal case, please circle the number that describes how stressful this was for you." Participants responded using a Likert type scale that ranged from 1 (not at all stressful) to 6 (extremely stressful).

Feeling Thermometer. A modified version of a feeling thermometer was used to measure mood in this study. Participants rated their mood on a 100-point scale ranging from 0 (very bad, or the worst I've ever felt) to 100 (excellent, the best I've ever felt). This single item measure was used to assess mood three times: first, prior to exposure to the conditions;

then again, post-condition; and finally, following the focus group discussion. A feeling

thermometer is a single-item scale that has shown good reliability and validity. Feeling

thermometers have been used as measures of health (Schunemann, Goldstein, Mador,

McKim, Stahl et al., 2006) and preferences (Wicks, 2007).

     Multiple Affect Adjective Checklist (MAACL). The MAACL (Zuckerman, Lubin,

Vogel, & Velarius, 1964) is a measure of transient mood (see Appendix E) and has

demonstrated good internal consistency reliability and low test-retest reliability. The stability

of the scores was expected to be low because the instrument measures transitory mood. Four

items from each of the three subscales, Anxiety, Depression, and Anger, have been used in

previous social psychological research (e.g., Crocker, Voelkl, Testa, & Major, 1991) and

were used to assess participants' mood states. Because the original format of a checklist has

been found to produce response bias (Watson & Vaidya, 2003), continuous response options

were used. Participants responded by using 5 point Likert-type response scales ranging from

1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely). Positive items were reverse scored.

     Collective Self-Esteem Scale (CSES). The CSES (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) was

used to assess four domains of self-esteem that tap individuals' regard for themselves as

members of their social group (Membership), their personal feelings toward the social group

(Private), how others regard their social group (Public), and the regard for their social group

membership as an aspect of their identities (Identity). The scale consists of 16 items with a 7-

point Likert type response scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree) and has demonstrated

good internal consistency reliability (see Appendix F). The authors found adequate test-retest

reliability estimates that ranged from .58 to .68 and good internal reliability estimates that

ranged from $\alpha = .71$ to $\alpha = .86$ for the subscales and $\alpha = .85$ to $\alpha = .88$ for the total score.

Choice of media. To assess affiliation, one of the domains in which LGB individuals may cover (Yoshino, 2001), participants were asked to choose from an array of magazine subscriptions (see Appendix G). Participants were asked, "If you were to select a magazine subscription today, which three would you choose?" Options included magazines with an openly lesbian or gay focus (e.g., *Advocate, Out, Curve, Pride and Equality*) and mainstream magazines (e.g., *People, Newsweek*). As an additional measure of covering, participants were then asked whether they would prefer to have the subscription delivered with or without a confidential envelope for each selected magazine.

Anagrams. A series of 20 anagrams was provided to participants to assess the impact of assimilative demands on a difficult cognitive performance task. Participants were asked to provide as many responses to each anagram as possible in a 5-minute period.

Heterosexist Harassment, Rejection, and Discrimination Scale (HHRDS). The HHRDS (Szymanski, 2006) was utilized to assess participants' experiences with discrimination, harassment, and rejection based on their sexual orientation (see Appendix H). Szymanski developed the HHRDS to measure the frequency of sexual minority individuals' experiences during the year prior to administration. The HHRDS consists of 14 items with a six-point Likert-type response scale. The scale is similar in design to the Schedule of Racist Events (Landrine & Klonoff, 1996) and Schedule of Sexist Events (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995). However, unlike the latter scales, the HHRDS does not ask about appraisals of or reactions to the heterosexist events. With exploratory factor analysis, a three-factor structure with moderately correlated factors was revealed (Szymanski, 2006). These factors were labeled Harassment and Rejection, Workplace and School Discrimination, and Other

Discrimination. Reliability estimates were good, with internal consistency reliability ranging from .78 to .89 for subscales and .90 for the total score.

Stigma Consciousness Questionnaire (SCQ). The SCQ (Pinel, 1999) was used to measure the extent to which participants expect to be stereotyped and discriminated against. The Private subscale addresses expectations that an individual would be the direct target of discrimination and prejudice, while the Public subscale addresses expectations that an individual's group is a target. The 10-item measure uses a 7-point Likert-type scale that has exhibited good internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = .81$; see Appendix I). Because of a mistake in the measure's duplication for participants, the response scale was inaccurately administered. Therefore, the SCQ was excluded from analyses.

Focus group questions. A set of semi-structured questions was used to guide discussion of participants' reactions to the legal cases presented. Participants were given definitions of covering and a quote by Yoshino (2001) to introduce the idea of covering, and they were asked questions about the concept of covering and the nature and role of these phenomena in their lives (see Appendix J).

Procedure

The procedures and instruments were piloted prior to beginning Study 1. Friendship networks were utilized to recruit five volunteers to complete the study as described below. Volunteers' data in the pilot study were destroyed immediately following its review with the volunteers. The volunteers' feedback was utilized to edit the format of the questionnaire (e.g., for ease of reading), to edit the focus group questions for clarity, and to gain feedback about the difficulty of the cognitive task. Prior to beginning this study, this study and its

procedures were approved by the Eastern Michigan University Human Subjects Review Committee.

Three meeting places were used that were private and generally believed to be affirmative of sexual diversity by the primary researcher and community informants. These locations were also chosen because they were central to participants' locations and were near major cities or metropolitan areas in Michigan. Meeting locations were counterbalanced when possible so that each condition was scheduled to occur in each location in an alternating order. Therefore, when a meeting was scheduled in a location, the Assimilative Demand/Negative Outcome condition was implemented and at the next meeting in that location, the Multicultural/Positive Outcome condition was implemented. Informed consent was obtained prior to participation in Study 1. Participants were introduced to the study, including the topic of the study and its format, and they were told that participation was voluntary and may be terminated at any time without penalty. Participants were offered $10 compensation for completing Study 1. Each participant was also offered entrance into a raffle for two $100 cash prizes and an additional entry into the drawing for each participant who they referred to the study.

Participants were administered the survey instruments and stimuli in groups of between two and seven participants. Prior to the quasi-experimental conditions (i.e., Pre-test), participants rated their mood on the feeling thermometer and completed the MAACL. Participants were then presented with two legal cases to read: one in which a professional woman was fired from her position because she had a same-sex public commitment ceremony (Shahar v. State Department of Law as cited in Yoshino, 2001; 2006) and one in

which a mother's custody rights were challenged because of behavior related to her lesbian identity (Ward v. Ward as cited in Navarro, 1996).

Immediately following the presentation of the cases, participants were instructed to complete a battery of measures including the judgment task, emotional responses, demographics, HHRDS, SCQ, MAACL, CSES, choice of media, and again the feeling thermometer and MAACL. The primary researcher then administered the timed anagrams task in the group format. The primary researcher then introduced the focus group portion of the study. Following permission of all participants, confidential audio-recording was used to record the group discussions. Participants were guided through key questions. The primary researcher facilitated discussion of topics and ideas generated throughout the group. Discussion among participants was moderated by sensitive and responsive facilitation to promote a safe environment (Freeman, 2006). Following the discussions, participants were asked to rate their moods with the feeling thermometer and render judgment and agreement to the cases. Finally, as a way of gaining some initial validity, the researcher reviewed a brief summary of the focus group with each group to identify and then correct any differences in understanding.

Data Analyses

   Quantitative data analyses. For all quantitative analyses, all variables and scales were created and analyses conducted using SPSS version 16 software. The psychometric properties of all scales and their relations to one another were examined by conducting internal reliability analyses on all scales and descriptive and correlational analyses on the variables of interest. Those measures that significantly related to the dependent variables were used as covariates in the corresponding analyses. Analyses with discrete independent

variables were examined using ANOVAs or M/ANCOVAs when covariates were used. Regression was used when analyses included continuous predictor variables.

To test the hypothesis that participants in the Assimilative Demand/Negative Outcome condition were expected to report more negative emotional reactions to the legal cases and appraise these as more stressful than participants in the Multicultural/Positive Outcome condition (H1), MANCOVA was used to compare groups' mean differences on emotional reactions to and appraised stressfulness of the cases. ANOVA was also used to test the hypothesis that sexual orientation indices (H8) were expected to differ by condition. Finally, a mixed factor ANCOVA was used to examine feeling thermometer ratings by condition (between subjects factor) and over time (within subjects factor). That is, a 3 (time of measurement) X 2 (condition) mixed factor ANCOVA was used to test the hypothesis that feeling thermometer scores would decrease after the Assimilative Demand/Negative Outcome condition (H4).

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to test appraised stressfulness as a mediator in the relationship between condition and transient affect, collective self-esteem (H2), and cognitive performance (H3). Condition was used as the predictor variable and appraised stressfulness as the mediator. Tests of mediation were performed using the following guidelines set forth by Frazier, Tix, and Barron (2004): 1) to demonstrate a significant relationship between the predictor and outcome variables, 2) to demonstrate a significant relationship between the predictor and the mediator, 3) to demonstrate a significant relationship between the mediator and outcome variables, and 4) to show that the strength of the association between the predictor and outcome variables significantly decreases when the mediator is entered into the model.

Linear regression was also used to test discrimination as a predictor of transient affect (i.e., anxiety, depression, anger, and collective self-esteem) (H6). Finally, independent sample t-tests were used to test whether selection of lesbian-focused and mainstream magazine subscriptions differed by condition (H7).

Focus group data analyses. The primary research utilized an inductive approach to analyze the focus group data. A professional transcriptionist who signed a confidentiality agreement transcribed all the focus group data. Each focus group meeting constitutes a separate transcript. The primary researcher checked the transcripts against all audio files for the purposes of ensuring data quality and trustworthiness. Because of the group setting and because participants' names were immediately removed from their questionnaires, participants' quantitative and focus group data could not be linked.

Analysis of focus group data has been given less attention in the empirical literatures than has individual interviews analysis (Wilkonson, 2004). Content analysis methods were used to investigate these focus group data. The technique of line-by-line coding from grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used. This strategy is an outgrowth from content analysis. Each meaningful participant utterance was treated as a unit of data or meaning unit, and the idea embedded in each meaning unit was coded (Charmaz, 2004). Categories were gleaned from the initial coding, and all the data were then coded according to these categories. Finally, major themes were identified through the process of memo-ing and analysis (Charmaz, 2004). An independent auditor reviewed the coding and analysis procedures and process to decrease bias in the analysis.

Study 2

The purpose of the individual interview-based study was to gain more in-depth information and to investigate the replicability of the themes developed with the focus group data. Applying major themes has been cited as one way to replicate previous findings and to reveal potential biases that occurred in analyses in the previous study (Stones, 1985). This study reveals new information and also provides a way of establishing the believability or trustworthiness of the data.

Sample

Participants whose responses represented the most extreme, negative reaction to covering demands in Study 1 were invited to participate in structured interviews. The following measures were used to indicate extremity or severity: emotional response to legal case vignettes, Post-test affect scores (i.e., Anger, Anxiety, Depressive affect), and Post-test feeling thermometer ratings. Eight participants from Study 1 who gave permission to be contacted for future study opportunities were selected to participate in structured interviews. Of the eight contacted, five agreed to participate and engaged in an interview. Interview times ranged from 40 to 65 minutes.

Instrument

Participants were asked questions about experiences and reactions to covering demands in a semi-structured interview format. The following was used as a guide:

1. Thinking about the last time we met on (date), when we discussed legal cases, please describe what you remember from the case and the concept of covering. (Regardless of responses, participants were provided with a description of the cases to refresh their memory.)

2. After you left the study, what were your thoughts and feelings about what was presented and discussed?

3. Thinking about your daily life as a lesbian, please describe ways in which you feel a demand to cover? (use the following probes if not already discussed by the participant):

   a. What aspects about your identity do you feel pressured to cover?

      i. (Provide clarification if needed or requested: e.g., appearance, affiliations, symbols, relationships, behaviors)

   b. In what circumstances?

      i. (Clarification: For example, at home, work, in public)

   c. With whom?

      i. (Clarification: For example, with acquaintances, friends, lovers, partners, family of origin, co-workers, strangers, in crowds)

   d. How can you tell that it is a pressure to cover? In what form do you get the messages that you should cover?

      i. (Clarification: For example, someone says so, a look, feelings of expectations, etc.)

4. How do you think your life would be different if you did not experience the pressure to cover?

5. Are there other identities or other parts of you that are affected by the covering demand? (Clarification: For example your gender?).

6. Considering that a lot of what we have been talking about is related to law, I would like to know: if you could pass any law, what would that be?

Procedure

Participants were contacted via email to request their participation. Meeting times and places were determined by participants' locations and preferences and included three participants' homes and one participant's office, and one interview was conducted in the primary researcher's office. Informed consent was reviewed and obtained prior to participation in Study 2. Participants were asked to respond to a series of questions in individual, face-to-face interviews. A semi-structured interview procedure was used to guide interviewees through the questions listed above. Probes were used in a sensitive manner to facilitate participant responses. As a way of gaining some initial validity, the researcher reviewed a brief summary of the interview with each participant to clarify any differences in understanding.

Data Analysis

The interviews constitute a separate body of data from the focus group data from Study 1. However, similar methods of data preparation were used for both: interviews were professionally transcribed and the primary researcher checked all transcripts against the original audio files. Each interview constitutes a separate transcript or case. An inductive approach to analyzing the interview data was used by following the general coding procedures of Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR; Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997). CQR is an adaption of a collection of qualitative methods including grounded theory and phenomenology. First, the primary researcher coded all the data using themes three through six of the focus group analysis. Individual units were then abstracted into core ideas. Core ideas were then all listed together under their corresponding domains for analysis across transcripts. Through a clustering and brainstorming process, categories were developed to

group and describe the core ideas. At each of these three steps, the primary researcher and a second, independent "judge" coded portions of the data. Any disagreements between the judges were argued until a consensus was reached.

Chapter 4: Results

Quantitative Data Analyses

Data were obtained from 46 participants. Seven participants did not complete the

entire questionnaire and were excluded from the analyses that included those missing data.

Descriptions of and Relationships among Variables

Psychometric properties. Internal consistency reliability analyses were conducted for

all constructed scales. Descriptive and psychometric statistics of measures of interest are

presented in Table 2. Good internal consistency reliability was found for most measures.

However, the alpha for the MAACL subscales of Anger at Pre-test ($\alpha = .53$) and Post-test (α

$= .57$) and Depressive affect at Pre-test ($\alpha = .50$) were low.

Relations among variables of interest. Relations among the variables of interest or

those that were used to test the hypotheses were examined using correlations. As shown in

Table 3, several relationships among the variables were found. Heterosexist discrimination

reported (HHRDS Total) in the past year was related to Ward Reaction ($r = .31$, $p < .05$) and

Pre-test Anxiety ratings ($r = .30$, $p < .05$), meaning that those who tended to endorse more

frequent discrimination tended to rate their reactions to the Ward case as more negative and

their pre-test anxiety higher. The HHRDS Workplace and School subscale was significantly

correlated with Shahar Reaction ($r = .32$, $p < .05$) and Ward Reaction ($r = .41$, $p < .01$).

