INTERSECTING SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION: RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER DIFFERENCES AMONG LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER (LGBT) HATE CRIME VICTIMS

by

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Abstract

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Adviser: Victoria Pitts-Taylor

Drawing on intersectionality theory, hate crime studies, and feminist and sexuality research, this dissertation project employs an intersectional approach to examine race, class, and gender differences among an interview sample of 44 people who experienced violence for being perceived as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT). In contrast to previous studies of LGBT hate crime victims, which have focused on the psychological effects of bias-motivated violence, this dissertation examines the sociological components of hate crime. In particular, this dissertation builds on research questions that have been explored in the hate crime literature – specifically, how LGBT people evaluate the severity of their violent experiences and how they determine whether violence is based on their sexuality or gender identity. Results are based on semi-structured, in-depth interviews, conducted in New York City, and reveal significant differences along the lines of race, class, and gender. White gay men, for instance, generally expressed certainty as to the cause of their violent experiences, while LGBT people of color sometimes expressed uncertainty because they could not be sure whether racism had also played a role. Moreover, with regard to evaluating the severity of their violent experiences, middle-class white respondents were more likely than low-income people of color to perceive their violent experiences as severe, even though the latter

experienced more physical violence than the former. By employing an intersectional approach to examine these research questions, this dissertation augments our understanding of the ways in which LGBT people perceive their violent experiences, revealing how forms of anti-LGBT violence are linked with institutional power structures such as race, class, gender, and sexuality. Entrenched in the disciplinary crossroads of sociology, criminal justice, and feminist and sexuality studies, this dissertation suggests that the social position of LGBT people plays a significant role in structuring their experiences of hate-motivated violence.

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Chapter 1

Literature Review: The Emergence of Hate Crime and the Significance of Intersectionality Theory

In the United States, violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people has increasingly become understood as a serious societal problem, worthy of scholarly attention (Berrill 1992; Cobb 2006; Comstock 1991; Herek 2009). At the same time, anti-LGBT violence has been constructed as constituting a form of hate crime (Herek, Cogan, and Gillis 2002; Jenness and Grattet 2001; Levin and McDevitt 2002). For instance, in 1996, after Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson murdered Matthew Shepard, many anti-violence activists and members of the news media constructed this violent incident as a form of hate-motivated violence (Loffreda 2001). Hate crime, broadly defined as violence motivated by bias or prejudice, has also been examined by social scientists over the last several decades (Grattet 2009; Green, McFalls, and Smith 2001; Hall 2005; Lyons 2008). Since the 1990's, hate crime research has explored the development and institutionalization of hate crime legislation (Grattet, Jenness, and Curry 1998; Jenness and Grattet 2001; McVeigh, Welch, and Bjarnason 2003). These studies have shown that social movement organizations have mobilized to define bias-motivated violence as a social problem and institutional spheres such as law enforcement, legislatures, and the courts have codified the laws (Jenness and Broad 1997; King 1998; Phillips and Grattet 2000; Soule and Earl 2001). Hate crime studies have also examined the causes and consequences of bias-motivated violence, revealing the psychological effects of hate crime and the social forces that may lead to it (Gerstenfeld

2004; Levin 2010; Lyons 2007; McDevitt, Levin, and Bennett 2002; Otis and Skinner 1996).

Studies of Hate Crime Victims: Examining the Psychological Effects of Violence

Despite the growing body of research on bias-motivated violence, studies of hate crime victims remain scant (Perry 2003a). The authoritative texts focus primarily on the causes and the social construction of hate crime (Jacobs and Potter 1998; Jenness and Grattet 2001; Levin 2010; Perry 2001). Among the few studies that have focused on victims, most have examined the psychological effects of hate crime (Craig 2002). They have shown, for example, that bias-motivated violence often contributes to symptoms associated with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) such as anxiety, anger, and despair (Herek et al. 1997; Herschberger and D'Augelli, 1995; Otis and Skinner 1996). Subsequent research has found that victims of hate crime report more trauma-related symptoms than victims of non-bias crime and non-victims (Ehrlich, Larcom, and, Purvis 1994; Herek, Gillis, and Cogan 1999; McDevitt et al. 2001; Rose and Mechanic 2002). This line of research has also distinguished among various forms of violence, and while several studies have shown that victims experience more trauma-related symptoms from physical attacks than from verbal violence and property-based crimes (D'Augelli and Grossman 2001; Herek et al. 1997, 1999), other studies suggest that verbal abuse can be as traumatic as physical violence (Boeckmann and Liew 2002; Rose and Mechanic 2002).

Psychological studies of hate crime victims have undoubtedly revealed the degree to which hate-motivated violence may have traumatic psychological effects. Nevertheless, these studies are theoretically problematic in several ways. In general,

psychological studies have suggested that the amount of trauma that victims report is largely contingent upon the type of violence they experience, indicating that hate crime may "hurt more" than other forms of violence (Iganski 2001: 626). The cumulative effect of this research implies a hierarchical ranking system, with hate-motivated physical violence usually placed toward the top and verbal violence and non-bias crime placed toward the bottom (Herek et al. 1997; McDevitt et al. 2001). These understandings of violence have brought attention to LGBT people's physically violent experiences, yet they have not been explored from a sociological or intersectional perspective.

Examining LGBT People's Violent Experiences through an Intersectional Lens

Intersectionality theory explores the ways in which systems of oppression such as race, class, gender, and sexuality simultaneously structure social relations (Collins 2000). This research project employs an intersectional approach to examine race, class, and gender differences among an interview sample of 44 LGBT people. Exploring race, class, and gender differences among LGBT people remains particularly important, as feminist and intersectionality scholarship has documented the ways that traditional research has sustained the interests of privileged groups (Crenshaw 1991; Glenn 2002; Razack 1998). This project, in contrast, expands our understanding of hate-motivated violence by providing empirical data on a range of LGBT people's violent experiences, and it augments the intersectionality literature by focusing on a form of violence – anti-LGBT hate crime – that has not been previously examined.

Previous studies of hate crime victims have typically overlooked the differences among LGBT people. Even when distinguishing among various forms of bias-motivated violence (e.g. anti-black, anti-Semitic, anti-gay), hate crime research has usually lumped

all forms of anti-LGBT violence together. This deficiency has arguably led to a homogenized portrayal of LGBT hate crime victims, with little attention focusing on the differences among them (Dunbar 2006). Indeed, previous studies have focused primarily on the experiences of white gay men, ignoring those of lesbian women, low-income people, and LGBT people of color (Dunbar 2006; Perry 2003a). As a result, these studies tend to overlook the relevance of race and social class in structuring LGBT people's violent experiences (Dunbar 2006; Moran 2000). Moreover, most hate crime research has not accounted for anti-transgender violence; many seminal works of anti-lesbian and anti-gay hate crime contain no mention of it (See Comstock 1991; Herek and Berrill 1992) and most edited volumes that examine hate-motivated violence ignore the issue entirely (See Gerstenfeld and Grant 2004; Perry 2003b). This trend is particularly troubling given the evidence that transgender people may be even more likely than lesbian women and gay men to encounter some forms of hate-motivated violence (Namaste 2006).

Studies of hate crime victims have reduced the heterogeneity of LGBT people's violent experiences by constructing broad, mutually exclusive categories of violence. A category such as "hate-motivated physical violence" includes many different types of violent behavior, all of which may differ in terms of brutality, frequency, and location. Indeed, it seems arbitrary to distinguish between some forms of violence (e.g., verbal/physical, bias-motivated/non-bias motivated) and not others (e.g., public/private, known/unknown perpetrator). One could imagine, for example, a study in which familial forms of violence were constructed as more severe than forms of stranger-based violence. My point here is not that forms of violence should be divided in more complex ways, but

that separating them inevitably ignores the variation and complexities within an individual category.

Most studies of hate crime victims have overlooked not only the differences within categories of violence but also the similarities between them. Physical and verbal violence, for example, are often interconnected and occur simultaneously, yet they have regularly been defined in dichotomous terms. Thus, in some of these psychological studies, hate crimes with both physical and verbal violence are defined solely as physical attacks (even though they are also verbal attacks).

My general argument is that this emphasis on the psychological effects of hate crime has left important sociological research questions unexplored. In what ways do people who experience hate-motivated violence make sense of their violent experiences? How do they interpret forms of hate crime differently based on their social position? And what are the ways in which they confront and resist forms of oppression? These questions of structure and agency, it seems to me, have not been addressed by studies of hate crime victims, particularly when such studies are compared with research on domestic violence (Berns 2001; Byng 1998; Purvin 2007). By focusing only on the harmful effects of bias-motivated violence, hate crime research has overlooked the ways in which victims are active and powerful in responding to their violent experiences. As I suggest throughout this dissertation, respondents involved in this research project undoubtedly confronted traumatic experiences, yet they also tried to reject the meanings that had been mapped onto them.

This dissertation project explores questions of structure and agency, with a particular emphasis on the ways in which respondents negotiated meanings of race, class,

and gender. I also examine several research questions – such as how LGBT people evaluate the severity of their violent experiences – that have already been explored in the hate crime literature (Herek, Gillis, and Cogan 1999; McDevitt et al. 2001; Rose and Mechanic 2002). Rather than using a psychological perspective, this dissertation project employs an intersectional approach to examine these research questions. By doing so, I hope to complicate hate crime scholarship, as we seem to know little about how victims' experiences of hate-motivated violence differ along the lines of race, class, and gender. Indeed, intersectionality, a theoretical framework that has been highly influential in other bodies of literature, has remained absent from studies of hate crime victims.

The Influence of Intersectionality Theory

Over the last several decades, intersectionality theory has become highly influential in gender studies, with some feminist theorists suggesting that it may be the most significant theoretical contribution of women's studies (McCall 2005). This theoretical contribution can be attributed largely to the work of black and Latina feminists (Davis 1981; Hull, Bell-Scott, and Smith 1982; Moraga and Anzaldua 1983). In its early stages, intersectionality theory was critical of feminist scholarship for generalizing from the experiences of white, middle-class women (Collins 2000; Zinn and Dill 1996). Conversely, intersectional approaches indicated that not all women experience oppression in the same way, as poor and working-class women of color, for example, confront obstacles unique to their own social position (Crenshaw 1994; Freeman 2000; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001; Razack 1998).

Intersectionality theory has also critiqued additive understandings of oppression, suggesting that institutional power structures should be viewed as overlapping rather than

additive or aggregate (Collins 2004; King 1988; Spelman 1988). The experiences of black women, for instance, cannot be understood as the cumulative effect of black men's raced experiences and white women's gendered experiences (Crenshaw 1994; hooks 1984). Instead, each of these groups confronts different forms of oppression, with black women facing oppressive experiences that neither white women nor black men must confront (Collins 2000). As aspects of individuals' identities cannot be separated from one another, intersectionality theory suggests that individuals should be viewed as whole people rather than the sum of their parts (Lorde 1984; Mann and Huffman 2005).

Although intersectional approaches have remained absent from studies of hate crime victims, they have been featured in other areas of the literature. Barbara Perry (2001), an eminent hate crime scholar, incorporates elements of intersectionality into her theoretical account of hate crime. In *In the Name of Hate: Understanding Hate Crimes*, Perry (2001) argues that traditional criminological theory has failed to account for hate-motivated violence, attributing it to anomic social conditions (Durkheim 1893, 1897). According to traditional criminology perspectives, hate crime occurs because relatively powerless individuals are unable to achieve society's goals through socially acceptable means. Perry argues that this theoretical framework cannot fully account for hate crime because perpetrators are often relatively privileged members of society. Instead, she argues that a more satisfying explanation must incorporate power relations: hate crime should be understood as a social control mechanism rooted in institutional power structures. She conceptualizes hate crime as an outgrowth of systems of oppression – as one of the ways in which perpetrators maintain social hierarchies. Perpetrators, for instance, may use racially-motivated violence to affirm white privilege, while anti-lesbian

and anti-gay violence may be employed to reinforce the subordination of women and the cultural devaluation of homosexuality (Perry 2001)[1].

Perry (2001) has advanced a persuasive sociological theory of hate crime by revealing the ways in which institutional power structures may lead to bias-motivated violence. Similarly, groundbreaking studies of organized hate groups (Blee 2002) and white supremacist discourse (Daniels 1997; Ferber 1998) have contributed to race, class, and gender scholarship. These studies have revealed the factors affecting women's involvement in racist activism (Blee 2002) and they have illustrated how white supremacist discourse reinforces patterns of social inequality (Daniels 1997; Ferber 1998). Nevertheless, while these studies have demonstrated some of the sociological dynamics of hate crime, they have focused on the causes and the perpetrators of hate-motivated violence more than the victims.

Understanding the Experiences of Domestic Violence Victims through an Intersectionality Lens

While intersectionality frameworks have been used to examine hate crime policies and perpetrators (See McPhail 2002; Perry 2001; Strolovitch 2007), they have not been utilized to explore the experiences of hate crime victims. Intersectional approaches, however, have informed many studies of domestic violence victims, particularly women who have been abused by men (Abraham 2000; Sokoloff and Dupont 2005). Research suggests that marginalized racial groups often confront a unique set of obstacles when trying to prevent domestic violence (Menjivar and Salcido 2002; Purvin 2007; Richie

[1] Hannah Arendt's (1970) classical work *On Violence* makes for an interesting companion piece here. In contrast to Perry, Arendt argues that even though violence and power seem concurrent, violence typically occurs when there is a *lack* of power or when it is slipping away. Violence, in other words, is not the ultimate expression of power, but the product of its decline.

1996). Members of oppressed groups, for example, may not report domestic violence to the police because doing so would reinforce stereotypical notions of their communities. Moreover, women of color may fear being ostracized for disclosing the abuse, feeling compelled to maintain standards of secrecy. Members of privileged groups, in contrast, are often not pressured to hide abuse in the same way (Crenshaw 1994; Rasche 1995).

Although marginalized groups of people may share some common concerns, they also differ in significant ways. For instance, black women, fearing police hostility, are often reluctant to contact law enforcement, and many immigrant women are isolated from support networks (Menjivar and Salcido 2002; Rasche 1995). Social class and sexuality also appear to shape the experiences of domestic violence victims, as many lesbian women avoid social service agencies that fail to provide services for them (Kanuha 1990; Renzetti 1992; Ristock 2002) and low-income women often find it difficult to escape abusive relationships because of economic concerns (Brandwein 1999; Dobash and Dobash 1992; Purvin 2007). Different social groups, in other words, confront their own obstacles.

Studies of domestic violence victims have also highlighted the considerable amount of variation within a particular social group. Indeed, research suggests that black women respond to domestic violence in radically different ways, which indicates that it would be reductive to homogenize their experiences (Garfield 2005; Gondolf 1998; Richie 1996). Black women, for instance, have different experiences along sexuality lines, with black lesbian women confronting different obstacles than black heterosexual women (Butler 1999; Ristock 2002). Specifically, racism in white lesbian communities

and homophobia in black heterosexual communities obstructs the ways in which black lesbian women may seek help (Kanuha 1990; Waldron 1996).

As outlined above, studies of domestic violence victims reveal that systems of oppression structure their experiences of abuse. One would expect to find similar results in terms of LGBT people's experiences of hate-motivated violence. This research project, then, is an attempt to bring some of the achievements of the domestic violence literature to studies of hate crime victims. By doing so, it augments our understanding of hate-motivated violence by revealing how LGBT people's violent experiences may differ along the lines of race, class, and gender.

The Emergence of Hate Crime

Hate crime is, of course, a recently constructed legal category that arose in response to social movement organizations; although it has meaning today, forty years ago it had none (Grattet and Jenness 2001; McVeigh, Welch, and Bjarnason 2003; Phillips and Grattet 2000). In 1978, the first hate crime law – a penalty enhancement for bias-motivated violence based on race, religion, color, or national origin – was passed in California. Several state legislature passed hate crime laws during the first half of the 1980's, but most of these laws did not gain widespread acceptance until the late 1980's. From 1987 through 1990, 18 states adopted hate crime laws, which expanded throughout the 1990's to other states and expanded to include additional protected groups of victims (Grattet, Jenness, and Curry 1998; Jenness 1999). Definitions of hate crime have varied widely by state, yet they have generally involved penalty enhancements for criminal acts that are based on a certain aspect (e.g., race or religion) of the victim's identity (Jenness and Grattet 2001). In general, statutes based on sexual orientation and gender identity

have been passed after protections based on race and religion, and hate crime laws have typically excluded misogynistic violence (Grattet, Jenness, and Curry 1998; Jenness and Broad 2004).

In 1990, the passage of the Hate Crime Statistics Act increased the data collection of bias-motivated violence, requiring the Attorney General to compile hate crime data (Nolan, Akiyama, and Berhanu 2002). Since the early 1990's, hate crime advocates have focused primarily on federalizing the laws, which perhaps culminated with The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, also known as The Matthew Shepard Act. Signed into law on October 28, 2009 by Barack Obama, the Act expanded federal hate crime law to include criminal behavior that was based on the victim's perceived gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability (Jenness and Grattet 2001; Levin 2010).

As hate crime legislation has developed and institutionalized, scholars have debated its utility. Proponents of hate crime legislation typically argue that bias-motivated violence has destructive effects on individuals (Garnets, Herek, and Levy 1990), communities (Iganski 2001), and society as a whole (Lawrence 1999; Levin and McDevitt 2002). Moreover, advocates contend that hate crime legislation helps decrease the amount of violence directed against minority groups in several ways: it improves law enforcement's sensitivity to victims (Garofalo and Martin 1993); it symbolically establishes that prejudice will not be tolerated (Lawrence 1999; Levin and McDevitt 1993); and it increases the amount of time and resources police spend investigating hate crime (Bell 2002).

Critiques of hate crime legislation typically focus on its harmful effects. Conservative opponents usually contend that hate crime legislation violates free speech protections, as perpetrators often receive longer criminal sentences because of the language they use (Jacobs and Potter 1998). As a result, critics sometimes argue that hate crime statutes punish perpetrators for "improper thinking" (Jacobs and Potter 1998: 10). In *Hate Crimes: Criminal Law and Identity Politics*, James Jacobs and Kimberly Potter (1998), two eminent critics of hate crime legislation, argue that the statutes are not a means to reduce bias-motivated violence, but a symbolic gesture designed to appease advocacy groups and political constituencies. They suggest that hate crime legislation extends from identity politics by arbitrarily establishing that certain groups (e.g. Muslim and Jewish people, gay men and lesbian women, and racial minority groups) are worthy of protection, while others (e.g. women, union members, people over a certain age) are not. Furthermore, Jacobs and Potter (1997, 1998) argue that many proponents of hate crime legislation exaggerate the pervasiveness of bias-motivated violence. Rather than viewing hate crime as epidemic, Jacobs and colleagues contend that bias-motivated violence occurs much less frequently than it has in the past (Jacobs and Henry 1996; Jacobs and Potter 1997, 1998).

In contrast to conservative critiques, progressive opponents of hate crime legislation view violence directed against minority groups as a serious social problem, but distrust the legal system to provide justice for powerless groups (Baehr 2003; Butler 1997; Conway 2002). These critiques suggest that hate crime statutes leave institutional forms of inequality unchallenged. In fact, as hate crime legislation often increases

criminal sanctions against racial minority groups and low-income people, it may reinforce the very power imbalances it is designed to ameliorate (Franklin 2002).

Much of the hate crime literature has sidestepped debates over the legislation by adopting a "value-neutral" approach. Social constructionists, in particular, have ignored arguments concerning the utility of hate crime legislation by examining its development and institutionalization (Jenness and Broad 1997; King 2008; McVeigh, Welch, and Bjarnason 2003; Phillips and Grattet 2000). This line of research suggests that the legal category of hate crime did not exist until the late 1970's, as social movement organizations and institutional actors mobilized to define bias-motivated violence as a social problem (Grattet and Jenness 2001; Hall 2005; Jacobs and Henry 1996; Jenness 1995). These studies have also shown that definitions of hate crime have changed over time and varied considerably based on location (King 2008; Wald, Button, and Rienzo 1996). Hate crime protections based on sexual orientation, for example, have differed widely across state lines and have typically been passed after those based on race and religion (Grattet, Jenness, and Curry 1998; Soule and Earl 2001). Furthermore, some groups, including women and transgender people, have typically not been protected by the statutes (Jenness and Broad 1994; McPhail and DiNitto 2005).

Research on the development and institutionalization of hate crime legislation is one of the most well-established areas of the hate crime literature. Studies examining the causes of bias-motivated violence are also substantial. Classic sociological explanations of hate crime are rooted in strain theory and Durkheimian modernization theory (Durkheim 1893; Gersetenfeld 2004; Green, McFalls, and Smith 2001). These approaches explain hate crime as resulting from anomic social conditions in which

relatively powerless individuals are unable to achieve society's goals through socially acceptable means (Gersetenfeld 2004; Merton 1957). Although economic frustrations may explain some forms of bias-motivated violence, strain theory has been criticized for being too simplistic of an explanation (Pinderhughes 1993; Perry 2001). Several empirical studies suggest that macroeconomic conditions have little effect on hate crime rates; in-migration minority patterns correlate most strongly with racially-motivated hate crime (Grattet 2009; Green, Strolovitch, and Wong 1998; Lyons 2008) and population density correlates most strongly with anti-gay violence (Green, Glaser, and Rich 1998; Green et al. 2001). Furthermore, while prejudice may contribute to bias-motivated violence, peer dynamics appear to be equally important (Franklin 2000). Still, despite these concerns with economic explanations, several studies suggest that the social disorganization of a neighborhood affects the likelihood that hate crime will occur (Grattet 2009; Lyons 2007)

Studies examining the causes of bias-motivated violence are closely tied to the literature on hate crime perpetrators. Although perpetrators vary based on the type of hate crime committed, bias-motivated violence tends to be committed by young white men who are not particularly poor and have little or no criminal record (Comstock 1991; Levin 2010). Compared with those who commit most other forms of crime, perpetrators of bias-motivated violence are more likely to use weapons, less likely to know the victim, and more likely to commit the crime in a small group (Garofalo and Martin 1993; Levin and McDevitt 1993; Messner, McHugh, and Felson 2004). With regard to anti-gay hate crime, perpetrators tend to drink more and to be more accepting of masculine ideology than their peers (Franklin 2000). Many incidents of hate-motivated violence are

considered thrill-seeking crimes in which several relatively non-prejudiced perpetrators follow a highly prejudiced leader (Byers and Crider 2002; Franklin 2000; Hamm 1993; McDevitt, Levin, and Bennett 2002). Moreover, despite the substantial amount of research on organized hate groups, perpetrators of bias crime rarely belong to one (Levin 2010).

Some studies examining the demographic characteristics of perpetrators have relied on FBI data. These data, however, have been criticized for underreporting hate-motivated violence, as many police precincts do not report their data to the FBI and many victims do not report their violent experiences to the police (Berrill and Herek 1992; Nolan, Akiyama, and Berhanu 2002). Nolan, Akiyama, and Berhanu (2002) found that about 85% of law enforcement agencies report zero incidents of hate-motivated violence within a given year, and that the fewest are reported in the South. Furthermore, studies indicate that the number of hate crimes in a given area has relatively little effect on police reporting (Jenness and Grattet 2005; King 2008). Police reporting of racial violence seems to be effected by structural variables such as the presence of a sizeable black population and the community's history of lynching (King, Messner, and Baller 2009). As a result of police noncompliance with hate crime laws, the FBI's Hate Crime Data Collection Program, which relies on the voluntary participation of law enforcement agencies, appears to underestimate the amount of bias crime in the U.S. (Levin 2010; Nolan, Akiyama, and Berhanu 2002).

Given these methodological concerns with FBI data, some social scientists have conducted their own survey studies (See Herek 2009 for the most extensive national

survey of homophobic violence[2]). These studies typically explore the demographic characteristics of victims and the frequency with which they experience hate-motivated violence. For instance, with regard to homophobic violence, survey research has shown that lesbian women and gay men are more likely than the general population to experience violence (Berrill 1992; Comstock 1991; Herek, Gillis, and Cogan 1999). These studies also suggest that homophobic violence varies based on race and age, as lesbian women and gay men of color are more likely to experience violence than their white counterparts (Comstock 1991; Dunbar 2006; von Schulthess 1992), and young lesbian women and gay men are more likely to experience violence than older gay and lesbian people (Dean, Wu, and Martin 1992; Garofalo and Martin 1993).

