

LGBT+ Concealed Carry Rates Before and After the Pulse Nightclub Shooting

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Abstract

The Center for Homicide Research conducted a study at the 2017 Twin Cities Pride Festival in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This study assessed concealed carry rates among LGBT+ individuals before and after the Pulse Nightclub shooting. The assessments made in this study also considered self-defense needs within the LGBT+ community. This study found that nearly half of LGBT+ participants have been a victim of violence. Most of these participants have obtained weapons because of these acts of violence. This included firearm holders with concealed carry permits as well as alternative weapons. The CHR study considered relations, both historical and current, between the LGBT+ community and law enforcement. This study also countered common political perceptions that tend to deem LGBT+ individuals as being pacifistic and liberal in relation to firearm ownership and concealed carry permits. Another finding from this study showed that some LGBT+ participants have already joined, or would consider joining, pro-firearm organizations. Lastly, high impact, low frequency events were found to affect concealed carry rates within the LGBT+ community. These events have changed LGBT+ individuals' perceptions of general safety and thus their self-defense tactics. These tactics can increase homicide prevention and promote safety for all individuals.

Keywords: Homicide Prevention, LGBTQIA+, Pulse Nightclub Shooting, Concealed Carry, Alternative Weapons

LGBT+ Concealed Carry Rates Before and After the Pulse Nightclub Shooting

Throughout history, individuals within the LGBT+ community have been victims of multiple types of violence and crime including homicide. With events such as the Stonewall uprising and the UpStairs Lounge fire, which killed over 30 LGBT+ individuals, violence toward this community has existed for decades (Camina, 2017; Duberman, 1993). Recently, there have been similar accounts of homicidal violence against this community with events such as the Pulse Nightclub shooting in June 2016. Of all homicides committed against LGBT+ individuals, 15.8% are hate crimes (Drake, 2016, p. 42). While individuals within the LGBT+ community may not always be in direct danger, a stigma surrounding sexual minority groups tend to result in the need to protect oneself (Volokh, 2009, p. 209). Despite this, little to no research has been conducted into the actual means of self-defense exercised by LGBT+ individuals. This includes assessing firearm ownership and its use within the LGBT+ community.

The Center for Homicide Research's primary goal is to prevent homicide, especially within marginalized communities, through empirical research. LGBT+ individuals are more frequent targets for random violent instances including homicide (Park & Mykhyalshyn, 2016). Concealed carry permits and alternative weapon ownership is one method that can further prevent these instances of violence. Stallard (2016) stated that "if you're [LGBT+] you cannot hope that laws will protect you... Orlando is proof you could bleed to death in the time it takes for [police] to stop the shooter." Despite the need for further examination of this subject, research on it has been seldom conducted. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has been barred from conducting any firearm-related research after a bill ended funding for the topic in 1997 (Barzilay, Johnson, & Mohny, 2016). Additionally, organizations such as the Pink Pistols have been formed so LGBT+ individuals have the opportunity to arm themselves; however, there is still a distinct lack of communication occurring on this matter. The National Rifle Association (NRA) and the Pink Pistols have not published any work on concealed carry permits within the LGBT+ community. A notable amount of research has been completed that analyzes the change in firearm sales after mass shootings; however, there is no comprehensive tally of firearm sales in the United States.¹ After the 2016 Pulse Nightclub shooting, firearm stores saw a change in customer demographic that showed an increase in LGBT+ individuals (Staff, 2016). Multiple groups offered free concealed carry courses for LGBT+ individuals after the Pulse shooting (O'Brien, 2016). Conducting this research provides an indication of the feelings of safety, or lack thereof, experienced by the LGBT+ community regarding firearms and concealed carry permits, which has never been done prior.

¹ For complete statistics on concealed carry permits in the state of Minnesota, see the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension's Annual Report at: <https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/bca/bca-divisions/administrative/Pages/firearms.aspx>

Methodology

The Center for Homicide Research study (which will be referred to as “the CHR study” for the remainder of this paper) was created and conducted by the Center for Homicide Research staff. The survey instrument was constructed to assess the perception of firearm ownership and concealed carry permit holding within the LGBT+ community (see Appendix A for complete survey instrument). The survey was administered to voluntary participants by Center for Homicide Research staff at the 2017 Twin Cities Pride Festival which was one year and two weeks after the Pulse Nightclub shooting. This took place over two, eight-hour work days. After confirming participants were 18 years of age or older, they would sign a consent form, complete the survey, and return it to staff (see Appendix B for full consent form). The survey was then counter-signed by staff and filed as complete.

All the completed surveys were reviewed to confirm that the consent forms had been signed and that all participants were of a usable age. The survey answers were coded into a data set using a standardized codebook. The data was entered into PSPP for statistical analysis. Data was analyzed using cross tabulation and frequency descriptive statistics. This is because the majority of the data was nominal. Jenks Natural Breaks Optimization Method was used to group the number of participants by zip codes using QGIS (see Appendix C). The independent variable in the CHR study was the time surrounding the Pulse Nightclub shooting. The dependent variables based on the LGBT+ community included: concealed carry rates, firearm ownership rates, and type of alternative self-defense methods. Concealed carry, specifically in Minnesota, refers to the act of legally carrying one’s firearm on their person in public. In Minnesota, one does not have to conceal their firearm while they carry as they may have to in other states². This differs from possession and ownership of a firearm which does not necessarily allow one to have their firearm on their person in specific spaces.