These correlations show that reporting more frequent discrimination at work and school was

related to rating reactions to both legal cases more negatively. The HHRDS Harassment and

Rejection subscale was significantly correlated with Pre-test Anger ($r = .33$, $p < .05$) and the

HHRDS Other scale to Pre-test Anxiety ($r = .42$, $p < .01$). These data show that reporting

more frequent harassment and rejection and other discrimination on the HHRDS related to greater scores on Pre-test Anger and Anxiety, respectively.

Table 2

Psychometric properties and descriptive statistics of scales

Scale		# items	α	M (SD)	n
Shahar Emotional Reaction		7	.82	21.96 (5.87)	46
Ward Emotional Reaction		7	.86	21.87 (6.64)	45
MAACL Anger	Pre-test	3	.53	5.33 (1.40)	46
	Post-test	4	.57	7.73 (2.00)	45
	Follow-up	3	.86	5.59 (2.06)	39
MAACL Anxiety	Pre-test	4	.67	7.80 (2.71)	46
	Post-test	4	.74	8.39 (2.67)	46
	Follow-up	4	.81	7.44 (2.69)	39
MAACL Depressive	Pre-test	4	.50	7.63 (2.25)	46
	Post-test	4	.73	9.34 (2.98)	44
	Follow-up	4	.82	8.30 (3.04)	37
HHRDS	Total	14	.87	27.68 (9.96)	44
	Harassment & Rejection	7	.81	15.09 (5.92)	45
	Workplace & School	4	.87	6.30 (3.46)	46
	Other	3	.84	6.27 (3.07)	45
Collective Self-Esteem	Total	16	.82	89.27 (10.45)	45
	Membership	4	.72	24.22 (2.96)	46
	Private	4	.71	24.22 (7.60)	46
	Public	4	.78	20.65 (3.94)	46
	Identity	4	.67	20.13 (4.82)	45

Table 3

Correlations among variables of interest

	Age	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Total HHRDS	.11	-										
2. HHRDS H&R	.09	.85***	-									
3. HHRDS W&S	-.02	.67***	.25	-								
4. HHRDS Other	.18	.81***	.53***	.25	-							
5. Pre-Therm	0	-.15	-.02	-.18	-.23	-						
6. Post-Therm	.08	.29	.05	-.32*	-.13	.76***	-					
7. Follow-Therm	-.15	.31*	-.01	-.19	-.23	.76***	.81***	-				
8. CSES Total	.09	-.08	-.04	-.05	-.10	.21	.07	.19	-			
9. CSES Member	.10	.02	-.05	.13	.01	.12	.01	.07	.80***	-		
10. CSES Private	-.06	.00	-.05	.05	.06	.09	.03	.13	.70***	.66***	-	
11. CSES Public	.02	-.28	-.14	-.24	-.34*	.21	.17	.15	.66***	.48**	.13	-
12. CSES Identity	.15	.04	.09	-.03	.03	.15	.00	.17	.72***	.34*	.02	.17

Note. HHRDS H&R = Harassment and Rejection; HHRDS W&S = Work and School; Pre = Pre-test, Post = Post-test, and Follow = Follow-up.
 p < .05. **p* < .01. ***p* < .001.

Table 3 *continued*

	Age	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
13. Anagrams	-.21	-.05	-.10	.12	.08	-.06	-.06	-.04	-.05	-.08	-.13	-.02
14. Shahar Reaction	-.15	.29	.15	.32*	.20	-.32*	-.39**	-.42**	-.16	-.12	.08	-.46**
15. Ward Reaction	.10	.31*	.16	.41**	.22	-.23	-.36*	-.40*	-.13	-.14	.01	-.32*
16. Pre-Anger	.06	.23	.33*	-.07	.18	-.15	.01	.00	-.03	-.10	-.15	-.07
17. Pre-Anxiety	.06	.30*	.17	.18	.42**	-.35*	-.09	-.25	-.20	.03	.10	-.19
18. Pre-Depress	.01	.04	-.14	.24	.15	-.49**	-.32*	-.27	-.09	-.10	-.04	-.08
19. Post-Anger	-.06	.20	.25	.12	.00	-.11	-.18	-.11	-.15	-.13	-.23	-.09
20. Post-Anxiety	-.04	.21	.07	.26	.25	-.22	-.44**	-.28	-.10	-.13	-.07	-.40**
21. Post-Depress	.15	.25	.07	.36*	.26	-.30*	-.55**	-.50**	-.17	-.12	-.25	-.28
22. Follow-Anger	.09	.04	.03	.14	-.14	.02	-.28	-.49**	-.01	.13	-.08	.08
23. Follow-Anxiety	-.04	.21	-.02	.41**	.18	-.28	-.54***	-.63***	-.17	-.04	-.20	-.07
24. Follow-Depress	.03	.18	-.08	.44**	.16	-.24	-.43**	-.60***	-.21	-.10	-.19	-.10

Note. Pre = Pre-test, Post = Post-test, and Follow = Follow-up.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Table 3 *continued*

	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
13. Anagrams	.03	-										
14. Shahar Reaction	.06	-.02	-									
15. Ward Reaction	.06	.13	.89***	-								
16. Pre-Anger	-.14	-.28	-.14	-.08	-							
17. Pre-Anxiety	-.33*	-.04	.20	.12	.16	-						
18. PreDepress	-.03	-.05	.25	.24	.29	.32*	-					
19. Post-Anger	-.04	-.11	.22	.24	.47**	.01	.36*	-				
20. PostAnxiety	.23	.02	.41**	.42**	.20	.16	.41**	.32*	-			
21. Post-Depress	.09	-.13	.47**	.45**	.13	.01	.39**	.41**	.58***	-		
22. Follow-Anger	-.12	-.05	.18	.18	.13	.08	.01	.49**	.14	.38**	-	
23. Follow-Anxiety	-.17	.13	.38*	.48**	.10	.27	.42**	.33*	.54***	.67***	.61***	-
24. Follow-Depress	-.21	.01	.44**	.47**	.14	.19	.53**	.44**	.37*	.65***	.65***	.80***

Note. Pre = Pre-test, Post = Post-test, and Follow = Follow-up
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Correlations were also used to examine the relationships between feeling thermometer ratings and other variables of interest. Pre-test feeling thermometer ratings were negatively correlated with Shahar Reaction ($r = -.32$, $p < .05$) and Post-test Depressive affect ($r = -.30$, $p < .05$). These correlations demonstrate that higher feeling thermometer ratings were related to lower Depressive affect scores and lower negative emotional reaction scores for the Shahar case. Therefore, for the analyses on Shahar Reaction and Post-test Depressive affect, the variance in Pre-test thermometer ratings was statistically controlled.

Tests for effects of participant characteristics on variables of interest. To determine whether the variables of interest differed by participants' reported characteristics, separate ANOVAs were conducted to test for effects of education, partner status, religiosity, and dis/ability on the variables included in the correlational analyses above. No significant main effects were found for religiosity. Because of the low frequency of racial identifications other than White/European-American in the sample, differences by race could not be examined.

Participants reported their current level of education according to their highest earned degree (e.g., Bachelor's degree) or level of education they had begun (e.g., some college). ANOVAs were conducted to test for effects of education. There was a significant main effect for education on Post-test feeling thermometer ratings, $F(4, 45) = 2.93$, $p < .05$. Post hoc tests show that those who completed some college ($M = 56.43$, $SD = 19.06$) and those with a Bachelor's degree ($M = 59.23$, $SD = 13.82$) rated their Post-test feeling thermometers higher than those who reported having an advanced graduate degree ($M = 30.00$, $SD = 7.07$). There was also a main effect for education on Post-test Depressive affect scores, $F(4, 45) = 4.04$, $p < .01$, such that those with an advanced graduate degree ($M = 13.20$, $SD = 2.77$) reported greater Depressive affect at Post-test than those with some college ($M = 7.86$, $SD = 2.48$), a

Bachelor's degree ($M = 8.69$, $SD = 2.72$), or a Master's degree ($M = 9.00$, $SD = 3.07$).

Finally, there was also a significant main effect for education on the CSES Private subscale,

$F(4, 45) = 3.94$, $p < .01$. Post hoc tests show that those with a Master's degree ($M = 6.55$, SD

$= .42$) had greater Private CSES scores than those with an advanced graduate degree ($M =$

5.45, $SD = .87$).

ANOVA was also used to analyze the data to determine whether variables of interest

differed by participants' dis/ability status. There was a main effect for dis/ability on HHRDS

Harassment and Rejection, $F(1, 45) = 5.29$, $p < .05$, such that those who did not identify a

disability reported lower frequencies on the HHRDS subscale Harassment and Rejection (M

$= 1.45$, $SD = .60$) than those who reported having a disability ($M = 2.19$, $SD = 1.54$).

Partner status was dichotomized into two categories: those who reported that they

lived with or were married to their partner and those who reported that they were single or

living apart from their partner. ANOVA was used to examine the effects of partner status on

the variables of interest. There was a main effect for partner status on CSES Total, $F(1, 45) =$

6.55, $p < .05$, such that those living with their partner had higher collective self-esteem scores

($M = 6.73$, $SD = .65$) than those not living with a partner ($M = 5.73$, $SD = .43$).

Tests for incidental differences between conditions. Participants were not randomly

assigned to the quasi-experimental conditions. The purpose of the following analyses is to

check for possible differences in participant characteristics and baseline data by condition.

Chi-square tests were used to examine the proportion of participant characteristics

(i.e., sexual identity, sexual attraction, sexual behavior, race, education, ability, religiosity,

partner status) by condition. These characteristics were found to be proportionately

distributed between the Assimilative Demand/Negative Outcome and Multicultural/Positive

Outcome conditions. An independent samples t–test was conducted to test for differences in age between conditions. Those in the Assimilative Demand/Negative Outcome condition (M = 44.7, SD = 12.38) were significantly older than those in the Multicultural/Positive Outcome condition (M = 37.5, SD = 6.17), $t(44)$ = -2.39, $p < .05$.

The Pre-test measures (i.e., the feeling thermometer ratings and the MAACL subscale scores) were those administered prior to the legal cases and provided a baseline for mood and transient affect, respectively. ANOVAs were conducted to test for differences of Pre-test measures by condition. Pre-test MAACL subscale scores and Pre-test feeling thermometer ratings did not significantly differ by condition.

Hypothesized Affective and Cognitive Consequences of Assimilative Demands

Hypothesis 1: Main effects for condition on emotional reactions are expected. Participants rated their emotional reactions to the cases (i.e., Shahar Reaction and Ward Reaction), and MANCOVA was used to test whether reactions to legal decisions differed by condition. The following variables were entered as covariates because they were found to have significant relationships with at least one of the dependent variables: HHRDS Total, HHRDS Workplace and School subscales, and Pre-test feeling thermometer ratings. Age was also entered as a covariate because age differed by condition.

Shahar Reaction, Ward Reaction, Shahar Stress, and Ward Stress were entered as dependent variables. Overall, the model was significant, $F(4, 37)$ = 14.72, $p < .001$, η_p^2 = .61. The partial eta squared statistic (η_p^2) shows that the model accounted for 61% of the variance in the dependent variables. There was a significant main effect for condition, $F(4, 37)$ = 14.72, $p < .001$. Main effects for condition were found for all dependent variables: Shahar Reaction, $F(1, 46)$ = 44.33, $p < .001$, Ward Reaction, $F(1, 46)$ = 47.54, $p < .001$, Shahar

Stress, $F(1, 46) = 5.06$, $p < .05$, and Ward Stress, $F(1, 46) = 10.41$, $p < .01$. Specifically, scores on Shahar Reaction were greater for those in the Assimilative Demand/Negative Outcome condition ($M = 25.35$, $SD = 4.52$) than for those in the Multicultural/Positive Outcome condition ($M = 17.55$, $SD = 4.30$). A similar pattern was found for the effect of condition on Ward Reaction, such that those in the Assimilative Demand/Negative Outcome condition rated Ward Reaction ($M = 25.77$, $SD = 5.2$) greater than those in the Multicultural/Positive Outcome condition ($M = 16.75$, $SD = 4.25$). Similarly, those in the Assimilative Demand/Negative Outcome condition rated appraised stressfulness of Shahar ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 1.25$) and Ward ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 1.34$) higher than those in the Multicultural/Positive Outcome condition (Shahar: $M = 2.80$, $SD = 1.44$; Ward: $M = 2.70$, $SD = 1.69$).

It is interesting to note that evaluations and judgments of the cases did not differ by condition. In regard to the legal cases, participants rated whether and how much they agreed with the court decisions, the importance of the cases, the relevance of the cases to one's self, and how much each case could affect future legal cases. Overwhelmingly, participants reported that they would find in favor of Shahar (100%) and Mary Ward (prior to the focus group = 98%; following the focus group = 97%). ANOVA tests were conducted to determine whether ratings of importance, relevance, and expected impact of the cases differed by condition. There were no significant differences found for these variables by condition (see Table 4 for descriptive statistics of these variables).

Table 4

Descriptive statistics for judgment tasks about the legal cases

		Percentage	*n*	Total *n*
For whom would you find in favor				
Post-test	In favor of Shahar	100.00%	46	46
	In favor of Ward	97.8%	45	46
Follow-up	In favor of Shahar	100.00%	39	39
	In favor of Ward	97.4%	38	39
Agreement with court decision		*M*	*SD*	
Post-test	In favor of Shahar	6.67	1.10	46
	In favor of Ward	6.52	1.26	46
Follow-up	In favor of Shahar	6.23	1.56	39
	In favor of Ward	6.18	1.55	39

		Condition		
		Multicultural	Assimilative Demand	Total
Appraisals of court decisions		*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
How relevant	Shahar	5.75 (1.29)	5.81 (1.55)	5.78 (1.43)
	Ward	4.65 (2.11)	5.08 (2.04)	4.89 (2.06)
How important	Shahar	6.45 (.60)	6.77 (.51)	6.63 (.57)
	Ward	6.45 (.69)	6.77 (.43)	5.63 (.57)
How affect future	Shahar	5.65 (1.53)	6.15 (.83)	5.93 (1.20)
cases	Ward	5.75 (1.33)	6.23 (.86)	6.02 (1.11)

These analyses show that emotional reactions to the cases were rated as more negative and that the cases were rated as more stressful in the Assimilative Demand/Negative Outcome condition than in the Multicultural/Positive Outcome condition. By contrast, there were no differences by condition in ratings of the cases' relevance, importance, or perceived impact.

