

Pink and Blue: Outcomes Associated with the Integration of Open Gay and Lesbian Personnel in  
the San Diego Police Department\*

By

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## **Executive Summary:**

A new University of California study has found that the integration of open gay and lesbian officers has improved the organizational effectiveness of the San Diego Police Department. Written by Aaron Belkin and Jason McNichol, the 43-page study is available at [www.gaymilitary.ucsb.edu](http://www.gaymilitary.ucsb.edu) as of November 13, 2001. Belkin is Director of the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military at UC Santa Barbara and McNichol is Doctoral candidate in Sociology at UC Berkeley.

Based on an analysis of prior research and a site visit to San Diego, the study is the most comprehensive analysis ever undertaken of the integration of open gay and lesbian officers in a major, urban American police department. The authors interviewed twenty-nine individuals – gay and straight -- and surveyed 328 government documents, academic studies, newspaper articles, and other materials. They took numerous steps, outlined in the report's section on 'methodology' to ensure the fairness of their findings.

Major findings include:

- The integration of open gays and lesbians has improved the police department's organizational effectiveness.
- A quiet process of normalization has reduced much of the emotional charge that heterosexual officers originally anticipated. A 'taken-for-grantedness' seems to characterize the presence of gay and lesbian officers.
- Departmental leaders including the current and former Chiefs of Police have taken numerous, important steps to ensure that the decade-long process of integration has proceeded effectively.
- While integration has proceeded largely uneventfully, subtle forms of discrimination do persist, and some gay officers who do not already enjoy respect may face challenges.
- In spite of these uneven effects, integration has enhanced cohesion as well as the SDPD's standing with the communities it serves.

### **Biographical sketches**

Aaron Belkin is Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of California, Santa Barbara and Director of the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military. His research interests include gays in the military, civil-military relations, and social science methodology. He is co-editor of *Counterfactual thought experiments in world politics; logical, methodological, and psychological perspectives*, published by Princeton University Press in 1996, and author or co-author of four published studies on gays and lesbians in the military.

Jason McNichol is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology at the University of California, Berkeley, and Director of ELM Research Associates, an independent, non-partisan consultancy. His research interests include gay and lesbian politics, gender equality in the developing world, and regulation of global markets. He is co-author of "The Institutional Terrain of the European Union," in *European Integration and Supranational Governance*, published by Oxford University Press in 1998. Belkin and McNichol are co-authors of "Homosexual Personnel Policy of the Canadian Forces," published by the *International Journal* in 2001.

## INTRODUCTION

Beginning in the mid-1980s, a number of American municipal police departments began to seek increased representation of homosexual personnel within their ranks. Responding to complaints about discriminatory practices, lawsuits, new laws, and a growing interest in new forms of community policing that emphasized closer ties between officers and the districts they served, major urban police departments, such as New York, Los Angeles, and Seattle, began implementing recruitment and support programs that targeted gay men and lesbians (see, e.g., Purdham, 1987; Gates, Carrol, & Smith 1986; Harris, 1991).

As was the case for many women and minorities during previous integration transitions, the early experiences of major police departments attempting to integrate known homosexuals proved to be challenging. Reactions among the rank-and-file, officers' organizations and prominent community members often were negative. Internal support for such policies was uneven, and longstanding work cultures were slow to change (Leinen, 1993; Barlow & Barlow, 2000). Research of police culture through the early 1990s describes a work environment that sought to reinforce traditional notions of masculinity, and casual remarks ridiculing or stereotyping homosexuals were commonplace in formal and informal settings. For many police officers, discussions of sexual interest in women and other reinforcements of heterosexual orientation were central to the shared work culture (Burkhe, 1996). Gay male officers who chose to come out or who were known to be gay frequently reported harassment, and isolated cases of threatened physical abuse and failure to support gay cops in back-up situations were identified and corroborated in a number of instances. Highly charged public debates took place in Los Angeles, New York, and Dallas over whether the integration of gay officers would undermine the local police department (Suro, 1992; Hernandez, 1989).

While two studies examining the experiences of gays and lesbians in American law enforcement were published in the early 1990s (Lienen, 1993; RAND, 1993), they were written when new policies integrating self-identified homosexuals had been established only recently. Since the publication of the Lienen and RAND Studies, a small number of researchers have continued to track outcomes associated with gay officers in police departments (Burke, 1994a; Stewart, 1995; Koegel, 1996). However, as of this date, an in-depth case study of a major urban department has yet to be undertaken. For example, Stewart's (1995) case studies focus only on cadet training programs rather than overall departmental performance, and some of his cases are based on surveys of as few as three individuals. Consequently, long-term outcomes remain unknown. This study seeks to provide an in-depth, longer-term assessment by examining the experiences and outcomes of a major urban police department after a decade of integration of open gay and lesbian officers.<sup>1</sup>

We have chosen to focus on the San Diego Police Department (SDPD) because in many respects it represents a typical American metropolitan force. While every urban police department is characterized by a unique set of historical, political, and socio-cultural circumstances, the City of San Diego is politically moderate, neither excessively liberal nor conservative, and the department draws from a regional population that is closely tied to major U.S. military institutions, holding relatively "mainstream" political and social values and in demographic flux. The metropolitan population of about 1.25 million that the force of approximately 2,100 sworn personnel serves is ranked the 7th largest in the United States, neither small nor exceptionally large.<sup>2</sup> Its public constituency during the 1990s, while changing rapidly, was still predominately white, socially and politically conservative to moderate, and working and middle class.<sup>3</sup> Among major U.S. cities, its crime rates were roughly average, and its police department was perceived to be competent but imperfect (McKinnie, 1996). And, like other departments at the time, in the early 1990s the SDPD found itself making a new commitment to

supporting equal opportunity and the integration of self-disclosed gay and lesbian personnel in its ranks. The case also offers the researcher a solid 10-year window to examine outcomes after a formal policy change. To the extent that the SDPD is somewhat typical of American metropolitan forces, the conclusions of our study may be relevant or partially relevant for other police departments.

Our key finding is that the increasing participation of self-disclosed homosexuals in the SDPD has not led to any overall negative consequences for performance, effectiveness, recruiting, morale, or other measures of well-being. Even though incidents of harassment and discrimination continue and new internal tensions have arisen concerning the policy, self-disclosed gay personnel, their peers and commanders, and outside observers all agree that disruptive incidents continue to decline in frequency and are usually handled effectively through both informal and formal channels. We suggest that while the findings of this case study may not be applicable to every police department, our data indicate that the integration of open gay and lesbian personnel in law enforcement need not undermine organizational effectiveness.

## METHODOLOGY

A social scientific study of outcomes associated with open participation of homosexuals in a major police department faces a number of challenging tasks. As previous researchers of the topic have noted, police departments are traditionally characterized by a variety of informal norms that emphasize loyalty, discretion, and secrecy (Buhrke, 1996; RAND, 1993; Stewart, 1995, 2001). For police departments with formal, public commitments to supporting equal opportunity for homosexuals, such as the SDPD, senior representatives making public statements may understandably wish to project images that are as consistent as possible with their departments' formal policies. Furthermore, lower-ranking personnel in the command structure may

feel uncomfortable making observations that could reflect poorly on their superiors or their departments more generally. Lastly, homosexual personnel themselves who are willing to be interviewed for a study are much more likely to be widely self-identified. Selection bias may emerge when efforts to speak with gay and lesbian personnel and their peers lead to a snowball sample that under-represents homosexual personnel who, for a variety of reasons, feel uneasy or unwilling to speak about their experiences.<sup>4</sup>

Taking into account the unique methodological challenges facing an investigation of this nature, the present study adopted a number of complementary techniques designed to maximize the breadth of data collected, anticipate and correct for any potential sampling or response bias whenever possible, and use multiple sources of evidence to substantiate and verify initial findings. The first stage of the study sought to identify, retrieve, and analyze all prior academic, policy, and press documents relating to homosexuals in the SDPD or other major urban police departments (n=328). While we do not include all 328 published sources in our bibliography, we did look carefully at all of them. Documents included (1) scholarly books, book chapters, and journal articles; (2) Doctoral dissertations and masters theses; (3) government documents; (4) internal departmental memos; (5) mainstream magazine and newspaper articles; and (6) newspaper articles from the gay press.