Participants

Of the total participants, 27 did not disclose their age which resulted in 1,081 usable participants. Age was required in the CHR study because one must be 18 years of age to legally own a firearm in Minnesota, where the study took place. The participants were part of a voluntary sample from the 2017 Twin Cities Pride Festival. The festival has had an annual attendance of 400,000 to 500,000 people consistently over the past five years (Van Denburg, 2011; Birkey, 2012; Raddatz, 2016; Wood, 2016). Of the participants in this study, 84.0% were Minnesota residents; most of which were based in the Twin Cities Metropolitan area (see Appendix C for distribution of participants). The most represented racial or ethnic group in this survey was White or Caucasian at 76.2% of participants. Mixed race or multiracial participants made up 6.8% of participants, 5.8% identified as African American or Black, 3.8% identified as Latinx or Hispanic, 3.7% identified as Asian or as Pacific Islander, 2.2% identified as Native American, and 1.6% identified as some other race or ethnicity. This racial breakdown mirrored the Minnesota demographics based on the 2010 United States Census Bureau data (White or

² Information regarding concealed carry permit laws in the state of Minnesota can be found under Minn. Stat. §624.714 (2017).

Caucasian: 85.3%, African American or Black: 5.2%, Latinx or Hispanic: 4.7%, Asian or Pacific Islander: 4.0%, and Native American: 1.1%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 84 years of age and the average age of participants was 34 years of age. This aligns with the national average which is 37.9 years of age (CIA, 2016).

Participants came from a range of sexual orientation and gender identities. Of the survey participants, 59.5% were of the LGBT+ community while the rest of the participants were heterosexual and cisgender. Of the total participants, 61.0% identified as female. Within this study, 14.1% of participants identified as gay, 13.4% as lesbian, 16.8% as bisexual, 2.0% as asexual, 6.0% as pansexual, 4.0% as queer, and 2.8% as some other sexual orientation. Of the participants who did not identify as cisgender, 1.2% identified as trans* men, 1.0% identified as trans* women, 0.7% identified as Two Spirit, 1.1% identified as agender, 3.5% identified as nonbinary, and 1.6% identified as some other gender identity. LGBT+ refers to the community of individuals who identify as any gender or sexual orientation that is not the combination of cisgender and heterosexual. This also includes individuals who do not identify with any gender or sexual orientation at all. Trans* is a person who does not identify with the assigned biological sex they were given at birth including, but not limited to: transgender, transsexual, Two Spirit, nonbinary, non-gender conforming, and gender queer folks. The '*' in this case indicates a larger grouping of individuals.

Measurements

This questionnaire focused on multiple reasons an LGBT+ individual either would or would not obtain a concealed carry permit (see Appendix A for original survey). This survey had 32 multiple choice questions which were all closed answer. Some questions were based on surveys previously administered by the Center for Homicide Research³. The margin of error for this study was $\pm 3.0\%$.

Results

Table 1. Firearm Ownership Rates

	All participants (N = 1,078)	LGBT+ participants (N = 642)	Heterosexual participants (N = 436)
Firearm Owners	119 (11.0%)	59 (9.2%)	60 (13.8%)
Self-Defense	31 (30.4%)	15 (31.3%)	16 (29.6%)
Fear of Government and Law Enforcement	1 (1.0%)	1 (2.1%)	0
Fear of Hate Crimes	2 (2.0%)	2 (4.2%)	0
Part of Employment	1 (1.0%)	1 (2.1%)	0
Exercise your Rights	4 (4.0%)	2 (4.2%)	2 (3.7%)
Hunting and Recreational Use	50 (49.0%)	23 (47.9%)	27 (50.0%)
Other	13 (12.8%)	4 (8.3%)	9 (16.7%)
Not Firearm Owners	826 (76.6%)	497 (77.4%)	329 (75.5%)
Not necessary to own	494 (64.1%)	282 (61.2%)	212 (68.4%)
Fear of judgement from others	8 (1.0%)	3 (0.7%)	5 (1.6%)
Risk of being hurt by law enforcement	24 (3.1%)	16 (3.5%)	8 (2.6%)
Possibility of firearm being used against you	76 (9.9%)	55 (11.9%)	21 (6.8%)
Do not believe in the right to bear arms	67 (8.7%)	41 (8.9%)	26 (8.4%)
Other	101 (13.1%)	63 (13.7%)	38 (12.3%)
Future Firearm Owners	133 (12.3%)	86 (13.4%)	47 (10.8%)
Self-Defense	60 (63.2%)	35 (58.3%)	25 (71.4%)
Fear of Government and Law Enforcement	2 (2.1%)	2 (3.3%)	0
Fear of Hate Crimes	6 (6.3%)	4 (6.7%)	2 (5.7%)
Exercise your Rights	10 (10.5%)	6 (10.0%)	4 (11.4%)
Hunting and Recreational Use	12 (12.6%)	8 (13.3%)	4 (11.4%)
Other	5 (5.3%)	5 (8.3%)	0

Table 1 shows firearm ownership rates among all participants, LGBT+ participants, and heterosexual participants.

*Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

³ Previous studies from the Center for Homicide Research can be found at: www.homicidecenter.org

Of LGBT+ survey participants, 68.2% have discharged a firearm. Of LGBT+ firearm owners, 67.9% never carry their weapon. This is due to the fact that most firearms owned by LGBT+ participants are used primarily for hunting and recreational use. At the time of the survey, two LGBT+ participants were carrying their weapon. Firearm laws and concealed carry permit rights were familiar to 61.0% of LGBT+ firearm owners. Of LGBT+ participants, 10.1% would consider joining the NRA. Of these participants, 26.2% were firearm owners, 32.3% were not firearm owners, and 41.5% were planning on becoming a firearm owner. Three participants were current members of the NRA and owned firearms. No survey participants were members of the Pink Pistols; however, 12.0% would consider joining, 41.9% would not consider joining, and 46.1% were unfamiliar with the group.