Hypothesis 2: Condition will be a predictor of cognitive and affect measures. Linear stepwise regression was used to test condition as a predictor of transient affect (MAACL subscales) and collective self-esteem (CSES). Because partner status, education, and Pre-test feeling thermometer ratings were related to MAACL subscales, these were entered in the first step to control for their effects. Condition was entered in the second step. Post-test measures of Depressive, Anger, and Anxiety MAACL subscales as well as CSES were entered as outcome variables (see Table 5 for means, standard deviations, and correlations among these variables). After accounting for variance of the controlled variables, condition was a non-significant predictor (see Table 6 for a summary of these analyses). Cognitive performance, or the number of solutions to anagrams, was also examined by condition. Participants provided a mean of 30.95 ($SD = 12.05$) correct responses. Condition was also a non-significant predictor for the number of solutions to anagrams, $R^2 = .10$, $\beta = -.24$, *ns*, providing no evidence that the number of solutions to anagrams varied by condition.

Hypothesis 3: Appraised stressfulness is expected to mediate the relationship between condition and cognitive and emotional measures. Frazier, Tix, and Barron's (2004) procedures were used to test for mediation. Three requirements must be met before testing for mediation. The first step in testing for mediation is to establish a relationship between the

predictor and the outcome. Because no relationships between MAACL, CSES, and condition were found, mediation was not tested.

Table 5

Means, standard deviations, and correlations among variables in regression analysis for condition predicting affect and self-esteem (n = 44)

Outcome variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Depression	9.15	3.05	-							
2. Anger	7.70	2.00	.41**	-						
3. Anxiety	8.39	2.67	.58***	.32*	-					
4. Collective Self-Esteem	5.58	.65	-.17	-.15	-.09	-				
Predictor variable										
5.Partner status	1.70	.46	.16	-.02	.17	.36**	-			
6. Education	3.98	1.13	.30*	.19	.36**	.05	.45**	-		
7. Pre-test Therm	59.78	17.70	-.30*	-.11	-.22	.21	-.26*	-.11	-	
8. Age	41.59	10.69	.15	-.06	-.04	.09	-.06	.08	.00	-
9 Condition	-	-	.28*	.13	.25*	.09	-.06	.14	.01	.34*

p < .05. **p* < .01. ****p* < .001.

Table 6

Hierarchical regression analysis for condition predicting affect and self-esteem (n=46)

Outcome variable	Step	Predictors	$\underline{B}$	$\underline{SEB}$	B	R^2	ΔR^2
Anxiety	Step 1	Partner Status	-.25	.05	-.04	.17	.17
		Education	.85*	.37	.36		
		Pre-test Therm	-.03	.02	-.20		
		Age	-.02	.04	-.08		
	Step 2	Condition	1.37	.80	.26	.23	.06
Depression	Step 1	Partner Status	-.26	1.09	-.04	.18	.18
		Education	.77	.43	.28		
		Pre-test Therm	-.05	.03	-.28		
		Age	.04	.04	.13		
	Step 2	Condition	1.40	.91	.23	.23	.06
Anger	Step 1	Partner Status	-.73	.75	-.17	.07	.07
		Education	.45	.30	.25		
		Pre-test Therm	-.01	.02	-.12		
		Age	-.02	.03	-.09		
	Step 2	Condition	.37	.62	.09	.09	.02
Collective Self-Esteem	Step 1	Partner Status	.72**	.22	.51	.26*	.26
		Education	-.08	.08	-.15		
		Pre-test Therm	.01*	.01	.32		
		Age	.01	.01	.13		
	Step 2	Condition	.15	.19	.12	.27	.01

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Because Shahar and Ward Reactions were found to have significant relationships with condition (see test of Hypothesis 2 above), and because they represent an alternative measure of emotion, exploratory analyses were conducted to test for appraised stressfulness as a mediator between these and condition. The first step in testing for mediation is to establish a relationship between the predictor and outcome, and the Shahar and Ward Reactions demonstrated significant relationships to condition. The second step is to establish a relationship between the predictor and mediator. Regression analysis shows a significant positive relationship between condition and Shahar Stress ($R^2 = .11$, $\beta = .33$, $p < .05$) as well as between condition and Ward Stress ($R^2 = .19$, $\beta = .43$, $p < .01$). The third step is to test for a relationship between the mediator and outcomes. Because only Ward Stress significantly predicted Ward reaction ($R^2 = .46$, $\beta = .85$, $p < .001$), Ward Reaction was tested as a mediator for the relationships between condition and Ward Reaction.

The final step in testing for mediation is to examine whether the strength of the association between the predictor and outcome variables significantly decreases when the mediator is entered into the model. Table 7 shows the hierarchical regression summary predicting Shahar and Ward Reactions. A significant change in F when Ward Stress was entered demonstrates its predictive value even when condition is controlled. The strength of the association between condition and Ward Reaction, however, remained significant when Ward Stress was entered in the last step. Condition, $\beta = .56$, $p < .001$, continues to predict a significant amount of variance even when Ward Stress is controlled, $\beta = .39$, $p < .01$. These results suggest that Ward Stress partially mediated the relationship between condition and Ward Reaction.

Table 7

Hierarchical regression analysis testing Ward Stress as a mediator of the relationship

between Ward Reaction and condition (n = 46)

Outcome variable		Predictor variable	B	SEB	Beta	R^2	ΔR^2
Ward reaction	Step 1	Age	-.07	.06	-.11	.01	.01
	Step 2	Condition	9.68***	1.51	.74	.49***	.48
	Step 3	Condition	7.30***	1.49	.56	.62***	.12
		Ward Stress	1.55**	.43	.39		

*** p < .01. *** p < .001.*

     Hypothesis 4: An interaction is expected for feeling thermometer ratings by condition and time of measurement. A 2 (condition) X 3 (time of measurement) mixed factor ANCOVA was conducted to test for changes in feeling thermometer ratings by condition and time of measurement. Feeling thermometer ratings were used as a three level within subjects variable (i.e., Pre-test, Post-test, and Follow-up to focus group), and condition was used as a two level (i.e., Assimilative Demand/Negative Outcome and Multicultural/Positive Outcome conditions) between subjects variable. Because education significantly related to feeling thermometer ratings and age differed by condition, these were entered as covariates. Table 8 provides the means and standard deviations of feeling thermometer ratings by condition. The main effect for condition was non-significant, $F(1,34) = 0.17$, *ns*. The main effect for time of measurement was significant, $F(2,33) = 11.25$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .41$. With Bonferroni

adjustments, post hoc tests show that Post-test (*M*=53.42) feeling thermometer ratings were lower than at Pre-test (*M*=59.74), $p < .01$, and at Follow-up (*M*=61.71), $p < .001$. The interaction between time of measurement and condition was non-significant.

Table 8

Means, standard deviations, and correlations for ANCOVA analysis of feeling thermometer ratings (n = 38)

	Feeling Thermometer ratings		
	Pre-test	Post-test	Follow-up
Condition	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
Assimilative Demand	59.47 (18.10)	52.63 (21.30)	59.21 (20.83)
Multicultural	60.00 (17.64)	54.21 (16.10)	64.21 (15.02)
Total	59.74 (17.63)	53.42 (18.64)	61.71 (18.09)

To explore the effects of time of measurement and condition on transient affect, ANCOVAs were also conducted on MAACL subscale scores. MAACL subscales of Depressive affect, Anger, and Anxiety were measured at Pre-test, Post-test, and Follow-up. Anxiety demonstrated non-significant effects. Anger demonstrated a within-subjects main effect, $F(2,36) = 13.61$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .43$. Post hoc tests with Bonferroni adjustment show that scores on Anger at Post-test (*M*=7.54, *SD*=.32) were significantly greater than at Pre-test (*M*=6.07, *SD*=.21), $p < .001$ and Follow-up (*M*=6.59, *SD*=.33), $p < .05$. The effect for condition and the interaction were non-significant.

An ANCOVA was used to examine the effects of condition and time of measurement on Depressive affect. Because education was significantly related to Depressive affect, education was used as an additional covariate in the analysis of Depressive affect. Again, the effect for condition was non-significant. There was a main effect for time of measurement on Depressive affect, $F(2,35) = 5.56$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .24$. Post hoc tests with Bonferroni adjustment show that Depressive affect at Post-test (M=9.20, SD=.43) was significantly greater than at Pre-test (M=7.62, SD=.34), $p < .01$ and Follow-up (M=8.16, SD=.49), $p < .05$. The overall interaction was non-significant, $F(2,35) = .58$, *ns*.

Hypothesized Relations of Assimilative Demands to Discrimination

The hypothesis regarding stigma consciousness was not tested due to an error in test administration that invalidated the data.

Linear regression was used to test HHRDS as a predictor of MAACL subscales. HHRDS scales were entered as predictor variables and MAACL subscales were entered as predictor variables in three regression analyses for Post-test Anger, Anxiety, and Depressive affect. No HHRDS scales were significant predictors of the MAACL subscales.

Exploratory Hypotheses about Covering Identity and Affiliation

Choice of magazines (i.e., lesbian- and mainstream-focused) were examined by condition using independent samples t-tests (n =45). The number of mainstream magazines chosen did not differ for those in the Assimilative Demand/Negative Outcome (M=1.12, SD=.97) compared to the Multicultural/Positive Outcome condition (M=1.15, SD=.88), t(43) = .11, *ns*. The number of lesbian-focused magazines chosen also did not significantly differ for those in the Assimilative Demand/Negative Outcome (M=1.88, SD=.97) and Multicultural/Positive Outcome conditions (M=1.85, SD=.88), t(43) = .11, *ns*. Participants

were also provided with the option of having subscriptions delivered in confidential

envelopes. One participant (2.2%) selected to have mainstream magazines delivered with

confidential envelopes and seven participants (15.6%) selected to have confidential

envelopes for lesbian-focused magazines. Six of these seven participants were in the

Assimilative Demand/Negative Outcome condition.

Level of identification, attraction, and sexual activity were also explored in relation to

condition. ANOVA was used to test for mean differences. There was no effect for condition

on identity, $F(1,45) = 2.28$, *ns,* sexual behavior, $F(1,45) = .70$, *ns,* or attraction, $F(1,45) =$

.03, *ns,* ratings.

<center>*Summary of Quantitative Results*</center>

The purpose of the quasi-experimental portion of this study was to examine the

emotional, cognitive, and behavioral impacts of legal decisions that represent the demand to

cover lesbian identity on lesbian-identified women. A significant effect for condition on

emotional reactions to the cases was found, such that participants demonstrated greater

negative emotional reactions to the cases and appraised them as more stressful in the

Assimilative Demand/Negative Outcome condition as compared to the Multicultural/Positive

Outcome condition. Exploratory analyses showed that appraised stressfulness partially

mediated the relationship between condition and reactions to Ward v. Ward. Transient,

negative affect, however, did not significantly differ by condition, nor did performance differ

on the anagrams. Further, collective self-esteem, ratings of participants' own sexual

orientations, and their selection of media did not differ by condition. Although MAACL

affect subscales did not differ reliably by condition, there were significant effects for time of

measurement across two measures of affect—angry and depressive—and for the feeling thermometer ratings.

These findings provide support for some, but not all, of the hypotheses. These findings provide initial support for conceptualizing the covering demand as it is represented in the legal decisions as a minority stressor (Meyer, 2003) in three ways. First, the between condition effect for negative emotional reactions to and appraised stressfulness of the cases indicates that the cases in the Assimilative Demand/Negative Outcome condition were more upsetting and more subjectively stressful than those in the Multicultural/Positive Outcome condition. Second, even though the minority stress literature (e.g., Meyer, 2003; Monat & Lazarus, 1991) suggests that appraised stressfulness accounts for relationships between stressors and outcomes, there was limited evidence of this pattern in this study's data; the appraised stressfulness of the Ward case partially mediated the relationship between condition and negative emotional reactions to that case. Finally, regardless of condition, participants reported more depressive and angry affect following the presentation of the cases. However, there were no differences found for depressive, angry, or anxious affect or collective self-esteem between conditions and no evidence of covering behavior. These findings may indicate that the cases, and the covering demand, were initially stressful but did not have an impact on general psychological health indicators (i.e., affect, cognitive performance, and collective self-esteem).

Focus Group Findings

In ten focus groups, 46 participants discussed the legal cases of Robin Shahar and Mary Ward, Yoshino's debate of whether to cover, and covering in their lives. Overall, the

focus group participants appeared to use the focus groups as a way of interrogating the covering demand. One participant framed the meaning of this discussion in this way:

> And so when we're talking about legal issues and things – I think most of you here would probably agree, like that is the reality. But should it be? It becomes a matter of integrity or – I don't know what it becomes – it's just a matter of self-respect or I don't know what it is. But it's an interesting question – the covering idea – when it comes to justice versus just being at the grocery store.

Group Processes

Most group interactions seemed positive. There was laughter in every group, and participants seemed to keep the mood light by making jokes, particularly about heterosexist ideas. The most common forms of group interaction were validation, empathy, and support among group members. On occasion, participants challenged each other by asking other group participants probative questions about why they thought or behaved in certain ways.

When participants expressed anger, irritation, and frustration, it was not uncommon for them to raise their voices. This anger was never observed as directed at other group participants, but was a shared reaction among participants in response to the content they discussed. In two groups, the moderator believed that the participants were angry at her because, rather than interacting with one another, some participants directed their comments toward her, stating, for example, that the use of the term "flaunting" offended them:

Participant 1: Yeah, I think that's not a very nice word to say.

Moderator: Um-hum.

Participant 2: Telling people they're flaunting–what the H does that mean? ...

Participant 1: So what I'm saying is that flaunting is not the word to be used.

With continued interaction and affirmation from other group members, the anger appeared to decrease or to be more clearly directed at the cases or ideas discussed. The moderator also clarified the question posed and its relation to the legal cases.

Major Themes and Categories

Presented below are the categories and corresponding major themes gleaned from the focus group data. Six themes were found to represent the data (see Table 9 for a list of themes and categories with the number of groups represented in each category). When fewer than four groups were represented in an aspect of a category, this is noted in the summary because the representativeness of those findings is less than in findings represented by a greater number of cases. This is a measure taken to facilitate the representativeness of the data (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997) while also documenting contrasting perspectives and experiences.

Theme 1: Emotional Reactions to the Cases Depended on Appraisal of the Cases

The cases, both when presented in the Assimilative Demand/Negative Outcome condition and in the Multicultural/Positive Outcome condition, evoked an array of emotion that appeared to be influenced by several types of appraisal. When the cases were appraised as discriminatory, relevant to the self, and representative of the current social context, more intense emotions of anger were common. Though many participants expressed negative emotion, they were not surprised by the perceived heterosexism.