Based on a preliminary analysis of these secondary sources, the study directors sought input from a diverse group of informed observers to design a broad, comprehensive interview survey strategy. The second stage of the project consisted of an intensive, three-day site visit to the San Diego Area that included participant observation of formal and informal activities within the SDPD where self-identified homosexual and heterosexual personnel work together; semi-structured interviews with senior and rank-and-file departmental personnel, both heterosexual and homosexual, on and off-site; additional interviews with representatives of major governmental, citizen, and police officer interest groups; and the collection of additional relevant documents

available from departmental, public, and private interest group sources. Follow-up interviews and document collection continued for an additional four weeks following the site visit. The response rate among individuals and organizations contacted for this study was 90% (n=29).

During the data collection process, the study authors adopted a number of strategies to maximize breadth of evidence and minimize bias. These techniques included (1) providing multiple opportunities for police personnel to remain anonymous or go "off the record" to encourage full disclosure; (2) securing private, one-on-one interviews with all subjects, thereby avoiding social pressures common in focus groups; (3) impressing on all subjects with a possible vested interest in the study's outcome the importance and value of an accurate and comprehensive response; (4) encouraging subjects to use informal networks to have colleagues with differing views or experiences contact the study authors on conditions of anonymity if preferred; and (5) soliciting interviews with informed observers who do not work for the SDPD including former personnel, community representatives, and public civil rights groups to corroborate findings and advise on potential sources of bias.<sup>5</sup>

The last stage of the study focused on an analysis of the preliminary observations to identify and confirm the robustness and consistency of findings. Where findings appeared inconsistent or potentially affected by bias or underreporting, the study authors sought to identify additional sources for follow-up interviews and conferred with key informants and outside observers. These efforts allowed the study authors to assess the likely validity and reliability of a variety of conclusions.<sup>6</sup> Our aim throughout the research has been to produce a case study that goes into more depth than any other analysis available in the literature. That having been said, since this is an N=1 study, our findings are only suggestive and more research is needed to examine the integration of gays and lesbians in other police departments.

CASE HISTORY: THE INCLUSION OF SELF-IDENTIFIED GAY AND LESBIAN  
PERSONNEL IN THE SAN DIEGO POLICE DEPARTMENT

Up through the late 1980s, the SDPD was typical of other police departments in having neither a formal policy regarding homosexual personnel nor a public presence of self-disclosed gay and lesbian officers. Like other major urban police departments, during the 1960s and 1970s the SDPD had continued to selectively discriminate, both explicitly and informally, against the hiring and promotion of self-identified homosexuals (Stetz & Thornton, 1998a, 1998b). Through at least 1980, the questionnaire given to potential recruits asked them to identify whether they were attracted to the same gender, and recruits were sometimes queried during oral interviews about their sexual preferences (Bob, 2001). Within the department, anti-gay attitudes, especially toward gay men, were widely shared, and homosexuals were frequently the subject of jokes, derogatory remarks, and differential treatment.<sup>7</sup> The only male officer to have disclosed his homosexuality during this time did so after he decided to resign from the department (Edgil, 2001).

While the SDPD maintained a largely unfavorable atmosphere for homosexuals prior to the 1990s, like other police departments it was not consistently so. Although screening and training of new recruits included questions regarding sexual behavior, a number of currently serving gay personnel recall administrators ignoring or sidestepping evidence of homosexuality. Furthermore, interviews and other evidence collected for this study suggest that several women officers, and perhaps a few men, were known by at least a handful of colleagues to be homosexual. But even in these cases they remained extremely discrete in their disclosure.<sup>8</sup>

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, a number of factors, both internal and external, led the SDPD to shift its formal and informal policies regarding homosexual personnel. First, as part of a growing commitment to increasing diversity within the ranks and improved relationships

with community groups, during the late 1980s the Chief of Police and his successor strongly supported a variety of measures to promote equal protection and greater inclusion of underrepresented groups (Burgreen, 2001; Sanders, 2001). Even though early departmental efforts to support diversity did not explicitly include homosexuals, as early as 1988 the Chief of Police had made public comments that supported the right of homosexuals to serve in the force.<sup>9</sup> Departmental shifts reflected a commitment to increasing diversity of public institutions and responded to a variety of legislative and policy shifts within the City of San Diego and the State of California that codified equal protection statutes. One such city measure that passed in 1990, commonly known as the "Human Dignity Ordinance," outlawed arbitrary discrimination against sexual minorities.<sup>10</sup>

In responding pro-actively to these legislative measures, the Department sought to redress complaints lodged by various underrepresented community groups including Latin American immigrants and homosexuals regarding poor service, harassment, and purported physical abuse by police officers (Rubin, 2001; Biagi, 2001). Organized representatives of the gay community of Hillcrest, near downtown, exerted significant pressure on the department to improve its patrol efforts after the murder of a young man in the neighborhood and several gay beatings (Biagi, 2001).

At the same time that the Department was responding to various citizen and governmental pressures to provide equal opportunity for officers and improve community relations, a variety of other trends contributed to a growing local and national awareness of issues relating to gay officers. The late 1980s had seen a number of gay and lesbian officers publicly "coming out" in other urban departments, often under highly charged political circumstances. One of the earliest gay police organizations, in New York City, encountered both legal and personal resistance by the police department as it attempted to organize. Under much controversy, a number of cities considered initiating recruitment efforts targeted at gay

populations (Leinen, 1993). Perhaps most significantly, in 1989 a former Los Angeles police officer filed a lawsuit against the department for having allegedly encouraged and allowed flagrant and sustained threats to his personal safety, while actively discriminating against him on-the-job (Hernandez, 1989). Along with several other incidents, this lawsuit brought heightened attention to the concerns of gays in uniform.

In October of 1990, the gay Los Angeles officer who filed the lawsuit, accompanied by two others, held a small press conference in San Diego to symbolically "come out" as gay cops. Their conversations and interactions with a number of prominent San Diego gay community members helped catalyze the beginning of a process of self-disclosure and organization among several gay and lesbian personnel in the SDPD in the coming months. Three weeks after the L.A. officer's visit, 10-year veteran SDPD officer John Graham officially "came out" at a press conference. Shortly thereafter, a second seasoned officer, Rick Edgil, also publicly acknowledged his homosexuality. Then-Police Chief Bob Burgreen made public statements in support of the rights of officers to serve openly as homosexuals, and the department appeared to take the news in stride. In July of 1991, Officer Graham served as the "man of the year" in the city's gay pride parade at which the department also sponsored an informational recruiting booth. By that time, gay and lesbian personnel had organized an officers association, SOLO (Society of Law Officers) and began coordinating their own support network with other groups around the country (Taylor, 1991).