As previously stated, most studies of hate crime victims have examined the psychological effects of bias-motivated violence (Craig 2002). Most of these studies, emphasizing the importance of homophobia, have made no reference to race, class, and gender (See Berrill 1992; Herek, Cogan, and Gillis 2002; McDevitt et al. 2001; Otis and Skinner 1996; Rose and Mechanic 2002). Adopting a feminist and intersectionality

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[2] Many sexualities scholars have argued that focusing on "homophobia" or "homophobic violence" individualizes prejudice toward gay and lesbian people (Bryant and Vidal-Ortiz 2008; Tomsen and Mason 2001). Instead, some sexualities scholarship suggests that sociologists should focus on heterosexism or heteronormativity – systems of oppression that privilege heterosexuality over homosexuality. Although I agree with these critiques, the gay and lesbian people whom I interviewed most typically spoke of "homophobia" rather than "heterosexism" or "heteronormativity." Moreover, respondents often perceived their perpetrators' actions in very individualistic terms. Thus, even though I have tried to connect perpetrators' actions with larger social forces, I have used the phrase "homophobic violence" throughout this dissertation because I believe that it most accurately reflects the violent experiences of gay and lesbian respondents involved in this study.

perspective, I would argue that it is difficult, if not impossible, to explore forms of anti-LGBT violence without referring to gender, given that many of its forms seem to occur when individuals have violated gender norms (Perry 2001; Tomsen and Mason 2001). At the same time, studies that have accounted for gender have usually privileged the effects of gender over sexuality, constructing homophobic violence as a product of patriarchy (See von Schulthess 1992: 71). Rather than privileging one form of inequality over another, this dissertation project suggests that both gender and sexuality are deeply implicated in most forms of anti-LGBT violence. Examining gender and sexuality as overlapping rather than competing forms of oppression helps us to move beyond hierarchical understandings of violence and to reveal some of the complexities of LGBT people's violent experiences.

Symbolic Interactionism and Microsociological Accounts of Violence

This dissertation project is informed by not only intersectionality theory but also microsociology and symbolic interactionism (Blumer 1969; Mead 1934; Meltzer, Petras, and Reynolds 1975; Thomas 1928). As such, part of this project examines the meaning making-processes of LGBT people, focusing particular attention on their response to meanings of difference and marginality. Even though perpetrators of anti-LGBT violence seem to use it as a means to assert meanings of difference ("you're different from us") and marginality ("you're unequal to us") onto queer people[3], we know relatively little about the ways in which LGBT people understand these meanings. How

[3] Throughout this dissertation, I use the word "queer" as interchangeable with "LGBT." When referring to a specific population, I sometimes use more precise language, referring to the violent experiences of transgender people as "anti-trans" and the violent experiences of lesbian women and gay men as "homophobic violence."

do they perceive their attackers' motivations? Do they seem to accept or reject meanings of difference and marginality? And, in what ways do they continually manage such meanings?

Drawing upon the work of social constructionists and symbolic interactionists (Becker 1963; Berger and Luckman 1967; Connell 1987; Mead 1934; Thomas 1928), this dissertation explores some of the ways in which LGBT people manage stigma and negotiate meaning (Blumer 1969; Erickson 1995; Goffman 1959, 1963). Blumer (1958) was among the first sociologists to draw our attention to the importance of prejudice, emphasizing its social dimension. Blumer argued that rather than conceptualizing prejudice as a manifestation of individual feelings, sociologists should account for social stratification processes, which encourage perceptions of competition and threat. Accordingly, he understood prejudice as an outcome of group position – how a social group views themselves in relation to other groups within society (Blumer 1958).

Although Blumer conceptualized prejudice as a dynamic process, Goffman (1963) focused even more explicitly on interaction. Goffman's theory of discredited and discreditable stigmas seems most relevant to this research project. Discredited stigmas occur when the individual actor assumes that audience members know about his or her socially disapproved identity (e.g. when an LGBT person assumes that heterosexual people will read him or her as queer). In contrast, a discreditable stigma is when audience members cannot perceive and do not know of the person's socially disapproved identity (e.g. when an LGBT person "passes" as heterosexual). Most of the gay and lesbian people whom I interviewed could be characterized as having a discredited stigma; they usually perceived themselves as gender nonconformists and argued that other people

perceived them as gay or lesbian. According to Goffman's theory, the dramaturgical importance of having a discredited stigma is managing the tension that results from others knowing of the stigma. Having a discredited stigma may lead to a considerable amount of fear on the part of the individuals with it, as they risk being ostracized or harassed. In some sense, this conceptualization underscores what part of this dissertation is about: how respondents managed their performances of gender and sexuality, especially when they had been encouraged to perform gender and sexuality in more normative ways. Of course, among transgender respondents, this issue was perhaps a bit trickier, as some of them hoped to "pass" as male or female. These respondents, managing a discreditable stigma, had to struggle with determining when they should reveal and conceal their trans identity.

Microsociological work has already focused considerable attention on the ways in which LGBT people construct and manage their identities (Gagne, Twksbury and McGaughey 1997; Hequembourg and Farrell 1999; Rust 1996; Takagi 1994; Taylor and Raeburn 1995). While this research project does not focus predominantly on the identity construction processes of LGBT people, identity scholarship has nonetheless informed much of my work. In particular, this body of scholarship has been useful for helping me to conceptualize identities as constructed achievements rather than inherent characteristics (Brekus 2003; Connell 1987; Seidman 1994; Stein and Plummer 1994; West and Zimmerman 1987). Moreover, these studies have helped me to focus on the agency of hate crime victims, attuning me to the ways in which LGBT people may reject meanings of themselves as unequal to their attackers or to heterosexual people in general.

Related to microsociological studies of identity, the theories of George Herbert Mead (1934, 1938) were also influential for my work. A prominent symbolic interactionist, Mead (1934) focused on the dynamic relationship between the individual and society, examining the development of the self and the importance of symbolic meaning. Similar to most microsociologists, Mead did not view individuals as passive recipients of information, but rather as active agents who interpret, evaluate, and define their own behavior. In contrast to some of the structural functionalists who preceded him, Mead conceptualized the self as active and creative, as capable of rejecting norms and social forces. Of course, he also recognized that social forces affect individuals' behavior, but he tended to emphasize self-interaction, the means by which individuals have internal conversations and prepare themselves for the process of engaging with others. In *Mind, Self, and Society*, Mead (1934) outlined his theory of the two phases of the self – the "I" and the "me." The "I" is one's unorganized response to others – the part of the self that is impulsive, reactive, and spontaneous. A person entirely dominated by the "I" would be wholly free of socialization (such a person, in all likelihood, would not exist, except in extreme cases of isolation). In contrast, the "me" is more self-reflexive – the part of the self in which the individual considers the position of others. The "me" guides the behavior of the socialized person, as individuals envision themselves in the place of others and then think about their own behavior in relation to other people. The "me" is, in effect, the part of the self in which the individual has internalized the perspective of others.

Of course, the "I" and the "me" are constantly interacting with one another, as individuals consider the attitudes of other people (the "me"), while perhaps responding

impulsively (the "I") at the same time. These two phases of the self, in other words, may operate simultaneously in many situations. For instance, as victims of violence consider whether they should report a violent incident to the police, the "I" and the "me" would probably both be at work. The victim's spontaneous "I"-like response might consist of a strong desire to have the attacker arrested, and yet as victims imagine themselves going through the process of reporting the crime, that desire might subside. Or, conversely, perhaps their immediate reaction would be to avoid reporting the violence, but upon considering the norms and values of their communities, they would feel compelled to do so. This division between the "I" and the "me" is almost never as neat or clear-cut as these two scenarios suggest. One's instantaneous response, after all, is shaped by social forces, making it difficult to separate these two parts of the self from one another. As the "I" and the "me" seem to overlap and occur simultaneously, it is often difficult to determine where the line for one begins and the other ends (Mead 1934).

Mead's conceptualization of the "I" and "me" interested me to the extent that this project focuses on self-interaction. When I first began this dissertation, I hoped to explore the ways in which LGBT people managed the meanings that had been mapped onto them. In this sense, this dissertation project has been a microsociological one from the beginning. My dissertation proposal was even written as if I was going to examine the identity construction processes of LGBT people. My general hypothesis was that respondents would reject meanings of themselves as unequal to their attackers or to heterosexual people. As I began to collect my data, however, I realized that I was more interested in race, class, and gender differences, and that my most interesting findings seemed to relate to the research questions that had already been explored in the hate

crime literature. Furthermore, since the literature that explores sexuality and identity is already substantial, I thought that it would be more useful to examine other research questions. Thus, even though questions of identity remain imbedded in much of this dissertation, they are less central than I had originally proposed.

Several microsociological accounts of violence have informed this project[4], most notably those of David Luckenbill (1977). Building on the work of Erving Goffman (1959), Luckenbill's theory of violence was one of the first microsociological theories to account for the ways in which criminal homicide develops through the course of interaction. Luckenbill theorized that incidents of criminal homicide typically resemble a confrontation in which victim and offender struggle over maintaining "face" – the image of self one claims during a social interaction. His theory was useful for helping me to think about forms of violence as interactional events. From his analysis of seventy-one cases of criminal homicide[5], he developed a typology of six time-order stages in which transactions ending in murder most frequently develop. Stage one, the opening move of the transaction, is performed by the victim and subsequently defined by the offender as offensive. During this time, victims usually made a direct, verbal comment which offenders interpreted as insulting. Regardless of the victim's intent, perpetrators interpreted the opening move as purposefully insulting, setting in motion a character contest in which opponents attempted to save face (Goffman 1959; Luckenbill 1977).

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[4] For a review of the social-psychological literature on violence, see Felson and Tedeschi (1993). Most recently, Randall Collins (2008) has advanced a theoretical account of violence, arguing that contrary to traditional understandings, violence is typically an uneasy and disorderly process, which makes it a rare rather than a common occurrence.

[5] Luckenbill employed a content analysis of several sources, including police reports, court testimonies, and statements from victims and offenders.

For the purpose of this research project, Luckenbill's third and fourth stages were the most significant in terms of guiding my theoretical understanding of violence. In the third stage, perpetrators respond to the victim's opening move. Here, the offender must make a choice: either deal with the victim's actions by demonstrating strength of character or attest to questions of face by excusing the violation. In all of the cases that Luckenbill examined, the offender attempted to restore face through a retaliatory move. Offenders most typically retaliated by issuing a verbal or physical challenge. Rather than excusing the violation or fleeing the scene, perpetrators established violence as an appropriate means for settling the conflict.

During the fourth stage of violence, victims confronted a similar choice as the one faced by the offender in the previous stage: either avoid further contact with the offender or agree that violence would be an appropriate way to resolve the situation. Luckenbill found that transactions ending in murder usually involved the victim and offender forging a working agreement of violence. The offender sometimes incorrectly interpreted the victim's actions as an implicit agreement of violence. More frequently, however, the victim established an agreement with the offender, defining the situation as suited for violence.

The audience surrounding the victim and offender was often instrumental in fostering a working agreement of violence. Luckenbill found that in fifty-seven percent of the cases involving an audience, onlookers actively encouraged the use of violence. In the remaining cases, the audience was neutral. Victims and offenders, however, often interpreted audience inaction as a move favoring the use of violence. The audience's neutrality, in other words, suggested that violence was an unproblematic way of resolving

the conflict. As a result, the presence of an audience often shaped the development of the violence, and Luckenbill's theory was one of the first to explain criminal homicide as resulting from a dynamic interchange between victim, audience, and perpetrator.

Luckenbill's theory seems to apply to the violent experiences of some of the LGBT people whom I interviewed, particularly gay male respondents. Nevertheless, anti-queer violence may also differ from some other forms of violence in important ways. How can we, for instance, understand anti-queer violence as beginning with a "threatening move"? When LGBT people violate gender norms or publicly reveal their sexuality or gender identity, do those actions constitute a "threatening move"? They may constitute a threat in some sense, but whom and what are they threatening? Anti-queer violence, it seems to me, is often shaped in large part by gender and sexuality norms, with LGBT people encountering violence as their "threatening move" challenges traditional notions of gender and sexuality. As LGBT people experience violence for publicly revealing their sexuality (e.g. holding hands with a significant other), they are challenging heterosexist[6] norms which encourage them to keep their sexuality hidden. Similarly, as LGBT people experience violence for violating gender norms, they are challenging patriarchal gender ideologies which encourage individuals to perform gender in normative ways. Given that patriarchal and heterosexist ideologies are deeply implicated in many forms of anti-LGBT violence, traditional criminological understanding of violence, which treat gender and sexuality as incidental, may not be able to account for much of anti-queer violence (Burgess-Proctor 2006; Miller 2001).

[6] Meant here to signify any ideology that privileges heterosexuality over homosexuality

Rather than using traditional criminological approaches to study hate crime, this project explores the violent experiences of LGBT people through an intersectional lens.

Challenging Hierarchical Understandings of Violence and Oppression

Intersectional approaches have traditionally challenged hierarchical understandings of oppression, suggesting that one system of oppression (e.g. sexism) cannot be understood as more fundamental than another (e.g. racism) because both systems are inextricably linked (Crenshaw 1994; Razack 1998; Spelman 1988). Instead, intersectionality frameworks posit that relations of domination should be understood as an interlocking web of mutually reinforcing power structures, each of which depends on the others (Collins 2004; McCall 2005). Rather than hierarchically ranking systems of oppression, intersectionality theory suggests that each system operates in different yet overlapping ways (Collins 2000; Crenshaw 1991).

If we accept that systems of oppression cannot be hierarchically ranked, then we should also accept that individuals' experiences of oppression cannot be categorized in hierarchical ways. Previous studies examining the severity of hate-motivated violence, however, have implied that certain forms of violence are more severe or damaging than others (Herek, Gillis, and Cogan 1999; McDevitt et al. 2001). Examples of this practice include victims being asked to describe their "most serious" violent experience (Rose and Mechanic 2002: 16) and to explain the crime in which they felt that they were "in the greatest physical danger" (Herek et al. 1997: 201). In these studies, victims describe only one violent incident in detail. As a result, these research methods require victims to discount many of their violent experiences, privileging one violent incident over others.

This dissertation project attempts to move away from hierarchical understandings of hate-motivated violence, while at the same time accepting that victims may rank forms of violence on their own. Rather than accepting abstract definitions of hate crime as given, respondents were allowed to explain their understanding of hate-motivated violence in their own words. This approach privileges rather than marginalizes the voice of victims. As other hate crime scholars have noted, the experiences of victims have not featured centrally in the literature (Blee 2007; Boeckmann and Turpin-Petrosino 2002). This research project, in contrast, places LGBT people's understanding and experiences of hate crime at the center of the research design.

The Context of This Project: An Autobiographical Note and an Outline of My General Argument

I was conducting much of my research – collecting and analyzing data – around the time of the democratic primary election in 2007-2008. This contest between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama (and, for a shorter time, John Edwards and Bill Richardson, among others) led to my interest in the tendency to rank people's experiences of oppression. In what some people deemed the "oppression Olympics," there seemed to a considerable amount of debate about "who had it the worst" – black men or white women. The media often seemed to treat this contest as an experiment where it would finally be revealed which of these two groups was worse off. A few notable feminists even reproduced these arguments, with Gloria Steinem (2008) writing an editorial in the *New York Times* endorsing Hillary Clinton, in which Steinem claimed that "gender is probably the most restricting force in American life" and "black men were given the vote a half-century before women of any race were allowed to mark a ballot, and generally have ascended to positions of power, from the military to the boardroom, before any

women" (p. 23A). During this time, media reports also seemed to focus on the voting decisions of black women and whether they would end up voting their race or their gender. Interestingly enough, white men did not typically face these inquires, even though the question seems equally logical as to whether they were going to vote their race (Clinton) or their gender (Obama). These differences reveal how race and gender are constructed in our society, where race is meant to signify "black" (or at least non-white) and gender is meant to signify "women." These constructions allow members of privileged groups to appear as neutral and objective (or race-less and gender-less), while people belonging to minority groups become understood as biased and partial (or influenced by their race and gender position).

During the time of this presidential election, I was also teaching several courses at Queens College. I remember showing the film *Far From Heaven*[7] (2002) to one of my classes, and having a student say that the film was about how racism is worse than homophobia because people can see race[8]. In other classes, students have written in their papers that homophobia is worse than racism because gay and lesbian people "have fewer rights." Despite this tendency among some students to rank systems of oppression, other students have argued against such hierarchical understandings of inequality. For instance, when the student said that *Far From Heaven* was about racism being worse than homophobia, another student said that it was "weird" to debate whether racism or homophobia is worse. I too believe that ranking people's experiences of oppression is an

[7] The film is about a 1950's white woman who is married to a closeted gay man and who falls in love with a black male gardener.

[8] Since this comment was not tape-recorded, and may not be an exact quote, I will refrain from using quotation marks here.

unproductive research question with which to engage. Yet, at the same time, it is difficult to discuss oppression without also describing hierarchies. Certainly, some differences – such as eye color and left-handedness – are not made socially significant in the same way as other differences – such as race, class, gender, and sexuality. Furthermore, not everyone experiences oppression to the same degree or in the same way. Black Americans, for example, experience racial oppression in such a way that most white Americans do not, and women can be viewed as "more oppressed" than men in terms of gender inequality. Moreover, in terms of racial inequality, some oppressed groups (e.g. black people) could be considered more disadvantaged than others (e.g. Latino and Asian people).[9] Nevertheless, as we consider the overlapping effects of systems of oppression, the differences among and within social groups become exceedingly complex.

At the same time as I do not wish to suggest that every experience of oppression is the same or equally destructive, one of the research questions that has dominated studies of hate crime victims – examining which forms of violence cause the most trauma – leads us down the path of diminishing people's traumatic experiences. Indeed, previous studies of hate crime victims have, perhaps unintentionally, implied that forms of hate-motivated physical violence are more severe than other forms of abuse. As outlined in Chapter 7, results from this project do not necessarily contradict research

[9] Yancey (2003) argues that instead of conceptualizing racial inequality in terms of white/non-white, a dichotomy of black/non-black would be more appropriate. His theory posits that Latino and Asian people will eventually assimilate into American society, creating a fundamental divide between black people and all other racial groups. Like all dichotomies, this theory may be imperfect, since Latino and Asian people may still experience forms of racial discrimination that white Americans do not, yet the theory does capture the particular forms of discrimination that only black Americans must confront. Indeed, throughout American history, institutional racism has most frequently been about the systematic oppression of black Americans.

which suggests that LGBT people perceive hate-motivated physical violence as more severe than verbal violence and property-based attacks (D'Augelli and Grossman 2001; Herek et al. 1997, 1999). Respondents whom I interviewed often made similar arguments, suggesting that physical violence based on their sexuality or gender identity had caused them more pain than any of their other violent experiences. While taking these voices seriously, we should also be cautious about constructing hierarchical understandings of violence, as some respondents did not conceptualize their violent experiences in hierarchical terms and others perceived forms of discrimination and incidents of verbal violence as more severe than physical attacks. My argument here is not necessarily that verbal abuse hurts as much as physical violence – although it often does – but that it is counterproductive to construct one extremely broad category of violence (e.g., "hate-motivated physical violence") as more severe than another, arbitrarily-constructed category (e.g. "verbal abuse"). I return to these arguments throughout this dissertation, particularly in chapters 6 and 8.

In terms of the bodies of literature that have informed this dissertation project, intersectionality theory is obviously the most influential, yet much of my academic training has been in gender studies and queer theory. This dissertation is fairly far from post-structuralism and postmodernism, yet I do retain the distrust for grand theory and the rejection of fixed identities and sexualities that these theoretical frameworks have advanced (Brekhus 2003; Butler 1990, 1997; Jargose 1996; Foucault 1978; Scott 1999). Studies that have utilized a feminist postructuralist perspective, particularly interview and ethnographic research involving socially marginalized populations, have influenced my work (Das 1990; Fraser 1989; Gordon and Weedon 1995; Pitts 2003; Taylor 2007).

Undoubtedly, the large body of literature on the social construction of sexuality has affected my approach toward studying sexualities and has shaped many of the issues described throughout this dissertation (Gagnon and Simon 1974; Greenberg 1988; Plummer 1975; Weeks 1985). Macrosociological accounts of gender (Epstein 1988; Lorber 1994; Risman 2004) and feminist critiques of men's sexual power (Koedt 1973; Millet 1972) also constitute much of my intellectual training, rooting my approach here in a feminist perspective. In addition to much of the intersectionality scholarship, many works have helped facilitate my understanding of race and social class, including historical and theoretical works (Acker 2006; Fredrickson 2002; Laureau 2003; Roberts 1997; Winant 2001) as well as more personal accounts (Hernandez and Rehman 2002; hooks 1989; Moraga and Anzaldua 1983; Rothman 2005; Wallace 1990). Using these ideas and theoretical frameworks as the basis for my work, and rooting this project in the hate crime literature and intersectionality scholarship, this dissertation focuses on an interview sample of LGBT people and their experiences of hate-motivated violence. Rather than engaging with intersectionality theory in the abstract, this project examines how LGBT people's lived experiences of oppression differ along the lines of race, class, and gender.

Chapter Outline

This chapter has reviewed several bodies of literature which have informed this project. The next chapter describes my research methods, including how I collected and analyzed my data. Chapters 3 through 5 examine patterns of victimization along gender lines: the first focuses primarily on lesbian women, the second on gay men, and the third on transgender people. Each chapter examines the intersection of gender and sexuality,

paying particular attention to respondents' meaning-making strategies. Although my primary emphasis in these chapters is on gender and sexuality, I do address race and social class differences as well. My general argument is that violence against lesbian women, gay men, and transgender people each needs to be considered in its own right, and yet all of them overlap in some important ways.

Although Chapters 3 through 5 focus on gender differences among respondents, I have tried not to overemphasize these differences, as such approaches have often been criticized for essentializing differences between women and men (Fausto-Sterling 2000; Miller 2001; Thorne 1993)[10]. One of the ways I have addressed this concern is by devoting a chapter to each of these three groups of respondents – lesbian women, gay men, and transgender people – and highlighting the differences *within* each of these groups. When describing across-gender differences, I try to ground my descriptions within a social analysis, emphasizing how these differences are socially produced. Whenever possible, I have also tried to highlight similarities across gender lines, accounting for the ways in which LGBT people may interpret and experience violence in similar ways. Finally, when addressing gender differences, I have tried to include words that hedge my findings – suggesting that these differences are by no means absolute or universal. Nevertheless, as most hate crime scholarship has not explored differences along the lines of race, class, and gender, I have tried to emphasize these differences in order to demonstrate that systems of oppression play a significant role in structuring the violent experiences of LGBT people. At the same time, I have tried to be cautious about

[10] For a critique of anti-essentalist arguments, see Fuss (1989).

reinforcing stereotypical understandings of queer people, whether those stereotypes concern the lives of lesbian women, transgender people, or LGBT people of color[11].

Chapter 6 explores race and social class differences in greater detail than the previous three chapters. Specifically, this chapter examines the ways in which respondents evaluated the severity of their violent experiences, comparing the perceptions of middle-class white respondents with the perceptions of poor and working-class LGBT people of color. Building on previous studies which have explored the psychological effects of hate crime, this chapter suggests that hate crime research should account for not only the type of violence that victims experience but also the social position of LGBT people. Indeed, results from this chapter indicate that middle-class white respondents were more likely than low-income people of color to perceive their violent experiences as severe, even though the former experienced less physical violence than the latter (See Meyer 2010, for a further discussion).

Chapter 7, building on the previous chapter, focuses on how LGBT people determine that violence is based on their sexuality or gender identity. I begin this chapter by suggesting that lesbian women and gay men often examined what their perpetrators had said about gender in order to determine whether violence was rooted in homophobia.

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[11] Throughout this dissertation, I use the phrase "LGBT people of color" or "queer people of color" to denote participants belonging to a racial minority group. This phrase is used to contrast the experiences of LGBT people of color with those of white respondents. Perhaps problematically, this phrase collapses the experiences of black, Latino, and Asian LGBT people into a single category, yet I have tried whenever possible to emphasize the differences among these groups. Several chapters, for example, emphasize the particular set of challenges confronting black LGBT people and how they may differ from those challenges confronting Latino or Asian respondents. Moreover, because I have only interviewed two Asian respondents, this category primarily represents the experiences of black and Latino respondents.

As gay and lesbian people acknowledged the cultural intersection of gender and sexuality, they sometimes determined that violence directed against their gender identity was also based on their sexuality. Moreover, results from this chapter indicate that white gay men generally expressed certainty as to the cause of their violent experiences, believing that violence was directed against them because of homophobia. Given the social construction of white privilege, white gay men could view their sexuality as the most salient factor in structuring their violent experiences. LGBT people of color, in contrast, sometimes could not be certain that violence was rooted in homophobia because racism may have played an equally significant role. Furthermore, LGBT people of color, and especially lesbian women of color, often expressed uncertainty as to the cause of their violent experiences because their perpetrators did not explicitly address homosexuality, particularly when the violence was intra-racial. In effect, this chapter emphasizes race, class, and gender differences, suggesting that queer people of color were more likely than white gay men to express uncertainty as to the cause of their violent experiences. Finally, I conclude this chapter by suggesting that white gay men may benefit disproportionately from hate crime statutes (See also, Meyer 2008).

In Chapter 8, the conclusion of this dissertation, I return to many of the themes introduced in this first chapter. Connecting my data with my theoretical approach, I try to summarize the most significant results of this research project. Chapter 8 highlights the various links between the preceding chapters and concludes with a discussion of how this project has contributed to the hate crime literature. The general argument of this chapter is that studies of hate crime victims should move beyond hierarchical

understandings of violence and toward a way of examining LGBT people's violent experiences that does not undermine the severity of some hate-motivated violence.