Table 9

Focus group major themes and categories with number of groups represented in each category

Theme 1: Emotional Reactions to the Cases Depended on Appraisal of the Cases

Category A: Negative emotional reactions to the cases (9)

Category B: Appraised cases as biased or heterosexist (9)

Category C: Dealing with complexity (7)

Category D: Contextualizing the cases (7)

Theme 2: Defining and Affirming Authenticity

Category A: "Flaunt" is misused and an offensive attack on lesbians (10)

Category B: Deconstruction of "acting" (10)

Category C: Affirming authenticity (8)

Theme 3: Identifying Covering Demands: What and How Covering Demands

Category A: Defining features of covering demands (9)

Category B: Covering demands are communicated in subtle and explicit ways (10)

Category C: Analyzing the environment to decide the level of disclosure (10)

Category D: Cues signal climates of stigma and acceptance (10)

Theme 4: Managing Tensions of Threat and Discomfort

Category A: Managing tensions (7)

Category B: Assimilative demands impact sense of safety and comfort (10)

Category C: Assimilative demands can exact an emotional cost (10)

Theme 5: Navigating "choice" and decisions when assimilation is demanded

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Category A: It's not a fair choice to cover (4)

Category B: Dis-covering as educating (5)

Category C: Walking the line between passing and out (5)

Category D: Sometimes covering works (4)

Theme 6: Strategies for Managing and Resisting Assimilative Demands

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Category A: From "family" to community building (9)

Category B: Strong positive self-concept and self-acceptance (7)

Category C: Agency, resources, and empowerment develop over time (6)

Note. Numbers in parentheses represent the number of focus groups in which the category is represented.

Category A: Negative emotional reactions to the cases. The legal cases evoked a variety of negative emotions: fear, anger, sadness, shock, and disappointment. Even though every group expressed negative emotional reactions to the cases, the cases were not considered surprising. One participant explained, "It's an interesting distinction between not being surprised and still being enraged. Just because we're not surprised about something doesn't mean that it doesn't evoke a strong emotion as a result." Several participants in two of the Multicultural/Positive Outcome condition groups specified that if the women were to have lost their cases, their negative reactions would have been more intense. Moreover, participants in one group referenced other, more violent forms of perceived injustice that would have evoked more intense reactions (e.g., the murder of Matthew Shepherd). The legal

cases were placed on a kind of continuum on which loss of rights was located between threatened loss of rights and violent victimization.

Category B: Appraised cases as biased or heterosexist. Negative emotional reactions were related to the perception of the legal decisions as biased or heterosexist. Although the presentation of the cases was prefaced with a claim that these cases focused on the women's behavior rather than their identity, discrimination and other forms of bias were perceived. "I mean even though their decisions were based on other factors, is what they said, it really boils down to them being lesbians." Several participants described their reactions in one word or phase, e.g., "gross injustice," "unfair," or "ignorance." Inherent in Shahar's firing, for example, participants identified the State Department of Law's actions as based on the "heterosexual assumption," or the assumption that everyone is heterosexual unless otherwise labeled. "Well, because he [Shahar's boss] was very happy that she was going to get married, and then when he discovered it was with a woman, it kind of pisses you off basically."

The claims made against the women in the cases, the judges' decisions (in the Assimilative Demand/Negative Outcome condition), and the perceived abuse of power were features related to negative reactions. For example, one participant explained:

> I just find that really upsetting. It really bothers me that the wealthy white men and that will go out of their way to [exclude] us legally and take things away from us. And I just find that very stupid and upsetting.

The injustices and relation of these cases to an oppressive system were upsetting as well, "And who makes these legal people god? Who gives them the right to tell us who we can be with and be happy with, you know?"

Participants in six groups identified multiple components of sexual stigma in the legal cases. Structural heterosexism was perceived as an influence. In the Multicultural/Positive

Outcome condition, one exchange among participants illustrates how the decision to maintain

Mary Ward's custody is situated in heterosexism:

Participant 1: There's a lot of prejudice still out there.

Participant 2: There's still ignorance.

Participant 3: Yeah, I definitely feel like we're still second-class citizens, that's for sure. This [legal victory] is a rarity.

Several stereotypes were also invoked in the discussion of these cases including pedophilia

being associated with similar- or same-sex sexuality and lesbianism as perverse and

abnormal. Participants attributed these accusations to the bias and prejudice of the people

using these stereotypes and making the accusations.

The accusations against Shahar and Mary Ward were countered by participants'

affirmations that women in the legal cases acted appropriately, like any other person might.

The participants challenged the assumption that the behavior in question was out of the

ordinary by identifying the bias in the decisions. The implication was that Shahar and Ward

acted like any other (heterosexual) person would act. The only difference between the

women in these cases and anyone else was their sexual orientation and the prejudice against

lesbians.

Category C: Dealing with complexity. In one Multicultural/Positive Outcome

condition group, positive reactions were expressed and the result of the decision was the

reason given for positive feelings, "Because once I saw it [Mary Ward won], I said, 'Yay,' it

made me happy. That influenced my emotional reaction a little bit." Even for participants in

the Multicultural/Positive Outcome condition, there was ambivalence about these cases, **"I**

mean I was happy that she won, but it was like why did she have to go through this in the

first place?"

Emotional reactions were sometimes neutral or suspended because the cases appeared to them to be ambiguous or incomplete. More commonly than in Shahar's case, participants believed the information about Mary Ward's case was incomplete:

> But the other part of the statement they alluded to somewhere in there was something about the sexual activities in the home. And so we don't know what that means – I mean does that mean that Mary, the caretaking parent, was inappropriate sexually around her child? Or is that just some bias that others had?

It was unclear to participants in four groups whether the allegations and decisions were based on appropriate evidence, whether there was bias, or if the focus was on what was best for the child. The ambiguity of the cases was discussed in both Multicultural/Positive Outcome and Assimilative Demand/Negative Outcome conditions.

Category D: Contextualizing the cases. In two of the Multicultural/Positive Outcome condition groups, some participants did not perceive the cases as relevant to them. For example, they did not have children, believed they had the power to choose a fair workplace, or did not think such legal cases would be brought to court. These participants tended to distinguish themselves from other participants who expressed more intense and negative reactions by saying that they were not angry or did not have an emotional reaction to the case.

Although these participants viewed the cases as irrelevant, others emphasized societal progress as the reason for having less intense emotional reactions. These participants emphasized the gain of some rights for sexual minority individuals in several states in the U.S.A. and decreasing prejudice or increasing tolerance over time:

> I think the way I felt is like – some time ago, I would have been a lot more angry about this case. But now I'm kind of like – this type of discrimination does exist, but it's getting better. After reading this, I was kind of like I know that it's getting better. So I didn't have the overbearing reaction that I thought I would have [had]... after I read the story.

Another participant placed the cases in the past, distinguishing them from the more progressive present:

> Yeah, because I mean as I was reading it, maybe because – maybe it happened – you know, if it was more like now, I guess if it happened now, I would be more angry because this was a past thing that happened in the past, which is one of those things that you're like here's another one that unfortunately is being treated unfairly.

Appraising the cases as irrelevant to them or as irrelevant in general seemed to relate to relatively less emotional reaction, and framing them as historical rather than contemporary reduced the emotional impact.

In contrast, and in the majority of the groups, participants asserted that the cases are relevant to current times and to themselves. Participants expressed the belief that losing cases unjustly because of phenomena related to lesbianism is common, real, and a possibility for the future, "My basic response is that I wasn't surprised by either of the cases. It just felt like, of course, that's how the justice system is going to work." In three groups, the cases represented a personal possibility or parallel experience. The possibility of losing custody, being fired, or being discriminated against in court was a potential or an actual perceived threat. One woman explained her relation to the case of Mary Ward:

> That is always a possible reality for me. My ex-husband was in jail for a period of time. And when he came out, that was the first weapon he used against me – he wanted full custody. We never went to court, but he always kind of had that little jab.

Another woman identified with having struggles because of unfairness in the legal system:

> I have battles in the justice system right now personally. And even then, I'm still the eternal optimist – this is going to turn out good. And it didn't, you know, so I was kind of surprised, but not really, you know. I think in a way, what was the point in being optimistic. And I see firsthand the battles of the justice system, and still was optimistic – and so just like damn it, here I go again.

The way in which participants positioned themselves in relation to the cases as well as how they positioned the cases in time and place influenced their reactions. That is, the further removed their interpretation took them, the less extreme their emotional reactions were to the cases.

Theme 2: Defining and Affirming Authenticity

When forms of commonplace and authentic expression by other lesbians were construed as "flaunting," participants were offended, and they rejected such constructions. Participants redefined flaunting from how it was portrayed in the legal cases and asserted that it is applicable to anyone, regardless of sexual orientation. Rather than engage in mainstream constructs of what it means to act lesbian or heterosexual, individual authenticity was considered to be beyond these heterocentric boundaries.

Category A: "Flaunt" is misused and an offensive attack on lesbians. The word "flaunting" was used in the accusation made against Shahar and also was used in the introduction to the idea and debate of covering in each group. Yoshino's proposal: "Should we cover our sexual orientation? Should we be discreet or flaunt it?" evoked reactions in all the focus groups. The word "flaunt" angered and offended the participants, who described it as an unfair accusation made against lesbians that would not be made against heterosexual women: "That makes me very angry, you know, if she was not a lesbian but a straight woman, no one would ever even think about that as – talking about getting married as flaunting anything." The word was redefined by participants, who described "flaunting" as public sexual behavior. Flaunting sexuality, including "sex," "making out," and being "all over each other," was deemed inappropriate for someone of any sexual orientation, but

having a romantic partner be known, by, for example, displaying a picture on a work desk or hand-holding and other behaviors, was rejected as flaunting and affirmed as appropriate.

Category B: Deconstruction of "acting." Yoshino's debate about whether lesbians should cover may be posed as a double bind because the corresponding choices perceived by participants were either a life in hiding or being associated with lewd conduct. The participants actively deconstructed the debate, and the question of "what is acting straight?" was frequently juxtaposed with questions of what it means to act Italian, black, or white, for example. "Acting straight" and "acting gay" were determined to be flawed understandings of authentic individual behavior. Participants sometimes guessed that the question was a reference to appearance and gender expression in regards to looking feminine (e.g., sitting "like a lady"), masculine, or butch. Implied in this deconstruction is the relation of these characteristics to heterosexist assumptions about lesbians being masculine. Alternatively, not fulfilling these stereotypes, i.e., not "acting lesbian," was also determined to be an individual preference that is unrelated to feeling shame for being a lesbian.

The question of whether lesbians should cover also suggested to participants that everyone should "all be this amalgamated clump," as one participant described it. It was lesbians, not heterosexuals, who would have to conform, a notion that one participant succinctly critiqued in this way, "And I look at that like in a group that is in a minority. Should black people act white? I don't think so." That there is one way, or a set of ways, to act like a lesbian or heterosexual woman was not only thought to be false, but was also perceived as a means of promoting unwanted assimilation.

Category C: Affirming authenticity. The responses to the question of whether lesbians should cover were an affirmation of authenticity in eight of the ten groups. Rather than

engage in the dichotomy of gay or straight, some participants in five groups simply stated, 'I act like me,' or a similar assertion:

> Right, like my whole thing – I couldn't figure out how to respond to it because it's like I just act like myself. You know I acted this way before I came out, before I knew I was gay, so how is that acting gay or straight? I'm just acting like me.

Participants also identified this idea of "acting" in their experiences with others, "So when someone says, 'You're acting so gay...' I mean I'm not acting – I *am* gay – there's no difference there – there's no act." The assertion that women's behavior could not be categorized as "gay" or "straight" appeared to buttress the assertion that everyone should be able to be authentic. Rather than covering, the ability to express one's self freely was valued.

Theme 3: Identifying Covering Demands: What and How Covering Demand[2]

Demands to cover multiple aspects of lesbian identity can be present in multiple settings. Covering demands are sometimes made explicit but, at other times, they may be subtle and detectable only through the felt climate of a setting. Awareness, questioning, and predicting the climate and potential reactions of others to disclosure comprise a cognitive, analytic process.

Category A: Defining features of covering demands. Covering demands[3] were identified in an array of settings. Family gatherings, school, work, social events, church, public spaces, and legal proceedings were all settings identified by multiple participants as

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[2] The following themes and categories address participants' experiences of covering in their everyday lives rather than their responses to presented materials (i.e., legal cases and Yoshino's debate). Although the subsequent analysis focuses on the covering demand, some of the data were inclusive of assimilative demands more broadly. There were times in which the same category or theme related to both passing and covering demands described by participants. Thus, some of the following themes and categories are inclusive of assimilative demands in general and are noted as such. This finding also supports Yoshino's (2001) assertion that the covering demand can be tantamount to the passing demand.

[3] Most of the participants identified covering demands in the group discussions. However, two participants identified reverse covering demands or demands to "act" more like a lesbian. One of these groups in particular responded in a supportive way to the pressure to reverse cover, in part by asserting that the covering demand may be enacted in multiple ways.

contexts in which they have experienced the demand to cover. When identifying covering demands, participants also identified aspects of their behavior that were the subject of covering demands: appearance, including body language, and particularly body language related to gender conformity; affiliations, especially romantic partners and public displays of affection; and associations to places known to be lesbian focused:

> It's interesting how much it does affect every area of your life. How am I going to dress today, where am I going to go, what am I going to say? ... God, it takes a lot of energy for having a pretty solid identity ...just because of all the having to navigate the outside world.

> *Category B: Covering demands are communicated in subtle and explicit ways.* One

way the covering demand was communicated to participants was through explicit messages from others (in seven groups). For some, they were asked or it was suggested that they change their appearance, behavior, or display of relationships, and for others, they identified others' questions as covering demands. For example, one participant described an explicit covering demand:

> Yeah, I think it's kind of interesting because when you were talking, actually my sister does this to me all the time – "Why do you have to tell everybody in their face that you're gay? Why do you have to act gay?" Well, it's not – I'm not acting – I am. And it's like, "Why everything about you has to be about being a lesbian?" It's like that's what I am. But the difficulty, I think, is that they expect you to act like you did before when [you were] in the closet. And this is where it really gets kind of irritating because they want you to be the person that they knew before you decided to just come out of the closet basically.

The covering demand was also experienced as something that 'hung in the air': participants in seven groups described a "sense" or feeling, or spoke of receiving indirect suggestions from others to downplay behavior associated with their lesbian identity. In trying to determine how she detected the covering demand, one woman explained, "I guess I would

say, then, yes, it was more of not feeling comfortable around the people I was with, to be able

to be myself. Yeah, there is that pressure."

 Category C: Analyzing the environment to decide the level of disclosure. A cognitive

process of analyzing or assessing people was used in an attempt to anticipate others'

reactions or potential ramifications of disclosure. Questioning was the most common form of

analysis when participants described this internal process, and several variables were

described as important in this assessment. One woman described this analytic process as a

strategy:

> The best thing I found with not having to cover who I am is, you know, basically gauging people before I say anything. You kind of meet them, talk to them for a few minutes, get a sense of – is this person, are they going to be cool with it or not? And if so, I mean are they going to be intense about it? Are they just going to quietly sit there and hate you? Or are they going to get in your face or something and smack you over the head with a bible?