While SDPD publicly supported the rights of several gay and lesbian officers to serve without fear of arbitrary discrimination or harassment in the early 1990s, the growing evidence of the Police Chief's and several senior administrators' "pro-gay" commitment contributed to a backlash among more conservative members of the department and the wider political community. The biggest public uproar ensued when a greater San Diego area police cadet training program sponsored by the Boy Scouts dismissed one its most respected teachers, an

officer from the El Cajon Police Department named Chuck Merino, because he was homosexual. Shortly after Officer Merino's dismissal, the Police Chief Bob Burgreen publicly condemned the Boy Scout's actions and suggested that the department would withdraw its participation from the Scouts' Explorer program. Almost immediately, a heated public debate followed in which a number of police officers and community members expressed frustration over Burgreen's decision. Several conservative politicians, the Police Officers Association (the union for the SDPD's uniformed officers), and many community members expressed anger over what they saw as a cow-towing to fashionable politically-correct causes and the emergence of a new form of reverse discrimination against white males.

Even though public criticism of Chief Burgreen continued for several months following the Boy Scout incident, the department continued to institutionalize a variety of mechanisms to support equal opportunity throughout the remainder of his tenure, as well as that of his successor. A liaison to the gay and lesbian community was created, as was one for Latin Americans and African Americans. All cadets were required to participate in a training module that sought to clarify rules regarding appropriate conduct, and the growing cadre of out gay and lesbian personnel began serving as bridges and interpreters for police work in predominately gay districts. Implemented to support equal opportunity for gay cops in the 1990s, these strategies constituted a clear and unambiguous policy commitment on the part of the SDPD, but they were not codified in an explicit, written statement that endorsed the participation of open homosexuals per se.

During this time of informal implementation of equal opportunity and education policies, gay and lesbian personnel continued to self-disclose on a case-by-case basis. But changes in the work environment did not proceed as quickly or evenly as official policy. Generally, the handful of individuals who had chosen to self-disclose reported encountering only minor difficulties with peers and supervisors in the early 1990s. But results of a prior study that included an

examination of the SDPD (RAND, 1993), suggest that in the SDPD, as in other departments, a number of more closeted gay and lesbian officers remained concerned about the impact self-disclosure would have on their careers. Especially in more conservative divisions of the department, frequent derogatory comments regarding homosexuals and other minority groups continued to characterize the day-to-day work environment. According to some gay men, "macho" cop culture in the department presented significant risks to homosexual personnel in the early and mid-1990s (Bob, 2001). For instance, several heterosexual officers maintaining public security at the annual gay pride parade turned their backs on the Chief of Police, gay officers, and their supporters as they marched by on at least two occasions. Lesbian officers who came out formally or informally in greater numbers throughout the decade described less overt hostility and discrimination in their work environments but also characterized them as less-than-ideal.

In the last several years, the number of self-identified gay men and women working in the department has grown from about 5 individuals in 1992 to between 35 and 50 as of this study date.<sup>11</sup> They range in rank from Officer 1 to (at least) Lieutenant and work across all divisions of the department, including patrol, detective work, vice, SWAT, community relations, and training. The Chief of Police meets regularly with a Citizens' Gay and Lesbian Advisory Board and a liaison to the gay and lesbian community reports directly to him. The SDPD's mission statement includes a strong commitment to diversity, and it recruits aggressively in gay and lesbian venues.<sup>12</sup> Each year, gay officers and their straight colleagues, including the chief, march in the gay pride parade (Biagi, 2001). What impact has a decade-long policy of integration as well as increasing participation of self-disclosed homosexuals had on the effectiveness and performance of the San Diego Police Department?

OUTCOMES ASSOCIATED WITH INCREASING PARTICIPATION: DISCRIMINATION,  
WORK ENVIRONMENTS, AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Observers concerned with evaluating the impacts of personnel policy changes on the well-being and effectiveness of police departments or other para-military organizations can focus on a variety of measures to assess outcomes. Debates over the effects of including open homosexuals in military or para-military organizations usually focus on three types of potential consequences: changes in the frequency of acute personnel problems arising as a direct consequence of the policy change (i.e., harassment or misconduct); secondary effects on morale, cohesion, or other interpersonal characteristics of the work environment that influence job performance and effectiveness individually and collectively; and the cumulative impact of these acute and secondary effects on objective measures of organizational performance and effectiveness (see, e.g., RAND, 1993). In the present study, we attempted to collect and assess all available evidence to evaluate all three classes of outcomes.

#### FORMAL HARASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION, AND MISCONDUCT

The SDPD's Equal Employment Opportunity office documents complaints and lodges investigations regarding all internal incidents of discrimination and harassment alleged to occur in the department. Personnel who wish to file a complaint may do so informally or formally. Complaints filed with the department EEO office include those filed with federal, state, and county offices and cover all forms of harassment or discrimination including age, race, gender, national origin, pregnancy, sexual orientation, and religion. The total number of formal and informal complaints and inquiries on record at EEO between 1995 and 2000 ranged between a low of seventy-nine in 2000 and a high of ninety-nine in 1995.<sup>13</sup> For reasons of confidentiality, the director of the EEO unit was not permitted to provide the authors of this study with precise numbers of complaints relating to sexual orientation during every year of this period. However,

at the time of the interview, the director was able to examine files available for 1999 and ascertain that only one of the eighty-seven complaints, formal and informal, lodged that year related, at least in part, to issues concerning sexual orientation (Lienback, 2001). According to her recollection, the extremely small percentage of complaints relating to sexual orientation in 1999 was typical of other years during her tenure in office. Most complaints received by the EEO office relate to sex or racial and ethnic discrimination. Relative to other categories, she characterized complaints relating to sexual orientation as "not significant at all" (Lienback, 2001).

The Equal Employment Investigations Office of the City of San Diego also receives and documents complaints of public employees. Since 1996, the office has received fifty-six EEO complaints filed against the SDPD. According to the director of the office, none of these complaints related to sexual orientation (Watson, 2001). Furthermore, in the five years prior to 1996 that she was on the job, the director could not identify a single case of alleged EEO violations relating to sexual orientation lodged against the SDPD. Alleged violations most commonly related to age, marital status, race, or gender.

As noted above, the SDPD EEO unit declined to release to the authors of this study the exact figures for sexual orientation complaints for any year except 1999. However, other senior departmental observers we interviewed confirmed that internal complaints regarding harassment, discrimination, or misconduct that relate to the sexual orientation of sworn personnel are extremely uncommon. To the degree that the command structure has been made aware of discrimination and harassment problems within the ranks, the vast majority of such complaints have focused on gender or racial issues, not sexual orientation. Every departmental observer with whom we spoke emphasized that complaints relating to sexual orientation are very unusual and far less frequent than allegations of gender discrimination or harassment.

While it is probable that the actual numbers of EEO complaints relating to sexual orientation are extremely small, they are likely to seriously underestimate the actual occurrence of harassment or discrimination that may stem from sexual orientation issues. Most importantly, closeted personnel who fear being identified as gay are unlikely to come forward to complain about problems, especially because they are often not certain of the allegiances of peers and supervisors who may arbitrate the dispute. Secondly, the SDPD work culture, like that of most police departments, strongly emphasizes the informal and discrete resolution of personnel problems at the unit level whenever possible. Lastly, because the sanctions imposed from formal EEO violations are perceived to be so high, including the time involved in the investigation itself, all parties may feel keen to avoid the procedures (McCulloch, 2001). As an Internal Affairs Sergeant familiar with EEO issues for gay and lesbians observed:

If they are not out and have not discussed it with their supervisors, they don't want to bring it forth. So they more or less have to be subjected to whatever the person's doing to them because they don't want to draw attention ... And you bring this all out and discuss it with people, strangers. People such as EEO, the office. They are people that you have never had contact with. And everyone in there who conducts investigations are city police sergeants. So you are talking with your peers, or a supervisor. So it's kind of a difficult situation. It's not like you are talking to somebody, who is what I would say 'completely impartial.' Because again you have that culture, what you say, that underlying maybe possible code of silence ...(Kendrick, 2001)

In order to better ascertain the extent of serious misconduct problems, we asked all interview subjects to reflect on any knowledge they might have regarding alleged complaints of discrimination or harassment involving gay officers that may have occurred in the department. Respondents included additional senior departmental officials whose position in the SDPD makes

them privy to internal complaints about harassment or misconduct including the Director of Internal Affairs who is responsible for personnel problems, the Assistant to the Chief of Police, an Internal Affairs officer familiar with gay and lesbian issues, and the Special Assistant to the Chief for Gay and Lesbian Issues. We also spoke with the Chief Psychologist at a private social services agency that contracts out primary psychological care for SDPD personnel. Because current personnel at the department may feel formal or informal pressure to minimize disclosure of potential problems, we also secured interviews with five outside experts who have extensive familiarity with the department, including the former Police Chief of San Diego from 1994-99, the Director of the Human Rights Commission for the City of San Diego, a senior member of the City's Gay and Lesbian Task Force, and other external contacts. Finally, we also asked all of our gay and lesbian respondents to speak openly about any knowledge of violations that may have occurred in the past.