In order to analyze the Pulse Nightclub shooting as an independent variable of firearm ownership, participants were asked how recently they had obtained a firearm. Of the 32 participants who obtained a firearm since June of 2016, 61.3% were LGBT+. Of these owners, 28.6% were first time owners. The main purposes behind obtaining these firearms were 47.1% for self-defense and 35.3% for hunting and recreational use. Lastly, 32.9% of LGBT+ participants stated that the Pulse Nightclub shooting influenced their decisions regarding firearms and concealed carry permits mentioned in the survey.

Table 2. Concealed Carry Permit Holder Rates

	All participants (N = 1,055)	LGBT+ participants (N = 633)	Heterosexual participants (N = 422)
Concealed Carry Permit Holders	40 (3.8%)	20 (3.2%)	20 (4.7%)
Self-Defense	21 (61.8%)	11 (61.1%)	10 (62.5%)
Fear of Government and Law Enforcement	1 (2.9%)	1 (5.6%)	0
Fear of Hate Crimes	2 (5.9%)	2 (11.1%)	0
Part of Employment	1 (2.9%)	1 (5.6%)	0
Exercise your Rights	6 (17.7%)	2 (11.1%)	4 (25.0%)
Other	3 (8.8%)	1 (5.6%)	2 (12.5%)
Not Concealed Carry Permit Holders	861 (81.6%)	508 (80.3%)	353 (83.7%)
Not necessary or want to own	696 (86.7%)	403 (84.8%)	293 (89.3%)
Too much work or time to get	37 (4.6%)	26 (5.5%)	11 (3.4%)
Too dangerous as a weapon to self and others	19 (2.4%)	12 (2.5%)	7 (2.1%)
Illegal to carry a firearm (felon)	3 (0.4%)	1 (0.2%)	2 (0.6%)
Other	48 (6.0%)	34 (7.2%)	15 (4.6%)
Future Concealed Carry Permit Holders	154 (14.6%)	105 (16.6%)	49 (11.6%)
Self-Defense	85 (75.9%)	54 (73.0%)	31 (81.6%)
Fear of Government and Law Enforcement	3 (2.7%)	3 (4.1%)	0
Fear of Hate Crimes	5 (4.5%)	4 (5.4%)	1 (2.6%)
Exercise your Rights	13 (11.6%)	8 (10.8%)	5 (13.2%)
Other	6 (5.4%)	5 (6.8%)	1 (2.6%)

Table 2 shows concealed carry permit holder rates among all participants, LGBT+ participants, and heterosexual participants.

*Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Participants had obtained a concealed carry permit between 13 years ago and two months ago. Of LGBT+ participants, 6.3% believed that concealed carry permits improve relations with law enforcement, 48.5% believed permits worsen these relations, 9.1% believed there is no effect, and 36.1% were unsure. Also, LGBT+ participants were questioned on whether concealed carry permits affect crime rates. Of LGBT+ participants, 41.3% believed permits increase crime, 14.1% believed permits decrease crime, 13.2% believed there is no effect, and 31.4% were unsure.

Table 3. Alternative Weapons Ownership Rates

	All participants (N = 1,070)	LGBT+ participants (N = 637)	Heterosexual participants (N = 433)
Alternative Weapon Carriers	441 (41.2%)	291 (45.7%)	150 (34.6%)
Knives	214 (20.0%)	159 (25.0%)	55 (12.7%)
Irritant Spray	259 (24.2%)	159 (25.0%)	100 (23.1%)
Brass Knuckles	20 (1.9%)	11 (1.7%)	9 (2.1%)
Stun Gun	56 (5.2%)	40 (6.3%)	16 (3.7%)
Other	88 (8.2%)	63 (9.9%)	25 (5.8%)
Not Alternative Weapon Carriers	629 (58.8%)	346 (54.3%)	283 (65.4%)

Table 3 shows alternative weapon ownership rates among all participants, LGBT+ participants, and heterosexual participants.

*Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Table 4. Relationships with Violence

	All participants (N = 1,015)	LGBT+ participants (N = 604)	Heterosexual participants (N = 411)
Victim of Violence	467 (46.0%)	311 (51.5%)	156 (38.0%)
Firearm violence	53 (5.2%)	34 (5.6%)	19 (4.3%)
Alternative Weapon violence	65 (6.4%)	45 (7.5%)	20 (4.9%)
Physical violence	286 (28.2%)	196 (32.5%)	90 (21.9%)
Sexual violence	291 (28.7%)	213 (35.3%)	78 (19.0%)
Domestic violence	187 (18.4%)	133 (22.1%)	54 (13.1%)
Law enforcement violence	36 (3.6%)	22 (3.6%)	14 (3.4%)
Not a Victim of Violence	548 (54.0%)	293 (48.5%)	255 (62.0%)

Table 4 shows rates of violence experienced by all participants, LGBT+ participants, and heterosexual participants.

*Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Of LGBT+ participants, 80.0% knew individuals who had been victims of violence. Of these victims, 48.3% were family members of the participant, 59.5% were friends, and 37.4% were acquaintances. Statistics which compare Tables 1 through 4 can be found in Appendix D.

Discussion

Considering LGBT+ Victims of Violence and Their Role

As there are many types of violence, there are also many motives behind violence. Homophobia is a key motive behind violence that the LGBT+ community faces. It is also one of the most dangerous motivators of violence (Chakraborti, N., & Garland, J., 2009, p. 63-64). Violence caused by homophobia is labeled as a hate crime. Hate crimes are defined as “crimes that manifest evidence of prejudice based on race, religion, sexual orientation or ethnicity” (Perry, 2001, p. 7). Around 20% of hate crimes are due to sexual orientation and gender identity biases, most relating to biases against gay men and trans* individuals (FBI, 2015). While the FBI deems the Pulse Nightclub shooting as a terroristic attack, the definition of a hate crime mirrors the shooting (Goldman, 2016). The offender in this situation targeted a certain group of people that resulted in numerous deaths (Grimson, 2016).