Another participant described the "line that gay people have to walk" in new situations,

perceiving herself as bordering on being too restrictive in her disclosure and disclosing too

much information, which might lead to losing her job. Participants described this as,

virtually, the daily process of trying to assume or detect others' assumptions, and in every

group, participants discussed this kind of process.

 Participants also reflected on their own decision making about coming out, passing,

and sharing their lives with others as an analytic process. One group suggested the following

as a ubiquitous experience:

> Participant 1: I'm pressured to come out. You're pressured to be feminine. You're pressured to be thin. You're pressured to do whatever. I mean we're questioning it all the time, making that decision all the time.

> Participant 2: All the time.

> Participant 3: All the time.

Participant 4:   All the time.

A number of variables were considered in participants' analysis. They predict, anticipate, and think through possible outcomes under the pressures to assimilate in order to weigh the consequences of assimilation versus those of authenticity.

Category D: Cues signal climates of stigma and acceptance. Common features that signaled assimilative demands were aspects of stigma and prejudice. Some communities and geographical regions were thought to have more prejudice and to be conservative, and participants sometimes described being able to sense the prejudice, "It's tangible, the prejudice – you can feel yourself being judged in certain states and areas, and others not at all." Other times, prejudice was revealed in the forms of jokes or other conversation.

The culture of different settings was also a cue to the presence of assimilative demands. Settings that were considered predictive of assimilative demands included those described as conservative and male-dominated, heterosexual-dominated, and religious. Some of the settings seemed to reflect a closed culture in which everyone appeared to adopt similar ways of life, beliefs, and values that did not clearly affirm lesbians. In this context and others, participants sometimes identified as being the only lesbian or one of a small minority. One woman described *dis-covering*, or refusing to cover or continue to cover, when in a heterosexual-dominant context:

> Right, like we just had our first slow dance at a [heterosexual] wedding. We were kind of just hamming it up a little though. But otherwise I feel like all the eyes were just on us. So it's like you'd just rather not do that at a straight wedding. It's that kind of thing.

In contrast to what signaled assimilative demands to participants were characteristics that signaled openness. Participants described having positive relationships with people such

as their co-workers when they believed them to be generally trustworthy or "good" people. Inclusion by others of participants' sexual orientation, their partner, or other aspects of their personal life in an accepting way typically signaled openness. Although social political progressiveness was important in determining the climate of a setting and whether individuals were likely to be open, participants also noted that it was the quality of the relationship they had with individuals that made them want to disclose more fully about their lives, "And I've kind of come to the conclusion that people that I feel close to, that I have some kind of friendship with, I will be authentic with them and tell them everything about who the person is that I'm married to. "

Theme 4: Managing Tensions of Threat and Discomfort

Tensions relate to an emotional component of covering demands and may manifest as a consequence of conflicting threats to the self and as threats to others' comfort or worldview. The threat to lesbians of losses, emotional pain, and rejection may comprise one facet of tension. Complementary to this threat is that heterosexuals who demand assimilation are perceived to experience discomfort or an upset worldview at the prospect of witnessing dis-covering. Moreover, lesbian women may experience conflicting tensions between the threat of potential negative consequences of dis-covering and the urge for authenticity. For women who perceive these threats, these conflicting internal and external tensions may comprise a double-bind in which they feel the responsibility for making the decision to risk the threat or to risk a loss of authenticity. In contrast, openness and acceptance are associated with relief and enjoyment.

Category A: Managing tensions. Participants identified others as being potentially offended or uncomfortable by their expression of identity. One woman summarized the

covering demand as such, **"So** in that case, basically they're telling you to adapt to a straighter world so that straight people don't feel uncomfortable." Participants related the demand to cover or assimilate to homophobia, or the fear and anxiety experienced in the presence of lesbians, and heterosexism, the system that affords heterosexuals the ability to make assimilative demands.

The ways in which participants were socialized to express or to not express their sexual orientation was discussed as a factor that helps explain how people navigate these tensions. Participants identified learning ways of expression beginning in childhood, which included influential factors such as generational status, religion, prejudice embedded in culture of childhood, and family values. These influenced how comfortable they felt about potentially making others uncomfortable. The ramifications of others' potential discomfort extended far beyond awkward feelings and cultural taboos, however, and were related to a sense of safety.

Category B: Assimilative demands impact sense of safety and comfort. Safety was a common component in discussions about being out and covering. In seven of the groups and across levels of being out and dis-covering, participants indicated that it is not safe to be out, "But I don't think that you're just safe either way. Like you know, if you're out at work, it doesn't mean that you're safe." One participant explained that although she does not think about how others might respond to her expression of sexual orientation, others have warned her to be aware of potential threats to her safety. Being out or dis-covering raised concerns not only about their own safety but others' safety as well. Participants felt the need to "protect" others, particularly children, from being harassed by others or from other threats to safety. Many participants experience a constant looming threat to their safety and security.

Participants considered a number of potential consequences of coming out and of dis-covering. Fear was an explicit reason for assimilation cited in two groups, and some participants explained that they have covered because they have already experienced negative consequences of coming out and dis-covering. "And then the other thing too, when she was talking about work, I think it's interesting because at work, fear takes over, and I act straight. I don't – I kind of you know, tread the wall...." As represented in nine focus groups, anticipating negative consequences was the most common reason cited in considering whether to cover or to pass, "… because we're the ones that have to deal with the repercussions of it." The possibility of losing jobs and friends, of being harassed, or of being physically threatened are all potential negative consequences that participants considered when making these decisions. In fact, past experiences of threatened safety underscored the reality of this threat.

Dis-covering through appearance, association, or other signs (e.g., an LGBT bumper sticker) were all noted as reasons some participants had been physically threatened or attacked. In three of the groups, participants had survived at least one of several forms of violence that constitute hate crimes including threatened assault, assault with a deadly weapon, and sexual assault. Others, too, described experiences in which they averted or escaped potential violence. The survival of a violent form of bias created a powerful basis for concern of safety.

Frequently woven into participants' narratives of coming out were negative, positive, and ambiguous consequences. These experiences provided a kind of backdrop to participants' understanding of how people might respond to their identities. In refusing some kinds of assimilative demands by coming out or dis-covering, participants in nine of the

groups described a number of hurtful experiences and losses. There were examples of this in every life domain, including work (e.g., losing a job or being denied promotion), social networks (e.g., losing friends and family or being isolated from them), and public domains (e.g., being harassed by strangers).

Category N: Assimilative demands can exact an emotional cost. When faced with assimilative demands, participants experienced discomfort and various aspects of anxiety. Feeling vigilant (e.g., "watchful" or on guard), worried, and fearful are some ways in which these demands were experienced.

When the period of time spent enduring assimilative demands was long, it appeared to evoke a kind of feeling of sadness or loss. Covering was described as similar to loss or isolation of parts of the self. Participants under chronic assimilative demands felt hurt, sad, and lonely. In talking about her family's lack of acceptance and pressure not to date a woman, one participant described her struggles:

> I felt like my heart was being ripped out – because here I am, finally happy in my life for once, coming out, being the person I've always been, but hidden for so many years and I could not be happy about it. Was it fair to her [my partner]? Definitely not. Fair to me? Absolutely no way. I'm like, well, you know what, it's time – you've finally come to a boiling point and a breaking point where you've got to be you. And if they don't like it, too bad, no matter if they get hurt or not. The last thing I want to do is ever hurt anyone, but you know what, sorry, I need to be happy.

A few participants distanced themselves from the pain over time, "I mean it hurt really bad for years to get past it, but now it's like I've gotten – I had to make myself numb to it because it's too hard to just keep thinking that they'll change."

A few participants made explicit that they did not experience shame related to experiences of assimilation. In contrast, for two participants who strongly identified themselves as having covered, a great deal of shame for their covering was expressed. They

hated what they felt they had done either without realizing it at the time or with the

awareness that they covered to avoid significant negative consequences. One participant

described feeling badly about covering for a court appearance, "… it made me feel really

gross afterwards" She later explained that she regretted her decision to cover:

> I felt horrible, and so within a month or two, I cut off all my hair again, and I was like, "I can't do that." … But it was many things – I was trying to like appease my [parent] and trying to like appease the system, and I ended up really not liking it. So yeah, I would say [that I covered] … and I feel like it was a bad decision.

Other aspects that may relate to shame were found in other participants' descriptions of

covering as "hypocritical" and in comments that they were "guilty" of covering. The idea

that when someone covers they are ashamed of themselves was integrated into how

participants explained their navigation of disclosure:

> And then part of it, I felt like maybe I should just – you know, like there was part of me that was sort of like the activist part that was like maybe I should come out, and why am I ashamed?

The presence of assimilative demands themselves may evoke shame: Others demand

assimilation to the mainstream or to heterosexuality because of the belief that there is

something wrong with lesbianism:

> When it's hush-hush, or when you feel like people are making you be hush-hush, you just feel like you're doing something wrong, even though, deep down inside, you know you're not – you know this is who you are. And you want so much to be who you are in front of all these people, but yet you know that either you're being judged, or like you're being told by certain people that are important to you, like "This is not how you're supposed to [behave]. This is what you're supposed to do." And it's difficult.

> The negative experience of being under assimilative demands is in sharp contrast to

the feelings participants described when they found open, affirming people and groups. After

experiencing assimilative demands in previous jobs, one participant described being out and

sharing her life with her co-workers, "It's good where I'm at. I'm so grateful, and I'm so blessed, very much so, especially leaving [previous job] behind – that was brutal."

Theme 5: Navigating "choice" and decisions when assimilation is demanded

Participants found ways to make choices about when assimilation was demanded or to manage circumstances in which choice was restricted. Some participants defined potential assimilative demands as opportunities to educate by dis-covering, and others simply refused to cover. When participants covered, it was not perceived as a free choice; however, while under assimilative demands, participants found ways to set limits on how or how much they would assimilate.

Category A: It's not a fair choice to cover. Although some participants in three groups reported never having covered, most participants recalled experiences they identified as covering. Most participants described examples of times they covered as resulting from a lack of free choice. They cited constraints that suggest that covering is more a coercive experience than one in which they have free choice:

> For me, it felt more like necessity, you know, like it was a choice, but it was a choice that – I don't know – if I had chosen the other way, there would have been a lot of stuff that would have come along with that. So it kind of felt like – I don't want to say like survival in a sense, but that seems like a little extreme. But in some ways, you know, I mean it was just sort of a necessary choice, or it felt that way.

By contrast, dis-covering was perceived as either a choice they could make or an option that is available. One woman explained that although she did not think she could dis-cover at work, that when she changes jobs, authenticity will be an important factor in her choice, "And I've made the decision that if I ever left that department, I'm out entirely, and out comes [my partner]'s picture on my desk."

Category B: Dis-covering as educating. In eight focus groups, there were participants who stated that they refused to cover. Beyond this resistance, the act of coming out and sharing one's self fully, including romantic partnerships and the nature of their sexual orientation, was also seen as an opportunity to educate others for those in five groups. Participants viewed this as a positive outcome of being out and dis-covering:

> It's not a closed mind that they have – their minds are not closed – now they're curious. And I think that if their curiosity is satisfied, then they can make that determination of, "There's nothing wrong with a person being gay. She's cool – she's got a baby – hey, that's fantastic." That's the way they should look at it.

Participants who viewed dis-covering as opportunities to educate others had a positive expectation for the interaction and viewed their dis-covering as a way of potentially reducing others' ignorance or prejudice.

Category C: Walking the line between passing and out. Participants in six groups often adopted the policy of "I won't lie," in that they did not say they had a husband, and if asked, they would identify their sexual orientation honestly. However, omitting information or allowing people to assume they were heterosexual was sometimes utilized.

Although blatant lying was not considered an option for participants, they described having "skills" and being able to veer conversations away from indicators of their sexual orientation. Although it might be assumed that this strategy equates to passing, in these examples, participants were out to some but not to everyone in a particular setting. In being out to some, they covered by omitting discussions of their partner, special events, or after-work plans, even with those with whom they were out:

> Participant 1: But I mean I do – there are some aspects of my work environment where I'm not totally who I could be. But if people ask me, "Who's that person in the picture?" or whatever, and a picture, it's definitely on my desk, but it's with other people, so it's not always just me and her and our child. You know, if they ask me, I'll tell them, but it's

> very rare for people to ask that kind of stuff. They just kind of assume
> because I don't fit some typical –

Participant 2: Stereotype.

For participants who were not out at work, having a personal life that included people who were supportive and settings in which they could be authentic made the work environment relatively benign. They viewed their professional life as purely professional and appropriately separated from their personal life:

> People you can tell at work, you know, that really know you, like maybe you talk to personally or – I mean everybody seems like they have at least one or two that they can trust. But in general, the whole scheme of things, you just are another professional person.

Category D: Sometimes covering works. Although several instances in which negative consequences might have been avoided by covering were noted, there were times participants achieved the desired outcomes because of covering. For example, one participant enjoyed increased sales when she raised the pitch of her voice and acted more "girly," "So I mean I just took it as kind of if I wanted success, this was what I was going to do. I mean it wasn't a really – it wasn't a big deal to me..." For some participants in two groups, this was an acceptable way to gain what they wanted or needed in contexts of assimilative demands. This was a strategy, separate from one's sense of self, and it was not necessarily associated with negative affect or regret.

Theme 6: Strategies for Managing and Resisting Assimilative Demands

Living outside of contexts that demand assimilation, withstanding impacts within assimilation contexts, and gaining comfort from confronting potential threats are ways of coping with assimilative demands. Beyond making decisions about how to respond to assimilative demands, participants also cope by fostering supportive environments outside of

the mainstream. Because it may not always be possible to avoid the covering demand, participants have developed ways to maintain a positive sense of self and positive lesbian identity that can withstand potential threats from assimilative demands. The level of threat from these demands is limited by participants' view of themselves as experienced and empowered and by having the resources to counter the tangible threats of assimilative demands.

Category A: From "family" to community building. To manage the impacts of assimilative demands, many participants selected affirmative social networks. Electing to spend time with people who are affirmative, supportive, and positive is important for obtaining opportunities to be authentic, to discuss options for managing demands, and to provide comfortable spaces. The practice of including positive people and excluding negative people from participants' social networks is used to build a supportive social network. Beyond selecting a social network, participants also selected residential areas, workplaces, public locations, and events that showed signs that were perceived to be characteristic of openness and acceptance:

> And I think that's one of the ways I've dealt with it, is to pick what I feel like is kind of a little utopia where it's okay for me to be who I am. But then sometimes then we forget – I go out, and I forget like the whole world isn't like so open.

Choosing where to shop, eat, and spend money not only provides a way of placing one's self in affirmative spaces, but it also helps to nurture supportive communities. One group of participants explained this link between the personal and political:

> Participant 1: We do make good decisions together to go to places that affirm – not just – it doesn't necessarily even have to do with sexual identity or anything like that. But it affirms who we are, which that's a huge part of who we are –

> Participant 2: Who we are politically...