In extended interviews with gay and lesbian personnel and other senior observers in the department, mention was made of at least three separate cases where serious alleged EEO misconduct occurred. The first case, which occurred several years ago, concerned a sergeant and lieutenant who were overheard dismissing the promotional possibilities of a gay cop using offensive and inappropriate language (Edgil, 2001). The second case involved the circulation of falsified love letters seeking to embarrass an openly gay recruit. The third case referred to a gay officer who believed he had been denied promotions because of his sexual orientation. In the first two cases, the gay officers involved believed that the administration, through formal and informal channels of EEO, worked quickly and effectively to address the violations and discipline the responsible parties. In the third case, as in other instances of alleged discrimination in promotion, there was insufficient proof of misconduct to make a finding.

According to gay officers and other respondents, serious instances of EEO violations such as those mentioned above are clearly the exceptions rather than the rule. All personnel and

observers we interviewed remarked that serious unreported violations of departmental anti-harassment and discrimination policies relating to gay or lesbian personnel are extremely rare, especially in the last several years. As the current President of the Police Officers Association noted,

There are occasions when ... and there certainly aren't very many, when someone may have done something inappropriate and they are dealt and they are disciplined and everyone sees it. They mean what they say [that] it's not going to be tolerated. I think that's part of it. For people who can't get past their prejudice they know that they've gotta put it away at their job. (Farrar, 2001)

Problems in the work environment are usually much more subtle and rarely rise to the level of a formal violation. A reduction in behaviors that clearly violate policies may be due to a variety of factors, but most respondents believe that a clear, unambiguous mandate from senior leadership has significantly altered perceptions among the rank-and-file of what is considered appropriate conduct. Because the leadership and command structure have maintained a strong, consistent position regarding EEO policies and backed them up in practice, personnel who previously may have engaged in policy-violating behaviors are aware of the dangers of continuing to do so.

Whatever the reasons may be for the low incidence of serious violations of policy, over time most gay personnel who have self-disclosed have experienced very few serious acts of discrimination or harassment. Consistent with the comments of the EEO representatives, problems in the workplace rising to the level of a violation appear to be much more common for women officers than homosexuals as a class.<sup>14</sup> As former Police Chief Sanders commented,

I know of detective units where there was a lesbian detective-these are tough units-and we've had zero problems. I know of the same units where we have had a straight woman

and we have had tremendous problems. In terms of men-that is the problem with gay and lesbians-you do not know who is-you may know who is out but we've had problems from gender differences. The men in the unit did not treat them as neutrally as you wanted. We took complaints very seriously in all of these issues. (Sanders, 2001)

The former Police Chief's views are consistent with the perspectives of the men and women interviewed for this study. For instance, reflecting on her own case as a lesbian and women officer, Sergeant Kendrick responded, "I don't think there's truly been any examples of anyone discriminating against me, more as a female, not as my [sexual] preference. They have been very, very supportive. I pretty much have gotten everything I asked for in department as for assignment" (Kendrick, 2001).

While serious violations of EEO policy regarding homosexual officers appear very uncommon, less specific and directed incidents of anti-gay behavior among colleagues and commanders still occur on occasion. Most currently serving gay and lesbian personnel have found themselves in at least a handful of situations that have made them uncomfortable or led them to consider making an EEO complaint. One gay officer, for example, reported an incident in which a sergeant who was actively spreading rumors that the officer might be gay began "riding him really hard" for no reason and writing him up regularly. After confronting the sergeant and informing him that the officer might contact the EEO office, the harassment stopped. In another context, Bob recounts another experience at headquarters:

But still I would ride the elevator, and, for instance this happened a couple of months ago: Some guy shook my hand, he grabbed a hold of it ... held my hand for a good five seconds or so, and the elevator closed and a couple of people said, "You know, what it means if they hold your hand for more than three seconds." This is where I have to step

up. I said, "I do not appreciate that kind of talk. It's time that you keep your own thoughts to yourself." (Bob, 2001)

Especially in less formal environments, gay and lesbian personnel often observe behaviors or comments that do not fully accord with current Departmental policies. Nevertheless, usually such comments are made "off the record" in semi-private settings and are not directed at particular individuals. As Bob observes, "People tend to keep it quiet and if they do talk like that, then it is usually one-on-one and it is away from everybody else" (Bob, 2001). Senior heterosexual commanders, community observers, and the current and former directors of the POA all have made similar observations.

#### CHANGES IN THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

How has self-disclosure by gay police officers in San Diego affected the functioning and well-being of their broader work environments? For this study, we asked six gay and three lesbian officers who have served in active patrol environments; five heterosexual officers, their commanders, and representatives; and other contacts who have worked with homosexuals in field units about any issues, changes, or consequences that may have arisen as a result of self-disclosure in work environments. One of the study authors also accompanied an out gay officer for several hours as he interacted with colleagues at his division. Coupled with other indirect evidence provided by outside observers with contacts in the department, responses from departmental personnel converge on a number of themes.

While the circumstances surrounding an individual's decision to self-disclose are always unique, the nine "out" gay and lesbian officers with whom we spoke have described a similar range of initial reactions and consequences. With some recent exceptions, gay and lesbian cops

usually came out slowly and cautiously over time, choosing to self-disclose to particular colleagues when circumstances seemed appropriate. Prior to coming out for the first time, virtually all had concerns that a number of close colleagues would reject them or refuse to work with them or that they even would be fired. Yet in the vast majority of cases, work partners and colleagues responded in a supportive and affirming manner. Most said they were sometimes surprised at the level of support accorded to them on a one-to-one level, even among traditional and conservative peers. Perhaps the single most common observation made by out personnel was that close colleagues tended to focus on their qualities as a police officer, or "good cop," in their reactions. The experience of Officer Rick Edgil was typical. In recollecting the response of a very conservative and traditional colleague to other peers who were ridiculing his self-disclosure in 1990, Officer Edgil recalled, "They would say, 'Can you believe it, John is queer,' etc. And Larry turned to them and said, 'I don't care what he is, he is a damn good cop and he has always been there when I called for cover'" (Edgil, 2001).