Chapter 2

Methodology

This project is based on in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 44 people who experienced violence for being perceived as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. I recruited participants from August 2006 through September 2007 through ten advocacy and service organizations in New York City. Seeking a diverse sample, I began recruiting participants in August of 2006 from a wide range of organizations, many of which provide services for LGBT people of color. A few of the organizations did not explicitly serve LGBT communities (e.g. they provided self-defense classes for women), but the vast majority of them did. Moreover, while three of the organizations focused primarily on anti-queer violence, most of them served LGBT people more generally. About one-third of respondents said that they had picked up my flier from one organization – a large, umbrella service center that accommodates a range of LGBT groups. This relatively high proportion can most likely be explained by the large amount of traffic that passes through this organization, as more LGBT people probably saw my flier here than anywhere else.

In total, I interviewed 44 people – 17 women, 17 men, and 10 transgender people. I purposely recruited an equal number of women and men, in the hope of being able to compare their experiences. I also thought that it was important to include transgender people in this study, given that their experiences are often overlooked; sexuality-based studies tend to focus attention on the most "respectable" LGBT people, which often excludes transgender people and other gender nonconformists (Ward 2004; Warner 1999). Still, as I have interviewed fewer transgender respondents than lesbian women

and gay men, this dissertation probably focuses on homophobic violence more than anti-transgender violence.

To recruit participants, I placed fliers on a bulletin board or in a waiting room (See Appendix A for the recruitment flier). All of the organizations that were approached allowed me to place fliers in their space. The flier read: "Have you experienced violence because you are (or were perceived to be) lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender?" A broad, open-ended question was used to attract participants with a variety of violent experiences and to allow respondents to define violence on their own terms. Interested respondents were then told on the flier to contact me (via telephone or e-mail) if they wanted to participate in the project. When respondents contacted me, we established a meeting time and location. I suggested that the interviews could be conducted at their home or at my school (The Graduate Center of the City University of New York); I let respondents choose their preferred location. Thirty-five of the interviews took place at The Graduate Center; all of these interviews were conducted in the same room. Five interviews were conducted at one of the organizations and one interview was conducted at a coffee shop – the location these participants preferred, out of convenience. The remaining three interviews were conducted at participants' apartments, which indicates that most respondents did not feel comfortable inviting me into their home[12].

I recruited participants over three time periods: (1) August and September of 2006; (2) March through May of 2007; and (3) August and September of 2007. Ten

[12] Several respondents were also homeless at the time of the interview (e.g., living in a domestic violence shelter or a shelter for the homeless). Even though I conducted the interviews in different locations, I do not believe these differences had a substantial effect on the interview data. Moreover, given the sensitive topic of the interviews, I thought that it was more important to make participants feel comfortable than to establish consistency in terms of the interview location.

interviews were conducted during the third stage of this process and half of the interviews (n=22) took place during the second. This three-staged process allowed me to reflect on my research methods and to make the appropriate changes as I moved forward, reflecting on what was working and what was not. During each stage of interviewing, I tried to restructure the interview protocol as much as possible and I tried to transcribe and code the data after conducting an interview. These techniques helped me not only to eliminate unnecessary questions but also to add material that could be explored in subsequent interviews.

I conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews in which respondents were asked to describe their violent experiences in detail. I then asked follow-up questions regarding their understanding of hate-motivated violence and their perception of its severity (See Appendix B for the interview protocol). In general, I tried to ask questions which allowed participants to reflect on their perpetrators' motivations (e.g., "As you look back on this incident, why do you think he/she/they used violence?"). Moreover, I usually asked respondents for their general opinion (e.g. "What's your opinion on the difference between physical and verbal violence?") before asking more specific questions (e.g. "Some studies on violence have argued that physical violence is often more painful than verbal violence…do you agree or disagree with that idea?"). When asking about topics related to studies of hate crime victims, I tried to preface my questions by first explaining the general argument of these studies (e.g. "Some studies have suggested…"). In these situations, I tried to be as clear and straightforward about my research goals as possible, while also trying not to lead respondents into taking a certain position.

The interviews lasted from approximately one to three hours; the median interview was 102 minutes. All of the interviews were tape-recorded, with respondents' permission. After the interview, participants completed a short questionnaire in which they provided basic demographic information (See Appendix C). As a way of leading into the questionnaire, I reserved asking questions about respondents' social class background until the end of the interview. This method also helped respondents feel more comfortable as the interview began, leaving the sensitive subject of social class toward the end. After the interviews, respondents were given twenty dollars for their participation.

Some of my methods for data collection and analysis followed the conventions of grounded theory, which generates theory through data rather than the other way around (Glasner 1995; Glasner and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1994). Since this project is rooted in hate crime and intersectionality studies, I also used these bodies of scholarship to guide the interview questions and format. As outlined in the previous chapter, both of these bodies of literature structured the research questions that I explored. Intersectionality theory, for example, affected my interest in differences along the lines of race, class, and gender, while the hate crime literature had an effect on the sorts of questions I asked during the interview process.

The interviews were transcribed shortly after they had occurred and then a coding scheme was developed to organize the data. Using ATLAS qualitative data analysis software, I coded the interview data into broad categories and then narrowed the categories as I continued to collect data. My coding techniques helped extract patterns among respondents' answers, as I tried to examine how their statements were interrelated,

looking for contradictions and consistencies (Berg 2004; Miles and Huberman 1994). Continuing data collection was then used to refine the coding scheme and sharpen my analysis of the discovered themes (Strauss and Corbin 1994).

While most studies of hate crime victims have used a survey method, some social scientists have argued that an interview method best captures the ways in which respondents create meaning (Devault 1990; Holstein and Gubrium 1995; Mishler 1986; Weiss 1994). Previous interview studies of LGBT hate crime victims have employed highly structured interviews with a uniform (but small) number of questions asked to every respondent (See Herek et al. 1997, 2002). These approaches allow for a large sample size, but they prevent respondents from actively constructing their own narratives (Holstein and Gubrium 1995; Kvale 1996). In contrast, I employed a less structured approach, allowing respondents to guide much of the discussion and to describe their violent experiences in detail.

Of course, survey and highly structured interview studies have several obvious advantages. First and foremost, these methods allow for hate crime research to compile large amounts of data on the social forces that may affect rates of hate-motivated violence. Those strengths are an obvious weakness of conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 44 people – my results cannot be generalized. Thus, even though I sometimes suggest that the data presented here may represent larger societal trends, I can only speculate. To that end, I have tried to present my results cautiously, while also not shying away from reporting on the trends that I have noticed.

When writing chapters 3 through 8, I found myself first reading some of the interview data (usually a code or two) and then putting the data to the side as I wrote.

While writing, I tried not to return to the interview data until I had written about several ideas or observations. During this initial stage of writing, I would usually make notes to myself about including a certain quote (e.g. "insert the quote that says something about X right here"). After writing about several trends that I had noticed in the interview data, I returned to the coded transcriptions to include some of the quotations, fleshing out some of my ideas and double-checking that I had not misrepresented what respondents had said. I occasionally listened to the interview tapes as a way of generating ideas and I tried to write down any idea as soon as it came to my mind so as not to lose it. These methods allowed me to use the interview data to guide what I wrote, while also preventing me from doing a "data dump." Throughout this dissertation, I include a lot of quotations, as a way of reflecting respondents' experiences, but I also try to guide the reader through the quotes by revealing their connections (Becker 1986; Mills 1959; Van Maanen 1988).

The Challenges of Recruiting Participants and Conducting Interviews

When recruiting participants for this study, I received phone calls from gay men and transgender people almost immediately after putting up fliers, yet very few lesbian women initially contacted me to participate. This gender difference in terms of recruitment can probably be explained by several factors. First, gay men and transgender people may have attended the organizations where I placed fliers more frequently than lesbian women. My sense from the short periods of time I spent visiting these organizations was that gay men did spend more time than lesbian women at many of them. Transgender people may have also frequented these organizations more frequently than lesbian women, although I have little sense as to whether this difference was true.

As other scholars have noted, lesbian women and transgender people remain marginalized from many mainstream LGBT organizations (Calhoun 2000; Frye 1983; Warner 1999; Ward 2004). Moreover, some of the organizations where I placed fliers were explicitly marketed toward gay men, which may have led them to come into contact with my flier the most often.

The frequency with which lesbian women attended these organizations may have affected gender differences in terms of volunteering, yet once very few lesbian women had initially volunteered for this study, I began to place fliers at bars and organizations that lesbian women were more likely to attend. I even changed the recruitment flier to focus only on lesbian women, omitting the words "gay" and "transgender." Nevertheless, this targeted approach barely increased the frequency with which lesbian women contacted me. Thus, the reasons for lesbian women volunteering less frequently than gay men and transgender people can probably not be attributed entirely to the type of organizations where I placed fliers. Even when I placed fliers at organizations that primarily serve lesbian women, I received relatively few phone calls.

These gender differences in terms of volunteering may also be explained by the type of violence experienced by lesbian women. Among lesbian women who came into contact with my flier, they may have experienced sexual assault with greater frequency than the gay men or transgender people who saw the flier. Indeed, several studies suggest that lesbian women experience sexual assault more often than many other social groups (Dunbar 2006; Herek 2009; Kuehnle and Sullivan 2001). As a result, many lesbian women who saw my flier may not have felt comfortable describing their violent experiences, particularly when the name on the flier was male.

Gender norms may have also played a role here. Given that heterosexual men appear to perpetrate most forms of anti-queer violence, lesbian women may have felt uncomfortable sharing their experiences of victimization, as gender norms sometimes encourage women to accept violence and harassment, especially from men. As a result, social control mechanisms may have discouraged lesbian women from volunteering for an interview study and encouraged them to accept their violent experiences in silence. Men, in contrast, are often encouraged to retaliate against challenges to their masculinity (Anderson 2002; Kimmel 2001; Pascoe 2007). Indeed, as I describe in Chapter 4, some of the gay men involved in this study seemed to use the interview process as a forum for asserting their masculinity. Gay men, then, may have been more likely to volunteer than lesbian women because the interview process gave them the opportunity to undermine challenges to their masculinity. At the same time, gender norms may not be the complete answer here, as gay male respondents consistently disputed traditional notions of masculinity by emphasizing the importance of emotional, as well as physical, strength. Still, as gay male respondents used the interview process to reassert masculinity and emphasize the importance of emotionality, they may have been particularly eager to participate in this study.

There is also some evidence that gay men and transgender people are more likely than lesbian women to experience forms of anti-queer violence (Herek, Cogan, and Gillis 2002; Kuehnle and Sullivan 2001). These differences in patterns of victimization may have affected gendered patterns in terms of volunteering. Nevertheless, gender differences in patterns of victimization have often been criticized for reinforcing the interests of middle-class men, since these differences depend in large part on how the

studies define and conceptualize violence (Moran 2004; Richardson and May 1999). Studies of hate crime victims, for instance, have been criticized for defining violence in normative ways, privileging stranger-based forms of violence that occur in public (Moran and Skeggs 2004).

All of the reasons outlined above, of course, may have contributed to lesbian women volunteering for this study in relatively low numbers. The particular forms of violence directed against lesbian women, coupled with the name on the flier and the possibility that the organizations primarily served gay men, may have all shaped lesbian women's participation. Regardless, enough lesbian women did eventually participate in the study – I simply had to be more diligent about recruiting and more patient in terms of time[13].

In general, gay male respondents were among the first interviews conducted and lesbian respondents were among the last. For instance, ten of the first 15 people I interviewed were gay men and eight of the final 11 people were lesbian women. These differences were not intentional, but in some sense they did help me to compare the interviews with women and men. Still, interviewing gay men toward the beginning and lesbian women toward the end had several drawbacks, as this approach seemed to structure gay men as the standard with which lesbian women and transgender people were measured against. As such, sometimes it felt as if I had to work at not reinforcing sexist ideology by establishing gay men as the default category with which everyone else was compared. This process also meant that my interviews with lesbian women tended

[13] To entice female participation, I increased the amount of money given to respondents from twenty to forty dollars (approximately eight participants received forty dollars for participating).

to be a bit more polished, since I had refined many of my questions and techniques by the end of the interviewing process. The interviews I conducted toward the end were not necessarily "better" – after all, there was something nice about the novelty of those initial interviews – but I had a clearer idea about what I wanted to know and how I could figure it out. Ultimately, I do not think that this recruitment process was a mistake, yet at the same time it did probably affect my interest in exploring gender differences.

The interview process itself was fraught with constant complications. These issues and concerns could be their own chapter, but here I limit myself to a brief description of some race and class complications. Given that I conducted many of the interviews with people of different race and social class positions, respondents were sometimes understandably skeptical of my intentions. I sometimes found myself "playing dumb"[14] about topics such as homophobia in black communities, in the hope of eliciting information from respondents. This technique seemed to work best when LGBT people of color perceived me as well-meaning but uninformed, yet many other respondents seemed to resist these interview techniques, feeling that it was not their job to educate me about their communities. At other times, I took the opposite approach by going out of my way to emphasize my knowledge (e.g. describing the effects of white privilege and institutional racism). I often shifted back-and-forth between these two techniques – playing dumb and emphasizing my knowledge – during the same interview. Moreover, I was not necessarily aware of these techniques while conducting an interview, but I sometimes notice these moments now when listening to the interview recordings. Ultimately, I think the interview process worked best when I was honest about my

[14] Here, this phrase is meant to signify that I would hide or downplay my knowledge about a certain topic.

ignorance but also forthright about my knowledge. After all, there were many occasions when I did not have to "play" dumb – I simply did not know about the topic at hand – and yet there were other times when being honest about my knowledge helped foster a reciprocal relationship between me and the participant. Issues of trust, of course, invariably arise when a white, middle-class researcher interviews low-income people of color, and I ultimately tried to manage these tensions – sometimes not very successfully – by being forthright about both my knowledge and my ignorance.

The Interview Sample

Of the 17 men I interviewed, all of them identified as gay, and 13 of the 17 women identified as lesbian; two female respondents identified as heterosexual and two as bisexual (See Appendix D for a list of the respondents' demographic characteristics). Eight of the ten transgender respondents identified as male-to-female (MTF), one as female-to-male (FTM), and one as intersexed. Participants ranged from 20 to 62 years old; the median age was 41. Twenty-one respondents identified as black, 13 as white, eight as Latino, and two as Asian. In terms of educational background, five participants had dropped out of high school, 14 had a high school diploma, six had taken some college courses, 16 had a college degree, and three had a postgraduate degree. Some of the violence that respondents described had occurred outside of New York City, but most of their violent experiences (i.e., well over half) occurred within the city. Every respondent described experiences of anti-LGBT verbal violence. All but six respondents described experiences of anti-LGBT physical violence; all of the respondents who did not have experiences of anti-LGBT physical violence were white and middle-class.

Quantifiable socioeconomic classifications were avoided in the hope of allowing respondents to describe their perceptions and experiences of social class (Acker 2006; Bettie 2003; Taylor 2009). In addition to educational attainment, respondents were asked to self-identify in terms of social class and to describe their occupational history in detail. Race and class seemed to intersect on these measurements, with most LGBT people of color being unemployed or identifying as working-class and most white respondents describing upper middle-class jobs. Moreover, of the 19 participants who did not attend college, 18 were black or Latino. Conversely, all but one of the white respondents had a college degree. Thus, with regard to the intersection of race and class, most middle-class participants were white and most low-income respondents were black or Latino. This division along race and class lines arose in part from my sampling technique: most of the organizations where I placed fliers appeared to serve a largely middle-class white population or a predominantly working-class black and Latino population. Moreover, the money that respondents received for participating seemed to attract a fair number of poor and working-class people; conversely, several middle-class respondents said that they did not need to be financially compensated for their time. This difference led to a partially bifurcated sample, with some middle-class respondents who wanted to contribute to the project and some low-income participants who needed the money that they would earn from participating.

The Methods and Structure of this Dissertation

In parts of this dissertation, I examine differences between these two groups – middle-class white respondents and low-income LGBT people of color – along with the variation within them. The categories of "middle-class white respondents" and "low-

income LGBT people of color" are meant to reflect race and class differences found within the sample. Of course, these categorizations are imperfect, as race and class identities are more fluid than these categories would suggest (Taylor 2007). A few white respondents, for example, had fluctuated in and out of working-class jobs and some LGBT people of color had previously worked in middle-class occupations. Nevertheless, most white respondents had worked primarily in upper middle-class jobs throughout their lives and most people of color were unemployed or had worked primarily in working-class occupations. At the same time, considerable differences could be found within each of these groups, as poor LGBT people of color, for instance, may interpret and experience anti-queer violence quite differently than working-class LGBT people of color. Still, results from this study suggest salient differences between middle-class white respondents and low-income LGBT people of color. Chapter 6, in particular, emphasizes the differences between these two groups of respondents. Thus, while I sometimes focus on the variation within these race and social class groups, this dissertation largely explores the differences between them, suggesting that the social position of LGBT people structures their response to anti-queer violence.

Throughout this dissertation, I use the phrase "homophobic violence" to denote the violent experiences of lesbian women and gay men. I have also used the phrase "anti-transgender violence" to signify the violent experiences of transgender people; at times, I have referred to these experiences as "transphobic violence."[15] Although heterosexism

[15] Whenever possible, I have tried to avoid using this phrase, as it collapses the experiences of trans people with those of lesbian women and gay men. Nevertheless, in the interest of brevity and variation, I have sometimes used the phrase "transphobic" as interchangeable with "anti-transgender."

and heteronormativity have slightly different meanings[16], I have used them interchangeably throughout most of this dissertation.

In the following chapters, I present much of the interview data, using respondents' words and experiences as the foundation for these chapters. To ensure respondents' confidentiality, I have used pseudonyms throughout. Most of the academic works I find myself reading these days, and those I often enjoy the most, are ethnographies (e.g., most recently, Bettie 2003; Pascoe 2007; Wilkins 2008; Stein 2001); I have tried to use these works, as well more foundational ethnographies (e.g., Hochschild 1983, 1989; Humphreys 1970), as models for my own work. In what follows, I have tried to limit the number of block quotations throughout the text. My sense is that readers often skim over long quotations, so I have tried to use them sparingly, summarizing respondents' words at certain moments and including short, succinct quotes at other times. I hope this approach makes the following chapters accessible, and yet still reflects the experiences of the LGBT people who participated in this project.

[16] Heterosexism, similar to patriarchy and institutionalized racism, signifies the societal privileging of heterosexuality and the oppression of queer people. Heteronormativity, which also operates on the societal level, is meant to signify the ways in which heterosexuality is constructed as normal and natural (and homosexuality is constructed as abnormal and unnatural).

Chapter 3

Violence against Lesbian Women: Homophobia, Sexism, and the Intersections of Gender and Sexuality

This chapter provides empirical data on the violent experiences of LGBT people, focusing particular attention on anti-lesbian violence. I have tried to use the perceptions and experiences of lesbian women to guide the data presented in this chapter, but I have included quotations from gay men and transgender women when appropriate. My goal here is not to generalize about the types of violence confronting LGBT people (for macro-level trends, See Herek 2009), but to further our understanding of the ways in which queer people may perceive hate-motivated violence. I begin this chapter by examining patterns of victimization among the LGBT people whom I interviewed and then I focus more specifically on the violent experiences of lesbian respondents. Focusing primarily on anti-lesbian violence allows me to highlight its distinctiveness as well as the differences among lesbian respondents. After exploring these differences, I end this chapter by outlining some of the meaning-making processes of lesbian women, revealing how they may make sense of their violent experiences.

Homophobic Violence: Appearing as Queer and Transgressing Gender Norms

Results from this study suggest that gay and lesbian respondents often experienced homophobic violence for transgressing gender norms – that is, they confronted violence when they were perceived to be "doing gender" inappropriately (West and Zimmerman 1987; Perry 2001). The data reflect numerous examples of this

trend. Leslie[1], a 50 year-old black bisexual woman, was pushed to the ground by a man who told her, "Don't start walking like a dyke, trying to show your manhood, you're still a woman." Thomas, a 41 year-old Asian gay man, was routinely beaten by his father for "acting like a sissy." And Carol, a 39 year-old Latina transgender woman, was sexually assaulted by a man who called her a "loud, nasty bitch" and told her that she was "asking for it." These violent experiences illustrate that gender and sexism, in addition to homophobia and heterosexism, are implicated in many forms of anti-LGBT violence. Indeed, respondents' violent experiences routinely seemed about ensuring gender conformity.

Respondents typically appeared to perform gender in nontraditional ways, as the gay men whom I interviewed often appeared feminine in their gender display and the lesbian women frequently appeared masculine in theirs. Several respondents even consciously and proudly identified themselves as gender transgressive. For instance, Judy, a 43 year-old Latina lesbian woman who had experienced homophobic violence on several occasions, described herself as a "gender warrior." She told me, "I'm battling gender shit as much as anything. Sometimes I'll call myself a gender warrior to pump myself up. Those are the days when I want to go out of my house and be as masculine as I want to be. That's when stuff is most likely to come my way." In a society in which homosexuality is stigmatized and gender nonconformity is associated with

[1] When first introducing respondents in a chapter, I usually include a description of their age, gender, sexuality, and race or ethnicity. Subsequent descriptions of the respondent do not necessarily include all of this information, but the respondent's age and sexuality are typically mentioned again. For the sake of brevity, I only include a description of the respondent's class position when I am addressing issues directly relevant to social class. When first introducing respondents, I also sometimes include a brief description of their violent experience.

homosexuality, homophobic violence serves to punish individuals for transgressing gender norms (Perry 2001; Tomsen and Mason 2001). The threat of homophobic violence establishes paths of least resistance in which gender conformity brings about homophobic violence less frequently than gender nonconformity. If individuals perform masculinity or femininity inappropriately, they risk experiencing homophobic violence for stepping "out of line." They risk, for example, being called a "fag" or a "dyke" for transgressing gender norms (Pascoe 2007; Perry 2003; Schwartz and Rutter 1998).

As sexuality theorists have documented, distinguishing between gender identity and sexual orientation has not occurred until relatively recently (D'Emilio and Freedman 1988; Foucault 1978; Marshall 1981; Ned Katz 1995). In the United States, gender and sexuality are constructed as distinct but overlapping characteristics (Ingraham 1994; Jackson 2005; Pringle 1992). Their intersection dictates that stereotypical feminine characteristics indicate male homosexuality and stereotypical masculine characteristics indicate female homosexuality (Marshall 1981; Pringle 1992; Schwartz and Rutter 1998). Stigmatized gender identities, in other words, supposedly reveal stigmatized sexual identities. Andre, a self-described androgynous black gay man, addressed this dynamic, arguing that others have judged his sexuality by examining his gender performance: "I didn't even know I was gay [when I was in high school], but I was feminine, so I guess they equated that with gay. They kind of put them both on the same spectrum." Andre was presumed to be gay because others perceived him as feminine; his gender nonconformity signaled to others that he may be queer. Moreover, during this time, he experienced homophobic violence not because he identified as gay but because others identified him as gay based on his gender performance. The way he understood his

sexuality, then, was largely irrelevant to how others perceived it. His gender performance marked him as visibly "out," regardless of whether or not he understood himself as queer.

Respondents also addressed the advantages of conforming to gender norms. For example, Ling, a 29 year-old bisexual Asian woman, explained how she benefited from not being perceived as queer: "It's good that I don't look it. That's why I don't get a lot of people picking on me now. No one can tell." Li argued that the reward of not "looking it" – of not appearing as if she were lesbian – included less homophobic violence. Similarly, Page, a 45 year-old Latina lesbian woman, suggested that she experienced less harassment than her ex-girlfriend "because [her ex-girlfriend] is a manly-type thing. Me? I'm regular, like a woman. You would never know that I'm gay." Page argued that conforming to gender norms reduced the likelihood of being perceived as queer and the probability of experiencing homophobic violence.

Given that lesbian women and gay men frequently encounter violence when their sexuality becomes known, homophobic violence should be understood in part as a social control mechanism encouraging queer people to conceal their sexuality. Punishing LGBT people for being visibly "out" reinforces cultural notions of "the closet" in which lesbian women and gay men are expected to keep their sexuality hidden (Calhoun 2000; Waldner and Berg 2008). Thus, homophobic violence reproduces ideologies constructing homosexuality as immoral and unnatural – as something that should be hidden from public view (D'Augelli and Grossman 2001; Seidman 2003).

Violence against Lesbian Women: Reinforcing Gender Inequality

Respondents, regardless of gender and sexuality, experienced violence overwhelmingly from men. When describing my dissertation results to others, I have often been surprised to discover that many people seem to believe that women perpetrate most anti-lesbian violence. Men, however, perpetrated almost all of the physical violence reported by lesbian respondents. In fact, lesbian respondents did not describe any incidents of physical violence from female strangers; some lesbian women had experienced physical violence from their mothers during childhood. Macro-level survey data support these findings, as patterns of victimization suggest that men perpetrate most anti-LGBT violence throughout the United States (Herek 2009; Kuehnle and Sullivan 2001). This trend should not be particularly surprising, given that men perpetrate most violent crime (Catalano 2006; Kimmel and Mahler 2003). Nevertheless, many respondents in this study did experience verbal violence from women.