Participant 3: Yeah, we don't want to go to a place and start like, you know, putting money into certain businesses. You are, you know, taking on whatever the people who own the business – their ideals – you're supporting those.

Participant 1: Everything I do is political – every penny I spend.

One group also emphasized the importance of creating supportive spaces by forming groups or community activities that affirmed a positive lesbian identity.

Category B: Strong positive self-concept and self-acceptance. Encountering assimilative demands can threaten authenticity, evoke stigma, and may contribute to negative self-regard. Positive regard for one's self and self-acceptance are internal resources that can help minimize the negative impact of assimilative demands. In seven groups, participants had developed ways of promoting positive self-regard. When encountering prejudice, stigma, and assimilative demands, participants in four of these groups attributed their negative experience to others' prejudice, rather than to their own identities:

And they can say things to you, or they could call you names, call you out, whatever they got to do – disrespect you. But they're just showing you where they're at – that's all – it's got nothing to do with me. It's not mine to own, it's not mine to carry – I've dealt with a lot of my baggage, so I'm not picking up yours, dear brother.

For participants in three groups, actively defining one's self and separating that self from reliance on others were components of bolstering a positive identity. Participants fostered their strength and self-acceptance by "forgiving" themselves when they make regretted decisions to assimilate, making peace with themselves, and affirming a strong, positive sense of themselves. Participants viewed themselves as growing stronger, stronger than the demands they faced, and unshakeable:

But like from that moment on, until I came to terms with things, I was always trying to strive for that line in *Desiderata*, and it says, "Nurture strength of spirit to shelter

you in times of sudden misfortune." Which to me is like when you are solid, and you know who you are, and you are okay with who you are, nobody can shake you.

For some participants, self-affirmation appeared to come with relative ease, like a well practiced habit, and others worked hard to garner the energy to "soldier on" in a "fight for my identity." To do this, some referenced reasons outside of themselves to maintain their identity as positive and out. Participants also maintained a perspective of events in the context of change over time. Recognition that progress is the trend and that a greater good may come from personal struggles provided hope and reasons for self-affirmation. Being out and dis-covering was also perceived as making a contribution to more positive experiences for future generations.

Category C: Agency, resources, and empowerment develop over time. Managing assimilative demands over time may also buffer lesbian women against the effects of assimilative demands. Age and experience were noted specifically in three groups as specific helpful resources.[4] Participants viewed themselves over time as learning new ways to manage demands while maintaining their integrity. As important as having practical resources acquired over time, however, was the growth of a sense of inner security. Participants in three groups found that the consequences of assimilative demands are not as threatening as they once anticipated.

Participants sometimes refused to cover and, in four groups, asked a question, such as, "What can they really do to me?" and over time, they found that the costs of dealing with assimilative demands were not worth the personal cost. In addition to strength and a positive identity, participants in three groups also noted that they have knowledge of policies, laws,

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[4] Although age or aging can be helpful in coping, it should be noted, as one participant did, that ageism is a problem inside as well as outside lesbian communities. These intersecting identities relate to another system of oppression as well as resources.

and other resources that afforded some protection. Experience and knowledge seem to minimize the threat of assimilative demands.

<div align="center">*Summary of Focus Group Findings*</div>

The purpose of the focus groups was to understand how lesbian women are impacted by assimilative demands in their lives as well as the ways in which they manage these demands. The focus group findings supported the quantitative findings in that participants in the focus groups demonstrated negative emotional reactions to the cases. Moreover, participants found the question of whether to cover offensive and refuted the legitimacy of this demand to assimilate.

The focus group analysis also revealed ways in which participants experienced the covering demand in their daily lives. Covering demands were associated with aspects of stigma-related experiences, had cognitive and emotional impacts, and were found in every domain of participants' lives. Identifying and analyzing the environment was found to be an active and highly contextualized process. Furthermore, strategies for managing tensions of threat, safety, comfort, and authenticity included an array of coping strategies beyond the act of covering. These findings are consistent with Yoshino's (2006) conceptualization of the covering demand as tantamount to other assimilative demands encountered by stigmatized individuals, and they are also consistent with research on minority stress in regard to the impact of these demands and the ways in which individuals cope with minority stress (e.g., Meyer, 2003).

Individual Interview Findings

Five participants completed individual interviews. Each of these participants identified as European-American or white and were partnered or married, and three had a child or were expecting to have a child. Presented below is a summary of the analysis of individual interview data (see Table 10 for a list of categories and themes with example quotations). One major change occurred in the analysis of the interview data as compared to the focus group data: Rather than maintaining the construct of "enjoying acceptance" as part of the theme of *managing tensions of threat and discomfort*, e*njoying acceptance and authenticity* was created as a separate theme. This was because, in the application of the focus group-based themes to the individual interview data, the judges determined that the data were not accurately captured by the former theme and it was agreed to create these as two separate themes.

Theme 1: Identifying Covering Demands: What and How Covering Demands

Assimilative demands, particularly covering, are a part of daily life. Participants described examining both the environment and people for cues of acceptance, assimilative demands, and stigma (Category A). Similar signs of the covering demand noted in the focus groups were also evident in individual interviews (e.g., predominantly heterosexual settings; Category B). Explicit demands (Category E) and participants' feeling of safety (Category D), too, were cues of assimilative demands similar to that found in the focus groups. For four participants, other individuals' behavior and reactions were also used by these individuals to predict levels of safety and whether assimilation would be demanded (Category C). Behavioral reactions to presented diversity such as transgendered people and to signs of

women's own sexual orientation were also used by participants to predict other individuals'
level of acceptance of participants' lesbian identity.

In each interview, women were asked whether they felt the covering demand applied
to other parts of their identities. Three of the women identified covering identity aspects
other than their lesbian identity (Category F). One woman felt pressure to and has covered
her liberal political beliefs among her conservative family members. Another discussed
covering her parents' divorce in childhood and a family member's drug addiction in a small
town where other such families were not visible. Still another noted she felt pressured to
cover her higher educational degree because others attributed negative stereotypes to highly
educated people, such as being unable to relate to those with less education. Two participants
stated that they did not experience covering in any other aspects of their identity.

Theme 2: Managing Tensions of Threat and Discomfort

When the possibility or the presentation of the covering demand is present, women
described having conflicting tensions. Similar to findings in the focus group data, individual
interview data reveal that participants experienced negative affect and feelings of a lack of
safety when faced with assimilative demands (Category C). Others also expressed discomfort
with disclosures related to lesbian identity. Four participants (Category B) had experienced
some negative consequences on the basis of their sexual orientations and sometimes
anticipated the recurrence of such negative consequences (Category F). Each participant cited
some life event or social constraint that make managing assimilative demands more difficult
at one time or another (Category D).

Table 10

Themes, categories, and example quotations from individual interview data

Theme 1: Identifying covering demands: What and how covering demands

I had a moment where I was like I have no idea how she's going to react because I'm not in an environment where I know it's inherently safe or that it is more likely to be safe.... And so I feel like that was one of the situations where I was really kind of going in blind. – "Ani"
Categories

       A. Analyzing individuals and settings to predict reactions (5)

       B. Social and structural characteristics are used to assess for covering demands (5)

       C. Individuals' behavior and reactions are used to predict covering demands (4)

       D. I get a sense or feeling that tells me whether it is safe to dis-cover (3)

       E. Explicit messages to cover (3)

       F. Other identity aspects under covering demands (3)

Theme 2: Managing tensions of threat and discomfort

And I also have a value in ... wanting to—you know, for both my child and myself, to instill a value that it's okay, that my life is okay. My choices that I've made are okay. And I don't want him to feel like he needs to hide that from people... – "Luna"
Categories

       A. Conflict between relationships, values, and safety (3)

       B. Experienced negative consequences of being out and expressive (4)

       C. Assimilative demands feel bad and unsafe (5)

       D. There are things that make managing assimilative demands more difficult (5)

       E. Others experience discomfort or upset about my disclosure (5)

       F. Anticipate conflict, being mistreated, or potential negative consequences (5)

Theme 3: Enjoying acceptance and authenticity

...when I went to work there I told everybody that I had a partner because I felt like I could do that.... And it was great and I loved working there because I felt like I could be myself. – "Cecelia"

Categories

    A. Relationships are richer without or after assimilative demands (3)

    B. Relief from stress and hassles and experiencing pleasure (5)

Theme 4: Navigating "choice" and decisions when assimilation is demanded

And also, I just feel like, you know, my family is my priority. I'll always find another job but I can't get another family so I'm not going to let people, you know, chase pieces of me away just because it's inconvenient for them to be aware of it. – "Cecelia"

Categories

    A. Differing expression in different parts of life and in different relationships (5)

    B. Managing information about lesbian identity by sharing more or less of it (2)

    C. Accepting and expressing, no matter how people might react (4)

    D. Limit assimilation based on my needs; make choices based on competing needs (4)

Theme 5: Strategies for managing and resisting assimilative demands

I think that I emotionally just moved further away from my family. You know ... — [it] became less and less important for me to please my mom or to make her happy. And I started to really look at my life and what I wanted it to be and probe more into my own . . . – "Alex"

Categories

    A. Sources of support (3)

    B. Personal styles and inner resources (4)

    C. Focus on what I need and separate from incongruent others (2)

Note: Quotations are in italics. Pseudonyms are given to participants to distinguish the source. Numbers in parentheses represent the number of participants who are represented in each category.

Similar to findings in the focus group data, participants described managing tensions between making others uncomfortable through disclosure and their authentic expression of self (Category E). However, the tension of obligation to loved ones became more apparent in the individual interviews than it was in the focus groups. Three of the participants were parents or expecting mothers who were co-parenting with their female partners. All three of these women expressed the "obligation" or value of not communicating shame to their children by covering (Category A). At times, this value was viewed as being at odds with perceived risks to safety. Participants also mentioned tensions with their partners in the individual interviews. The ways in which romantic partners manage assimilative demands can be a point of tension. Some participants had arguments with their partners about how they responded to assimilative demands or had partners who were hurt by the participants' downplaying displays of affection.

Theme 3: Enjoying Acceptance and Authenticity

Participants experienced settings and life domains relatively free of assimilative demands. In response to the interview question about how life would be different without the covering demand, participants suggested it would be a relief from stress (Category B). Without the demand to cover, participants believed they would have less to think about and worry about, and would not have to think about coming out. They would have "less work." Two participants noted that they still would not choose to share more information about themselves. Participants described feeling comfortable, happy, and enjoying more and closer friendships, particularly in professional settings, when they were free of assimilative demands. The struggles and tensions in some of their relationships, however, eventually enriched their quality (Category A). That is because not only are relationships based on

acceptance and authenticity enjoyable and valuable, but enduring the tensions of past assimilative demands and working through these together have made some of participants' relationships particularly meaningful.

Theme 4: Navigating "Choice" and Decisions when Assimilation is Demanded

Being and expressing one's self can be managed in a variety of ways in contexts that demand assimilation. At times, participants shared information about themselves selectively by omitting information that might signal their lesbian identity, being vague about references to it, or steering conversations away from related topics (Category B). At other times, participants expressed themselves freely regardless of whether others might respond positively or negatively (Category C). Similar to the way in which focus group participants described separating their personal from their professional life domains, participants in individual interviews also described having distinct life domains and relationships in which they shared more or less of themselves (Category A). Participants also described limiting assimilation by choosing to give up things of perceived lesser value (e.g., job prospects, family gatherings) and to seek out affirmative options to minimize their exposure to assimilative demands (Category D).

Theme 5: Strategies for Managing and Resisting Assimilative Demands

Every participant made some comment about having a good life, being happy, or some other positive self-reflection. Even in contexts of assimilation, participants have resources and strategies that reduce the potential impact of assimilative demands. A variety of sources of social support, including supportive, accepting romantic partnerships, a level of unconditional support from family, or institutional resources for protection, helped participants resist or manage the impact of assimilative demands (Category A). Participants

also described having personal, inner resources such as self-esteem and personal styles they have found to be helpful (e.g., a perspective that others cannot hurt me; Category B). Finally, rather than attending to assimilative demands and others' prejudice, two participants focused on their needs and distanced themselves from people who are not accepting (Category C).

How Participants Would Change the Law

To find out what participants considered most important in regard to legal changes, they were asked what law they would pass if they could pass any law. Rather than focusing on a single law, however, four of the five participants discussed ways in which they would impact multiple or existing laws. One participant would change adoption law to permit second parent adoptions. Others discussed ways in which they would bestow equal rights more broadly, including in regard to marriage or civil unions and protections against hate crimes. Fair treatment, interpretation of equal rights for all based on the bill of rights, and legal backing for human rights in general were all wished-for changes in policy and law.

Summary of Individual Interview Findings

The purpose of the individual interviews was to gather in-depth information from a sample of Study 1 participants and to determine whether the major themes from the focus group analysis were applicable to the individual interview data. The four themes relating to focus group participants' personal experiences of assimilative demands appositely represented the individual interview data. The individual interview findings provide additional support for these four themes. However, a new theme, *enjoying acceptance and authenticity*, was revealed in the individual interview data. This theme represented the positive experiences gained from the absence of or relief from the covering demand. Participants in the individual interviews described this positive experience as well as aspects

of managing tension in their personal, and primary, relationships (e.g., their children, parents,

and romantic partners). The participants revealed that management or refusing assimilative

demands in these relationships can sometimes lead to deeper, more meaningful relationships.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the psychological impacts on lesbian-identified women of legal decisions that represented the demand to cover lesbian identity. The quantitative analysis showed a significant effect for condition on emotional reactions to the cases. Participants rated their emotional reactions as more negative and appraised the cases as more stressful in the Assimilative Demand/Negative Outcome as compared to the Multicultural/Positive Outcome condition. In subsequent exploratory analyses, appraised stressfulness was found to partially mediate the relationship between condition and reactions to Ward v. Ward. General, transient affect (MAACL subscales), however, did not significantly differ by condition, nor did performance differ on collective self-esteem, the anagrams, ratings of participants' own sexual orientations, or their selection of media. Although MAACL affect subscales did not significantly differ by condition, there were significant effects for time of measurement across two measures of affect, angry and depressive, and for the feeling thermometer ratings. The qualitative findings support the quantitative ones in that the cases evoked negative emotional reactions, as did the idea of covering more broadly.

Findings from the qualitative data also revealed a rich picture of the ways participants experienced covering demands. When participants analyzed the demand to cover, they found the question of whether to cover offensive and refuted the legitimacy of this demand to assimilate. Covering demands were found to be related to multiple aspects of stigma-related experiences and had both a cognitive and an emotional impact. Participants identified aspects of covering demands in every life domain and described a process of analyzing the environment for cues of assimilative demands. They reported competing tensions between

assimilative demands, a sense of safety, and authenticity that create a dynamic tension for which the participants have developed multiple strategies and resources, including internal sources of strength and external sources of community. Interview data coded with the major themes of the focus group analysis revealed similar findings. One major finding in the analysis of individual interview data was the emergence of a new theme of *enjoying acceptance and authenticity*, which describes relief from the anxiety of covering demands as well as positive emotions and enriched relationships in the absence of, or after the release of, covering demands.