In focusing on aspects of performance, integrity, and respect as a "good cop," heterosexual peers and commanders usually adapted quickly to knowledge of a colleague's homosexuality. The observations of gay officers were consistent with the perspectives of heterosexual colleagues and commanders we interviewed. For them, respect for a colleague's performance record as a hardworking, capable, and trustworthy fellow officer was far more important and influential than an admission of a particular sexual identity. Former Police Chief Jerry Sanders believed this factor was especially true for men coming out in the 1990s: "I think that the male officers had more trouble with gay men, but I really think that revolved around performance. Once performance was established then I think we saw a much different atmosphere" (Sanders, 2001). For both gay cops and their colleagues, in the work environment sexual identity takes a back seat to reputation and respect in the department. As a longstanding lesbian officer in the Department observed,

In my unit here, I believe most of the people knew, many people I did not know and never ever worked around. So you know my method of operation is to come in really low key, just do my job, keep my reputation stellar. Let them get to know who I am, let them get to know me as a person, as a professional in their office, as an employee of the city. And I'm not just a representative of the department. I'm a representative of the city. And then get them to like me that way. If they don't like me then whatever, maybe they don't like me because of my work ethic. Then once I feel safe, I start to put my foot in the water, talking about what I do in the weekend, my personal life, and once in a while, I have brought my significant other in to pick me up ... get to meet everyone in the office and they get to know her. (Kendrick, 2001)

The process of selective disclosure and having a positive reputation to fall back on has allowed many gay and lesbian officers to guard against potentially hostile reactions and disruptive effects in their work environments. Historically, in work environments where equal opportunity protections were not defined or enforced, and where widespread condemnation of open gay people was the norm, such a protective approach was crucial. But in recent years in at least some units of the SDPD, traditional proscriptions against self-disclosure have begun to shift; arguably, a process of "normalization" of open participation by gay and lesbian officers is now underway.

Although self-disclosure remains a sensitive and delicate process for many gay and lesbian officers, in a number of ways the work issues surrounding such decisions have become much more routine. In several respects, the presence of self-disclosed gay and lesbian officers has become normalized. Perhaps most obviously, for larger proportions of the force over time, the discovery of a colleague's homosexuality is much less shocking or disruptive. Officer Edgil, for instance, recounted a recent experience:

It is kind of funny, last year there was a week period where I took over a squad and ran it and we were doing something at the end of the shift where all the officers meet you and you sign your reports and approve everything and you double check it and something came up in conversation and I just kind of looked at one of these guys. "I do not want to make anybody feel uncomfortable here but you guys are all aware that I am gay, right?" And a couple of guys just stood there and looked at me like, "No, I did not know you were gay," and they had been at the division for like six to eight months and I'm like, "I just kind of assumed that all you guys knew this." And the one kid looked at me and goes, "Well I don't really care, my brother's gay." And it ... just became a non-issue ... It is not the big deal that it was. (Edgil, 2001).

For most personnel working in the SDPD, the controversy and concern over working with openly gay people has subsided as day-to-day interactions with gay colleagues become more commonplace. In many divisions, for straight and gay people alike, sexual orientation issues are relatively unimportant vis-a-vis the daily challenges of being a cop. While isolated comments and misconduct may occur, the professional working environment and strong support for equal treatment from headquarters tends to diffuse their frequency and significance. As the current President of the Police Officers Association remarked,

I think it is a common enough occurrence that there is no special uniqueness if someone shows up at your command. I am not saying that there is zero conversation about it. I suppose that one person might say to another ... you know ... there probably is still some joke or something that might be said from one to another but I don't think ... It's certainly nothing that is widespread. (Farrar, 2001)

This "taken-for-grantedness" regarding work with gay and lesbian cops has also spread, albeit less evenly, to the rank and file. In at least some divisions, patrol officers have become accustomed to working alongside gay and lesbian colleagues. Some gay and lesbian personnel have even begun to attend departmental functions with their partners routinely.

Virtually all respondents believe that the increasing taken-for-grantedness of gay cops reflects in part the more tolerant values of new recruits coming into the department. Younger cohorts of recruits have brought with them more diverse views and greater comfort-levels with gay issues than in years past, and EEO policies and training programs are allowing for more candid give-and-take as recruits wrestle with uncertainties over how to work with gay people (Marshall, 2001). In the last several years, problems of understanding or discomfort relating to gay colleagues have not disappeared, but they have become much easier to identify and resolve as younger cohorts enter the force. As POA President Sergeant Collins observed:

It just seems to me that the Department is at a point where there still are those people that are intolerant for whatever reason and it can be religion, or it can be just old school. But I would say that the majority of the younger officers that we are hiring are much more liberal than they ever were before, and all the training and the expense that the city and the department have gone through to sensitize people to all of those issues is paying off. (Collins, 2001).

The Director of Internal Affairs agreed:

I've taught professional ethics at the police academy for the recruits last nine years. And I taught in the academy for 25 years. I saw a tremendous change in attitudes. When I came on in the department, people with an alternative lifestyle did not come out of the closet. Very secretive. Even best friends were not confided [in] ... now it's second nature, it's accepted. (Gollehon, 2001)

Within the SDPD, the process of normalization also appears to be improving the coping strategies and problem-solving techniques available to personnel when conflicts do still arise between gay and straight colleagues. For many out gay cops, normalization means that they can more openly engage conflicts or misapprehensions as they arise on a day-to-day basis. For "Pat," who self-disclosed during training to correct fellow recruits' misconceptions that there were no gay peers in their midst, humor, "ribbing," and other informal methods to address misconceptions among his peers played an important role in defusing potential difficulties in the SWAT unit where he works. Other gay cops we interviewed have been able to take advantage of a more tolerant and open environment to challenge stereotypes and defuse potential tensions.

The growing acceptance and support for gay personnel in the SDPD has removed some of the destructive sting from individual instances of inappropriate language or conduct and allowed gay personnel to depersonalize minor infractions. Most gay personnel have observed or overheard mildly offensive or inappropriate comments in the work environment on an occasional basis, but in the current climate these incidents often are seen as reflective of ignorance rather than personal attacks, situations that go into the "box of dumb remarks" for one respondent.

For gay cops and their colleagues, being able to normalize working in an environment with both straight and gay personnel may help contribute to a higher level of comfort, solidarity and trust within their working units. All observers we spoke with for this study situated the evolution of equal opportunity policies towards gays within a broader departmental effort to instill a new philosophy of honesty, tolerance, and good conduct among the rank and file. As departmental culture has evolved and gays have come out and spoken more openly about their lives, misunderstandings and levels of distrust between them and some of their colleagues have eased. As Commander McCulloch remarked,

The people that were gay or lesbian-it wasn't as open as it is now. But people knew. But I think it strained it just a little bit. But they still were professional enough to get the job done. I think that with the cultural shift ... it is more accepted, it is a less stressful work environment. It is less likely to interfere. It was something that I had to watch when I directly supervised to make sure that everyone was being treated equally and the job was getting done ... now, because it is more out in the open and is more accepted, it is less of a concern I would imagine, and I'm just speculating, I would imagine as a direct supervisor. And there [are] more people, too. It used to be fewer in number but it is now more in fact. (McCulloch, 2001)

Although interpersonal misunderstandings, problems, and conflicts between personnel will always exist, potential problems between gay and straight officers are much easier to identify and handle, when sexual orientation issues are brought out in the open and made "matter of fact" (Ball, 2001).

