AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

CHELSEY COUCH, for the MASTER OF ARTS degree in PSYCHOLOGY, presented on APRIL 5, 2018, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: THE ROLE OF SELF-COMPASSION IN UNDERSTANDING MINORITY STRESS, GENDER ROLE STRESS, AND DEPRESSION AMONG LGBTQ+ INDIVIDUALS

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People who are marginalized based on their sexual orientation or gender identity face heightened risk of negative health and psychological outcomes compared to more privileged populations (Meyer, 1995; Hughes, Szalacha, & McNair, 2010). Previous researchers have suggested that positive coping strategies may be beneficial in reducing the high risks of negative outcomes, such as depression, associated with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) minority stress (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999, Kertzner, 2001). Moreover, certain sociocultural factors, such as gender role stress (Eisler, 1995; Eisler & Blalock, 1991; Eisler & Skidmore, 1987; Gillespie & Eisler, 1992), may influence LGBTQ+ individuals’ experience of minority stress in unique ways, but gaps in this area of the literature remain. The purpose of this study will be to examine the relationships between gender role stress, LGBT minority stress, self-compassion, and depression in a sample of LGBTQ+ adults. I will conduct regression analyses and mediation analyses to test the following main hypotheses: (a) Gender role stress will be significantly associated with LGBT minority stress, (b) LGBT minority stress will be associated with higher levels of depression symptoms, and (c) self-compassion will fully mediate the relationship between LGBT minority stress and depression.