Respondents, particularly lesbian women, often encountered violence and harassment that was male-centered. Many lesbian women reported being asked questions such as "have you tried being with a man?" or "why don't you like men?" Gay men were usually not asked similar questions about women. This difference reflects misogyny to the extent that it constructs lesbian women's sexual desire as incomprehensible. For instance, Dorothy, a 49 year-old white lesbian woman, "came out" to her mother, who then said, "I can't see why a woman would choose to be with another woman. It makes no sense why you wouldn't want to be with a man." This statement reproduces heteronormativity by constructing homosexuality as a choice (and heterosexuality as natural). It also seems to reinforce gender inequality, constructing women as inferior to men. If heteronormativity dictates that both lesbian women and gay men choose to be

sexually involved with members of the same sex, then sexism dictates that lesbian women make a less logical choice than gay men. In a society in which men are more valued than women, lesbian women must explain their partner choice because it is assumed that a rational human being would desire men. As a result, the intersection of heteronormativity and sexism constructs lesbian women's sexual desire as a foolish and incomprehensible choice (Calhoun 2000).

Because lesbian women's sexuality is positioned vis-à-vis heterosexual men to a greater extent than gay men's sexuality is positioned vis-à-vis heterosexual women, lesbian women are forced to think about themselves in relation to other people in such a way that gay men are not. Indeed, anti-lesbian violence often served as a social control mechanism encouraging lesbian women to be other-centered. In many cases, perpetrators seemed to use anti-lesbian violence as a way to punish women for ignoring heterosexual men. For instance, Judy, the 43 year-old lesbian woman mentioned earlier in this chapter, was pushed to the ground by a male stranger. Judy thought that the man had targeted her because she was holding hands with another woman (who was a straight woman, but one of Judy's friends). After pushing her, the man said, "The only reason you're like that is because you haven't had a good man. Nobody has fucked you right." This statement constructs lesbian women's sexuality as problematic – as something that needs to be explained – and it places heterosexual men at the center of that explanation. If lesbian women's sexuality only occurs because they "haven't had a good man," then their sexuality can only be understood by referring to men. Moreover, if lesbian women's sexuality is explained in terms of what they have not experienced ("nobody has fucked you right"), then lesbianism only occurs under abnormal circumstances (it results

from *bad* experiences with men, or at least the absence of good ones). Thus, explaining lesbian women's sexuality as resulting from bad experiences with men reproduces heterosexism by constructing homosexuality as abnormal and reinforces sexism by constructing men as in control of women's sexuality.

Male-centered and heterosexist ideologies seemed embedded in most forms of anti-lesbian violence. Jasmine, the 44 year-old lesbian woman described previously, reported many violent experiences, several of which had occurred with her girlfriend. One of these experiences occurred when they were holding hands in public and several men began to taunt them. A man told Jasmine's girlfriend, "Come on, girl, I could do more for you than she can." When Jasmine's girlfriend ignored this comment, the man called her a "bitch" and spat at her. In this case, the violence seemed to serve both a psychological function – it allowed the perpetrator to construct himself as sexually superior to Jasmine – and a sociological one – it reinforced institutional power structures by punishing women for finding sexual pleasure with one another. At times, anti-lesbian violence, then, should be understood as a social control mechanism encouraging women to depend upon men for gratification (Pharr 1998; Rich 1980).

Homophobic Violence as a Means for Reinforcing Gender Difference

Homophobic violence often reinforced gender and sexuality norms by maintaining discourse that queer people should not be visibly "out" and by strengthening normative gender ideologies that encourage gender conformity. LGBT people's violent experiences also seemed to reinforce notions of gender difference, reproducing essentialist understandings in which women and men are viewed as inherently different. For example, Gideon, a 25 year-old black gay man, was beaten by his mother during

adolescence for engaging in stereotypical feminine behavior such as jumping rope and playing with girls' hair. During one of these beatings, his mother told him, "Don't you know that you're a man? Only women and fags act like that." Here, Gideon's mother used homophobic violence to remind him of his gender identity ("don't you know that you're a man?") and to establish dichotomous standards of gender-appropriate behavior ("only women and fags act like that"). Similarly, Jasmine, a 44 year-old black lesbian woman, was attacked by two male strangers for performing gender inappropriately. In response to her "aggressively masculine" appearance, as she described it, and her holding hands with her girlfriend, one of the men punched her on the shoulder. After hitting her, the perpetrator said, "You're no man, so don't go thinking that you can act like you are." Homophobic violence, in this case, served to punish Jasmine for behaving in a way that the perpetrator perceived as too masculine. His insistence that she was not a man suggested that he was punishing her for failing to match her gender display with her presumed sex characteristics. In this context, homophobic violence seemed designed to reinforce notions of women and men as fundamentally different, relying on societal ideals in which gender is understood as fixed and permanent. His actions, in other words, reinforced essentialist understandings of gender in which individuals must be either male or female and cannot change from one gender to the other.

Anti-Lesbian Violence: Extending from Sexism and Heteronormativity

Although some previous research contends that homophobic violence extends primarily from patriarchy (Pharr 1998; von Schulthess 1992), recent studies have emphasized the links and connections between sexism and homophobia (Tomsen and Mason 2001). Hate crime research has traditionally focused on how anti-lesbian violence

begins as misogynist, with a homophobic component subsequently added (von Schulthess 1992). One of the most influential studies of anti-lesbian hate crime goes as far to "conceptualize lesbianism as an extension of gender and conceptualize anti-lesbian violence as an extension of misogynistic violence" (von Schulthess 1992: 71). In some ways, von Schulthess's argument has been discredited by much of feminist and queer scholarship, which contends that sexuality and homophobia cannot be understood as products of gender and sexism (Calhoun 2000; Ingraham 1994; Jackson 2005; MacKinnon 1982; Rubin 1984). The hate crime literature, then, could be viewed as somewhat antiquated in how it has conceptualized the intersections between gender and sexuality. Nevertheless, hate crime research has continued to advance von Schulthess's argument that anti-lesbian violence should be understood primarily as a product of misogyny[2].

Von Schulthess (1992) studied anti-lesbian violence in San Francisco, surveying 400 lesbian women at gay pride events and then interviewing seven respondents from her original sample. Her article is one of the only studies to focus exclusively on anti-lesbian hate crime, as gay men have been featured most prominently in the literature (Perry 2003a). From her data, von Schulthess concluded that anti-lesbian violence "intensifies the sense of intimidation that [lesbians] experience daily as women" (p. 65) and she argued that forms of anti-lesbian violence could be viewed "along a continuum ranging from exclusively antiwoman at one end to exclusively anti-lesbian at the other" (p. 71).

[2] Barbara Perry (2001), citing von Schulthess, reproduces her argument: "Anti-lesbian violence is an extension of misgynistic sentiment generally" (Perry 2001:116). Perry certainly does not collapse homophobia into sexism, but there is relatively little mention of sexuality or homophobia throughout her text, which suggests that she accepts the privileging of gender over sexuality.

She also implied that most forms of violence experienced by the lesbian women in her sample were immediately misogynist but not instantly homophobic.

Although some of the violence against lesbian women in my sample began as misogynist and then later became homophobic, their violent experiences were most typically homophobic right away. Indeed, lesbian women in this study usually experienced violence when their sexuality became known. Examples of this trend abound in the data: the Ku Klux Klan attacked Dorothy after she "came out" during high school; a man spat on Aisha for wearing a gay pride t-shirt; and Catherine received death threats for heading the gay and lesbian group on her college campus. As I have argued, anti-lesbian violence frequently involves misogyny, yet reducing it to misogynist violence ignores how homophobia and heterosexism are implicated in many of its forms. Lesbian women, in many cases, may experience violence based on not only their gender but also their sexuality – that is, they may experience violence for being perceived as *lesbian* women. Thus, it is not merely that homophobia increases violence against women – as von Schulthess suggests – but that it makes certain forms of misogynist violence possible.

Although von Schulthess (1992) arguably underestimates the role of homophobia in structuring anti-lesbian violence, the data from my study may differ from hers in part because of our different sampling techniques. Before participating in this study, respondents were asked to think about the relationship between their sexuality and their violent experiences (the recruitment flier read: "Have you experienced violence because you were perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender?"). Conversely, von Schulthess surveyed lesbian women at gay pride events who may or may not have

experienced violence. Thus, in my study, respondents participated under the assumption that they had experienced homophobic violence; von Schulthess surveyed lesbian women more generally. These sampling techniques may have led to different results, with participants from my study experiencing violence that was more explicitly rooted in homophobia. Respondents' violent experiences, in other words, will inevitably change based on the methods used by the researcher.

Of course, violence against lesbian women sometimes occurs for reasons other than their perceived sexual identity. As I argue throughout this dissertation, the experiences of poor and working-class LGBT people of color suggest that racism and classism play a significant role in structuring anti-queer violence. Moreover, given that sexism structures many of the violent experiences of LGBT people, a nuanced understanding of anti-queer violence must account for the ways in which multiple forms of power relations draw upon and reinforce one another.

Obviously, forms of anti-lesbian violence will relate to misogyny and homophobia to varying degrees; one form may occur largely because of homophobia, while another may extend primarily from sexism. Still, when von Schulthess proposes a continuum ranging from misogynist to homophobic violence, she implies that sexism and heteronormativity can be separated from one another. In contrast, my results suggest that it is often difficult, if not impossible, to determine where the line for one begins and the other ends. Respondents themselves often had no idea whether one of their violent experiences began as anti-lesbian or anti-female because it seemed to have occurred for both of these reasons. For example, Latoya, a 50 year-old black lesbian woman who

worked as a balloon decorator, said the following about a man who had assaulted her on the street:

> I thought that it was mostly about my sexuality, but he kept calling me a "bitch" and doing this sexual stuff, so I really don't know…I thought that he was mad because I was a woman who didn't want anything to do with him. But then he just seemed mad because I was a lesbian. So, I guess both of those things had something to do with it, but hell if I really know.

In this situation, a man approached Latoya on the street, told her she was "beautiful," and then asked for her phone number. She repeatedly expressed disinterest, indicating that she was in a hurry. He then began to taunt and sexually objectify her. After several minutes, she told him, "Listen, I'm going to pick up my girlfriend from work, I really don't have time." Confused, he then asked if she was lesbian, which she confirmed. His demeanor suddenly changed as he began insulting her, screaming "you pussy-eating bitch" and "you nasty, disgusting bitch." Fearing for her safety, Latoya ran away from him. He eventually caught up with her, grabbing her by the hair and pulling her to the ground. As she screamed for help, another man intervened, which allowed her to run away.

I have described Latoya's violent experience to illustrate the interconnections between misogynist and homophobic forms of violence. Both sexism and heteronormativity seemed to structure this incident, making it difficult to determine whether it began as misogynist or homophobic. Certainly, the physical violence began after Latoya revealed her lesbian identity. The sudden shift in the situation indicates that the violence either would not have occurred or would not have occurred in the same way had Latoya identified as heterosexual. Still, her gender determined how the incident developed, as the perpetrator's assumption that a woman would want to be approached on

the street was the basis for the entire encounter to occur. His repeated sexual advances indicate not only his heteronormativity but also his assumption that a woman would be interested in this kind of overture, even when explaining that she does not. Furthermore, his insults incorporate both misogyny and homophobia, labeling her a "pussy-eating bitch" for identifying as lesbian and rejecting his sexual advances.

Ultimately, I am arguing that hate crime research should focus on more productive research questions than whether anti-lesbian violence begins as misogynist or homophobic. Indeed, constructing systems of oppression as competitors – race vs. class, gender vs. sexuality – is a time-honored tradition that intersectionality scholarship has tried to subvert for quite some time (Bettie 2003; Calhoun 2000; Collins 2004; McCall 2005; Pringle 1992). This line of scholarship would suggest that privileging one system of oppression over another (e.g. sexism over heteronormativity) has the effect of marginalizing many of LGBT people's violent experiences. If hate crime research constructs homophobic violence as an extension of misogyny, then we cannot adequately account for LGBT people who understand their violent experiences as rooted primarily in homophobia. If we conceptualize anti-LGBT violence as emanating solely from homophobia, then we overlook the ways in which gender is implicated in many of its forms. Rather than ranking systems of oppression, hate crime research should focus on the connections between them. Indeed, since anti-lesbian violence most frequently involves sexism and homophobia, both of them should be accounted for and taken into consideration.

Associating with Homosexuality: Anti-Queer Violence against Heterosexual Women

The violent experiences of the two heterosexual women whom I interviewed for this study further illustrate the degree to which anti-LGBT violence relates to sexism and homophobia. Lisa, a 36 year-old heterosexual Latina woman, was physically assaulted, along with her gay male friend, after exiting a lesbian- and gay-themed party at a prominent university in New York City. Campus security framed the incident as related entirely to homophobia, telling Lisa that it was "not her issue" upon discovering that she identifies as straight. Even though Lisa perceived the incident as emanating from homophobia, she problematized the response of campus security, arguing that their actions reinforced certain assumptions:

> They told me, "You stay out of it, it's not really your issue," which I took as a "well, if you weren't hanging out with these people, this wouldn't have happened." Which also, when I go back to my experience of race bias, if you're standing with a black man when the cop beats his ass, you know, "It's none of your business, because you're not black; racism is not your problem because you're not black." It's the message that a lot of white people are given, so then they teach that to their children….But, racism is everybody's problem. And homophobia is everybody's problem. And if you're there when it happens and you don't do anything, then you're *part* of the problem. We're taught that it's not your problem, because you're not gay, so you just sit over there and give your shoulder for your friend to cry on and we'll take care of it.

The institutional response in this case seemed to define homophobic violence narrowly, thereby reinforcing notions that heterosexism should concern only gay and lesbian people. Lisa's experience, however, illustrates that heterosexual people may encounter homophobic violence. As a result, anti-queer violence should not be understood entirely as a social control mechanism disciplining LGBT bodies, as it sometimes serves to punish individuals for associating themselves with a queer space or person.

Anne, a 41-year old black woman and the other straight-identified woman whom I interviewed, also experienced violence because of her close association with a gay male

friend. She was harassed along with her friend by two male strangers who called him a "faggot." Anne's friend yelled back at the men, saying, "It's none of your fucking business," which prompted the two men to taunt and eventually assault her friend. When Anne tried to intervene, one of the men pushed her to the ground, telling her, "Stay out of this, bitch." Anne thought that her intervention halted the assault, as the perpetrators ran off when she said, "I'm calling the cops." Analyzing the perpetrators' motivations, Anne perceived them as misogynist: "I do think that they were sexist pigs. They only had a problem with him because he looked like more of a woman than me. They didn't have a problem putting their hands on a woman, either, which I saw firsthand." On the one hand, this violent experience cannot be reduced entirely to sexism, since the perpetrators attacked Anne's friend (a gay man) rather than her (a heterosexual woman), yet the initial attack spilled over into misogynist violence, which suggested to Anne that sexism played a role in the violence.

Differences among Lesbian Women

Lesbian women seemed to experience homophobic violence differently based on whether they were perceived as masculine or feminine. That is, lesbian respondents often thought that heterosexual men had perpetrated anti-lesbian violence in different ways depending on the victim's perceived gender identity. In what follows, although I have constructed the categories of masculine and feminine women dichotomously, lesbian respondents did not typically view themselves as belonging to either of these categories. Some lesbian women described themselves as "butch" or "femme," but most did not (for feminist debates on the terms butch and femme, See Harris and Crocker 1997; Nestle 1992). Instead, lesbian respondents usually understood their gender identities as more

malleable than simply masculine or feminine. Nevertheless, lesbian women often thought that they were defined by their perpetrators as either masculine or feminine, even though lesbian respondents did not necessarily identify this way. In these situations, they sometimes felt as if heterosexual meanings had been mapped onto them. This type of reaction was particularly common when the violence involved a lesbian couple, where heterosexual men appeared to perceive the relationship as involving a male/masculine person and a female/feminine person. Again, lesbian respondents did not typically perceive their relationships in such heteronormative terms, but they thought that their perpetrators had conceptualized the relationship in this way. Thus, the categories of masculine and feminine women, as I use them in this section, should be understood to represent how lesbian respondents were perceived by their perpetrators at a specific moment in time. Because the same woman could be perceived as masculine in one situation and feminine in another, the categories should be understood as the meaning attached to a lesbian woman during a particular situation rather than the property of an individual woman.

Lesbian women frequently felt that they were treated differently based on whether they were perceived as masculine or feminine. These differences in treatment were most apparent to lesbian respondents when perpetrators harassed a lesbian couple. In general, respondents argued that masculine lesbians were the most likely to experience physical violence in public. For instance, Page, a 45 year-old Latina lesbian woman, explained how this dynamic operated when she was with her girlfriend in public:

> Interviewer: You've described several times when you were with your girlfriend and you were physically attacked. Has your girlfriend ever experienced any physical violence when you've been with her?

> Page: I don't think she's ever experienced anything physical – at least, not because she's gay.
>
> Interviewer: Do you have any idea why that might be?
>
> Page: Because she's feminine. Guys feel more comfortable harassing me because even though I'm a woman, they see me as manly in some ways…They feel like they can do whatever they want with me. Like they're beating up someone who looks like a man to them, so they're not beating up a woman. So, it's ok for them.

Lesbian respondents sometimes compared themselves with their girlfriends, suggesting that women were the most likely to experience physical violence when they were perceived as masculine. Even though masculine lesbians were the most likely to address this dynamic, feminine women also thought that physical violence was rarely directed against them. For instance, Tamika, a 53 year-old black lesbian woman, thought that she had experienced less physical violence than her girlfriend because of their different gender performances:

> Interviewer: So, when you've been with [your girlfriend], she's the one who's experienced the physical violence? I mean, it's been directed towards her?
>
> Tamika: *Always* towards her. Because they see her as more masculine. They mostly leave me alone because they see me as the feminine one; the kind of girl they think would sleep with them.

Tamika suggested that male perpetrators perceived feminine lesbians as potential sexual partners rather than gender nonconformists. Moreover, given societal norms stigmatizing violence against women, Tamika argued that heterosexual men may feel most comfortable perpetrating violence against masculine women – in public settings, at least. Still, these differences between masculine and feminine women seemed to depend on the context. In some cases, female respondents said that they were the most likely to be verbally harassed when they were perceived as feminine. Furthermore, both masculine and feminine lesbians had experiences of sexual assault. My argument, then, is not

necessarily that lesbian women experience more violence depending on whether they are perceived as masculine or feminine, but that their violent experiences may take on different forms. Feminine lesbians, for example, described many occasions in which their partner choice was questioned. For instance, later during the interview, Tamika said that she had experienced as much verbal violence as her girlfriend:

> Interviewer: Do you think [your girlfriend] gets more verbal harassment than you, too?
>
> Tamika: I'm not sure. Like, if we're out, I'll get more questions than her. Guys will harass me and they'll just ignore her.
>
> Interviewer: Oh, so it's kind of tricky. Depends on the situation.
>
> Tamika: Depends on the situation.
>
> Interviewer: Can you think of a time when that occurred?
>
> Tamika: Oh, yeah. We were out for dinner this one time and our waiter was asking me these questions. All of these really annoying questions. And I was like, aren't you supposed to be nice to us? You're our waiter!…He starting off by asking me why I don't like men. Then it was something about how "if I was going to be with somebody who looks like a guy, why not just be with a guy?"...I remember him saying something like, "I don't understand you people."…It was all about why I was with her. I get that sort of thing a lot – I have to explain why I'm with her.

In these situations, heterosexual men questioned the woman they perceived as feminine, while ignoring the woman they perceived as masculine. These differences suggest that the perceived gender identity of a lesbian woman structures her experiences of anti-lesbian violence, as sexist and heteronormative ideologies shape the ways in which heterosexual men interact with lesbian women.

In other situations, masculine women were constructed as corrupting feminine lesbians. Judy, described earlier in this chapter, identified as "butch" and explained the different forms of verbal violence confronting masculine and feminine lesbians:

> [People who harass me] think that it's my fault that she's like that. Like, I influenced her. I did this to her. And I'm like, "Hey, she could have been like that since the day she was born. You don't know that. You don't know her." I'm not forcing her to be with a woman. That's her choice. They act like she doesn't have any control over it…It's like they feel that it's our fault. Like, if gay, aggressive women – dykes – whatever you want to call us….If we weren't gay, femmes would be alright – the femmes would be with a man. Our girlfriends would be with men.

Here, Judy described heteronormative discourse constructing masculine lesbians as corrupting feminine women – the former supposedly "make" the latter gay. This discourse reproduces heteronormativity by constructing feminine lesbians as naturally heterosexual; it suggests that they would be straight if they had not been tarnished by masculine women. Furthermore, this understanding of lesbian sexuality relies on patriarchal ideology, implying that feminine women have little control over their sexuality, and constructing masculine women as active (they are "doing" the changing) and feminine women as passive (they are changed). As a result, lesbian women become stereotyped as either corrupting and controlling or flighty and complicit. Defining lesbian women in these dichotomous terms creates an oppressive structure for them, as they become associated with negative characteristics regardless of whether they are labeled as masculine or feminine. As other gender scholarship has shown, women who subvert traditional gender norms are often characterized in such ways, becoming stereotyped as overly aggressive and belligerent or weak-willed and susceptible to men's influence (Miller 2001).

These oppressive structures seemed particularly apparent when a lesbian respondent experienced different forms of violence based on how she was perceived. For instance, Jasmine, a 44 year-old black lesbian woman who worked as a security guard, experienced different forms of violence depending on whether she was perceived as

masculine or feminine. As she began her job as a security guard, Jasmine said that her coworkers perceived her as feminine because of how she dressed. During this time, Jasmine argued that she was "not taken seriously…because the men saw [her] as a little wallflower." She was also not "out" in terms of her sexuality, which sometimes led to sexual harassment from her male coworkers:

> Yeah, my sexuality came up a lot, in little ways…Like men would make little comments about how I should "give a guy a try" or "stop messing around and have real sex one of these days." Degrading stuff like that…They would always try to ask about my sex life, in this way that they didn't really care, they just wanted to bother me.

When men perceived Jasmine as feminine, she seemed to encounter verbal forms of violence more frequently than other forms. Moreover, she repeatedly experienced sexual harassment during this time, which created a hostile work environment for her. After several months at this job, Jasmine requested a worksite transfer. When transferred to another security position, she changed her gender presentation – she "butched herself up," as she described it. This change in her gender performance also altered the forms of violence directed against her:

> I didn't want to have the same thing happen to me. So, I cut my hair real short and just started wearing butchy clothes…I wanted for them to see me as a tough woman, so I had to dress that way…It worked for a while, until they found out that I was a lesbian. Then I started to get tormented even worse than before. That's when someone put the word "DYKE" on my locker. My car was vandalized…It felt much more dangerous at this job once they found out I was a lesbian.

Jasmine's experience at these two jobs illustrates the bind in which many lesbian women find themselves, particularly in male-dominated jobs. They risk being perceived as frivolous if they perform femininity in traditional ways, and yet they risk experiencing anti-queer violence if they appropriate a masculine gender display. Of course, women in

general often face these oppressive structures, in which they feel trapped by a series of no-win situations (Frye 1983; Johnson 1997). The dilemma facing lesbian women, however, seems unique to their own social position. Indeed, at her second security job, Jasmine experienced violence only after revealing her sexuality – that is, once it became public. Thus, lesbian women must manage their sexual identities differently than heterosexual women; as societal pressures encourage lesbian women to conceal their sexuality, they must decide how and when to reveal their sexual identities, if at all. They must, in effect, contend with homophobia and heteronormativity.

As I have outlined, feminine lesbians were often questioned about their partner choice, perceived as frivolous, and sometimes even sexually harassed. Conversely, masculine lesbians more frequently experienced physical violence. Anti-lesbian physical violence, then, appeared to serve as a social control mechanism encouraging female respondents to conceal their sexuality and to perform gender in traditional ways. Feminine lesbians were often aware of this dynamic, arguing that their traditional gender displays allowed them to "pass" as heterosexual. For instance, Jetta, a 28 year-old black lesbian woman, was pushed down a flight of stairs by a man in her apartment building. She thought that he had assaulted her because he had called her "dyke" on two previous occasions and she described him as "the crazy guy" in her apartment building who "must have been high on drugs" when the incident occurred. When describing being pushed down the stairs, she claimed that the way she performed gender sometimes afforded her privilege not granted to other lesbian women:

> Sometimes I'll avoid dressing a certain way because I want to make sure that it doesn't happen again…People don't see me as a lesbian woman, unless I tell them…I'm pretty feminine, so I can just go about my business if I want. I know that it's easier that way, for people to think that I'm just like any other girl.