Commanders and senior officers interviewed for this study have also identified secondary benefits to the work environment that may emerge from allowing gay recruits to self-disclose under uniform rules of appropriate conduct. Having gay officers come out allows them to more fully integrate themselves into the work culture and tends to reduce internal divisions:

When I go to line-ups, which I do frequently, where the officers go and the sergeants do the briefings. That's what gives me my perception that back ten, fifteen years ago was one of concern or watching all the time, now it is more, it is less guarded because I do see improved communication between the two groups and I do see more acceptance and better ... "We are all a part of the same team" atmosphere. (McCulloch, 2001)

For gay officers, too, coming out often allows them to develop more honest and collegial relationships with peers with whom awkwardness or uncertainty previously prevailed:

Because, yeah, there was this awkwardness before: "Well gosh, should I ask Rick and do I acknowledge that he is gay by saying, do you want to bring someone special?" And I actually did [get] invitations like that. And I actually took that as a compliment, you know. But there is this awkwardness about that. They don't know what to say. I think there is a lot more trust when you are not being secretive. (Edgil, 2001)

As the participation of gay cops in the day-to-day work life of their peers has become more commonplace, open or flagrant hostility to self-disclosure has all-but-disappeared. Nonetheless, elements of mistrust, discomfort, and resentment arising from the presence of out gay officers persist, both in familiar forms as well as in new ones. First, as noted earlier, colleagues uncomfortable with their gay peers did not usually engage in behaviors that violate EEO policies, but they still manifested a variety of more subtle behaviors that presented challenges to gay cops. Colleagues or commanders uncomfortable with the discovery of a gay officer in their ranks sometimes reflected their unease by becoming curt, withdrawn, and aloof, in essence, giving their gay colleagues "the cold shoulder." Pat, who came out during his training sequence, offered a prototypical example by describing a field training officer's (FTO) behavior while riding in a car for together for several days of ten hour shifts:

This particular officer said absolutely zero ever to me that was ever not work-related, and was always very critical of my work ... There were never any comments, never anything unprofessional ... never anything I could pinpoint. Other trainees I knew from my class had not had the same experience with him ... That was the only situation I had [relating to discrimination] with any of my six FTOs. (Pat, 2001)

In the particular case noted by Pat, the cool reception he received from the FTO thawed over time; in later encounters, their relationship normalized. In this instance and in a number of others, initial unease among some colleagues lifted once a gay or lesbian officer became better known. But not all personnel were amenable to changing their views. While the leadership of the SDPD has consistently embraced gay and lesbian officers as fully valued members of the force, not all personnel shared a moral acceptance of homosexuality. In spite of education, familiarization, and exposure over the last several years, a number of personnel in the Department still find the prospect of working with gays and lesbians uncomfortable or undesirable. Pat observed,

There are a lot of officers with whom I know there's a wall ... kind of a buffer zone. They don't want to get closer than a certain amount and are not comfortable with me. And in some cases I know that if it weren't for the policy they'd be rude to me. But they know the policy ... so they live with me. Not that many officers are like that. The bulk of cops see so much deviant illegal behavior in the field, then if all it is is the matter of who you're sleeping with, they don't care. (Pat, 2001)

Captain McCulloch concurred:

I am sure there's still people within the organization that have core beliefs that are anti-gay or lesbian but I think culturally they know that they are in the minority and there is that pressure and also that they are going to be held accountable if they were to verbalize that at the workplace so they would not dare. (McCulloch, 2001)

Gay personnel and their less comfortable straight colleagues have developed a variety of informal mechanisms to minimize awkwardness and discomfort. Perhaps the most simple method is avoidance whenever possible: colleagues uncomfortable with one another work

together as necessary, but otherwise they stay out of each other's way. This strategy is perhaps most apparent when colleagues of gay cops are highly religious. As Sergeant Kendrick described,

The only issues that I see here with me are people who are highly religious. They have a real issue with homosexuals in the department. And you kind of tend to sway away from them. There are some in my office, some around the same floor. You can feel it. They don't say anything. Because they know if they say something, it could affect them professionally. (Kendrick, 2001)

While there is evidence of such avoidance strategies occurring in the hallways of large divisions, it does not appear that efforts to avoid colleagues have led to widespread changes in work assignments. Present and former command staff agree consistently that disruptions to working relationships resulting from the presence of a gay or lesbian cop are very infrequent. Having worked with and supervised a number of units with open lesbians and gay men, Lieutenant Christopher Ball stated,

At no time did anyone come to me and say that I cannot be effective working with this person because they are gay. At no time did anyone come to me and say that so and so doesn't have the nerve to come and tell you but I know that he/she is very uncomfortable working with this person because they are gay. At no time was I involved in casual conversation with a group of people that said, "you know that person is [expletive deleted] gay, I can't tolerate them or I can work with them or I can't interact them." (Ball, 2001)

At the same time, however, Lieutenant Ball and others have noted that most departmental personnel enjoy relative discretion in decisions to change their post or job status; interpersonal conflicts may be uncommon because personnel with problems transfer elsewhere.

The challenge of negotiating working relationships between colleagues with different belief systems may be related to a second major indication of a still uneven and incomplete transition: decision-making over promotions in the department. Interviews with rank-and-file as well as senior management reveal two seemingly contrary views. On the one hand, several gay and straight observers offered evidence that some gay officers have experienced subtle forms of discrimination in their efforts to get promoted. On the other hand, representatives of the heterosexual rank-and-file and one gay cop suggested that many officers are resentful and suspicious of apparent efforts to increase minority representation in promotion decisions.

During interviews conducted for this study, several straight and gay respondents viewed the promotion of openly homosexual officers to higher ranks within the administration as possibly problematic, particularly for men. This situation was seen as especially true up through the early 1990s. Half of our gay respondents reported having been made aware of at least one occasion when a homosexual officer may have been passed over for a promotion because of his sexuality. In one instance discussed above, when a sergeant and lieutenant were overheard dismissing the promotional prospects of a gay male officer, an EEO investigation promptly ensued and resulted in disciplinary action for both. In a second incident, Internal Affairs Sergeant Kendrick recalled, "One male we have in the department had difficulties. He's very bitter that he hasn't been promoted, he hasn't moved on up and he hasn't had choice assignment because he came out too early" (Kendrick, 2001).

During the course of this study, several other observers intimated that they were aware of additional cases of alleged job discrimination against gay men. Two higher-level observers, one female and one male, surmised that senior management who were older, predominately male, and

more conservative than younger recruits might have a difficult time working closely with openly gay males. Consistent with the more general pattern observed in this study, most respondents believed that lesbians face fewer informal barriers than gay men. As former POA President Sergeant Collins remarked, "This is still a male profession and it is a macho-male profession. In most people's mind the gay men do not fit that mold." He went on to add that he suspects that in "any organization, possibly even this one, that gay men may have less of an opportunity to advance than gay women. I think that is pretty factual." Other heterosexual observers believe that informal barriers to promotions for gay men, for instance, in consideration for specialized units, were quite strong but have softened considerably in the last several years (McCulloch, 2001).

While several gay personnel and a representative of Internal Affairs observed that gay cops might sometimes face informal obstacles to rising through the ranks, several heterosexual officers and supervisors believed that some of the white rank-and-file resent possible preferential treatment to homosexuals as yet another "special class" in the department. Three respondents who have represented the rank-and-file in different capacities noted that a number of white male officers feel frustrated at what they see as an over-compensation on the part of the department to accommodate minorities and homosexuals. For instance, some straight officers resented the Chief of Police for marching in the gay pride and Martin Luther King Day parades but not in the St. Patrick's Day celebration (Collins, 2001). Furthermore, at least some of the rank-and-file have been frustrated by the chief's efforts to recruit a number of straight peers to march in the SDPD contingent of San Diego's gay pride parade. A similar protest has been made against the department's apparent effort to promote larger numbers of minorities, women, and lesbians to high-profile positions, presumably at the expense of perhaps better-qualified white males. According to one observer, these comments are typical of a widespread backlash against what some see as special privileges accorded to under-represented groups in public employment

(Wilson, 2001). Most of this backlash, however, appears to be directed at non-whites and women. As current POA Director Bill Farrar observed, "You hear a lot of that in terms of job assignment or job promotions, but I do not recall anybody ever complaining that so-and-so got promoted or got a job because of their sexual preference" (Farrar, 2001).