Participants in the Assimilative Demand/Negative Outcome condition had more negative emotions about the cases and appraised the cases as more stressful than those in the Multicultural/Positive Outcome condition. This finding is consistent with Theme 1, *emotional reactions to the cases depended on appraisal of the cases*, from the focus group analysis. The majority of the focus groups expressed negative emotions about the cases. Moreover, as described in Theme 2, *defining and affirming authenticity,* participants expressed a great deal of anger about covering in general. These findings are also consistent with research that shows sexual minorities experience distress related to heterosexist legal challenges (e.g., Russell & Richards, 2003) as well as the minority stress model (Meyer, 2003) that outlines the affective consequences of heterosexism.

Because there is evidence (e.g., King, 2005) and theory (Meyer, 2003; Monat & Lazarus, 1991) that primary appraisals, such as appraised stressfulness, explain relationships between minority stressors and emotional distress, a similar pattern was expected in this study. Although there was a difference of stress by condition, the data did not support a relationship between condition and measures of transient affect, and so there was also no

evidence of mediation. However, exploratory analyses utilizing the emotional reactions to legal cases revealed that the appraised stressfulness of Ward v. Ward partially mediated the relationship between self-reported emotional reaction to the case and condition; the appraisal of stressfulness explained a significant amount of the variance or is part of the reason why the Ward case in the Assimilative Demand/Negative Outcome condition evoked more negative emotional reactions than in the Multicultural/Positive Outcome condition. These findings provide initial support that the covering demand, as represented in legal decisions, has the potential to be perceived as a stressor and to impact emotional reactions via primary appraisal.

There were significant within-subjects effects for time of measurement on anger, depressive affect, and feeling thermometer ratings. These findings showed that, across conditions, participants were more angry and depressive and rated their feelings lower after they read the legal cases. The qualitative findings in this study also highlight the impact of the covering demand on affect. Particularly in the focus-group-based theme *emotional reactions to the cases depended on appraisal of the cases*, the impact of these cases and the idea of covering more broadly was evidenced as evocative of meaningful emotional reactions. Moreover, as represented in the theme *managing tensions of threat and discomfort,* in both the focus groups and interview analyses, participants described the toll that assimilative demands have on them, both emotionally and interpersonally. Although there is less evidence of the impact of heterosexism on anger, there is ample evidence that wellbeing and aspects of depression are impacted by manifestations of heterosexist minority stressors (e.g., Meyer, 1995; 2003). Heterosexist discrimination (Szymanski, 2006), hate crimes (Herek, 2009; Herek, Cogan, & Gillis, 1999; Herek, Gillis, Cogan, & Glunt, 1997), and

internalized heterosexism (see Szymanski, Kashubeck-West & Meyer, 2008 for a review) have all been related to depression. These findings emphasize that all participants were affected by exposure to the covering demand. These effects are also consistent with this related literature in that the covering demand operates both as an instance of heterosexism and as a stressor.

Following the focus groups, angry and depressive affect was less negative and feeling thermometer ratings were increased, returning to baseline or pre-test levels. Discussion of the cases and perhaps the support, empathy, and humor exchanged among participants may have relieved the angry and depressed affect and improved overall feelings. This is consistent with research that highlights the important influence of social support in coping with stigma (e.g., Miller & Major, 2000). In the qualitative findings of this study, social support was also among the strategies and resources identified as helpful in coping with the covering demand. This strategy in their daily lives may have operated effectively in these focus groups as well.

There were no differences by condition for transient affect, collective self-esteem, cognitive performance, or behavioral selection of mainstream as compared to lesbian-focused media. This may be because the threat of the demand was present in both conditions and may have been sufficient to impact these outcomes in both conditions. Although measures of affect and feelings did not differ by condition, there were significant effects for time of measurement. In the focus groups following both Assimilative Demand/Negative Outcome and Multicultural/Positive Outcome conditions, participants explicitly related the cases to stigma and stereotypes about lesbians and to the potential and actual threats they have experienced. The relief of the covering demand represented in the Multicultural/Positive Outcome condition may not have relieved participants from the effect of the demand's threat.

That their identities were the point of contention may have been sufficient to impact affect in both conditions. If this was the case, affect would be expected to become more negative at post-test for both conditions, as the within-subjects effects demonstrated.

The lack of a significant effect for anxious affect might appear to contradict the facets of anxiety found in the qualitative data, particularly in the themes of *identifying covering demands* and *managing tensions of threat and discomfort*. However, participants' descriptors of anxiety were expressed in relation to the anticipation of assimilative demands and their potential negative consequences. It is possible that participants did not detect or engage in the process of detecting assimilative demands in the data collection sessions; they appraised the meeting as "safe" or found no assimilative demands in this setting. In contrast, it is also possible that participants engaged in anticipating and assessing for assimilative demands before ever engaging in the quasi-experiment. Research on the impact of heterosexism has found heterosexism to be related to anxiety (e.g., Kessler, Mickelson, & Williams, 1999; Szymanski, 2006). However, it is also possible that *affect* is not the most salient aspect of anxiety related to the covering demand, but other aspects may be relevant such as cognitive patterns related to obsessive thinking or vigilance not captured by the MAACL. Finally, that the consequences of the cases were already known (i.e., the women won or lost) may have circumvented participants' anticipatory-based responses.

The qualitative findings of this research compliment many of its quantitative findings and provide insight that goes beyond the quantitative findings of the study. It was in the theme *defining and affirming authenticity* that participants' definitions of the covering demand were revealed. Participants defined the construct as relying on false assumptions about what it means to be lesbian and were offended by the assertion that lesbians should

cover. Covering was not supported as a reasonable demand, but one related to bias, prejudice, and heterosexism. This appears consistent with Yoshino's assertion that the covering demand is a subtle but potent manifestation of the same stigma that perpetuates other assimilative demands. As he theorized, the covering demand may be experienced as tantamount to the passing demand (Yoshino, 2001) and as similar in function to discrimination.

Two striking findings from the qualitative analyses are the features of the process of the covering demand in participants' lives. Examination of the themes of *identifying what and how covering demands* and *managing tensions of threat and discomfort* revealed that participants encounter a number of subtle social situations in which they expect or experience a lack of acceptance of their identity by others and a pressure to assimilate. Although sometimes subtle, the features of covering demands were readily and consistently described as meaningful and related to dynamic tensions. Not only may the demand impact an individual's psychological distress, but the ambiguity surrounding these demands can also be a stressor (Miller & Major, 2000). Such ambiguity also helps to contextualize the process by which participants actively analyzed their environments for assimilative demands.

The qualitative data in this study demonstrated that analyzing one's environment to identify covering demands is an active cognitive process. In the theme *identifying what and how covering demands,* participants described a frequent and sometimes ongoing process of examining the environment for cues of assimilative demands. They not only questioned whether and what to disclose but also spent time and energy attempting to predict others' reactions, prejudices, and potential actions. Stigma consciousness (Pinel, 1999) and the theoretical construct of felt stigma (Herek, 2007; 2009) represent aspects of these experiences. However, the focus of the latter constructs has been on expectations of being

discriminated against or not accepted (e.g., Pinel, 1999; Meyer, 2003) and the knowledge or awareness of stigma (Herek, 2009), which reflects a more passive and static construct than that described here by the participants. The constructs of identifying and analyzing in the theme *identifying what and how covering demands* may also relate to self-concealment (Mohr & Fassinger, 2003), which captures the tendency to conceal one's sexual orientation. In contrast to self-concealment, however, participants' descriptions focused on context rather than on individual tendency. Moreover, self-concealment assumes full-fledged passing. Alternatively, the research on secrets may provide an applicable model for further study of this aspect of covering demands because this literature has emphasized that secrecy is active cognitive "work" (Lane & Wegner, 1995). The findings from this study suggest that assimilative demands may involve a more active process than has been previously reported in the minority stress literature.

Qualitative findings from this study also showed that lesbian women do not always face a simple choice of either being out and authentic, or not, in any particular context. Specifically, the themes *navigating "choice" and decisions when assimilation is demanded* and *strategies for managing and resisting assimilative demands* may represent coping strategies. At times, participants experienced distress because of regret for past acts of assimilation. Other times, participants found acceptable ways to cope with assimilative demands. These themes may be understood as related to primary and secondary control coping (Miller, 2004; Miller & Kaiser, 2001). Participants sometimes described adapting themselves, or assimilating at varying levels, which may be seen as secondary control coping. Coping strategies often noted by participants as helpful or desirable, however, involved affecting external components of the assimilative demands (e.g., selecting affirming

settings and social networks), similar to primary control coping. In support of this idea, there is evidence that primary control coping is related to fewer psychological "costs" or less distress than secondary control coping (Miller, 2004). The type of coping that is available and its relative effectiveness in regards to identity management has implications for the psychological impact of assimilative demands.

The findings about the use of strategies in this study also share similarities with findings on the use of acculturation strategies. In the acculturation framework, adjusting one's behavior to fit only into the mainstream constitutes assimilation. In contrast, orienting to one's culture or living primarily among those similar to the self constitutes separation (Berry, 1997). Integration (Berry, 1997) and fusion (LaFramboise et al., 1993) describe acculturation strategies in which individuals adopt both their culture and the dominant culture. Findings from this study indicate that lesbian women's responses to assimilative demands can be understood as reflecting the underlying acculturation continua: an individual's level of authentic expression or connection to the mainstream and an individual's level of connection to lesbian affirmative contexts outside the mainstream. This acculturation framework allows for both of these levels of connection or disconnection to occur simultaneously and allows for the complexity of navigating different contexts and life domains. This simultaneity of two levels of connection adds to the one-dimensional conceptualization of self-concealment and experiences with stigma. It will be important for future research to consider multiple levels of concealment and expression at one time.

This is the first study to quasi-experimentally manipulate legal decisions to study their effects on a stigmatized group, and it shares similarities with findings of naturalistic studies that have examined the effects of statewide legal challenges against sexual minority

rights (Rostocky et al., 2009; Russell & Richards, 2003). Participants described the legal cases in this study as discriminatory and exhibited negative emotional reactions to them. In this study, participants were not exposed to the media coverage surrounding the legal decisions. Rather, they perceived stereotypes and other biases as being inherent in the arguments and allegations made, independent of other influences. Moreover, these cases were perceived by many participants as representative of possible events in their own lives. Participants demonstrated the ways in which a structural instance of stigma and oppression can impact individuals. This finding appears consistent with the theory that structural representations of heterosexism can be perceived as potential stressors (Meyer, 1995; 2003).

The overall findings of this research provide initial support for conceptualizing the covering demand in lesbians' lives as a minority stressor. It provides initial evidence that covering demands can impact psychological states related to mental health. In this research, negative emotional reactions, appraised stressfulness of the cases, and the potential scale of this impact (e.g., as less than witnessing heterosexist violence) suggest that the covering demand may act as a kind of "minor" stressor. Embedded in the qualitative findings is also evidence of the covering demand as a kind of minor injury, which may accumulate or relate to individuals' of experiences with more significant negative impacts. Moreover, the qualitative findings reveal the strategies participants use to manage covering demands that parallel coping strategies. Similar to chronic aspects of minority stress (Meyer, 2003) and everyday discrimination (Essed, 1991), the covering demand may constitute a chronic, everyday stressor.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

Limitations

Although this study has revealed important information about assimilative demands, it also has limitations. One is its sampling method bias. Others include a lack of information about measures specific to the legal cases and the modest reliability of the MAACL.

This research utilized a non-probability community venues sampling method that is considered appropriate for research questions such as those analyzed in this study (Meyer & Wilson, 2009). Moreover, recommended snowball sampling modifications were used to reduce the bias in this sampling method. Yet evidence of bias persisted in this study's sample as European-Americans and those with higher education are overrepresented. Moreover, the location of the study's settings limits its generalizability. Although advertisements for the study were distributed throughout Michigan, participation took place in three areas in or near major metropolitan areas in Michigan. Thus, generalization of these results should be restricted to related populations. Further research to investigate the covering demand in more diverse samples would benefit future research.

An important aspect of the study was to include only women who identified as lesbian so that they could relate the legal cases to their identities. However, this also restricts generalizability. Women who identify as queer, unlabeled, woman-loving-woman, and others, would need to be studied to determine how the results of this study might apply.

The measure of cognitive performance could be more effective in future studies. The limitations of the study setting restricted the feasibility of other, possibly more reliable measures of cognitive performance. For example, stereotype threat studies have utilized items from the Graduate Record Exam (Steele & Aaronson, 1995). Moreover, the social

setting of this study may have reduced the validity of the anagrams task. The primary researcher observed some evidence of distraction (e.g., giggling and brief conversation) during the anagram administration that may have influenced attention and therefore performance. Moreover, the social setting may have also impacted the level of motivation to achieve on the task.

The modest reliability of the MAACL affect subscales is also a limitation of this study and likely attenuated the power of related analyses or the ability to detect effects in analyses using these subscales (Onwuegbuzie & Daniel, 2000). Future research would benefit from use of other measures with evidence of stronger reliability in a recent community sample.

Future Directions

This study demonstrated preliminary quasi-experimental evidence of emotional reactions to covering demands and supports the conceptualization of the covering demand as a potential minority stressor. Future research would benefit from replication of these findings. The findings from this study's qualitative analyses also support further investigation of the covering demand, as participants defined covering demands as unfair, stressful, and related to heterosexism.

The findings from this study indicate that, as Yoshino (2001) theorized, the covering demand may be experienced as tantamount to the passing demand and as similar to discrimination. Measures of minority stress may benefit from including these more subtle experiences of a demand to assimilate. Future research would also benefit from developing a standardized questionnaire of lesbian women's experiences with the covering demand, which

would make future investigations more accessible and comparable to the existing empirical literature on stigma and minority stress.

Future research would also benefit from investigating covering demands in samples of other populations. The covering demand may be applicable to experiences of several populations including other sexual minority groups, marginalized racial and ethnic groups, or members of working classes, for example. In keeping with the acknowledgement of the value and need for diverse perspectives in the study of covering demands, further investigation would be greatly enhanced by increased sample diversity. As covering demands may be experienced by individuals in different stigma contexts, a study of covering intersecting identities would provide valuable information about the different manifestations and consequences of covering demands for diverse groups.

Conclusion

Covering was first described as an important part of managing a stigmatized identity in social interactions (Goffman, 1963) and continues to be shown as relevant in contemporary times as a demand codified by law and present in everyday life (Yoshino, 2001; 2006). This study related Goffman's (1963) original conception of this stigma management strategy and Yoshino's (2001) conceptualization of it and its legal representations to prominent frameworks for studying the psychological effects and processes of minority stress (Meyer, 2003).