At times, lesbian respondents managed their presentations of self to avoid physical violence in public. Lesbian women said that they sometimes avoided masculine gender displays when they were in public with their girlfriends, believing that a butch and femme woman appearing together in public would "out" them to others. This type of response was even more common among gay male respondents, who often described situations in which they had tried to avoid appearing as feminine. Several gay men, for example, told me that they had avoided wearing feminine clothing or accessories (e.g., makeup, eyeliner) in relatively "dangerous areas."

In general, respondents believed that conforming to gender norms was a way to avoid homophobic violence. Yet, at the same time, lesbian women sometimes seemed to gain status – particularly in masculinized work environments – when appropriating a masculine gender display. Thus, the degree to which lesbian women are encouraged to perform masculinity or femininity varies depending upon the context. Stereotypes of lesbian women, for example, encourage them to appropriate masculine gender displays, while pressures within lesbian communities may encourage them to identify as either butch or femme. Jetta described these conflicting pressures faced by lesbian women: "Lesbians are supposed to be masculine, but then with [other] lesbians you're supposed to be butch *or* femme. But, then other people will get mad at you for wanting to be either of those. So, it really just depends on the crowd you hang with." Describing these contradictory and paradoxical pressures, lesbian respondents often argued that they were expected to perform gender differently based on the context. In some lesbian communities, they were expected to fit themselves into a neatly constructed butch/femme binary, while in other communities they were supposed to reject both of those identities.

Thus, lesbian women are alternatively rewarded and punished for appropriating masculine or feminine gender displays.

How Lesbian Women's Verbally Violent Experiences Varied based on the Gender of the Perpetrator

The insults directed toward lesbian women seemed to differ slightly based on the perpetrator's gender. As outlined previously, violence from male perpetrators often punished lesbian women for rejecting the sexual advances of men. Conversely, when women perpetrated verbal violence, it seemed to focus primarily on lesbian sexuality. One respondent – Tina, a 21 year-old Latina lesbian woman – emphasized these gender differences during the interview. Tina described two incidents of verbal violence – one from a woman, another from a man – that had occurred during the same week. The first experience occurred when holding hands with her girlfriend on the subway. A male stranger told Tina that she was "never going to be satisfied" by her girlfriend, April, who responded by asking the man, "Do you have a problem?" The man then told April, "I'm not worried, you can't please her, you don't have a dick." Tina and April then got off at the next subway stop, ending the encounter. On the one hand, this experience seemed rooted in heterosexism. Suggesting that women cannot provide sexual pleasure for one another reinforces heteronormativity by constructing vaginal-penile intercourse as ideal. At the same time, his statement focused primarily on the sexuality of heterosexual men, privileging it over lesbian women's sexuality. Indeed, his implicit message seemed to be "you can't please her [in the same way that I can]," thereby reproducing male-centered discourse.

Verbal insults from heterosexual women often differed slightly from those involving heterosexual men. For example, several days after being harassed by the man

on the subway, a female co-worker questioned Tina about her sexuality. Her co-worker began by asking, "What made you that way?," to which Tina responded with, "Nothing *made* me this way." This response prompted her co-worked to ask, "Is it because of your bad relationship with your father?" In some ways, this statement seems similar to those comments from the man on the subway, described above. In both situations, Tina's sexuality is positioned in relation to heterosexual men, yet each situation differs slightly in that both of them are intimately connected with the identity of the person who made the comments. Analyzing these two incidents, Tina and I had the following exchange:

> Interviewer: What do you think she was trying to say?
>
> Tina: She was trying to say that because she doesn't have a bad relationship with her father, and because I do, that's why I'm gay.
>
> Interviewer: She has a good relationship with her father?
>
> Tina: Yeah, but she isn't very close with her mom. She would *always* talk about how close she was with her father…She was trying to say that it's ok that she doesn't have a good relationship with her mom. Like, her relationship with her dad keeps her from turning out bad – you know, like me, or whatever.
>
> Interviewer: So, it was like as long as she has a good relationship with her father she doesn't have to worry about "becoming" gay?
>
> Tina: Yeah, so it was all about her. Just like the guy [on the subway] who was all "You can't please her 'cause you don't have what I got."

Respondents sometimes seemed at their most animated when describing how violence was shaped by forces beyond their control – how it depended, for example, on the setting or the perpetrators involved. At times, this perception appeared to help respondents move beyond blaming themselves for their violent experiences. Here, Tina's experience indicates that heterosexual women and men may both employ anti-queer statements to bolster the worth of their own social group. That is, heterosexual men may perpetrate

homophobic violence as a way to reinforce their superiority, while heterosexual women may employ verbal violence as a means to elevate the standing of their own sexuality. Obviously, these two moves are not equivalent or institutionally supported in the same way, but both of them suggest that homophobic violence depends on the perpetrator's gender identity.

Of course, my qualitative data focuses on victims' perceptions and experiences, thereby limiting any conclusions that can be drawn about perpetrators. Data from this study, in other words, cannot definitively show that patterns of victimization differ based on the perpetrator's gender. Large-scale quantitative surveys would be more useful for discovering how patterns of victimization differ at the societal level. Still, the data presented here suggest a possible area of study for future research.

I should also note that Tina analyzed her violent experiences atypically, as she seemed to examine them analytically and to separate them somewhat from her own identity. Most of the LGBT people whom I interviewed, in contrast, focused on the ways in which their violent experiences felt like a personal attack. This dynamic can probably be attributed to the essentializing of sexuality in the United States – that is, the construction of sexuality as part of "who one is." This trend can be seen in discourse describing an individual's sexuality as an integral part of one's identity; we say things such as "she *is* a lesbian" or "he *is* straight." In this context, sexuality is constructed as a core aspect of one's identity, as something defining that person. Given these societal constructions of sexuality, one would expect LGBT people to view homophobic violence, first and foremost, as a personal attack.

Even though patterns of victimization sometimes differed based on who was perpetrating the violence, hate crime research should be cautious about universalizing these differences. Societal differences along the lines of race, class, and gender should be understood primarily as resulting from social arrangements rather than the inherent nature of individuals. There is, in other words, a fine line between reproducing essentialist understandings of social groups and documenting how patterns of behavior differ along the lines of race, class, and gender. One of the ways for hate crime research to avoid reproducing stereotypical representations is to document the similarities between social groups and the variation within them. For example, even though I have described a possible gender difference between how women and men perpetrated anti-lesbian violence, both groups perpetrated it in some similar ways. Homophobic violence, for example, seemed to reproduce sexism and heteronormativity, regardless of whether women or men perpetrated it, which suggests that there was some overlap between male and female perpetrators.

Some of the basic tenants of intersectionality theory would suggest that everyone's social position structures their experiences and perceptions, as patterns of activity can be explained in large part by the way a society is organized (Crenshaw 1994; Spelman 1988). In particular, intersectionality theory posits that the social organization of society – the unequal distribution of power, prestige, and resources – has a significant effect on our life chances and how we behave (Collins 2000; Patilllo-McCoy 1999; Zinn and Dill 1996). As a result, one would expect homophobic violence to differ based on the social position of the person perpetrating it. Nevertheless, quantitative hate crime research would need to explore these research questions in greater detail. Unfortunately,

as it stands, the hate crime literature has paid relatively little attention to race, class, and gender differences among victims and perpetrators (Dunbar 2006).

The Agency of Lesbian Women: Validating Sexual Identities and Emphasizing Perpetrators' Hypocrisy

While homophobic physical violence often seemed designed to encourage lesbian respondents to perform gender in traditional ways, most lesbian women focused on their agency in being able to reject their attackers' meanings. This trend held for many of the LGBT people whom I interviewed, regardless of sexuality or gender identity, as respondents did not generally describe societal pressures as affecting their behavior. At times, respondents emphasized their agency by focusing on the ways they had modified their presentations of self. In these cases, respondents highlighted their ability to reduce the frequency with which violence had been perpetrated against them. Yet, in other cases, respondents did not think that their violent experiences had decreased over time, leading them to perceive anti-queer violence as something they might continually confront. LGBT people who performed gender in nontraditional ways were the most likely to perceive anti-queer violence as ongoing. As a result, gender nonconformist respondents sometimes had to work hardest at validating the ways in which they performed gender and sexuality. That is, queer people who had their gender and sexuality performances most consistently questioned seemed to spend the most time defending those performances. In this section, I examine how respondents justified their gender and sexual identities, paying particular attention to the meaning-making processes of lesbian women.

One of the ways lesbian women validated their sexual identities was by rejecting the meanings their attackers had mapped onto them. Since perpetrators often used anti-lesbian violence to assert meanings of marginality ("you're unequal to us"), lesbian women usually responded to these meanings by constructing themselves as equal – or even superior – to their attackers. These constructions took on many forms. Most commonly, lesbian respondents did so by pointing to their attacker's hypocrisy. Among black LGBT people, for example, this response frequently involved mentioning a perpetrator being on "the down low" (engaging in homosexual acts, while maintaining a heterosexual identity)[3]. Diamond, a 51 year-old black lesbian woman, described the men who had harassed her in this way: "Those boys who yell the loudest [homophobic slurs] at me and my girlfriend are the same ones who will go into the park looking for a blow job [from a man]. That's why they're the loudest – they've got stuff to hide." Constructing perpetrators as sexual hypocrites, respondents could view their own gender performances as an open and honest expression of their sexuality. That is, LGBT people could emphasize how their attackers hid parts of themselves, while respondents revealed those (or similar) parts.

Respondents addressed the hypocrisy of their perpetrators in other ways as well. Sometimes these statements described perpetrators' religious hypocrisy. Judy, described several times in this chapter, compared her religious views with those of a man who yelled homophobic slurs at her: "I go to church every Sunday…This guy who was screaming at me, when does he go? And then he'll sit there and yell how it's against the

[3] Several Puerto Rican respondents referred to their perpetrators as "banjee boys," a term used to describe men (who are usually black or Latino) who have sex with other men and who dress in stereotypically masculine attire.

Bible." I read this comment as Judy's attempt to push back against Christian discourse condemning homosexuality. As LGBT people become stigmatized as hedonistic and immoral, some queer people may counter those discourses by highlighting the ways in which they live moral or religious lives. At times, lesbian women challenged their perpetrator's morality without relying on religious principles, yet these statements also usually constructed perpetrators as hypocritical. Aisha, a 53 year-old black lesbian woman, emphasized her perpetrator's immorality: "You're going to attack me for liking women, but then you're going to use violence to try and hurt me and do as you will. Those are some fucked up ideas about what's right and wrong." Lesbian respondents were sometimes even harsher in judging their neighbors, acquaintances, and family members. Seven respondents in total referred to at least one of their attackers as "crazy"; several more LGBT people used synonyms for this word. These judgments typically occurred when respondents knew their attackers. When LGBT people perceived their perpetrator as someone whom they might interact with in the future, they seemed to work particularly hard at constructing this person as someone worth avoiding. Labeling a perpetrator as "crazy" was one of the ways respondents could distance themselves from interacting with individuals who might perpetrate violence.

Several respondents pointed out how their attackers seemed atypical compared with others in a similar position. Jetta described her attacker, who had pushed her down a flight of stairs, as unusual in comparison with other – seemingly more tolerant – people in her apartment building: "He's known as the crazy one in the building. Most people in there aren't like that…Most people just go about their business and leave me alone. That's true most places you go." Constructing homophobic violence as deviant behavior,

many respondents described their perpetrators as comparatively troubled. Such statements implied that passive or outright acceptance of homosexuality remains the most frequent way that LGBT people are treated in New York City. Norms establishing that people should "keep to themselves" dictate that queer people can go about their daily lives, without having rights to their personal space violated. Nevertheless, as data from this study suggest, LGBT people are sometimes attacked in public spaces, and they often view such attacks as emanating from psychologically unbalanced individuals. Jetta conveyed this understanding rather succinctly, as she continued to describe her attacker: "I can do everything in my power to make sure [violence] doesn't happen, but it just takes one nut to find out [my sexuality]. I have no control of what they're gonna do."

Other respondents addressed perpetrators' hypocrisy by pointing to the social context in which the violence had occurred. Although respondents did not generally describe social forces as affecting their own behavior, they sometimes argued that sociological factors had shaped their perpetrators' actions. Some lesbian respondents, for example, focused on how male perpetrators seemed to harass lesbian couples only when the perpetrators were with their male friends. In these situations, lesbian respondents painted male perpetrators as weak-willed, willing to cave to peer pressure. For instance, Jasmine, a 44 year-old butch lesbian woman mentioned earlier in this chapter, condemned male perpetrators for using homophobic violence to impress their friends:

> If they're by themselves, they won't do anything. But then when they're with their friends on the street, they'll start to bother you….Those are the only times when my girlfriend and I get it – when it's a group [of guys]….There's usually one or two guys who will do the most; the others will just laugh….I don't care what they think of me, *they* care what guys think of them.

Here, Jasmine criticized male perpetrators for being easily swayed by peer pressure ("they care what guys think of them"), while simultaneously constructing herself as defiant ("I don't care what they think of me"). Interestingly, Jasmine told me earlier in the interview how she had changed her behavior after experiencing homophobic violence. When she first started getting harassed, Jasmine would usually respond with verbal comments of her own, sometimes escalating the amount of violence directed against her. Over time, she told me that she had learned, "Not to say anything back because it will just make it worse." In her statement above, however, Jasmine says that she does not care what heterosexual men think of her and later during the interview she said that she no longer "gives in to other people." Taken together, her statements suggest that LGBT people may acknowledge the ways they have modified their behavior, while also viewing themselves as resolute in the face of social pressure.

Pointing to attackers' hypocrisy, respondents occasionally criticized the masculinity of their perpetrators. These responses were most common among gay men, but lesbian respondents sometimes employed sexist and homophobic discourse as well. For instance, Aisha, a 53 year-old lesbian woman described above, used sexist language when describing her perpetrators: "I thought they were little pussies. It's easy to throw something at me when you've got your friends there to back you up…I would have beaten [one perpetrator's] ass, if he was by himself." Responses such as this were uncommon, but they did occur. While returning to masculinity contests in the following chapter, here I only wish to suggest that LGBT people may rely on – rather than subvert – traditional gender hierarchies, reframing themselves as more masculine than their attackers. Indeed, in response to homophobic violence, LGBT people sometimes looked

for ways to highlight their own value, which occasionally included bolstering their standing in social hierarchies.

Emphasizing Individual Empowerment and Social Change

While respondents seemed to focus most frequently on their attackers' hypocrisy, some LGBT people addressed the need for broader, more institutional change. These statements usually dealt with concerns beyond the individual perpetrator, calling for a more fundamental transformation of society. For instance, Latoya, the 50 year-old balloon decorator described earlier, argued that LGBT people should address societal reform:

> Well, the violence comes from somewhere. Like, people aren't born disliking gay people. They're taught it….It's more than just one person, [homophobia] is everywhere. Just turn on the TV for a few seconds or keep your ears and eyes open. So, we change where [violence] comes from, then we will change what people do. That's what we should be focusing on – the source of it all. The way things are set [up].

In some sense, Latoya's analysis was atypical, perhaps reflecting the tendency in American society to focus on individual empowerment rather than institutional change. Still, some respondents connected negative representations of LGBT people with forms of anti-queer violence. Women, transgender people, and people of color, in particular, focused on protest and collaboration, emphasizing the need for LGBT people to mobilize and build coalitions. For instance, Page, a 45 year-old Latina woman, stressed how LGBT people should work together to end anti-queer violence: "We just need to come together and put a stop to it. Say that we can be who we want and the violence is not ok." In these situations, respondents focused on building coalitions in the hope of accomplishing social change. Calling for societal reform, LGBT people connected their

violent experiences with social forces, arguing that hate-motivated violence emanates from unequal social arrangements rather than psychologically disturbed individuals.

While some LGBT people emphasized the need for societal change, respondents more typically focused on individual empowerment. In these situations, respondents highlighted their agency by drawing on therapeutic discourse. For instance, Jetta, mentioned several times in this chapter, emphasized how she had responded to homophobic violence productively:

> I'm a powerful person, Doug. I don't let the negativity get to me. That's because the power lies within myself. I know who I am and what I'm doing. Once you know that, no one can mess with you. I've gotten all of my dreams. Not many people could say that. And that's why I'm happy. I'm content with myself. I'm a very confident person because I know that I have the power to confront anything that comes my way. I have the power to confront what most people fear.

Employing self-help discourse, Jetta constructed herself as empowered. She seemed deeply and understandably hurt from her violent experiences, yet at one moment she would blame herself for bad events in her life and at another she would continually emphasize her confidence. Focusing on her personal empowerment seemed to help her feel as if she had overcome her traumatic experiences, allowing her to view herself as someone who would not be hurt in the future.

Respondents sometimes appeared to emphasize their individual empowerment as a way of dealing with violence that they might confront down the line. For instance, Tina, a 21 year-old Latina lesbian woman, anticipated experiencing violence, but felt that she could handle it: "People are going to think what they want to think and do what they want, but that doesn't mean I have to take it…The best I gotta do is keep my head held high – accept what comes my way and keep on moving." Sentiments such as this were fairly common among respondents. Anticipating the possibility of homophobic violence,

LGBT people focused on their ability to cope with it, viewing themselves as capable of rejecting the meanings that might be mapped onto them.

Many respondents also rejected discourse implying that homophobic violence comes with the territory of being perceived as queer. For example, Dorothy, a 49 year-old black lesbian woman, rejected comments from her family members that minimized the severity of her violent experience: "[My family members] were just giving me this 'Well, what did you think was going to happen' attitude….But, that's bullshit. I don't have to have [violence] in my life….That's one thing I've learned – I don't have to go on taking anything I don't want to." Although most respondents seemed to struggle with the meanings that had been mapped onto them, they also frequently rejected such meanings. LGBT people seemed particularly forceful in declaring their agency when their friends and family members had minimized the severity of their violent experiences. As hate crime scholars have documented, secondary victimization – not supporting victims after a violent experience – can be as traumatic as the initial attack (Berrill and Herek 1992). Indeed, respondents seemed especially distressed when friends, family members, and service providers engaged in victim-blaming. At the same time, however, secondary victimization often provided a focal point for LGBT people's rage, as they could confront victim-blaming discourse head-on. In contrast, respondents sometimes expressed confusion concerning their perpetrators' motivations, particularly in cases when their attackers said little or nothing. As a result, respondents occasionally addressed secondary victimization – unsupportive comments from others – more than comments from their perpetrators. Thus, much of my data pointing to victims' agency reflects conversations that LGBT people had after their initial violent experience.

Lesbian and transgender women frequently felt that they had been blamed for their violent experiences. Upon telling others about the violence, these respondents described occasions in which an friend, acquaintance, or family member had responded with something to the equivalent of "Well, what did you do?" These responses required lesbian and transgender women to explain how their actions may have led to the violence. As other research indicates, women tend to be blamed for their violent experiences more frequently than other groups (Berns 2001) and gay and lesbian people are less likely than other victims to receive sympathy after being victimized (Lyons 2006). More research should be undertaken with regard to this research question, but studies thus far indicate that LGBT hate crime victims are held more accountable for their actions than victims of other bias crime (Lyons 2006).

Creating Support Networks

One of the ways that respondents tried to avoid secondary victimization was by creating a safe space for themselves. Finding supportive friends and family members meant that respondents usually befriended like-minded people, most frequently individuals with comparable identities. For the most part, respondents seemed to befriend individuals with similar race, class, and sexuality backgrounds. Most low-income queer people of color, for example, befriended other poor and working-class LGBT people of color. Respondents usually described their choice to befriend similar people in rather generic ways, highlighting how they could "be themselves" around their friends. Yet, a few respondents connected this choice with their desire to have friends who support their gender and sexual identities. For instance, Carol, a 39 year-old Latina transgender woman, described her desire to have a supportive group of friends in this

way: "If something bad happens, I don't have to worry that I'll have unsupportive, bad people around me. They'll know exactly what it's like and be able to help me through it…I can mess up and I know that they'll be there for me. They'll have my back." Respondents often expected their friends to serve as a support network, allowing LGBT people to enact their gender and sexual identities in such a way that they felt most comfortable. As intersectionality theory contends, support networks provide a space for members of marginalized groups to resist oppression (Collins 2000). Indeed, after experiencing anti-queer violence, LGBT people sometimes made a deliberate choice to befriend others who would not judge them too harshly.

As previously stated, respondents typically performed gender in nontraditional ways. I had the sense that most of their friends were also gender transgressive, although this trend was sometimes difficult to determine. I usually tried to make this determination by asking respondents if they knew others who had experienced anti-LGBT violence and then asking them to describe their friends' violent experiences. I received a variety of responses to these questions, but most respondents knew others who had at least one experience of anti-queer physical violence. Nearly one-third of respondents – primarily low-income LGBT people of color – said that most of their friends had encountered anti-queer physical violence. About half of those respondents had witnessed their friends experience the violence and nearly all of the transgender people whom I interviewed knew others who had experienced anti-trans violence.

While respondents usually perceived themselves as gender nonconformist, they sometimes argued that their friends appeared even more obviously queer. In such cases, respondents said that they usually experienced less violence than their friends. For

instance, Diamond, a 51 year-old lesbian woman mentioned earlier in this chapter, explained that homophobic violence seemed to be directed more often against her friend, Anita: "She gets it more than me. People aren't surprised that I'm a lesbian, but with her it's obvious right away. You can't miss it." Obviously, respondents did not describe all of their friends this way, but my general sense was that most LGBT people had friends who performed gender in nontraditional ways.

The Effects of Knowing and Identifying with Others Who Have Experienced Anti-LGBT Violence

Having friends who had experienced anti-queer violence seemed to structure respondents' interest in affecting social change. As outlined previously, respondents usually focused on either their own personal empowerment or their desire to build coalitions with other LGBT people. The former response emphasized individual growth, while the latter focused on the need for social change. Analyzing the reasons LGBT people may come to participate in social movements would be a substantial enough research question for an entire dissertation; moreover, the social movements literature has already spent considerable attention addressing the ways in which individuals become involved in collective action (See Bernstein 1997; Gamson 1995; Jenness and Broad 1994). Since this topic was not my primary focus when conducting this study, the results provided here should be understood as preliminary, requiring further research. Nevertheless, the data that follow allow me to speculate on possible reasons for LGBT people focusing on individual improvement or institutional change.

Respondents seemed to focus most frequently on mobilizing for social change when they knew others who had experienced anti-queer violence. Knowing others meant that respondents may have witnessed the effects of homophobic violence on multiple

people rather than just themselves. Thus, knowing others may have led respondents to perceive anti-queer violence as harmful and widespread. As LGBT people came to view homophobic violence as affecting many people, they may have wanted to alter the organization of society as a way of reducing the pervasiveness of anti-queer violence.

Although LGBT people were the most likely to emphasize social change when they knew others who had experienced homophobic violence, respondents focused on individual empowerment when they knew – but did not identify – with other victims of violence. Knowing others, in other words, was not a sufficient condition for wanting to mobilize against anti-LGBT violence. Instead, identifying with other victims – rather than knowing them – seemed to affect the degree to which respondents desired social change. Some LGBT people, for example, knew others who had experienced anti-queer violence, but did not identify with them. In these cases, respondents typically focused on their personal empowerment rather than their desire to affect social change. For instance, Aisha, the 53 year-old lesbian woman who described some of her attackers as "pussies," knew others who had experienced homophobic violence, but did not perceive herself as similar to them:

> Yeah, I know a few people [who've experienced homophobic violence]…I'm not really like them. They complain too much. I try to grow on my own, without anyone else's help…No matter what happens from the outside, I won't let it get me down…The best thing I can do is care for myself so it doesn't happen again.

Aisha was one of only a few lesbian women to distance herself from other victims of violence. Here, she positioned herself as different from other victims ("they complain too much") and then focused on her sense of self-worth ("the best thing I can do is care for myself").

When queer people identified with victims of violence they seemed more willing to desire social change. Aisha's perception contrasts with Judy's understanding of the violence directed against her: "I try to stick up for gay people whenever any violence is going on…It just has gotta stop, against us, it just has gotta stop." Aisha and Judy had a similar violent experience in that both women were shoved to the ground by a male stranger. Similar to Aisha, Judy focused on her agency in reducing violence against herself and highlighted her ability to reject her attackers' meanings, yet Judy emphasized the need for reducing anti-LGBT violence ("it just has gotta stop"), while Aisha underscored the need to improve her psychological well-being.

In general, respondents most frequently emphasized personal empowerment either when they did not know other victims of violence or when they did not identify with them. To take but one more example, Greg, a 43 year-old white gay man, constructed himself in opposition to other men who had experienced homophobic violence, perceiving himself as different from other victims:

> Greg: Like guys who'll hit on straight guys. I'm not like them. I'm not some stupid faggot.
>
> Interviewer: What do you mean by that – "stupid faggot"?
>
> Greg: Like guys who get their ass beat. They'll hit on any [straight man] they see. I'm not saying they deserve it, I'm not saying that, but if you do that, then what do you expect to happen?