Interestingly, in addressing issues of treatment and promotion in the SDPD, the gay and lesbian personnel we spoke with were unanimous in their strong commitment to a merit-based system for promotion. Three mentioned that fear of being perceived as wanting special treatment had led them to be less candid about their identity. In fact, one gay male officer lodged the same complaints about problems with overzealous promotion of diversity as many straight respondents, but believed preferential treatment only applied to non-whites, women, and lesbians.

#### ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE: EFFECTIVENESS, RESPONSIVENESS, COMMUNITY RELATIONS, RECRUITMENT AND REPUTATION

What consequences, if any, has the increasing presence of self-identified gay and lesbian officers had for the various measures of performance and effectiveness of the department as a public law enforcement agency? Early arguments over gay and lesbian participation in police departments focused on whether gay and straight colleagues could work closely and effectively together under dangerous circumstances to protect public safety, and whether gay officers would be deliberately abandoned or denied back-up during hazardous operations. Nobody familiar with the history of the SDPD could identify any such complaints or incidents. All respondents contacted for this study unambiguously asserted that when close support was required and the safety of citizens or cops was at stake, personal differences were left aside. As a gay member of the SWAT team stated, "Basically, it's personal issues are aside when there's a cover, because you're covering the badge, you're not just covering the person" (Pat, 2001).

Emphasizing that even colleagues who were less keen on working with a gay cop gave assistance, Lt. Schaufelberger noted,

If I get on the air and I need help everybody goes. If I get on the air and I am asking for help with a report or I get on the air and I am asking for somebody to come in and impound a car, maybe it is an issue. But the bottom line is if I get on and key my mike, people are going to be driving with their heads in the glove box and their hearts in their throats just coming to keep me alive and that is the truth of what it is that we do. So the bottom line, live or die they are going to be there. (Schaufelberger, 2001)

An exception to this finding is that during the first several years of the AIDS crisis, when many officers were concerned with possible risks of exposure from colleagues who might have carried the virus, some observers noted a potential problem with back-up support. But according to our respondents, a strong education campaign within the department quickly diffused fears (Collins, 2001).

We asked all commanders, field officers, and senior personnel that we interviewed how the growing ranks of self-disclosed gays and lesbians have influenced the performance and effectiveness of the department more broadly in reducing crime and ensuring the safety and security of the city's citizens. None could identify any negative consequences, even when probed for hypothetical examples. When asked to compare the performance measures of analogous units, such as arrest and apprehension rates between units, where one included self-identified gay or lesbian personnel and the other did not, commanders and former supervisors stated that there were no significant differences. For instance Lieutenant Chris Ball said that there were "no differences" between the performance levels of drug units with and without the participation of self-disclosed gay personnel.

While all respondents believed that out gay cops did not contribute to noticeable differences in unit performance indicators, several argued that the increasing participation of gay cops on the beat has been linked with improvements in the quality of neighborhood policing around the city. As noted above, SDPD support and integration of larger numbers of self-disclosed gay and lesbian officers during the 1990s coincided with a broader effort to strengthen community policing. The community initiatives and commitment to diversity were in part a response to increasing crime and growing dissatisfaction with SDPD conduct and performance in several minority communities. As part of this effort, the department implemented a number of new programs such as new "storefront" satellite offices in neighborhoods to strengthen informal interactions between neighborhood citizens and officers assigned to their districts. At the same time, the department sought to draw upon the cultural and social resources of its increasingly diverse workforce to better respond to the concerns of particular communities such as Latinos and gays. In the predominately gay "Hillcrest" neighborhood and in other minority communities, these efforts appeared to pay off: by the late 1990s, citizen satisfaction was up, incidents of alleged harassment and abuses were down, and violent crime had decreased substantially (Biagi, 2001). According to many officers who we interviewed, the support and integration of out gay cops has played a significant role in these larger improvements in community policing. As Pat observed, "You gain way more respect from the community that you're policing if you have members of the diverse community working as cops" (Pat, 2001).

While there is no way to ascertain whether the increasing participation of self-disclosed homosexuals as part of a broader community policing and diversity effort is responsible for improvements in the effectiveness of the SDPD, indirect evidence supports the general argument that at very least, the department's reputation and performance did not suffer as a result of increasing gay participation. For example, a 1994-5 survey of minority attitudes toward the SDPD found largely favorable ratings among a range of minority constituencies as well as other

improvements over the early 1990s (McKinnie, 1996). A more recent U.S. Department of Justice report (1999) on crime and community perceptions of safety in twelve major U.S. cities suggests that a number of measures improved during this time. From 1990 to 1997, homicide rates in San Diego dropped by 53.3%, superceded by only New York City in the extent of the reduction. The proportion of residents who were satisfied with the SDPD in 1998 stood at 93%, superceded in the survey only by Madison, Wisconsin at 97%. That same year, over half (57%) of San Diego residents polled said that the police department was practicing at least some community policing (n=1,131) (United States Department of Justice, 1999).

A last class of performance measures relevant to police departments focuses on how well they are respected and embraced by the wider communities they serve and depend on for their salaries and pool of potential recruits. Consistent with the findings reported throughout this study, all available evidence suggests that the SDPD has not suffered negative publicity or lower recruitment or retention rates as a result of its strong support of gay cops. In the years since the first public debate over departmental relationships with the Boy Scout Explorer Program in the early 1990s, the pro-gay policies of the department have not attracted much local media coverage. The former editor of *The Gay and Lesbian Times*, George Biagi, who now works as Council Representative for Citycouncilwoman Tony Atkins, has monitored publicity surrounding gay cops in the department throughout the last decade:

I have never in the five years that I have worked here had somebody call up and say, "I cannot believe this city is recruiting gay people for the police force." I've never had a single complaint, haven't read a single article in the newspaper. Even when I was the editor of *The Gay and Lesbian Times*, never heard anything negative about diversifying the Police Department. (Biagi, 2001)

Similarly, a Nexis/Lexis search of The San Diego Union Tribune and other major news sources collected for this study revealed that the only substantive articles discussing gay officers in the SDPD were upbeat stories about the department's progress as a pro-active organization supporting diversity, both internally and externally (e.g., Galgano, 1999).

Finally, available data and perspectives from internal and external observers suggest that the growing presence of out gay officers has not had any impact on aggregate recruitment and retention. As the total force size has grown slowly from just under 2000 to just over 2000 in the last ten years, nobody we interviewed believed that recruitment or retention rates had suffered in any way as a result of the policy change. As former Police Chief Jerry Sanders stated, "No, we've never had a shortage of applicants . . . And that was just never an issue ... In fact I had never heard that issue before" (Sanders, 2001). Similarly, neither he nor current commanders and supervisory personnel are aware of any instances where an officer resigned from the police as a result of having to work with gay officers.

## SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

This study began by asking a deceptively straightforward question: How have increasing numbers of self-disclosed gay and lesbian officers influenced the functioning, well-being, and performance of the San Diego Police Department in the last decade? We considered potential effects on harassment and discrimination rates, disruptions to the work environment, influences on morale and cohesiveness, and recruitment, retention, and reputation. All available evidence suggests that, in the cases of all these classes of these indicators, the increasing participation of out gay and lesbian personnel has not led to any harmful consequences. Instead, a quiet but remarkable process of normalization has developed that has reduced much of the emotional and moral charge that the prospect of serving with gay colleagues generated originally.

For many out cops in the SDPD and their colleagues, being gay or lesbian is starting to become a "non-issue."