Violence comes in many forms. The CHR study asked about the types of violence that may have occurred in the participant’s life. The types of violence listed in the study included: firearm, alternative weapon, physical, sexual, domestic, and law enforcement violence. Of LGBT+ survey participants, 51.5% have been victims of violence. Sexual violence was the most common form of violence experienced at 35.3%. This was closely followed by physical violence at 32.5%. These types of violence when directed toward sexual orientation or gender identity tend to cause the victim to suffer from symptoms similar to those of posttraumatic stress disorder

(Dworkin, 2002, p. 9). These symptoms tend to also last longer (Dworkin, 2002, p. 9). Though the survey participants were not specifically asked about their mental health, they disclosed their opinions of violence which can lead to suggestions about their fear. The fear of violence reoccurring is a motive for some individuals to carry weapons for self-defense purposes. This study found that 58.7% of LGBT+ participants who have been a victim of violence carry an alternative weapon for self-defense. Similarly, of the participants that have not been a victim of violence 68.6% do not carry an alternative weapon for self-defense. Of LGBT+ participants who have been a victim of violence, 8.0% own a firearm while 4.2% hold a concealed carry permit.

Examination of Alternative Weapons

From the 2017 Pride Festival, 49.3% of LGBT+ survey participants do not use any type of weapon for self-defense. Of LGBT+ participants, 9.2% owned a firearm with 47.9% for the main purpose of hunting or recreational use. Of LGBT+ participants, 3.2% hold a concealed carry permit for self-defense. Alternative weapons include: knives, irritant spray (pepper spray or Mace), stun gun (Taser), brass knuckles, and other non-lethal weapons used for protection. These alternative weapons are carried by 45.7% of the LGBT+ population. In the Stanford Law Review (2009), Volokh explains why most people in the United States do not have lethal self-defense weapons such as firearms. These reasons include: religious or ethical beliefs, the emotional inability to use the weapon, the fear of killing or hurting an innocent bystander, the fear of the weapon being misused under non-self-defense interactions, and the inability to own a firearm due to legality reasons (Volokh, 2009, p. 207-208). Of LGBT+ participants who do not own a firearm, the main reason for this includes: 11.9% because of the possibility of the firearm being turned on them, 8.9% because they do not believe in the right to bear arms, and 0.7% from fear of being judged by others.

Of LGBT+ participants, knives and irritant sprays were the most common forms of alternative weapon carried, each at 25.0%. Irritant spray is a nonlethal weapon that “temporarily disable[s] people by irritating the respiratory system and the eyes” (Volokh, 2009, p. 205-206). Mark Steiger, President of the Minnesota Pink Pistols, recommends that, “pepper spray is probably the best option if a gun isn't available. It'll slow down or stop an attack and give you some time to get away and get help.” In the Seattle Pacific University shooting in June 2014, a school safety monitor successfully stopped a shooter with pepper spray (Green, 2017). Similarly, the presence of an alternative weapon, such as irritant spray at the Pulse Nightclub shooting, could have stopped or slowed down the shooter. Irritant sprays are publicly known to be the most effective type of self-defense weapon because they are easier to carry concealed due to their size (Volokh, 2009, p. 205-206). They are easy to accurately use, and often will not result in death of the offender or the victim (Volokh, 2009, p. 205-206). Range and blow-back are faults that should also be considered, compared to firearms which are more lethal (Volokh, 2009, p. 205-206).

Knives for defensive weapons are almost always classified as lethal weapons that are designed to stab or slash, but are too short to be swords (Kopel, 2013, p. 2). There are more laws and regulations on carrying knives; however, most households own knives even if they are not

for the sole purpose of self-defense (Kopel, 2013, p. 3). The CHR study states that 30.5% of LGBT+ firearm owners often choose knives over other alternative weapons. For the individuals who cannot or do not wish to own a firearm, irritant sprays and knives can be considered the most effective options for self-defense.

Law Enforcement and the LGBT+ Community

A well-known set of events where law enforcement mistreatment was apparent against the LGBT+ community were the Stonewall Riots in New York City. In 1969, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms raided the Stonewall Inn gay club for not having proper labels on alcoholic beverages in the bar (Duberman, 1993, p. 194). Also in 1969, nine states reformed their sodomy laws. Sodomy is any form of sexual penetration that is not penile-vaginal. In the case of *Bowers v Hardwick*, the Georgia District Court originally ruled in favor of the state; the Georgia statute made acts of homosexuality with an adult male in the “bedroom of his home” unconstitutional (*Bowers v Hardwick*, 1986). These reforms resulted in the criminalization of gay men and indirectly discriminated against LGBT+ individuals (ACLU, 2017). Prior to these reforms, sodomy laws only criminalized people in cases of sexual assault, child rape, public sex, and sex with animals (ACLU, 2017). This idea was supported by federal law enforcement who used these laws to legally justify discrimination against LGBT+ individuals (ACLU, 2017). The *Bowers v Hardwick* ruling was overturned in 2003 in *Lawrence v Texas* which ruled that illegalizing specific sexual acts between consensual adults in the privacy of a home is unconstitutional (*Lawrence v Texas*, 2003).