During the interview, Greg focused on his personal empowerment more than his desire to affect social change. His response above, loaded with victim-blaming, positions himself as dissimilar to others who have experienced homophobic violence. Constructing himself in opposition to victims, Greg perceived homophobic violence as something that he would not experience as long as he avoided certain behavior (that is, as something that

only happens to "stupid faggots"). As he explained later during the interview, he did not expect to experience homophobic violence in the future: "No, I don't think it'll happen to me. Like I said, I know what I'm doing." Greg's response was certainly uncommon; most respondents did not distance themselves from victims quite so explicitly. Most respondents, in contrast, sympathized with others who had experienced homophobic violence. Moreover, knowing other victims seemed to increase LGBT people's sympathy and their desire to affect social change. As Tamika, a 53 year-old black lesbian woman explained, "It's easy to want things to just get better for yourself, but when you see that bad things happen to your friends too, then that just makes it all the more easy to want to see things change for the better." Knowing and identifying with others who had experienced homophobic violence, some LGBT people believed that they should work to change social conditions.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined the ways in which gender and sexuality structured the violent experiences of LGBT people, particularly lesbian women. Results indicate that respondents frequently experienced homophobic violence for transgressing gender norms, with gender nonconformity signaling that LGBT people may be queer. Data also revealed that the gender of both the victim and perpetrator shaped the development of anti-lesbian violence. Physical violence on the streets of New York City, for example, seemed to be directed most frequently against butch lesbian women. At the same time, lesbian women who were perceived as feminine often experienced verbal harassment in public and physical and sexual violence in private. As a result, since sexual assault and verbal harassment are not understood as traditional forms of hate crime, standard

definitions of bias-motivated violence (i.e., physical violence perpetrated by strangers) exclude many of the violent experiences of feminine lesbians. This trend seems particularly problematic when compared with the violent experiences of gay male respondents, many of whom experienced violence that would traditionally be classified as a hate crime. Thus, as several feminist scholars have already argued expanding definitions of bias-motivated violence might reduce some of the male-centeredness in current understandings of hate crime (Gelber 2000; Perry 2003a; von Schulthess 1992). As hate crime research continues to explore definitions of bias-motivated violence, particular attention should be paid to the ways in which these understandings may privilege the experiences of some groups, while marginalizing the experiences of others (Blee 2007).

In response to homophobic violence, gay and lesbian people often searched for meaning and tried to validate their gender and sexual identities. One of the primary ways of validating their identities was by comparing themselves with their perpetrators; in particular, respondents often focused on their perpetrators' hypocrisy. Moreover, LGBT people frequently highlighted their agency in responding to violence, emphasizing their individual empowerment and their desire for social change. The degree to which respondents focused on social change seemed to depend in part on whether they identified with other victims of violence, as LGBT people usually described their individual empowerment when they did not know or did not identify with individuals who had experienced anti-queer violence.

Given that respondents were the most likely to desire social change when identifying with other victims, the work of some LGBT service organizations may help

increase queer support for anti-violence efforts. Some advocacy and service organizations have focused on bringing victims of violence together in a shared space. If the end goal of these programs is to increase the degree to which victims identify with others who have experienced violence, then these projects may also amplify LGBT people's desire for social change. Still, there remains a significant difference between desiring social change and mobilizing to achieve it. Further research would need to explore in greater detail the relationship between identifying with victims of violence and mobilizing for social change.

Results also suggested that respondents often questioned the psychological state of their attackers. When doing so, they usually focused relatively little attention on social change, using therapeutic discourse to construct themselves as more psychologically balanced than their attackers. This finding supports previous research in which self-help discourse has been tied with conformity. Alyson Cole (2007), for example, argues that therapeutic language "tends to preserve the status quo…[as] attention shifts from evaluating social circumstances to focusing on individual character. The struggle for power becomes an exercise in self-help" (p. 138). Given these arguments, attempts to pathologize hate crime perpetrators may not only portray them in stereotypical ways but also increase the likelihood of victims viewing their violent experiences in individualistic terms, as they come to perceive hate-motivated violence as emanating from psychologically unbalanced individuals rather than unequal power arrangements.

Chapter 4

Violence against Gay Men: Attacking Femininity and Performing Masculinity

In the previous chapter, I outlined some of the common experiences and perceptions of lesbian respondents. This chapter, in contrast, focuses primarily on the violent experiences of gay male respondents, examining their response to homophobic violence. I begin this chapter by outlining patterns of victimization and then end it by examining the meaning-making processes of gay men. This chapter expands on some of the themes of the previous chapter, but also deviates from them, using the experiences of gay male respondents as the framework for the material presented here. This approach illuminates the similarities and differences between anti-lesbian and anti-gay violence, with results indicating, for example, that gay men focused on strength in such a way that lesbian and transgender women did not. In what follows, I explore the reasons for these gender differences, arguing that gay men perceived homophobic violence as an attack on their masculinity – as an attempt to construct gay men as weak.

Homophobic Violence against Gay Men: The Intersections of Gender and Sexuality

As outlined in the previous chapter, when lesbian respondents were perceived as masculine, they sometimes gained respect in the workforce. Gay male respondents, however, almost always decreased in status when they were perceived as feminine. This difference can be explained in large part by the rigidity of masculinity norms and the cultural devaluation of femininity. Anti-gay violence, then, can be understood as a social control mechanism discouraging men from performing femininity. Indeed, most gay

male respondents experienced physical violence, which usually began at a young age, for engaging in stereotypically feminine behavior. For instance, Gideon, a 25 year-old black gay man, described times during his childhood when his mother physically abused him for playing with dolls: "She would hit me and say, 'Do you want to be a faggot? Do you want to be a sissy?'" During this time, he was also beaten by classmates and called homophobic names. When he told his mother about the bullying he had experienced at school, she was dismissive, attributing it to his feminine behavior: "That's why they call you a faggot," she told him, pointing to a book he was reading (the book had a female protagonist). Similarly, Frank, a 51 year-old white gay man, was physically abused throughout adolescence, usually by his father. Although Frank said that the violence often occurred for reasons independent of anything he had done (e.g. his father was drunk), he also thought that he was targeted because of his gender performance. In comparison with his brother (described as "a jock who played football"), Frank experienced considerably more physical violence. His father rarely abused his brother, yet Frank was routinely punished for engaging in stereotypically feminine behavior (e.g. crying, talking with his hands). During the interview, Frank described several occasions in which his father beat him with a belt and told him to "stop acting like such a sissy" and to "be more of a man."

These violent experiences illustrate the degree to which femininity in men is culturally devalued. In patriarchal societies, characteristics associated with women tend to be the least valued. Thus, as men engage in stereotypically feminine behavior, they associate themselves with culturally devalued attributes. Furthermore, hegemonic forms of masculinity – the ideal set of masculine practices – proscribe that men should reject

behavior associated with femininity (Connell 1995; Johnson 1997; Kimmel 2003). Women, in contrast, are not encouraged to reject dominant constructions of masculinity in the same way (Messerschmidt 2004; Messner 2002).

Although lesbian respondents often encountered homophobic violence for violating gender norms, gay men even more commonly had their gender performances called into question. Moreover, in contrast to lesbian women, gay male respondents rarely experienced violence in response to their partner choice. Part of this difference can be explained by differences in the sample – lesbian women were more likely to be partnered than gay men – but it may also be explained in part by the intersection of sexism and heteronormativity, which problematizes lesbian women's sexual desire (e.g. "have you tried being with a man?") and gay men's gender performance (e.g. "do you want to be a sissy?"). In both cases, sexism informs patterns of victimization, as women and femininity become constructed as inferior to men and masculinity. Gender inequality, in other words, shapes the development of both anti-lesbian and anti-gay violence – desiring women becomes constructed as problematic for lesbian women, while a feminine gender performance is constructed as problematic for gay men.

Gay male respondents sometimes even attributed their violent experiences to patriarchal relations. Gideon, described on the previous page, connected the violence directed against him to sexism in the U.S.:

> We live in a misogynist society that says that anything associated with femininity is wrong or that you shouldn't want to be associated with anything feminine. So, you're an outsider when you associate your persona with femininity – and so they try to beat the woman out of you. So, I felt like that's what they were doing in calling me "faggot."

Gideon's feminine gender display often precipitated violence, leading him to the logical conclusion that his perpetrators seemed motivated by misogyny as much as homophobia. Indeed, gay men's experiences sometimes seemed to extend largely from sexism. When Daniel, a 26 year-old black gay man, "came out" to his mother, she told him, "I don't care what you are, just don't be acting feminine." Her statement explicitly condemned femininity rather than homosexuality, constructing the former as a graver sin than the latter. At the same time, even though she implied that she "doesn't care" about his sexuality, her dismissal of "what he is" also seemed to be her way of insulting his sexual identity. Certainly, Daniel interpreted his mother's comment as related to his sexuality: "She was trying to tell me to keep it hidden, like I shouldn't be open about it." On the surface, his mother's comment appeared as if it was related only to gender, but Daniel believed that it had homophobic implications as well. This understanding of homophobic violence was quite common among respondents, regardless of sexual identity. Given the association of gender nonconformity with homosexuality, respondents often viewed their violent experiences as connected with their gender and sexual identities.

Responding to Homophobic Insults: Talking Back and Fighting in Self-Defense

In some cases, violence against gay men seemed almost random – that is, the perpetrator attacked without warning. Those situations, however, were atypical; anti-gay violence did not typically begin and end with one sudden, physically violent action. More commonly, violence against gay men began with some sort of verbal exchange, usually a challenge to the gay man's masculinity. In such cases, perpetrators generally initiated the interaction by using homophobic insults or making a threatening nonverbal gesture (e.g. a stare or a motion indicating violence). As such, much of anti-gay violence

seemed to take the form of a masculinity contest, with heterosexual men trying to impose notions of weakness onto gay men. Gay male respondents typically responded to their perpetrators in one of four ways: (1) ignoring the gesture or comment; (2) indicating that they wished to be left alone; (3) asking a question (e.g. "Do you have a problem?"); or (4) verbally challenging the perpetrator's statement. When respondents ignored the gesture or comment, the interaction usually – but not always – ended shortly thereafter. In a few cases, gay male respondents were stalked by their perpetrators, unable to get away. More commonly, though, respondents said that they would hear homophobic insults directed at them, but that the interaction would end if they continued to walk away from their perpetrators. Ignoring homophobic insults, in other words, generally meant that they would eventually stop. Andre, a 24 year-old black gay man, described this process of ignoring perpetrators' comments:

> There's this one block in the park where I've been called 'faggot' several times…It's like my block from hell. But no one has ever touched me there…It's just like, 'gotta ignore the comments for one block and then it'll be over.' That's what you can do if you want – ignore them and they won't even pay you no mind so long as they can get out their one or two comments.

There is a fine line here between blaming victims for their violent experiences and suggesting that they usually encountered homophobic violence when responding to their perpetrators. I do not mean to suggest that gay men should be faulted or chastised for responding to homophobic insults[1]. I also do not wish to suggest that LGBT people should necessarily avoid responding to homophobic insults, as such a statement would encourage passiveness in response to violence. Still, it remains important to

[1] During the interviews, I often had to be careful not to come across as if I was blaming respondents for their violent experiences. To do so, I tried to avoid asking "why" questions (e.g. "Why did you…?"), beginning most of my questions with "how" instead.

acknowledge this process in which the likelihood of experiencing anti-queer violence undoubtedly increases as LGBT people verbally respond to insults. Given that many of the gay men whom I interviewed responded to homophobic comments even when knowing that their response might lead to physical violence, their actions may certainly be characterized as brave.

Gay male respondents often acknowledged that they experienced physical violence when responding to homophobic insults. Thus, as gay men encountered these insults, they had to determine whether or not they should verbally respond. Andre, described above, explained his reasons for responding to homophobic comments in the following way:

> I'll be honest, I have a big mouth, it gets me in trouble a lot. So, yeah, that's one problem, and then I just feel like I shouldn't have to always just keep on walking…[it might be] easier for me to just ignore it because then they'll leave me alone, but sometimes I feel like I shouldn't have to. There's only so much I can take."

Andre described his "big mouth" playfully, as if he found his behavior wonderfully absurd. His comment "there's only so much I can take" was conveyed by other respondents, even if they did not use those exact words. Respondents frequently suggested a tipping point in the amount of verbal abuse they were willing to tolerate. Gay male respondents, in particular, often said that they had ignored homophobic insults in the past, but that they usually responded to such comments now – that is, their frequency of responding had increased over time. Overcoming their fear of responding to homophobic insults, gay men regularly viewed their actions as challenging homophobia. At the same time, as they increased the frequency with which they responded to

homophobic insults, they sometimes began to fear that they might experience physical violence.

As gay men explained their reasons for actively responding to homophobic insults, they typically glorified their present situation and condemned the past. For instance, Gideon, the 25 year-old black gay man described earlier in this chapter, emphasized how his life had improved after responding to homophobic insults. At the time of the interview, he lived in what he called a relatively "dangerous area" of the Bronx, where he had been called homophobic names on several occasions, which he usually responded to: "I wouldn't want to say nothing, that's when you feel bad about it. That was all in the past, now it's better…It's like you can either sit back and take it, or not, and I'm not going to anymore." Responses such as this were common among gay male respondents, in part because masculinity norms encourage men to retaliate against someone who causes them harm. Yet, for many of the gay men whom I interviewed, "pushing back" against their attackers seemed to be a matter of survival. Later during the interview, Gideon responded to a question concerning whether he experienced more physical violence after he began verbally responding to his perpetrators: "At first, yes, but once guys saw that I can fight, they left me alone…They think that I'm weak, but when they see that I'm not, they keep moving." Gideon said that heterosexual men in his neighborhood knew "not to mess" with him because they knew that he could defend himself. Similarly, he thought that men outside of his neighborhood "mostly left [him] alone" because he "looked mean." Explaining his options, he argued that he had little choice but to respond to homophobic insults:

> I got a lot of comments without doing anything. So, then I just thought that I have to say something [when heterosexual men insult me], otherwise I'm not defending

> myself. I'm letting it be ok for them to call me that…Once I decided to do that, it made me learn to defend myself. I could either learn how to fight [and] protect myself, no longer be gay, or die. Those were my choices.

Framing his options in this way, Gideon implied that his choice was obvious: he had to learn how to fight and protect himself. Perhaps it was that simple. His neighborhood, coupled with his gender and sexual identity, meant that he could expect to encounter homophobic violence for the foreseeable future. Even if he chose not to respond to his attackers, he would still probably have continued to experience homophobic insults. Thus, he could not escape verbal harassment, short of moving, which would have been difficult since he was unemployed and living with his sister.

Expecting to encounter homophobic violence, Gideon decided to "toughen up." He began to carry a weapon – a pocketknife with a five-inch blade – and to dress in slightly more masculine attire. Even though Gideon said that he consciously changed his dress style, he also said that he found it important to retain his feminine style (he described his style as "a mix of the feminine and 'don't fuck with me'"). He often wore a black leather jacket with a bandana on his head, and he sometimes wore eyeliner. When I asked if he liked to dress this way, he responded: "Yeah, it makes me feel like a bad ass." Other sociologists have described the esteem given to "bad ass" identities in many communities, particularly black and Latino ones, yet discussions of these identities have most frequently been tied to heterosexuality (Katz 1988). Gideon's statements, however, suggest that gay men of color may employ the discourse of "bad ass" to elevate the status of their identities.

As Gideon "toughened up" and began to think of himself as "bad ass," he also began to respond to his attackers more frequently. He described one occasion in which a

male stranger referred to him as a "cocksucker," to which Gideon responded, "That's right, and I suck better dick than you'll ever get." This response prompted the stranger to threaten Gideon, claiming he would "beat his ass." Gideon then said, "Let's go" and opened his fists, as if he was ready to fight. This encounter ended at that moment, but several days later he was approached on the street by the same man. On this occasion, the stranger was with three other men. As the men approached Gideon, they made homophobic comments and threats, calling him a "faggot" who "deserved to be taught a lesson." Gideon said very little, but he did take out his knife as the men moved closer, intensifying their insults. The four men then attacked Gideon, punching and kicking him. Defending himself with his knife, he cut one of the men on the arm. As a result of the attack, Gideon experienced significant bruising on his face and body. He did not go to the hospital, although he now admitted, "I probably should have, I was in pain all over." He did, however, feel fortunate that the men did not use weapons during the attack. He said that he had encountered a similar incident more recently, but the men "backed off and ran away" when they saw that he carried a weapon. Based on these incidents, Gideon concluded, "When they know you can defend yourself, they won't mess with you."

Other gay male respondents found themselves in similar, although arguably not quite as dire, situations. Indeed, many of the gay men whom I interviewed carried weapons, particularly those respondents living in neighborhoods that they perceived as relatively violent or dangerous. Several gay men showed me their weapons during the interview, which ranged from a small pocketknife to a ten-inch switchblade. Most of

these respondents had not used their weapons to injure someone, but a majority had used them to fend off perpetrators.

Making Sense of Homophobic Violence: Gay Men's Focus on Strength and Progress

Gay male respondents, in many ways, seemed to contradict stereotypes of passive gay men, as they often spent a considerable amount of time during the interview outlining the ways in which they had actively responded to homophobic violence. They also seemed to work hard at refuting notions of themselves as weak, tying their masculinity to strength and toughness (Gilmore 1990; Marsiglio 1998; Kimmel and Mahler 2003). This trend can be explained in large part by the interactive dynamic between victim and perpetrator, with heterosexual men trying to impose notions of weakness onto gay men. For instance, Andre, described earlier in this chapter, said that he had been called a "sissy" and a "punk" on several occasions. During one incident, a man mocked Andre by hitting his shoulder and saying, "Did I just hurt the sissy?" Here, the perpetrator used homophobic violence to construct Andre as weak, yet Andre rejected this construction:

> They see me as weak, because I carry a purse and walk a certain way, but I'm really not. I can defend myself if need be. I've been in plenty of fights. I've never lost one….They'd just rather think that I'm weak, so they can degrade me, treat me like a thing they can control…But no matter what they do to me, I'm still going to be the same person.

Pointing to his strengths, Andre rejected the meanings that his attackers had tried to map onto him. In one sense, he primarily addressed his physical strength, constructing himself as capable of defending himself ("I've been in plenty of fights. I've never lost one"). In another sense, though, he addressed his emotional and ideological strengths, noting his ability to remain steadfast in the face of homophobia ("no matter what they do to me, I'm still going to be the same person").

Focusing on strength seemed to occur much more frequently during interviews with gay male respondents than during interviews with lesbian and transgender women. These gender differences can be attributed largely to the ways in which LGBT people interpreted their violent experiences. Gay men, for example, tried to resist meanings of weakness that they perceived as being mapped onto them. That is, as heterosexual men tried to contest the masculinity of gay men, these respondents felt compelled to emphasize the ways in which they were strong.

Gay male respondents constructed themselves as strong in a variety of ways. One of these ways was by highlighting how they had responded productively to the violence. In these cases, gay men emphasized that they had made the best of a bad situation. For instance, responding to a question about positive experiences, Kevin, a 62 year-old black gay man, focused on the ways he had benefited from homophobic violence: "Well, I don't even see what I've talked about as negative. It's just what's happened. A lot of good has come from it. I don't have to worry that bad things will happen to me, because they already have. I'll be able to handle it." At first, this response may seem like a contradiction. Kevin refused to characterize his violent experiences as "negative," but then implied that they were "bad things." A few other respondents seemed to engage in similar moves. When doing so, they constructed homophobic violence as a "bad thing," yet at the same time they thought that their violent experiences had made them capable of handling negative experiences in the future. In other words, they acknowledged the pain associated with violence, but chose to focus on the ways they had progressed since experiencing it. Gay men, in particular, emphasized their progression, highlighting their productive response to homophobic violence.

Responding to homophobic violence often seemed built quite strongly into the identities of gay men. For example, Cole, a 33 year-old black gay man, characterized himself as a "gay avenger" who was "out there to protect gay men" from harm. He described several incidents in which he had defended one of his gay friends. One such occasion occurred in a laundry mat where his friend – a black man whom Cole described as "obviously gay" – was called a "faggot" by a male stranger. Cole approached the man and demanded that he apologize. The man refused, until Cole threatened, "If you don't apologize, we're going to have a problem here." Cole told me that he perceived himself as having a physically imposing presence and an easy time intimidating people. He also said that others usually perceived him as heterosexual, as homophobic comments were rarely directed in his direction. When asked about defending other gay men, he explained his motivations in the following way: "How I live my life has changed a lot. I mean, back when I was younger it was all about survival. Now, it's not. You know, now it's about helping *other* people survive." This emphasize on progress was something I heard from many gay male respondents, as they often connected their identities to improvements they had made in their lives. In these situations, they argued that homophobic violence did not have to be debilitating, but instead could result in one becoming a "better person."

As gay male respondents described the ways in which they had responded productively to violence, they sometimes rejected a victim identity. These statements were usually quite explicit, with a few gay men saying, "I'm not a victim." Lesbian and transgender women occasionally rejected a victim identity, too, but they did not usually do so until they were asked about it. Gay men, in contrast, more frequently rejected a

victim identity on their own terms. Rejecting this identity, some gay male respondents emphasized how they had overcome the pain associated with their violent experiences. Cole, described above, acknowledged that homophobic violence had been painful, but refused to identify as a victim: "It hurt at the time, but I don't really think of myself in that way because if I do, then it's like I let them win, I let them have some control over me." Another gay male respondent – Kevin, also described above – distinguished between being victimized and identifying as a victim: "I experienced a victimization, but I'm not a victim, that's how I think of it. It's like, it was bad, but I'm not any *one* thing because of it." Although these two respondents refused to be categorized as victims, lesbian and transgender women usually responded with ambivalence to questions concerning victimization. Respondents typically knew very little about the meaning of "hate crime" and seemed unconcerned as to whether they would be classified as "hate crime victims." Nevertheless, gay male respondents sometimes rejected a victim identity as a way of emphasizing their strength. Thomas, a 41 year-old Asian man, described his unwillingness to accept a victim identity in the following way:

> Thomas: [Identifying as a victim is] people identifying themselves from their weakness instead of from their strength. And as you can tell by the way that I'm talking to you, I play my strengths all the time, and it scares the living daylights out of most people.
>
> Interviewer: So, tell me more about your strengths, then…
>
> Thomas: I am much more than my biology [respondent picks up microphone and places it near his mouth]. I'll record this, so you can hear this. I am much more than my biology, my history, my experience. I am an individualized, unrepeatable, creative, whole, perfect, complete, ageless, timeless, limitless, boundless, infinite, bold, self-actualized, open, receptive, teachable, reachable, unbeatable, unstoppable, multidimensional, faithful, loving, strong, wise, powerful, imaginative, understanding, willing, willful, orderly, enthusiastic, pure, spiritual, outlaw, powerhouse person who is made in the image and likeness of all

> infinite possibility, and I refuse to stand there and sit around in this whole victim culture with two stiff buns so tight that they're bouncing off the wall.

Thomas, perhaps more than any other respondent, spent much of the interview focusing on his strengths. The above speech, which he told me he had memorized, signifies the degree to which some gay men felt compelled to reject notions of themselves as weak.

The Role of Others in Encouraging Gay Men to Focus on Strength

Gay male respondents seemed to learn from an early age that hegemonic forms of masculinity are closely tied with strength (Connell 1995; Messner 2002; Segal 1990). Their socialization experiences, in other words, taught them to hide any displays of weakness. For example, Greg, a 43 year-old white gay man, described an incident during adolescence when he was called a "faggot" by another boy. Greg's father encouraged him to fight the boy, saying, "If you don't beat his ass, everyone will think you're weak." As a result, his father constructed violence as a more appropriate expression of masculinity than weakness. Most gay male respondents described incidents in which they had been punished for being perceived as weak; moreover, they usually had little trouble recalling these incidents, frequently emphasizing their effects. Thus, gay men's focus on strength depended not only on their perpetrators' actions but also on previous experiences in which they had been punished for showing weakness. Daniel, a 26 year-old black male respondent described previously, told me about a time when his minister suggested that he alter his voice so that he "doesn't sound weak." The minister said that Cole should change his voice to sound "more like [rappers] DMX and Ja Rule" rather than sounding "like Michael Jackson." The comment seemed ironic to Daniel, given that a minister had encouraged one of his congregation members to emulate rappers.

Encouraging Daniel to masculinize his voice, the minister also constructed black masculinities in opposition to femininity (signified here by Michael Jackson).

Gay men were sometimes even encouraged to be emotionally strong in response to homophobic violence. The most explicit example occurred when Jayvyn, a 33 year-old black gay man, told his friend, Matt, about a time when he was punched in the face. Jayvyn felt that Matt was unsupportive, asking, "You went to the hospital?" and "Why didn't you hit him back?" These questions seemed paradoxical to Jayvyn, constructing a hospital visit as more bizarre than a decision not to hit another man. Nevertheless, these paradoxes may be intrinsic to dominant constructions of masculinity, as social control mechanisms establish that men should not show weakness even if that means engaging in seemingly destructive behavior (Kimmel 2001; Messner 2005; Mullins 2006).