But like answers to all deceptively straightforward questions, the findings of this study have led us to some more complex conclusions, as well. While the integration of self-disclosed gay cops into the SDPD has proceeded largely uneventfully, old dilemmas have remained and new problems have emerged. A strong EEO policy has reduced the frequency of blatant violations of basic rights, but some personnel continue to exercise more subtle forms of discrimination, and potential difficulties with promotion remain. Gay men working among the rank-and-file and those personnel who do not already enjoy high levels of respect may face the greatest challenges. Consequently, many gay male officers still choose to remain closeted, as do some lesbians, perhaps to the detriment of their own mental health and the long-term well-being of their units. Furthermore, strong support for the rights of homosexuals sometimes stands in direct tension with the moral or religious views of other personnel. At the same time, among the ranks of the "old guard" are many who feel disenfranchised and resentful of what they see as the granting of special privileges to under-represented groups.

Yet, even while fully acknowledging these potentially uneven effects, the findings of this study suggest that broader shifts towards a more honest and diverse workforce resulting in part from the change in policy have enabled the SDPD to evolve into a higher performing department than it might otherwise have been. In spite of the interpersonal difficulties that remain, the normalization of gay cops has been associated with higher levels of trust, cohesion, and effectiveness in working with diverse communities than were present in the early 1990s. Many observers believe that the Department's broader commitment to support gay cops has helped the SDPD retain and strengthen its good standing with its own officers as well as the communities it serves.

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May 30, 2001.

Farrar, Bill. President. San Diego Policy Officers Association, Inc. San Diego, CA. May 29, 2001.

"Linda" Officer, Level II. San Diego Police Department. May 30, 2001.

McCulloch, Mike. Captain. Central Division. San Diego Police Department. June 18, 2001.

### SELF-IDENTIFIED GAY AND LESBIAN PERSONNEL

"Bob." San Diego Police Department. May 30, 2001.

Edgil, Rick. Officer. Western Division. San Diego Police Department. May 30-31, 2001.

Graham, John. Officer. Community Relations. San Diego Police Department. June 3, 2001.

Kendrick, Carolyn. Sergeant. Internal Affairs Unit. San Diego Police Department. May 30, 2001.

"Pat" Officer. SWAT. San Diego Police Department. June 5, 2001.

"Phil." Officer. Western Division. San Diego Police Department. June 4, 2001.

Schaufelberger, Margy. Lieutenant. Program Director. Regional Community Policing Institute of San Diego. May 31, 2001.

Stone, Natalie. Sergeant. Special Assistant to the Chief of Police. San Diego Police Department. May 31, 2001.

Waclawek, Gerry. Police Officer. Central Division. San Diego Police Department. May 29, 2001.

#### PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES

Biagi, George N. Council Representative for Councilmember Toni Atkins, District 3. City of San Diego, 2001.

Fulkerson, Scott. Executive Director. Citizens' Review Board on Police Practices. City of San Diego, 2001.

Grobesson, Mitch. Former police officer. Los Angeles, CA. Multiple Dates, May and June, 2001.

Rubin, David. Deputy District Attorney, Assistant Chief of North County Branch (San Diego) June 5, 2001.

Stewart, Chuck. Consultant to numerous California Law Enforcement Agencies. Multiple dates, May, 2001.

Watson, Margaret. EEO Commissioner for the City of San Diego. June 26, 2001.

Wilson, Bridgette. Task Force. May 29, 2001.

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<sup>1</sup> During the 1990s, several academic researchers published results of investigations of issues related to gay and lesbian officers in police departments, but such investigations focused on attitudinal or pedagogical topics and not on case studies of long-term departmental performance outcomes (e.g., Barlow and Barlow, 2000; Burke, 1994b; Doyle, 1995; Hiatt & Hargrave, 1994; Praat & Tuffin, 1996). For an earlier example, see Bayley (1974). The authors are very grateful to Harold Toro, doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology at the University of California, Berkeley, for helpful assistance in collection of data.

<sup>2</sup> Recent population and force figures were provided by the SDPD and confirmed through city sources (also available through <http://www.sandiego.gov>).

<sup>3</sup> During the last two political terms, for example, the City Council of San Diego has been evenly split between Democrats and Republicans. At the same time, a number of strong conservative voting blocks continue to dominate several suburbs, and San Diego has been widely seen as relatively "straight-laced" and conservative (Los Angeles Times, 3 December 1992).

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of how to minimize bias given these methodological obstacles, see King, Keohane & Verba (1994).

<sup>5</sup> One outside observer, a former Los Angeles police officer who had settled a lawsuit with the LAPD over charges of discrimination and harassment during the 1980s, was very concerned about the possibility of the SDPD "whitewashing" the study by directing investigators to particular interview subjects (Grobesson, 2001). As a result of his concerns, the study authors made all possible attempts to solicit contact from as wide a range of external sources as possible through multiple channels.

<sup>6</sup> Interview sources are listed at the end of the study.

<sup>7</sup> All of respondents in this study who worked at the SDPD during the 1970s and early 1980s as well as community observers described a work culture of widespread mistrust and ridicule of

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homosexuality. One respondent, for instance, recalled the high proportion of jay-walking citations issued to pedestrians in the gay area of Hillcrest in the early 1980s-what she termed the "great gay crime." (Wilson, 2001). Anti-gay sentiments were part of a broader culture that had difficulties with women and other underrepresented groups as well (Kendrick, 2001; Harrison, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> Outside of the Police Department, current Deputy District Attorney David Rubin came out to colleagues upon joining the office in late 1986.

<sup>9</sup> A local university alumni newsletter covering homosexual rights issues in 1990 quoted Police Chief Bob Burgreen as saying in 1988, " I personally know that there are Gay and Lesbian people in the San Diego Police Department now, and they are doing an effective job in being police officers...I think it's how a person handles their sexual preference, how a person handles their sexuality, that's important, rather than what that is." (A Mailing of the Center for Social Services, 1991).

<sup>10</sup> The addition of the ordinance to the San Diego Municipal Code on April 16th, 1990 (52.9601) reads: "Discrimination based on sexual orientation deprives the City of the fullest utilization of its resources and capacity for development and advancement. Such discrimination poses a substantial threat to the health, safety, and welfare of the community. Existing state and federal restraints on arbitrary discrimination are inadequate to meet the particular problems of this City. It is hereby declared as the public policy of The City of San Diego that it is necessary to protect and safeguard the right and opportunity of all persons to be free from discrimination based on sexual orientation. Notwithstanding the intent of this ordinance to protect all citizens from arbitrary discrimination, nothing in this ordinance shall be construed as endorsing, encouraging, or approving a particular life style, nor is it the intent of this ordinance to give special privileges or rights to any person based on sexual orientation." (San Diego Municipal Code 52.9601, published 10/98).

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<sup>11</sup> The figure of 35 "out" personnel is a conservative estimate provided by knowledgeable internal sources in the Department and corroborated in interviews conducted for this study. The actual number is likely to be higher.

<sup>12</sup> The Diversity Commitment Team's (undated) mission statement states, "The San Diego Police Department's Diversity Commitment is dedicated to uniting and strengthening our organization by supporting an environment where differences are valued" (Internal Affairs document obtained by study authors.). The Department's general vision and mission statement identifies eight principal values: human life, crime fighting, loyalty, fairness, ethics, valuing people, open communication, and diversity. In defining "valuing people," "open communication," and "diversity," the statement reads, "We will treat each other with dignity and respect, protecting the rights and well-being of individuals...We will listen to one another's opinions and concerns...We appreciate one another's differences and recognize that our unique skills, knowledge, abilities and backgrounds bring strength and caring to our organization." (Document provided by Internal Affairs personnel to study authors).

<sup>13</sup> Total SDPD EEO complaint statistics (formal and informal), 1995-2000: 1995: 99 complaints; 1996: 83 complaints; 1997: 90 complaints; 1998: 90 complaints; 1999: 87 complaints; 2000: 79 complaints. Data provided to study authors by Sergeant Natalie Stone of the San Diego Police Department.

<sup>14</sup> Of course, some women are members of both groups.