In the CHR study, 3.6% of LGBT+ participants had been victims of law enforcement violence. This study also found that 3.5% of LGBT+ participants had not considered obtaining a firearm for self-defensive purposes due to a fear of law enforcement officers. Similarly, when asked if concealed carry permits impacted police relations, 6.3% of LGBT+ participants believed that the permits improve relations, while 48.5% believed these permits worsen relations. Of LGBT+ participants, 36.1% were unsure how permits affected police relations, and 9.1% felt there was no impact. The survey was conducted within miles of the July 2016 death of Philando Castile⁴, a concealed carry permit holder, which potentially impacted these results.

A report from the Williams Institute of Law at the University of California, Los Angeles stated that, “discrimination and harassment by law enforcement officers based on sexual orientation and gender identity continues to be pervasive throughout the United States” (Mallory, Hasenbush, & Sears, 2015, p. 2). This study also found that of the LGBT+ individuals stopped by law enforcement, 48% reported that they experienced police misconduct (Mallory, et al., 2015, p. 3). This could be affecting crime rates as well as concealed carry rates. When asked how concealed carry permits affect crime rates in the CHR study, 41.3% of LGBT+ participants believed they increased crime rates, while 14.1% believed they decreased rates. Of LGBT+ participants, 13.2% believed concealed carry had no effect on crime rates, and 31.4% were unsure of any effect.

⁴ Philando Castile was a 32-year-old Black man who was shot and killed in Falcon Heights, Minnesota in July 2016 (Hardeman, Medina, Kozhimannil, 2016).

High Impact, Low Frequency Events, and Their Effect on the LGBT+ Community

Events that have a large effect on individuals but rarely happen are known as high impact, low frequency events. These events can have negative psychological and emotional effects on victims and the community. In 2016, Liz Margolies, psychotherapist and founder of the National LGBT Cancer Network, stated that the Pulse Nightclub shooting “may also produce long-term mental health effects” (Taylor, 2016). These events can happen to all types of individuals, with various types of weapons, and have varying motives (i.e., hate crimes or terroristic attacks). For example, on June 24th, 1973, a fire was set in the UpStairs Lounge gay bar in New Orleans, Louisiana. The fire killed 32 people and injured 15 more making this the “largest gay mass murder in U.S. history” for 43 years until the Pulse Nightclub shooting (Camina, 2017). On June 12th, 2016, 49 people were shot and killed and 53 others were injured at Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Florida (Grimson, Wyllie, & Fieldstadt, 2016). While it is a felony to carry a firearm in a nightclub that serves alcohol in Florida (Fla. Stat. § 790.06(12) (2017)), the presence of a concealed carry permit holder may have potentially changed the outcome of the Pulse Nightclub shooting to result in fewer deaths. On the contrary, if a concealed carry permit holder would have been present at the UpStairs Lounge fire, the fire arguably would still have taken place.

When a group is targeted and victimized as described above, psychologists tend to see a major decline in mental health (Mays & Cochran, 2001, p. 1874). Sexual minorities are also at a greater risk for increased levels of depression and suicidality after they experience this type of victimization (Mays & Cochran, 2001, p.1874). Instances such as the Pulse Nightclub shooting and the UpStairs Lounge fire leave lasting impacts not only on the victims of the event but also the community. The aftermath of high impact, low frequency events tend to result in similar effects. Some individuals may feel threatened and unsafe after these brutal attacks while others may feel a sense of community strength. Different communities may be torn apart. For example, after the September 11th attack on the Twin Towers in New York City, the Muslim community was stereotyped and socially chastised (Freedman, 2012).

When individuals feel threatened or unsafe, there can be an increase in the potential for self-defense measures to be taken. The CHR study found 32.9% of LGBT+ individuals’ thoughts on firearms and concealed carry were influenced by the Pulse Nightclub shooting. In fact, 61.3% of participants who obtained a firearm since the Pulse shooting identified as LGBT+. While all individuals will react differently to high impact, low frequency events, this study found that the Pulse Nightclub shooting played a role in the perception of self-defense and overall safety for the LGBT+ individuals surveyed.

Political Perceptions on LGBT+ Concealed Carry Usage

The Pulse Nightclub shooting resulted in statements from political figures and caused an increase in conversation about gun control in the United States; however, this did not translate to a change in public policy. United States Senator from Florida, Marco Rubio (R), spoke of the shooter saying he, “targeted the gay community because of the views that exist in the radical Islamic community about the gay community” (Green, 2016). Vice President at the time of the shooting, Joe Biden (D), said “the violence is not normal, and the targeting of our lesbian, gay,

bisexual, and transgender Americans is evil and abhorrent” (Green, 2016). President of the Human Rights Campaign, Chad Griffin, brought up the topic of gun control when he said “let’s not forget that what made this hate so deadly—is that it’s still far too easy for dangerous people to get their hands on guns in our country” (Green, 2016). Even with this considered, gun control policies have been unable to make their way through the Florida legislature. While over 20 pieces of firearm legislation were proposed in Florida after the Pulse Nightclub shooting, only three were passed (Larson & Sherman, 2017).

Historically, the LGBT+ community has been perceived as liberal, pacifistic, and anti-firearm by much of society (Highleyman, 2004, p. 22; Seidman, 1998, p. 49). The CHR study examined actual opinions of a portion of the LGBT+ community. This study found that 19.8% of LGBT+ individuals surveyed at the 2017 Twin Cities Pride Festival either had a concealed carry permit or were considering obtaining one. Pro-firearm organizations, such as the NRA, are often aligned with the conservative ideals that the LGBT+ community are not; however, this study found that 10.6% of LGBT+ participants are either members or would consider joining the NRA. The Pink Pistols is an alternative pro-firearm rights organization focused on sexual minority groups following the death of Matthew Shepard⁵. None of LGBT+ participants in this study were members of the Pink Pistols; however, 12.0% of them responded that they would consider joining the organization.