Whereas lesbian and transgender women often thought that they had been blamed for their own victimization, gay men more commonly believed that they had been encouraged to fight back or remain silent about being victimized. Several gay men felt that their friends and family members had conveyed a sense that they should "suck it up" – move on with their lives and not tell others about their violent experiences. Lesbian women often felt this way, too, but they did not seem to have as many socialization experiences in which they had been encouraged to hide signs of weakness, nor did their violent experiences seem as explicitly related to strength.

At times, gay male respondents appeared to suffer emotional and physical costs as a result of these internalized masculinity norms. For instance, Daniel, described on the previous page, explained his reasons for not going to the hospital after being gay-bashed: "It wasn't that bad, I could take it. I just had to be strong in the face of adversity." Even

though Daniel had cuts on his arms and bruises on his face (which he described as "the size of someone's fist"), he rationalized his decision not to go to the hospital by describing his injuries as not "that bad" and constructing himself as "strong in the face of adversity." Thus, his appropriation of a strong persona seemed to impede his willingness to get help from others. His decision not to go to the hospital can also be explained by other factors, including his not having health insurance. Most gay male respondents did not necessarily refuse medical treatment in the same way as Daniel, yet many gay men did avoid the help of others. Indeed, gay men were less likely than lesbian and transgender women to search for support networks after experiencing anti-LGBT violence. Masculinity norms, then, may limit gay men's willingness to seek help, as they come to believe that they can handle the effects of homophobic violence on their own. Of course, given the negative experiences that some gay men had with service providers, hate crime research should be cautious about privileging LGBT people's decision to visit the hospital or, especially, to go to the police. Many lesbian respondents, and almost all of the gay men and transgender people whom I interviewed, had negative experiences with law enforcement. A history of police harassment was particularly prevalent among black LGBT people, as some of their violent experiences were at the hands of the police.

Emphasizing Self-Defense, Physical Strength, and Emotional Resolve

Although some gay male respondents explicitly constructed themselves as strong, they usually addressed masculinity norms in more subtle ways. In particular, gay men focused on masculinity when explaining their reasons for violently responding to homophobic violence. In these situations, they implicitly addressed masculinity, emphasizing their ability to prevent homophobic violence from reoccurring. For

instance, Andre, a 24 year-old black gay man mentioned earlier, explained the process by which he had come to view violence as self-defense:

> You can't choose peace all of the time. Even though I'm a Buddhist and I know peace and I know non-violence, you can't choose it all the time because they will try to kill you. They don't care. They will try to kill you. They will try. They will try to hurt you and they will try to sicken you…I learned that after being attacked by more than one person. I realized, no, somebody can't just call you a faggot. You *can't* walk away. Because when they keep doing it, and what happens? You have to learn how to stop it. And I've learned in my situation that it will never end. I just have to do my best to stand up for myself.

Comments such as these were common, particularly among low-income minority men. To gay men living in poor communities, physically responding to homophobic violence was regularly viewed as a form of self-defense. They perceived their response to homophobic violence as a matter of necessity rather than a matter of choice. Andre, for example, said "you *can't* walk away," implying that his only option was to respond with physical force. Thus, anticipating violence in the future, gay men often concluded that they had to defend themselves by fighting back. This response, while possibly the best option for many gay men, seemed informed in part by masculinity norms. Since dominant constructions of masculinity encourage men to retaliate against individuals who challenge them, gay male respondents were not redefining masculinity in this way. Rather than constructing strength as unimportant, they generally emphasized the ways in which they were strong.

In a few cases, gay men constructed themselves as physically stronger than their attackers. For instance, Jericho, a 48 year-old Latino gay man, was taunted in a homophobic way and pushed by a male stranger, which prompted Jericho to punch the man in the face. Addressing his perpetrators' actions, Jericho said, "He thought he was stronger than me, but I beat his ass." This response was one of the few times Jericho

smiled during the interview, as he seemed to find joy in defending himself against his attacker. Similar to most gay male respondents, however, he did not address the effects of masculinity norms on his behavior. Instead, Jericho said, "It was either hit him or stand there and get my ass beat." Even though gay men sometimes perceived masculinity norms as affecting their attackers, male respondents usually constructed their own response as inevitable, given the situation. They did not, in other words, acknowledge that their desire to retaliate may have been shaped by masculinity norms.

Although many gay male respondents seemed to reproduce masculinity norms emphasizing strength, they usually perceived themselves as feminine as well. In these cases, they often argued that feminine men could be strong. Andre, described above, validated his identity by highlighting his emotional strength:

> Just because I'm feminine and gay doesn't mean that I'm weak.…People don't want me to be this way [feminine], but I still am. I would like to see them [straight men] do that. They're the ones who call me names only when their friends are around.

Here, Andre seemed to construct himself as more resolute than his attackers. Even though "people don't want" him to be feminine, Andre behaved as he wanted. His perpetrators, in contrast, only insulted him "when their friends are around." This type of response was one of the ways that LGBT people pointed to their perpetrators' hypocrisy. As heterosexual men perpetrated homophobic violence in groups – when their friends could protect them – gay men constructed this behavior as signifying weakness. It indicated to gay men that their attackers were fearful of perpetrating homophobic violence without the protection of their friends. Moreover, it suggested that perpetrators had caved to peer pressure. Andre addressed this dynamic later during the interview: "It's always one guy who tries to get in your face and gets upset. They'll think that

they're so tough when their friends are around, but then when they're not, [that guy] won't even go looking your way. It's like they have to go out there and show [their friends] they're not gay." This emphasis on perpetrators' conformity allowed gay men to construct their attackers as performative, perpetrating homophobic violence merely to impress their friends. Several respondents took this idea one step further, constructing their attackers as closeted gay men who only perpetrated homophobic violence to prevent others from questioning their sexuality. With this construction, heterosexual men, willing to cave to social pressures, become understood as weak-willed, while gay men – having the courage to be "who they are," despite social pressures – become understood as resolute.

As I have highlighted, gay male respondents focused on strength as a way of undermining the meanings that their attackers had tried to map onto them. Furthermore, some gay male respondents seemed to reinforce masculinity norms by emphasizing how they were physically stronger than their attackers. Still, while gay men sometimes underscored their physical strength, they even more frequently emphasized their emotional resolve. In this sense, then, perhaps most gay male respondents reconfigured gender norms by moving ideal constructions of masculinity closer to emotional rather than physical strength. Expanding notions of strength to include emotional resolve, gay men pointed to the ways in which they had persevered through homophobic environments. From their viewpoint, emotional determination made them strong. Thus, even though gay men continually addressed strength – arguably working within the confines of masculinity norms – they often seemed to expand the boundaries of acceptable male behavior. Kevin, a 62 year-old black gay man, conveyed his

understanding of strength in this way: "You can be strong in different ways….I'm strong mentally. I can handle many things emotionally. Guys should be that way, it's better for us to be strong that way than just be strong with muscles." Deciding how they should perform masculinity, gay men regularly constructed themselves as strong, but they often did so in unexpected ways – that is, by connecting strength with femininity, homosexuality, and emotional resolve. By doing so, they rejected their attackers' conception of gay men, arguing that femininity and homosexuality can be understood as signifying strength. As I argue below, this response was related not only to gender and sexuality but also race. Building on the work of sociologists who have explored the experiences of LGBT people of color, as well as the intersections of race and sexuality (See Battle and Barnes 2010; Cohen 1999; Collins 2004; Nagel 2003), the following sections examine the relationship between race and gay men's focus on strength.

Misrepresenting Your Race: The Experiences of Gay Men of Color

Although most gay male respondents – regardless of race – rejected notions of themselves as weak, men of color also struggled with being perceived as misrepresenting their race. In many cases, black and Latino respondents felt as if they had been punished for failing to live up to standards of what they "should be." For instance, Jayvyn, a 33 year-old black gay man described earlier in this chapter, explained why he thought some black heterosexual men had harassed him: "It's like I've let down black men by being gay or something. That means that I've identified myself with weakness, and I'm not supposed to do that. Like I've made black men look bad by not associating myself as straight.'" Identifying as feminine, black gay men commonly thought that they had been attacked for being perceived as weak. Moreover, they often constructed themselves in

opposition to stereotypes that have historically associated the bodies of black men with hypermasculinity and brute strength (Collins 2004; Nagel 2003; Roberts 1997; Ross 1998). Jayvyn seemed to contend with these stereotypes, explaining that he had been chastised on several occasions for failing to meet expectations of black masculinities. When asked to provide an example, he said that it usually occurred in insidious ways: "Like these little looks, a woman did it on the subway the other day. Like just looking at me like I'm a waste because I'm gay, like that means I'm not portraying black men very well." Black gay men often felt that they had been marginalized from heterosexual black communities because of their gender and sexual identities, feeling as if "authentic" black masculinities necessitated rejecting homosexuality (Johnson 2001; Thomas 2001).

Rather than accepting these notions of authenticity, black gay men suggested that their feminine gender performances were a legitimate way of expressing themselves. For instance, Jayvyn, mentioned above, legitimized his feminine gender performance, while disparaging hegemonic forms of masculinity:

> I don't see what's so great about being all masculine, anyway. It just makes your life closed off and repressed. I'm not that "strong black man," in the sense that most people think of. I'm gaaaay. Everyone knows it, the second I walk out the door. That doesn't make me a bad African American, or whatever.

Black gay male respondents usually challenged notions that they were not performing blackness appropriately. Identifying as both feminine and gay, they argued that such an identity made them no less authentically black. In fact, they typically valued femininity, suggesting that other men could benefit from stereotypically feminine behavior.

Black respondents sometimes described incidents in which others had associated homosexuality with whiteness. For example, Andre, mentioned throughout this chapter, described several incidents in which his sexuality was dismissed as a "white thing,"

particularly by his family members. On one occasion, Andre's uncle told him to "take that white shit inside" when he had worn make-up and dressed femininely outdoors. Andre thought that his uncle did not necessarily want him to stop performing femininity, but for him to stop performing it in public. This incident indicates that LGBT people of color sometimes face pressures to keep their sexuality hidden, as Andre's uncle constructed male femininity as problematic. His uncle's actions seemed designed to keep LGBT people of color from making their sexuality public, suggesting that black heterosexual people may attempt to enhance the social standing of black sexualities, which have historically been stigmatized, by associating deviant sexualities (i.e., homosexuality) with whiteness and respectable sexualities (i.e., heterosexuality) with blackness (Boykin 1996; Cohen 1999; Collins 2004; Griffin 2006). Andre also described an incident during his adolescence when his mother caught him watching a gay-themed movie (he could not remember the title of the film). His mother chastised him, telling him to turn off the movie: "We don't do any of that white faggot shit in my house." Conflating homosexuality with whiteness, his mother constructed gay sexuality as an inappropriate expression of blackness. That is, she tried to make homosexuality seem absent from black communities, as if it was only "white faggot shit." As a result, her statement appeared to marginalize black LGBT people from their race-based communities, making them seem invisible and discouraging them from revealing their sexuality.

Gay men of color sometimes experienced anti-LGBT violence as a social control mechanism punishing them for "betraying" their racial groups. In these situations, homosexuality, because of its cultural connection with whiteness, led to queer men of

color being perceived as not genuinely representing their race. Jayvyn, described above, explained this dynamic:

> They know who is black and who is not, but it's like being gay is a white thing because if you're black, then why would you give people another reason to not like you? Like if you're gay and black then you've given up your right to be black, you're not *really* black. Homophobia just needs to be better, worked on, in the black community.

Jayvyn, like other black male respondents, was eager to describe what he perceived as a significant problem – homophobia – within black communities. Here, he argued that the association of homosexuality with whiteness often made it difficult for queer men of color to become accepted in black heterosexual communities.

Of course, one could argue that the whitening of homosexuality is by no means unique to black communities. The overlap of racism and heterosexism – privileging white people and discouraging homosexuality – necessitates that white people are primarily discouraged from being gay or lesbian. That is, this intersection creates societal messages that white people should not be queer, thereby associating a privileged racial identity (whiteness) with a stigmatized sexual identity (homosexuality). Moreover, homosexuality has stereotypically been associated with the upper-class (See Valocchi 1999), even though there is some evidence that gay men and lesbian women make less than their heterosexual counterparts (Gluckman and Reed 1997; Taylor 2007). The classed nature of LGBT identities furthers the association of homosexuality with whiteness, marginalizing the experiences of low-income LGBT people, who are disproportionately black and Latino. Finally, racism in gay communities has often reinforced the association of homosexuality with whiteness, as mainstream LGBT organizations have traditionally used white queer people to represent the experiences of

all LGBT people (Anzaldua and Moraga 1983; Lorde 1984; Takagi 1994; Ward 2004). When queer people of color have been included in mainstream LGBT communities, they are often exoticized – made to seem foreign, exotic, and sexual. As a result, LGBT people of color have frequently been marginalized from many queer communities (Battle et al. 2002; Cohen 1999; Pastrana 2006; Ward 2004).

LGBT people of color often described racism in queer communities by noting racial stereotypes that involve gender and sexuality. At times, gay men of color argued that male femininity was devalued in many queer communities and that LGBT people of color had been marginalized from those communities because of stereotypes associating them with feminine gender performances. For instance, Daniel, described in previous sections of this chapter, thought that gay media often represent black gay men as being either supposedly very masculine or very feminine:

> Whenever you see us [black gay men], we're either really masculine or really feminine, like there's no [in] between. Then other gay people think that we're really feminine, but then there's not really that much tolerance for it…People don't really like feminine guys in the gay community. It's still looked down up…You're patted on the back if you're masculine, but then if you're not, then it's like, "Oh, you're one of *those* black guys – I don't want anything to do with you."

Daniel addressed hierarchies in LGBT communities, suggesting that masculine men tend to be more valued than feminine men. He also noted an interesting relationship between gender and race, arguing that stereotypes of black gay men incorporate elements of gender deviance, constructing gay men of color as excessively feminine or masculine. Thus, if feminine gay men are generally the least valued in LGBT communities – and black gay men are associated with femininity – then gendered hierarchies within queer communities may be constructed along racial lines. Characteristics associated with white

LGBT people, in other words, become more highly valued than those associated with queer people of color. This intersection of race, gender, and sexuality means that devaluing femininity may disproportionately harm the status of black gay men, while ridiculing black gay men may reinforce the cultural devaluation of femininity. Conversely, efforts to improve the conditions of black gay men may help subvert sexist ideologies.

Descriptions of racism in gay communities frequently involved individual LGBT people (who were usually white) enacting racism. In these situations, white LGBT people made racist comments or treated queer people of color differently than white LGBT people. Daniel, when asked if he had experienced racism from gay men, gestured "a little bit" with his hands and then described a time when two white men – one of whom was gay – had joked about how he had gotten into college just "because of affirmative action." This idea is the logic by which institutional racism obscures itself, as if society is somehow set up to benefit black people[2]. In this case, the supposed bond of queerness seemed to have little effect, as racial differences eliminated any feelings of unity between gay men. Situations such as these indicate that LGBT people do not have uniform interests, in contrast to the universalizing tendencies of the mainstream gay rights movement (Cohen 1997; Sedgwick 1990; Ward 2008).

Men of color also described racism in LGBT communities by arguing that queer people of color are often sexualized in such a way that white LGBT people are not. In

[2] These discourses seem particularly popular in rightwing movements, whereby white people become constructed as the victims of racial prejudice (See Ferber 1998). Although these narratives have been present throughout much of American history, particularly as black people have gained civil rights, they have arguably been on the rise since Barrack Obama's election.

this sense, LGBT people of color expressed concern about being exoticized, particularly as they interacted with white LGBT people. Black and Latino respondents sometimes seemed hesitant to discuss matters concerning race with a white male researcher, thereby limiting the depth of data I could obtain. Nevertheless, a few gay male respondents acknowledged these racial differences when I asked whether white gay men were less sexualized than black or Latino people. At these moments, respondents usually made statements or gestures indicating "obviously" or "of course." These statements are difficult to quote, yet some respondents willingly described specific stereotypes. Thomas, for example, a 41 year-old Asian man described previously, described racial stereotypes in detail: "Like all black and Hispanic guys are good in bed, and that Asian guys are supposed to be submissive – that black guys are there to please and Asian men are more than willing to spread their legs and please any white guy….Then white guys are whatever, like the norm." When asked to describe the drawback of these stereotypes, Thomas said, "You're not being looked at as a person. You're just some sexual thing." Other gay men of color also described being sexually objectified, particularly in bars and clubs.

Obviously, this dynamic is not unique to LGBT communities, as members of racial minority groups have been sexualized throughout American history (Collins 2000; Roberts 1997). Some LGBT people of color, however, argued that sexualized stereotypes seemed heightened in gay communities, with queer people of color being defined largely by their sexual prowess. On the surface, these stereotypes often appeared complimentary – they made LGBT people of color seem more sexually gifted than their white counterparts – yet underneath they seemed to reinforce racist ideologies by

constructing LGBT people of color as hypersexual. As such, these stereotypes associated queer people of color with their sexual – rather than their intellectual – abilities.

Research examining homophobia in black communities has frequently focused on the role of the Black Church (Cohen 1999; Comstock 2001; Griffin 2006; hooks 1989). Consistent with these studies, black LGBT people whom I interviewed frequently connected homophobia in black communities with the role of the Black Church. Focusing on homophobia in black communities has also led to debates concerning whether it is "worse" than elsewhere (hooks 1989; Lewis 2003). Studies have produced contradictory results, with some finding little or no racial differences and others finding that black heterosexual people may hold more homophobic views than their white counterparts (Jenkins, Lambert, and Baker 2009; Lewis 2003). While these studies emphasize homophobia in black communities, they may lead to unproductive research questions. First, there are obvious methodological challenges – homophobia is difficult to measure with survey or interview data, since respondents often know the socially appropriate response. Furthermore, debates where homophobia is "worst" seem to minimize institutionalized heterosexism. They imply that homophobia is a greater problem in some communities than others, yet heteronormativity is widespread and systemic. Thus, these debates may lead us down the path of scapegoating heterosexual people of color, making it seem as if white people are less homophobic than racial minorities. At the very least, these arguments construct homophobia as a problem of prejudiced individuals rather than unequal social arrangements. Sociologists, in particular, may want to move away from debates concerning who is racist, homophobic, or sexist, as they appear to individualize power relations. Thus, focusing on homophobia

in race-based communities should be balanced with an understanding of heterosexism as pervasive throughout society.

At the same time as we should be cautious about reducing homophobia to the actions of certain people, some LGBT people of color did argue that homophobia was a larger problem in black heterosexual communities than in other communities. These arguments often addressed intersections of race and sexuality. Andre, described above, explained the reasons white heterosexual people might be more accepting of his sexuality than black heterosexual people: "Like a white person has already had to deal with me being black. They've seen that. So if I tell them that I'm gay, it's not as big of a deal because they've already had to deal with me being different than them." Andre suggested that the immediacy of race reduces the likelihood of encountering homophobia from white heterosexual people, as they have already dealt with racial difference. Following-up on this idea, Andre made an interesting parallel between race and sexuality: "Like with being gay, if it's on full display and I'm out with a whole bunch of [gay] friends and we're being loud and gay acting, if people see us, it doesn't matter that we're black. They don't really care. That's like water under the bridge." In situations in which sexuality is openly expressed ("on full display"), racism may be less germane to the situation. Taken together, these two quotes reveal the complex variability of race and sexuality, as both creep in and out of situations, operating sometimes at different moments and at other times all at once (Calhoun 2000; Collins 2004; Risman 2004).

Rejecting Notions of Weakness: Race, Gender, and Stereotypes of Gay Men of Color

Black and Latino gay men seemed to reject notions of themselves as weak in part because they did not want to be perceived as representing stereotypes. While generally

perceiving themselves as feminine – and viewing stereotypical representations as feminized – men of color often constructed themselves in opposition to such stereotypes. For instance, Jericho, a 48 year-old Latino gay man, problematized stereotypes of gay men:

> They're all about being insignificant, that you can be taken advantage of and be all bouncy and light on your feet, if you will. Like Jack from Will and Grace, things in movies, you can't take that stuff seriously…It's just too standard, no one is really like that. I'm not like that, I stand up for myself.

Respondents usually problematized the passiveness of these stereotypes, perceiving representations of gay men as frivolous and condescending. These stereotypes also seemed intimately connected with race, as men of color often thought that they were stereotyped as exotic and sexual or passive and feminine. When asked if he thought stereotypes of Latino gay men were different from those of white gay men, Jericho responded: "They're worse. You're lucky if you see them [representations of Latino gay men], but when you do, then they're just really feminine, and not in a good way….They just care about the newest Gucci bag or some *thing*." Jericho perceived these stereotypes as unfairly superficial and inconsequential. Similar to other respondents, he valued independence and self-reliance, perceiving himself as strong and capable: "I'm just not that way. I might be feminine, but I can still take care of myself and not let guys take advantage of me or do whatever they want to me."

Gay men also seemed to describe stereotypes as a way of radicalizing themselves – of making themselves appear different from "most gay men." For instance, Andre, mentioned throughout this chapter, constructed himself in opposition to stereotypes of black gay men: "I guess I'm just different [from those stereotypes]. I don't really like all of those things, like clubs and dancing….I just don't like doing what everyone else is

doing." Gay men often perceived themselves as nonconformists, capable of subverting social norms. In contrast to their perpetrators, who seemed willing to cave to peer pressure, gay men frequently viewed themselves as rebellious and self-sufficient.

Most gay male respondents, regardless of race, emphasized their nonconformity and individuality. Nevertheless, this emphasis on originality seemed particularly acute among men of color. Given their marginalized position in multiple communities, gay men of color typically perceived themselves as outsiders from many of the communities to which they belonged. As a way of validating their identities, they privileged nonconformity and problematized obedience. This trend also held for lesbian and transgender people of color, which is consistent with the results from other studies that suggest LGBT people of color frequently place a high value on independence and self-reliance (Moore 2010). Feeling isolated from heterosexual communities of color and white queer communities, low-income LGBT people of color must often fend for themselves and create their own support networks, leading them to value self-sufficiency.

Creating Support Networks and Expecting Violence

Navigating racism in gay communities and homophobia in race-based communities – as well as the marginalization of male femininity in both of these communities – queer men of color often found support among other LGBT people of color. Befriending others with similar race, class, gender, and sexual identities, gay men of color tried to create a safe space for themselves. Indeed, queer men of color frequently suggested that they felt most comfortable enacting their gender identities around their friends – individuals who were usually gender nonconformist as well. Thus, as gay men of color created support networks, they began to feel as if they could speak and act

femininely, resisting some dominant social norms.

At the same time as low-income LGBT people of color created support networks, they often acknowledged that these safe spaces did not always protect them from homophobic violence. As a result, they sometimes implied that they expected to encounter anti-queer violence in the future. For example, Jayvyn, described earlier in this chapter, perceived homophobic violence as foreseeable given his situation:

> Being gay in the African American community, you're going to come across issues like that. Unfortunately, that's what it is. Doesn't make it right, but it comes with the territory….I know by being an openly gay man and not hiding it, I'm going to have my attacks once in a while. "You faggot, you fucking homo." I take it all in stride, because you know why? That's not my name, my name is [respondent's name]. I don't answer to that, so it doesn't affect me. And I knew by being openly gay and coming out, a long time ago, that that's part of the territory.…It's like a job, you can complain about it, but you knew it came with the job. I knew by me being openly gay, I was gonna get these verbal attacks, I was gonna get these ridicules.

Equating his sexual identity with a job, Jayvyn suggested that homophobic violence "comes with the territory" of being a black gay man. When expressing this idea, he appeared sad about the possibility of experiencing violence in the future, and yet this recognition also seemed to help him to accept any violence that might come his way.

Reinforcing Hierarchies: Expressing Misogyny, Racism, Classism, and Internalized Homophobia

As I have outlined, black gay men typically perceived themselves as feminine and validated traditional notions of femininity. Thus, in most cases, gay men did not employ sexist or masculinist rhetoric. Even so, a few gay men distanced themselves from femininity, arguably to the point of expressing misogyny. For instance, Walter, a 24 year-old black gay man, rejected notions of himself as feminine: "I ain't no bitch, I'm just a man." When asked what he meant by the term "bitch," he responded with the following:

> I don't date a person who considers themselves a homosexual or a girl or this kind of stuff. He considers himself a man or he considers himself a young adult. [The guy I'm sexually involved with] considers himself a grown ass man. He's a grown ass man. That's all I hang out with: people who consider themselves a man. I don't hang out with people who consider themselves a homo or a fag or some girly thing. I just don't like how they carry themselves. They carry themselves in a very disrespectful way.