This study has provided initial support for the relevance of the covering demand to the stigma literature (Herek, 2009) and to the minority stress model (Meyer, 2003). Findings reveal that lesbian women in this sample found these instances of the covering demand upsetting and stressful, and the presentation of the covering demand negatively impacted

their emotional states, regardless of condition. In their daily lives, the covering demand was found to be a sometimes subtle but identifiable aspect of everyday life that was related to a threat to their safety, to psychological distress, and to practical, negative consequences. These lesbian women also revealed ways in which they have successfully coped with and managed the covering demand.

The minority stress literature would greatly benefit from the inclusion of these aspects of covering. Moreover, there are potential implications for multiple stigmatized identity groups for which the covering demand may operate. Because the covering demand operates on the behavioral level of a person's identity, it may be present in the lives of any stigmatized group. Many of the findings of this study have been related to literatures that include several such groups. For example, the empirical literature on discrimination has been applied to racial, ethnic, sex, and sexual orientation groups; acculturation research has also focused on immigrants and bicultural individuals; and stigma research has also been applied to even other identity groups, such as those based on dis/ability. The study of the covering demand in psychology has the potential to significantly contribute to understanding this ubiquitous stressor that is embedded in structures of oppression and stigma.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Stimuli: Legal cases

Assimilative Demand/Negative Outcome Introduction:

Legal Decisions in Lesbians' Lives

The following accounts are adaptations of stories from newspapers and other media. They represent real persons and struggles for equal rights in the workplace and in child custody suits. These women faced being judged on the basis of *behavior* related to their lesbian sexual orientations, and their legal defeats represent the continuing struggles for the rights of all lesbians.

Multicultural/Positive Outcome Introduction:

Legal Decisions in Lesbians' Lives

The following accounts are adaptations of stories from newspapers and other media. They represent real persons and struggles for equal rights in the workplace and in child custody suits. Although these women faced being judged on the basis of *behavior* related to their lesbian sexual orientations, their legal victories represent progress for the rights of all lesbians.

Legal Decision # 1

Robin Shahar took her current name when she was married in July 1991. Because of this commitment ceremony, Shahar lost her job as a staff attorney at the state's Department of Law. The problem for her career was that Shahar had married a woman, Fran. Shahar had been out as a lesbian for five years by that time, and she had a rule: "I would not lie if someone asked me about my boyfriend or what I did over the weekend. But I wouldn't initiate." The effect of this rule was that most of her coworkers knew she was gay.

In November 1990, Shahar filled out a department personnel form. One question inquired: "Do any of your relatives work for the state?" As Shahar recalls, "I remember

thinking long and hard about what I wanted to write. I thought, this is a conflict-of-interest question, and Fran works for the state. But I also knew she wasn't my spouse in straight society's view. In the end, I went back to my rule: do not lie." Shahar wrote that Fran, her "future spouse," worked for the state.

In May 1991, Shahar graduated from Emory Law School. That month, Shahar discussed her upcoming employment with her supervisor and requested a late starting date because of her marriage, without specifying that she would be marrying a woman. Her supervisor congratulated her, and he began to tell coworkers Shahar was getting married. He later learned that Shahar was marrying a woman, and this news caused uproar. The five senior aides held meetings, and confirmed through Shahar's personnel file that she considered Fran her "future spouse." The attorney general decided to withdraw Shahar's job offer, and Shahar's termination was read to her in the presence of a witness.

Shahar remained uncertain about filing a suit. Before the couple left for their honeymoon in Greece, they met with an attorney from the ACLU. The couple decided to think it over on their trip. When they returned both their mothers were waiting at the airport imploring them not to file, but the couple had decided to do so. Shahar filed a lawsuit claiming her supervisor had violated her right to exercise her religion, her right to intimate and expressive association, her right to equal protection on the basis of sexual orientation, and her right to due process.

During the lawsuit, Shahar's ex-supervisor said that the couple had flaunted their homosexuality by engaging in a commitment ceremony, by changing their names, by living together, and by holding insurance jointly. He viewed this conduct as "activist." In a letter written to the dean of Emory Law School, he hypothesized Shahar had set him up by

obtaining a job with the department to pursue her activism. In court, he asserted that employing a flaunter like Shahar would hurt the department's credibility.

   Shahar lost/won her case against the Department of Law. She lost all of her claims in federal district court. (Story adapted and excerpts taken from Yoshino, 2006

Legal Decision # 2

   Mary Ward is a divorced mother with an 11 year-old daughter, Cassey. Mary identifies as a lesbian and lives with her partner. She had sole custody of her daughter while her ex-husband, John Ward, served a prison sentence for murder. He has since been released and has remarried. John Ward filed an appeal for custody of his daughter.

   John Ward told the court that Cassey had been exposed to sexual conduct between Mary and her partner and that it would be harmful to Cassey. Cassey also made statements of a sexual nature, exhibited bad table manners and personal hygiene habits and preferred to wear men's cologne. Mary Ward, who at the time lived with a girlfriend and two older daughters -- one of whom is lesbian and had a live-in girlfriend -- denied that she had exposed the child to any sexual behavior in her home. The court considered whether to move custody from Mary to John Ward. This decision was not based on her sexual orientation, but based on Mary's "conduct."

   In a written statement, John Ward stated that "growing up in a household with a husband and wife residing together in marriage was more beneficial to an 11-year-old girl than growing up in a household with four adults engaged in homosexual relationships." Mary Ward denied any misconduct in her home and continued to fight for custody of Cassey.

   Mary Ward lost/won her case. She lost/maintained custody of her daughter. (Story and excerpt adapted from Navarro, 1996, at *The New York Times*)

Appendix B

Demographic Information

What year were you born?__19_____

For the following questions, please check all that apply to you.

Are you:

Appendix C

Judgment Task

Please indicate your responses to the following questions by placing a check mark ✓next to

the response or circling your response.

Do you find in favor of Shahar or the State Department of Law?

Not at all Relevant   Extremely Relevant

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

How do you think this will affect similar cases in the future?

Not at all   Extremely

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix D

Emotional Reactions to the Cases

Please circle the number that best describes your emotional reactions to this case.

	Not at all	A little bit	Somewhat	Very much	Extremely
Angry	1	2	3	4	5
Happy	1	2	3	4	5
Frustrated	1	2	3	4	5
Anxious or Nervous	1	2	3	4	5
Inspired	1	2	3	4	5
Sad	1	2	3	4	5
Hopeless	1	2	3	4	5

Please feel free to describe your reaction in your own words below.

_____

_____

_____

Appendix E

Multiple Affect Adjective Checklist (Zuckerman, Lubin, Vogel, & Velarius, 1964)

Please circle the number that best describes how you feel NOW.

	Not at all	**A little bit**	**Somewhat**	**Very much**	**Extremely**
Angry	1	2	3	4	5
Cruel	1	2	3	4	5
Agreeable*	1	2	3	4	5
Cooperative*	1	2	3	4	5
Fearful	1	2	3	4	5
Worried	1	2	3	4	5
Secure*	1	2	3	4	5
Calm*	1	2	3	4	5
Blue	1	2	3	4	5
Discouraged	1	2	3	4	5
Fine*	1	2	3	4	5
Active*	1	2	3	4	5

* Denotes items that are reverse scored.

Appendix F

Collective Self-Esteem Scale (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992)

We are all members of different social groups or social categories. Some of such social groups or categories pertain to *gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class.* We would like you to consider your memberships in those particular groups or categories, and respond to the following statements on the basis of how you feel about those groups and your memberships in them. There are no right or wrong answers to any of these statements. We are interested in your honest reactions and opinions. Please read each statement carefully and respond by using the following scale:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. I am a worthy member of the social groups I belong to.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. I often regret that I belong to some of the social groups I do.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3. Overall, my social groups are considered good by others.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. Overall, my group memberships have very little to do with how I feel about myself.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

5. I feel I don't have much to offer the social groups I belong to

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. In general, I'm glad to be a member of the social groups I belong to.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

7. Most people consider my social groups, on the average, to be more ineffective than other

social groups.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

8. The social groups I belong to are an important reflection of who I am.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

9. I am a cooperative participant in the social groups I belong to.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

10. Overall, I often feel that the social groups of which I am a member are not worthwhile.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

11. In general, others respect the social groups I am a member of.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

12. The social groups I belong to are unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

13. I often feel I am a useless member of my social groups.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

14. I feel good about the social groups I belong to.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

15. In general, others think that that the social groups I am a member of are unworthy.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

16. In general, belonging to social groups is an important part of my self-image.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix G

If you were to select a magazine subscription for yourself today, which 3 would you choose?

For each choice, would you prefer to have the subscription delivered with or without a
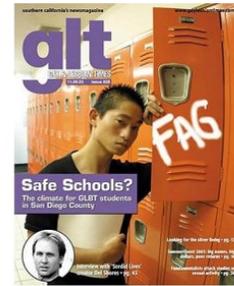
confidential envelope.

☐ The Advocate

☐ Curve

☐ Gay & Lesbian Times

Confidential envelope?

Yes /No

Confidential envelope?

Yes /No

Confidential envelope?

Yes /No

☐ Newsweek

☐ O The Oprah Magazine

☐ OUT

Confidential envelope?

Yes /No

Confidential envelope?

Yes /No

Confidential envelope?

Yes /No

☐ Passport

☐ Redbook

☐ Time

Confidential envelope?

Yes /No

Confidential envelope?

Yes /No

Confidential envelope?

Yes /No

☐ National Geographic. Traveler

☐ U.S. News

☐ Venus Zine

Confidential envelope?
Yes /No

Confidential envelope?
Yes /No

Confidential envelope?
Yes /No

Appendix H

Heterosexist Harassment, Rejection, and Discrimination Scale (Szymanski, 2006)

Please think carefully about your life as you answer the questions below. Read each question

and then circle the number that best describes events in the PAST YEAR using these rules.

Circle 1 – If the event has NEVER happened to you.

Circle 2 – If the event happened ONCE IN A WHILE (less than 10% of the time).

Circle 3 – If the event happened SOMETIMES (10-24% of the time).

Circle 4 – If the event happened A LOT (26-49% of the time).

Circle 5 – If the event happened MOST OF THE TIME (50-70% of the time).

Circle 6 – If the event happened ALMOST ALL OF THE TIME (more than 70% of the

time).

Never	Once in a while	Sometimes	A lot	Most of the time	Almost all of the time
1	2	3	4	5	6

1. How many times have you been treated unfairly <u>by teachers or professors</u> because you are

a lesbian?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

2. How many times have you been treated unfairly <u>by your employer, boss, or supervisors</u>

because you are a lesbian?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

3. How many times have you been treated unfairly by your co-workers, fellow students, or colleagues because you are a lesbian?

1	2	3	4	5	6

4. How many times have you been treated unfairly by people in service jobs (by store clerks, waiters, bartenders, waitresses, bank tellers, mechanics, and others) because you are a lesbian?

1	2	3	4	5	6

5. How many times have you been treated unfairly by strangers because you are a lesbian?

1	2	3	4	5	6

6. How many times have you been treated unfairly by people in helping jobs (by doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, dentists, caseworkers, school counselors, therapists, pediatricians, school principals, gynecologists, and others) because you are a lesbian?

1	2	3	4	5	6

7. How many times were you denied a raise, a promotion, tenure, a good assignment, a job, or other such thing at work that you deserved because you are a lesbian?

1	2	3	4	5	6

8. How many times have you been treated unfairly by your family because you are a lesbian?

1	2	3	4	5	6

9. How many times have you been <u>called a heterosexist name</u> like dyke, lezzie, or other names?

1	2	3	4	5	6

10. How many times have you been <u>made fun of, picked on, pushed, shoved, hit, or threatened with harm</u> because you are a lesbian?

1	2	3	4	5	6

11. How many times have you been <u>rejected by family members</u> because you are a lesbian?

1	2	3	4	5	6

12. How many times have you been <u>rejected by friends</u> because you are a lesbian?

1	2	3	4	5	6

13. How many times have you <u>heard Anti-Lesbian/Anti-Gay remarks from family members</u>?

1	2	3	4	5	6

14. How many times have you been <u>verbally insulted</u> because you are a lesbian?

1	2	3	4	5	6

Appendix I

Stigma Consciousness Questionnaire (Pinel, 1999)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree to each of the following statments.

strongly disagree	*disagree*	*disagree somewhat*	*neither agree nor disagree*	*agree somewhat*	*agree*	*strongly agree*
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

1. Stereotypes about homosexually have not affected me personally *

0	1	2	3	4	5	6

2. I never worry that my behaviors will be viewed as stereotypical of homosexuals *

0	1	2	3	4	5	6

3. When interacting with heterosexuals who know of my sexual preference, I feel like they interpret all of my behaviors in terms of the fact that I am a homosexual.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6

4. Most heterosexuals do not judge homosexuals on the basis of their sexual preference *

0	1	2	3	4	5	6

* Denotes items that are reverse scored.

5. My being homosexual does not influence how homosexuals act with me. *

0	1	2	3	4	5	6

6. I almost never think about the fact that I am homosexual when I interact with

heterosexuals. *

0	1	2	3	4	5	6

7. My being homosexual does not influence how people act with me. *

0	1	2	3	4	5	6

8. Most heterosexuals have a lot more homophobic thoughts than they express.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6

9. I often think that heterosexuals are unfairly accused of being homophobic *

0	1	2	3	4	5	6

10. Most heterosexuals have a problem viewing homosexuals as equals.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6

* Denotes items that are reverse scored.

Appendix J

Focus Group Guided Questions

Provided to participants:

The gays I know no longer debate conversion and passing – we categorically oppose

conversion, and oppose passing while recognizing the importance of letting

individuals come out on their own. We remain divided, however, by questions of

covering – how much individuals should assimilate or conform to the mainstream

after coming out as gay. Should gays "act straight"? Should we be discreet about our

sexuality, or "flaunt" it?

--Excerpt from Kenji Yoshino's (2006) book on *Covering*

Conversion is the pressure to or act of attempting to change a person's social identity,

for example, to convert from lesbian to heterosexual.

Passing is the pressure to or act of being mistaken for someone of a different social

group.

Covering is the pressure to or act of making it easier to not pay attention to your

identity. It is the downplaying of behaviors (e.g., appearance, who you associate

with) and other characteristics associated with social identities.

Guiding Questions:

1. Thinking about the legal cases we reviewed earlier, what were your initial reactions to

   these circumstances and legal decisions?

2. What do you think of the idea of 'covering'?

3. Have you or someone you have known experienced anything similar to this idea of covering? (Participants were asked to discuss the nature of those experiences including whether they felt "pressured" or if covering felt "freely chosen.")

4. What do you think the consequences of a demand to cover your sexual identity might be for you or others?

5. What kinds of strategies do you use or think might be helpful to overcome or cope with assimilative demands like covering?