Heterosexual Perspectives

Although the CHR study was focused on the LGBT+ community, there were 40.5% heterosexual, cisgender participants. These participants will be referred to as heterosexual for the remainder of this section. Heterosexual participants made up 50.4% of firearm owners and 50.0% of concealed carry permit holders in this study. This study found a similarity in the perceptions of firearm ownership and concealed carry permit holding between the heterosexual and LGBT+ communities. Of the firearm owners, 50.0% of heterosexual and 47.9% of LGBT+ firearm owners stated hunting and recreation as their main reason for owning a firearm. Regarding self-defense purposes, this study found heterosexual individuals to own firearms for personal safety less often than their LGBT+ counterparts. This also applies to concealed carry permit holders.

Both groups held a concealed carry permit for the main purpose of self-defense. Secondary reasons for holding a concealed carry permit were different for both groups. Heterosexual participants held their permit in order to “exercise their rights” while LGBT+ participants held their permit due to a “fear of hate crimes.”⁶ Heterosexual participants were less likely to have an alternative weapon for self-defense at 34.6% compared to LGBT+ participants at 45.7%. The types of alternative weapons carried by each group was also different. Heterosexual participants chose to carry more non-lethal weaponry such as irritant spray compared to lethal weapons such as knives, which LGBT+ participants carried more often.

⁵ Matthew Shepard was a 21-year-old gay male who was murdered by two men in Wyoming in October 1998 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2009).

⁶ Hate crimes come in many different forms. Self-defense is different than hate crime prevention. See questions 1a, 2b, and 5a in survey instrument (Appendix A.).

There were slight differences in the reported acts of violence against these two groups. Heterosexual participants were roughly 14% less likely to have experienced some type of violence than LGBT+ participants. Sexual and physical violence were the most common forms of violence experienced among all CHR study participants. Also, they knew a similar number of victims of violence, most commonly friends of the survey participants. Lastly, heterosexual and LGBT+ participants responded similarly in relation to being a victim of law enforcement violence, which was roughly 3%; however, marginalized and minority communities, on average, faced this type of violence more often. The study found that 68.2% of LGBT+ victims of violence were people of color. Jason Sole, the Minneapolis NAACP President, stated in a phone interview with the Center for Homicide Research that marginalized communities “see this different treatment all the time; there are things we have to worry about that our counterparts do not. We are often treated as subjects of inferiority when it comes to relations with law enforcement.”

In relation to the Pulse Nightclub shooting, heterosexual participants were less likely to be affected than the LGBT+ participants. No heterosexual participants owned a firearm or a concealed carry permit for fear of hate crimes compared to the 4.2% of LGBT+ individuals that own a firearm for this purpose. There were also 11.1% that have a concealed carry permit for the same purpose. Lastly, only 18.3% of heterosexual participants’ answers to the survey were influenced by the Pulse Nightclub shooting compared to 32.9% of LGBT+ participants⁷.

Assessment of Future LGBT+ Violence Prevention

Minnesota State Senator Scott Dibble (D), stated during an interview with the Center for Homicide Research that while “the movement to enact equality has been a tough road over many decades,” he is optimistic because change is possible with acts of “intentionality and passion,” which is exactly what the LGBT+ community is exhibiting in these times. According to the Pew Research Center, 92% of LGBT+ adults believe that society has become more accepting over the last ten years and will continue to be more accepting in the next decade (Drake, 2013).

To prevent violence and homicide in the LGBT+ community, a possible first step is learning how to be an effective bystander. Five actions that an effective bystander may take include: notice the situation, understand it is an emergency, develop a feeling of personal responsibility, believe that you have the skills to help, and reach a conscious decision to help (Fischer, 2011, p. 518). An emergency is not always a dangerous life-or-death situation; it can be homophobic slurs or biases that occur in everyday life. Being an effective bystander is one option people can take toward preventing violence and homicide against the LGBT+ community; however, more political and social change needs to occur in order to prevent these homophobic actions.

Another step that could prevent future violence against the LGBT+ community is expanding this research. In order to do this, current limitations must be acknowledged. These limitations include: the size of specific population subsets and the fact that almost all participants

⁷ While the majority of the victims of the Pulse Nightclub shooting were of LGBT+ identifying sexual orientations, there were seven victims that identified as heterosexual (Center for Homicide Research, 2017).

were residents of the Metropolitan Minneapolis-based area (see Appendix C for distribution of participants). Also, 61.0% of the participants identified as female. The data from this study is more representative of certain gender and geographic communities than others. Over more time, this study could be replicated to see if rates of firearm or weapon ownership change amongst LGBT+ individuals.

Conclusion

The primary goal of the Center for Homicide Research is to prevent homicide, especially within marginalized communities, through empirical research. This paper assessed to what extent LGBT+ individuals exercise the second amendment right to carry a firearm. The study also identified a sample of LGBT+ individuals' experiences with violence and how that affected their self-defense methods. Generally, alternative self-defense weapons were carried more often than firearms. Historical and current treatment of LGBT+ people by law enforcement was discussed and analyzed in this study. The current impact that law enforcement has on the LGBT+ community was found to be minimal in this study; however, it reinforced the fact that minority and marginalized communities have a higher probability of experiencing violence. Concurrently, victims of violence tend to feel a need for self-protection after they have been exposed to violence. Despite the overarching political perception of firearm ownership and use in the United States, political affiliation was found to have no association between LGBT+ and heterosexual individuals in relation to concealed carry rates or self-defense weapon ownership in this study.


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Appendix A.



Concealed Carry Survey

(Please Check Only 1 Option for Each Question, unless noted)

1. Do you own a firearm?

☐ Yes (1)
☐ No (2)
☐ No, but planning on getting one (3)

1a. If YES/planning on getting one, what is your main reason for becoming a firearm owner?

☐ General Safety/Self-Defense (1)
☐ Fear of Government/Law Enforcement (2)
☐ Fear of Hate Crimes (3)
☐ Part of Employment (4)
☐ Exercise your Rights (5)
☐ Hunting/Recreational Use (6)
☐ Other (88)

1b. If NO to question 1, what is your main reason for not becoming a firearm owner?

☐ Not necessary to own a firearm (1)
☐ Fear of judgement from others (2)
☐ Risk of being hurt by Law Enforcement (3)
☐ Possibility of firearm being used against you (4)
☐ Do not believe in the right to bear arms (5)
☐ Other (88)

IF YOU DO NOT OWN A FIREARM, SKIP TO QUESTION 5.

2. Have you obtained a firearm since June 2016?

☐ Yes (1)
☐ No (2)

2a. If yes, was the firearm that you obtained since June 2016 the first firearm you have ever owned?


☐ Yes, I did not own a firearm (1)
☐ No, I already owned a firearm (2)

2b. If yes to question 2, what is your main purpose of the firearm(s) that you obtained since June 2016?

☐ General Safety/Self-Defense (1)
☐ Fear of Government/Law Enforcement (2)
☐ Fear of Hate Crimes (3)
☐ Part of Employment (4)
☐ Exercise your Rights (5)
☐ Hunting/Recreational Use (6)
☐ Other (88)

3. How often do you carry a firearm?

☐ Always (1)
☐ Never (2)
☐ Sometimes (Select all that apply) (3)
☐ Weekdays during the day (A)
☐ Weekdays at night (B)
☐ Weekends during the day (C)
☐ Weekends at night (D)
☐ When going to certain places (E)
 please specify places: _____



Concealed Carry Survey

(Please Check Only 1 Option for Each Question, unless noted)

4. Are you currently carrying a firearm?

☐ Yes (1)
☐ No (2)
☐ No, but planning on getting one (3)

5. Do you have a concealed carry permit?

☐ Yes (1)
☐ No (2)
☐ No, but planning on getting one (3)

5a. If YES/planning on getting one, what is your main reason for becoming a concealed carry permit holder?

☐ General Safety/Self-Defense (1)
☐ Fear of Government/Law Enforcement (2)
☐ Fear of Hate Crimes (3)
☐ Part of Employment (4)
☐ Exercise your Rights (5)
☐ Other (88)

5b. If NO to question 5, what is your main reason for not becoming a concealed carry permit holder?

☐ Do not want need to concealed carry (1)
☐ Too much work to get one (2)
☐ Other: _____ (88)

6. If you are a holder, how long have you had your concealed carry permit? (Round to the nearest month)

☐ Not a Current Concealed Carry Permit Holder (0)
☐ Yes (1)
☐ No (2)

7. Have you ever shot a firearm, even once?

☐ Yes (1)
☐ No (2)

8. Do you carry any alternative weapons for defensive purposes? (Select all that apply)

☐ Knife (A)
☐ Mace/Pepper Spray (B)
☐ Brass Knuckles (C)
☐ Taser (D)
☐ Other (E)
☐ No alternative weapons (0)

9. Have you been a victim of violence?

(Select all that apply)
☐ Yes, firearm violence (A)
☐ Yes, alternative weapon violence (B)
☐ Yes, physical violence (C)
☐ Yes, sexual violence (D)
☐ Yes, domestic violence (E)
☐ Yes, Law Enforcement violence (F)
☐ No (0)
☐ Prefer Not to Answer (99)

THANK YOU!

Appendix B.



PRIDE 2017: Concealed Carry Survey Consent Form

You are invited to be in a research study assessing significance of concealed carry permits within the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Asexual (GLBTA+) community. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take the survey. This study is being conducted by the Center for Homicide Research (CHR).

Background Information:

The purpose of this survey is to explore the roles of concealed carry permits and self-defense among the GLBTA+.

Procedure:

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following: Fill out a survey about the role of concealed carry permits and firearms in your life. This survey will also explore opinions on self-defense and safety measures taken among the GLBTA+ community. Demographic information will also be asked in this survey, such as age, race, gender, etc. *You may ask to have the survey read to you, and your answers recorded by our research staff.*

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

You will be asked to include personal demographic information. Additionally, personal feelings and opinions will be recorded for study purposes. Your participation will give the CHR insight over the significance of concealed carry permits and self-defense among the community, which will aid in homicide prevention research.

Confidentiality:

Information recorded within the survey will be used for study purposes only. In the case of publication, your name will NOT be used. Names will not appear on the survey form, so your responses cannot be traced back to you. Surveys and confidentiality forms will be kept at the CHR's filing cabinets during the study's analysis and will be shredded when finished. The CHR takes great measures in ensuring and protecting confidentiality.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the CHR. You are allowed at any time in this survey to stop taking the survey and/or have the survey destroyed. You are allowed to choose to not answer any question in this survey. This is a voluntary survey, and there are no penalties for not participating in our survey. However, you must be 18 years or older to participate in this survey.

The Center for Homicide Research is a unique, volunteer-driven, non-profit organization addressing the issue of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Asexual (GLBTA+) homicide. The mission of the Center for Homicide Research is to promote greater knowledge and understanding of the unique nature of homicide through sound empirical research, critical analysis, and effective community partnerships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researchers conducting this survey are student researchers from the Center for Homicide Research.

You may ask any questions you have **now**.

If you have questions later, you may contact the researchers at 612-331-4820.

If you choose to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with the Center for Homicide Research.

You may request a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

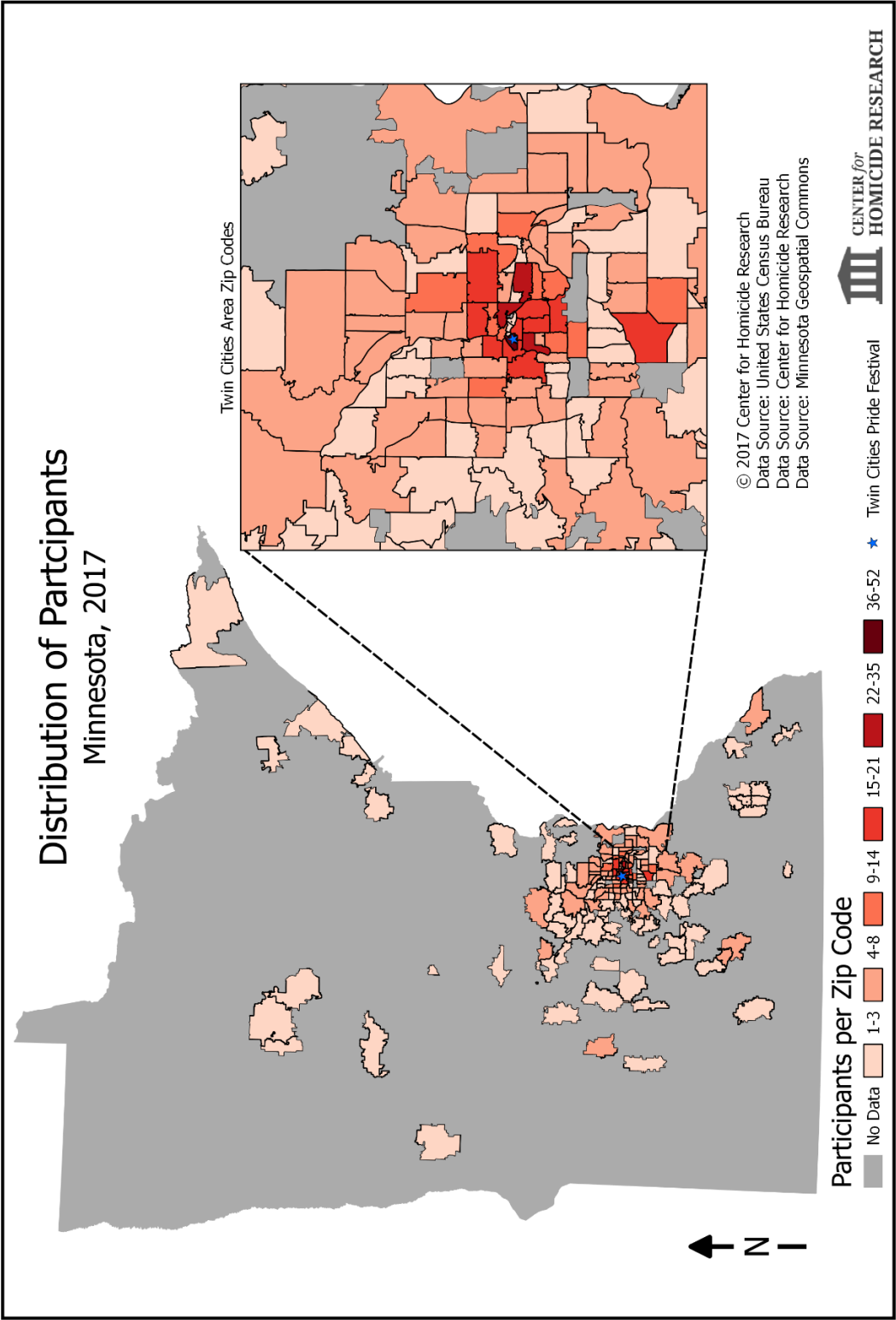
I have read the above information and am 18 years of age or older.

I have asked any questions that I have and received answers. I consent to participate in this study.

Signature _____ Date _____
Signature of Investigator _____ Date _____

**Participation in survey is not required to enter drawing

Appendix C.



Appendix D.

Table 5. Comparatives of LGBT+ Participants

	Victim of Violence	Not a Victim of Violence	Alternative Weapons Owner	Not an Alternative Weapons Owner	Concealed Carry Permit Holder	Not a Concealed Carry Permit Holder	Future Concealed Carry Permit Holder
Firearm Owner	25 (4.1%)	30 (5.0%)	27 (4.2%)	32 (5.0%)	14 (2.2%)	26 (4.1%)	18 (2.8%)
Not a Firearm Owner	237 (39.2%)	232 (38.4%)	206 (32.3%)	287 (45.1%)	3 (0.5%)	470 (74.3%)	18 (2.8%)
Future Firearm Owner	49 (8.1%)	31 (5.1%)	58 (9.1%)	27 (4.2%)	3 (0.5%)	12 (1.9%)	69 (10.9%)
Concealed Carry Permit Holder	13 (2.2%)	7 (1.2%)	11 (1.8%)	9 (1.4%)			
Not a Concealed Carry Permit Holder	231 (38.8%)	249 (41.8%)	201 (32.0%)	304 (48.4%)			
Future Concealed Carry Permit Holder	63 (10.6%)	33 (5.5%)	76 (12.1%)	27 (4.3%)			
Alternative Weapons Owner	182 (30.2%)	92 (15.3%)					
Not an Alternative Weapons Owner	128 (21.2%)	201 (33.3%)					

Table 5 compares contents of Tables 1 - 4 against each other.

*Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.