Throughout the interview, Walter equated women with feminine gay men, using the same terms – "bitch," "girl," "weak" – to describe both of them. He seemed to have internalized misogyny and homophobia, linking femininity with many of the things that are wrong with the world. At one point, he overtly expressed misogyny, saying that he "hates females with a passion." This response came when describing an ex-girlfriend who had threatened to tell others that he was gay. Walter indicated that he had served jail time for an "altercation" between the two of them. I interpreted his statement as an indication that he had been arrested for domestic violence – for hitting her after she had threatened to tell others of his sexuality. During the interview, he constantly reasserted his masculinity, distancing himself from both femininity and homosexuality. Moreover, he appeared to have used violence as a way of reasserting his masculinity. One of his violent experiences involved a man calling him a "bitch," which prompted Walter to threaten the man with a knife. The male stranger then hit Walter in the face and ran away. Several weeks later, when Walter ran into the same man at a deli, he cut the male stranger on his face. Describing his motivations, Walter seemed most upset that he had been called a bitch: "I do not like someone calling me a bitch. I do not like females at all. That's my opinion about them. And for somebody to call me that, that gets under my nerves even more. So, that's why I react to that word." Walter seemed to retaliate

against challenges to his masculinity, disassociating himself from femininity and directing his rage at women and feminine gay men.

Since gay and especially black men have historically been stereotyped as misogynist, we should be cautious about making too much of Walter's response. As I have stated, most black gay men did not respond in this way; instead, they typically valued femininity. Thus, it would be a mistake to view Walter as representative of LGBT people of color in general or black gay men in particular. Moreover, he was certainly not alone in directing his rage at other minority groups[3]. Several respondents, for example, openly expressed racist beliefs. Page, a 45 year-old Latina lesbian woman, told me, "I do not like black people." Ted, a 33 year-old white male respondent, said that he expected violence from "someone like that" in response to being attacked by a black male perpetrator. And Mary, a 47 year-old white transgender woman, described her perpetrator as "a wise ass," before pausing as if she was going to say a racial slur, and then instead she said "ethnic person" in a disgusted tone.

Several respondents said classist things – suggesting that poor people are "lazy" or "stupid" – and sometimes these statements seemed related to race as well. Mary, described above, responded to a question concerning her perpetrators' motivations by saying, "These people, it's just like they're lazy and don't have anything better to do." Her inflection when saying "these people" suggested black people (one of her perpetrators was black), or perhaps people of color more generally. Mary's comment, while overtly classist, seemed to be her way of concealing racism, as classist statements may be less stigmatized than overtly racist ones, leading some people to express racism

[3] I use "minority groups" here to signify any oppressed group, including women.

through a classist remark. Regardless of her exact intent, these sorts of statements illustrate that LGBT people may sometimes express racism, misogyny, or classism as a way of condemning their perpetrators and making it seem as if homophobic violence would only be perpetrated by certain groups of people. Thus, in dealing with the pain associated with their violent experiences, LGBT people may blame other marginalized groups for causing them anguish. As other scholars have demonstrated, individuals sometimes deal with oppression by reinforcing hierarchies and relying on traditional norms (Espiritu 2005; Wilkins 2008).

Although Walter expressed misogyny to a degree that most gay men did not, it was not entirely uncommon for respondents to have internalized homophobia. Again, these statements are difficult to quote, but they usually took the form of respondents blaming themselves. When doing so, they seemed to focus on what they should have done differently. For instance, Daniel, described throughout this chapter, spent a lot of time during the interview obsessing over how his actions may have caused homophobic violence to occur. He was punched in the face by a man who called him a "faggot." Daniel seemed to blame himself for responding to the man's homophobic slur; Daniel had said "fuck off" to the male stranger. During the interview, he appeared to regret his behavior:

> I shouldn't have said that, then he wouldn't have done that. I feel bad, like that was some really stupid thing to do. I could have just walked away. Or put my headphones on or called someone or gotten the police. It didn't have to be that way. I could have been the bigger person, not let him get me. Or I could have even just not been so obvious on the street, then the whole thing never would have happened at all. Then all of these bad things never would have happened.

At this moment, there was a profound sadness in Daniel's voice. His statement that he should have "not been so obvious on the street" problematized his gender performance

rather than his perpetrator's actions. Obsessing over what he could have done differently, he seemed to think that his violent experiences were no one's fault but his own.

As respondents blamed themselves, they often downplayed the severity of their violent experiences as well. Later during the interview, Daniel minimized the violent experience described above: "It was bad at the time, but not such a big deal now, looking back on it." During the interviews, seven respondents said something to the effect of "I'm not really sure if this counts as violence," before describing one of their violent experiences. Cole, mentioned earlier in this chapter, made such a statement before describing a time when he was mugged at knifepoint; at that time, his perpetrator called him a "faggot." After describing this experience, Cole expressed regret at how he had performed gender: "I remembered telling myself not to wear that [pink] scarf that day, like it was just a bad idea, and I knew it before I left. Like, you know, why would I be so stupid?"

Conclusion: Conceptualizing Anti-Gay Violence as Rooted in Multiple Systems of Oppression

As described in the previous chapter, the hate crime literature has often privileged the effects of one system of oppression over another. With regard to anti-gay violence, studies have usually privileged the effects of either sexism or homophobia (but rarely both). Indeed, gender and sexuality theorists are often pressured to "pick a side" in debates concerning whether sexism or heteronormativity has a more profound effect on some social phenomena. Much of existing hate crime scholarship has reinforced these hierarchical understandings of gender and sexuality, with some gender scholars minimizing the role of homophobia (See von Schulthess 1992) and some gay male scholars ignoring sexism altogether (See Comstock 1991; Herek et al. 1997, 2002).

Neither of these approaches can fully account for most forms of anti-LGBT violence; the first approach reduces homophobia to an extension of misogyny, while the second overlooks the ways in which gender is implicated in homophobic violence. Rather than pitting gender and sexuality against one another, it would be more useful to examine their interconnections – how they draw upon and reinforce one another. Indeed, the LGBT people whom I interviewed usually viewed both gender and sexuality as related to their violent experiences.

Gay male respondents rarely engaged in debates concerning whether their violent experiences seemed related more to sexism or homophobia. They were considerably more likely to say that *both* sexism and homophobia had affected their violent experiences than to say that one of them had a larger effect. When gay men did privilege the effects of gender or sexuality, it seemed to depend on the context in which the violence had occurred. That is, they viewed one violent experience as rooted largely in homophobia, while viewing another as shaped primarily by their gender identity. Indeed, sexuality and gender, although interrelated, do not operate in the same way. Gay men most frequently perceived a violent experience as rooted in sexism when it had occurred because of their feminine gender display. Conversely, they were considerably less likely to perceive violence as related to sexism when viewing their gender display as "not particularly feminine" at the time of the attack. In such situations, their public declaration of homosexuality – rather than their gender nonconformity – precipitated violence, leading gay men to minimize the effects of gender in structuring their violent experiences.

These differences between how gay men perceived homophobic violence were most apparent when one respondent viewed several of his violent experiences differently. For instance, Andre, described throughout this chapter, perceived one of his violent experiences as partially rooted in sexism, while attributing another primarily to homophobia. The first of these experiences occurred when he was walking on the street and a male stranger taunted and eventually hit him; the second occurred when a police officer brutally sodomized him with a nightstick. Andre perceived the second experience as rooted primarily in homophobia because the violence occurred after he had revealed his sexuality. Moreover, he thought that his gender display was fairly traditional: "I was wearing regular guy clothes that day…He wasn't sure that I was gay until I said it, until I told him." The first experience, in contrast, occurred in public when Andre was wearing "very girly clothes" and carrying a purse. Even though his perpetrator taunted him with homophobic language, Andre perceived the violence as related to sexism: "I think that he had issues with females. He kept calling me a 'little bitch,' like that was some sort of bad thing." Gay male respondents were the most likely to attribute their violent experiences to sexism in situations such as these – when perpetrators seemed bothered by male femininity. Conversely, when gay men thought that they had performed gender in more traditional ways, they often focused solely on homophobia.

While respondents could perceive one violent experience as emanating from homophobia, while viewing another as related to sexism, they did not usually privilege one form of oppression over another. Of course, I did not ask respondents to rank systems of oppression. Thus, they could have thought of institutional power structures in hierarchical terms without explicitly saying so. Still, respondents did not generally imply

that one system had most profoundly shaped their violent experiences. LGBT people of color, for example, did not usually suggest that homophobia had affected them more than racism (or vice-versa); instead, they more frequently viewed their violent experiences as emanating from both racism and homophobia. At times, LGBT people of color viewed an individual act of violence as rooted primarily in racism or homophobia, yet they attributed different violent experiences to various systems of oppression. As such, they shifted from focusing on one system of oppression to another, depending on the context in which the violence had occurred.

Although respondents did not usually privilege one system of oppression over another, Dorothy, a 49 year-old white lesbian woman, was one exception. During the interview, she implied that sexism and homophobia are more widespread than racism. When asked if she had witnessed racist violence, she replied, "I don't know much about that. I haven't really seen it. I'm sure it's out there, I just don't think it's too prevalent." In contrast, earlier in the interview, she described sexism as widespread: "You see it everywhere." She also implied similar things about homophobia being ubiquitous. Predictably, then, she seemed to view those systems of oppression which negatively affect her – sexism and homophobia – as more widespread than the system – racism – from which she benefits. In some sense, many respondents described their social position in this way, focusing on the ways in which they were oppressed rather than privileged. This trend is hardly surprising, given that privilege often seems normative to those in powerful positions (Harding 2004; McIntosh 2004). Nevertheless, respondents did not typically construct one system of oppression as more fundamental than another.

As I argued in the Introduction of this dissertation, not everyone experiences oppression to the same degree or in the same way. In this sense, then, we can speak of black people as "more oppressed" from racism than white people, or we can think of lesbian women and gay men as "most oppressed" by heterosexism. Nevertheless, since individuals always belong to multiple social groups, their social position cannot be reduced to one aspect of their identity. Many black LGBT scholars have been arguing against these understandings of identity for quite some time. Audre Lorde (1981), for example, said in an interview,

> There's always someone asking you to underline one piece of yourself, whether it's Black, woman, mother, dyke, teacher, etc. – because that's the piece they need to key in to. They want you to dismiss everything else. But once you do that, then you've lost because then you become acquired or bought by that particular essence of yourself, and you've denied yourself all of the energy that it takes to keep all those others in jail. Only by learning to live in harmony with your contradictions can you keep it all afloat (p. 15).

Other scholars have named this process of being asked to choose between different aspects of one's identity as "a kind of psychic suicide" (Thomas 2001: 332). Thus, I am not suggesting that hate crime research should ask LGBT people to rank systems of oppression, as this research method would require respondents to separate different aspects of their identity from one another, thereby perpetuating this "kind of psychic suicide."

In this chapter, I have focused primarily on the experiences of gay men, paying particular attention to the intersections of gender, sexuality, and race. Results suggest that gay male respondents shared some similar experiences with lesbian women, but that anti-gay and anti-lesbian violence differed in significant ways as well. In particular, gay men had meanings of weakness mapped onto them and responded to their violent

experiences by focusing on their physical strength and, especially, their emotional resolve. These results also seemed intimately connected with race, as queer men of color were often perceived as associating themselves with weakness because they had identified as gay and, thereby, supposedly given in to white culture. In the following chapter, I continue to explore these themes of intersectionality, focusing on a form of violence – anti-transgender violence – that has largely been overlooked among studies of hate crime victims.

Chapter 5

Anti-Transgender Violence: Dehumanizing Attacks and Transgressing Gender Boundaries

The previous two chapters focused primarily on the gender dynamics of anti-lesbian and anti-gay violence. Building on those chapters, the data presented in this chapter reveal that violence against transgender people often operates in different ways than anti-lesbian and anti-gay violence. Given that eight out of the ten transgender respondents involved in this project identified as male-to-female, some of the violence described in this chapter overlaps with forms of misogynist violence. Moreover, trans respondents frequently experienced violence that seemed, at least on the surface, informed by homophobia. Nevertheless, despite the overlapping challenges confronting LGBT people in general, this chapter suggests that transgender people confront violence unique to their own social position. I begin this chapter by describing the similarities and differences among forms of anti-LGBT violence, paying particular attention to the specific types of violence confronted by transgender respondents. Subsequently, this chapter explores the meaning-making processes of transgender respondents, outlining the ways in which they distinguished among their violent experiences. Leading into Chapter 6, I then conclude this chapter by describing how respondents evaluated the severity of their violent experiences.

A Distinct Form of Violence

Consistent with previous research, violence against transgender people differed from anti-lesbian and anti-gay violence in important ways (Namaste 2006; Stotzer 2009).

Transgender people often experienced physical violence when transitioning from one gender to another – that is, when their gender display was perceived as not matching their biological sex. In the processes of transitioning, transgender respondents changed their gender display from the sex they had been assigned at birth. As transgender respondents went through this process of transitioning, they often, but not always, underwent sex reassignment surgery and hormonal replacement therapy. At this time, the violence directed against them regularly increased, as it became more obvious to others that transgender people were changing their gender identity. Mary, a 47 year-old white transgender woman, explained this dynamic:

> When you start transitioning, everyone around you starts transitioning, too. And some can deal with it and some can't….We trans people do the gender fuck. That scares the hell out of people, and it can be a magnificently transformative experience. But, it scares the shit out of everybody because you have to ask the question, "What is male? What is female?"

As transgender people transitioned from one gender to another, they challenged notions that one's gender identity must match hir[1] presumed sex characteristics. They contested the supposed naturalness of gender by revealing that one's genitalia does not automatically determine hir gender display. In this context, violence against transgender people can be understood as a social control mechanism punishing individuals for transgressing dichotomous gender boundaries, encouraging them to identify as discernibly male or female.

As transgender people transitioned to their desired gender identity, the violence directed against them sometimes subsided. Many transgender female respondents, for example, said that they had experienced violence when transitioning, but that it decreased

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[1] A gender-neutral pronoun (pronounced "here"), used here in place of her/his or her/him.

significantly as they became perceived as women. For instance, Dominique, a 23 year-old black transgender woman, expressed amusement when describing how men in her apartment building who had harassed her as she began transitioning then started to make sexual advances when they perceived her as female:

> It was almost funny. Like there was this one guy in particular who would always be like "Oh god, that's a man, that's a man," just saying stupid stuff. But then when I became someone who was not easily spotted as being transgender, then it was all, "Oh baby, how you doing?" *respondent laughs*…The more you take hormones – the more you feminized yourself – the better you seem to blend into society. The less they discriminate against you.

These shifts in the amount of violence were often noted by transgender respondents. They described a process in which they began to experience less violence as they performed gender more in-line with the culturally agreed upon scripts for women and men. Lakesiah, a 38 year-old black transgender woman, described the privilege that accompanies traditional gender identities: "It's better. People think that I'm a woman now. Unless I decide to tell them, people don't know that I'm trans…I can walk the streets and nobody knows what I am, unless I tell them. People either think I'm a lesbian or someone's mom – that makes it easy to go about my life."

Although the amount of violence directed against transgender people often seemed to depend on whether or not they were in the process of transitioning, this process was not always quite so clear-cut. Indeed, several transgender respondents conceptualized transitioning as a lifelong process, and others did not necessarily worry about appearing as discernibly male or female. For instance, Carol, a 39 year-old Latina transgender woman, self-identified as a woman, but also liked that she was often perceived as transgender:

> I see myself as a trans woman, but I know that when other people look at me, that's not always how they see me – as a woman. So, I know that it's hard this way, but I don't really care anymore. I'm happy if people want to see the trans part of me rather than the woman part.

Carol acknowledged the pressures faced by people who may appear as recognizably trans, yet she also felt comfortable being recognized as transgender. Later during the interview, she argued that it did not matter to her whether others perceived her as "passing" for a woman and she described transitioning as something that "doesn't end" and "can't happen overnight." Thus, the process of transitioning should be understood as a fluid one, where there is not necessarily a clear starting and ending point. At the same time, some transgender people did perceive themselves as transitioning from one gender to another, altering their appearance to correspond with their desired gender identity. It was during this time of transitioning when transgender people often experienced violence with the greatest frequency[2].

Even though trans respondents usually experienced more physical violence as they began the process of transitioning, the violence directed against them did not necessarily end as they became more regularly perceived as male or female. Instead, their violent experiences seemed to take on new forms as they appropriated more traditional gender displays. For instance, as transgender people were in the process of transitioning, they frequently experienced public violence from strangers. Conversely, as transgender people moved through the transitioning process – and sometimes came to be

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[2] For a good review of the political concerns with "passing" among transgender people, see Roen (2002).

perceived as non-transgender[3] – they had to more carefully manage the ways in which they revealed their trans identity. In these situations, transgender people often experienced violence in their personal and romantic relationships, once they had revealed their trans identity to another person. Many transgender respondents, for example, described family members who had cut off contact with them upon learning of their trans identity. Moreover, most transgender respondents had experienced domestic violence in which romantic and sexual partners had become violent when a trans person made their identity known. For instance, Lakeisha, described on the previous page, was beaten by her male partner when he learned of her trans identity. He kicked her in the ribs and punched her face many times; she suffered a broken jaw and ribs as a result. Prior to the day on which the violence had occurred, she assumed that he knew of her being transgender, since they had been sexually involved. On the day of the violent incident, however, he suggested that they should try to have a baby together – that she should become pregnant. Lakeisha then explained that she could not physically have children, given her trans identity. His behavior immediately changed, as he began to throw items around the room, yelling, "All this time, you mean to tell me that I was fucking a *thing*?" Subsequently, he came extremely violent, repeatedly referring to her as "it" and a "thing," while physically beating her.

Lakeisha's experience reflects a trend consistent with the interview data: violence against transgender people was often more explicitly dehumanizing than anti-lesbian and anti-gay violence. Perpetrators regularly referred to transgender people as "it," depriving

[3] Non-transgender people are increasingly being referred to as "cisgender," meaning an individual who is comfortable with their gender identity assigned at birth (See Green 2006; Serano 2007).

them of human qualities. For instance, several transgender respondents described incidents in which they heard male strangers yelling, "What is it?" in their direction. Nevada, a 36 year-old person who identified as intersexed[4], fought back tears as ze[5] explained that hir brother referred to hir as "brother it." His casual way of dehumanizing Nevada seemed to cause hir a lot of pain and anger:

> He calls me "brother it." Like the last time I called him, he called me "brother it," and called me by the name that I grew up by. I told him, "You can't give me respect? I mean you know what happened to me, and you know what name I told you I want to be called by, and you can't do that?" He was like, "No." I was like, "All right, bye." I'll never phone his fucking stupid ass again. I'm tired of being hurt.

Trans people frequently seemed to experience these forms of violence, where they were constructed as inhuman objects. In this context, anti-transgender violence encourages individuals to fall neatly into the categories of male or female. Constructing trans people as objects, in other words, legitimizes a rigid gender binary in which individuals must be either male or female – they cannot be both at the same time, nor can they be a gender other than these two. Dehumanizing trans people also makes it easier for perpetrators to employ violence, allowing them to view their actions as harming an object rather than a person.

Several transgender respondents connected their dehumanization with media stereotypes – particularly, those stereotypes perpetuated by pornography, in which trans people have historically been portrayed as "shemales." These representations,

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[4] Used here to denote an individual born with genitalia of both gender, or with ambiguous genitalia.

[5] A gender-neutral pronoun (pronounced "sea"). Used here in place of she/he for an individual whose gender identity does not fit into one of those two categories.

popularized by notions of "chicks with dicks," construct transgender women as sexual "freaks of nature," making their bodies seem abnormal and pathological. Dominique, the 23 year-old transgender woman described earlier in this chapter, emphasized these media images when describing stereotypes of trans people:

> The gay community and the trans community, it's not the same thing. We are related, but it's not the same thing. We got different issues….With the media and the pornography industry, like the shemales and stuff like that, they don't give us a good name….A straight guy meets a woman of trans experience, and first thing, they're like, "Oh, a shemale." They think about freaky and stuff like that. A lot of guys, they're aware that we look like chicks, but we still got a dick, so they think that they can hit, they can beat up, and that's fine because they're still beating up a male.

Here, Dominique connected stereotypes of transgender people with violence directed against them. She also indicated that transgender people are stereotyped in ways that are qualitatively different from stereotypes of lesbian women and gay men. Moreover, as I have argued, violence confronting lesbian, gay, and transgender respondents differed in significant ways. Most transgender women, for example, encountered a lot of physical violence while working in prostitution; lesbian women and gay men rarely described such experiences. These differences suggest that violence against transgender people, while overlapping in some ways with anti-lesbian and anti-gay violence, needs to be considered in its own right. Moreover, the differences among transgender people need to be taken into consideration, as transgender respondents' experiences of violence varied considerably based on whether or not they were working as a sex worker.

While anti-transgender violence may operate differently than homophobic forms of violence, perpetrators often used homophobic insults – rather than transphobic ones – to degrade transgender respondents. This trend reflects societal patterns in which transgenderism is more frequently collapsed into homosexuality than the other way

around. Public discourse and mainstream LGBT communities have focused considerably more attention on homosexuality than transgenderism. Moreover, transgender people have regularly been represented as gay, with media discourse collapsing transgender stories and concerns into narratives about homosexuality (Halberstam 2005). These cultural understandings of transgenderism seemed to affect the language that perpetrators used. Gay and lesbian respondents, for example, were never called transphobic insults, while perpetrators routinely used homophobic language to condemn transgender respondents. These patterns suggest that many perpetrators of anti-queer violence possess the vocabulary to condemn homosexuality but not transgenderism.

As scholarship has documented, transgender people have challenged their exclusion from LGBT communities for quite some time (Currah, Juang, and Minter 2006; Feinberg 1999). Among the transgender people whom I interviewed, they often found it frustrating, albeit unsurprising, when they were labeled as gay rather than trans. Their frustration seemed particularly palpable when describing lesbian women and gay men who had advanced these exclusionary practices. Whereas transgender respondents usually expected heterosexual people to confuse transgenderism with homosexuality, they sometimes anticipated that gay and lesbian people would be more supportive. At times, I thought that transgender respondents muted their criticisms of gay and lesbian people because they did not know how their concerns would be interpreted by a gay male researcher. Nevertheless, some trans respondents did express their frustration with being marginalized from many queer communities. For instance, Kayla, a 36 year-old black transgender woman, explained that she only felt comfortable participating in transgender support groups: “I can’t go to regular gay groups because no one really cares what I have

to say." When asked what she meant, Kayla added: "Like what I have to say comes second. It's not listened to first. 'Let's hear from the gay people and *then* we'll get to you.'"

Some lesbian respondents made similar statements about how mainstream LGBT organizations focused primarily on the interests of gay men, yet transgender respondents seemed to have their own particular set of concerns. One such concern was that anti-violence organizations were usually marketed toward gay men in particular and lesbian women to a lesser extent. Kayla, described above, noted her experiences with several organizations that focus primarily on reducing anti-lesbian and anti-gay violence: "If you're not the norm of what they're looking for, they won't turn you away, really, it's just not *designed* to really help you out. So it's kinda like those who are trans have to wait in the back of the line, if you want anything done."

Several trans respondents also felt that they were placed in the "back of the line" when dealing with organizations that aim to help sexual assault victims. For instance, Eva, a 46 year-old black transgender woman, reported an attempted sexual assault to an organization that helps women who have been sexually assaulted. Eva said that the people she dealt with were supportive, but she felt that her violent experience was considered secondary to that of non-transgender women: "[The staff members] were nice…[but] it was just this, "What you have experienced is bad, but we don't really know how to help you, so what do you want us to do?" This type of concern was not usually voiced by lesbian women and gay men – at least, not quite in the same way. Transgender respondents often encountered service providers who "did not know what to do" because they had not been trained to help trans people. As a result, trans respondents usually

attended support groups that were geared explicitly toward helping trans people, even if those groups did not necessarily focus on violence. Since many of the transgender people involved in these groups had experienced violence, they typically focused on violence, at least in part.

Trans respondents frequently had more problems dealing with service providers than gay and lesbian respondents. Eva, described above, experienced secondary victimization that was related to her trans identity. She was attacked by a male stranger who tried to sexually assault her. Eva escaped the attempted rape by screaming, which prompted a group of men to come to her aid, scaring the perpetrator away. When the police came to the scene, however, they told her that she "couldn't be raped" because she "wasn't a real woman." This response suggests that transgender respondents, many of whom had experienced sexual assault, may confront secondary victimization in different ways than lesbian women and gay men. Secondary victimization against trans people often retained a dehumanizing quality that seemed related to standards of "realness" and "authenticity." Several other trans respondents, for example, described occasions in which police officers had referred to them as "it" or used "he/she" interchangeably as a way of mocking them. Given that trans respondents typically experienced violence and secondary victimization in different ways than lesbian women and gay men, gender identity should be conceptualized as distinct from sexuality, and anti-transgender violence should not be collapsed into forms of homophobic violence.

Transgender Women's Experiences of Sexual Assault

Although violence against trans people differed in some important ways from anti-lesbian and anti-gay violence, all of these forms of violence overlapped in other

ways. In particular, the experiences of transgender women often seemed to be informed by multiple systems of oppression – namely, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia. The intersection of these systems of oppression was particularly apparent in forms of violence where men had sexually assaulted transgender women. For instance, Lakeisha, described previously in this chapter, was sexually assaulted by her former lover's friends. According to Lakeisha, her ex-boyfriend was "sweet" at the beginning of their relationship, but his demeanor changed upon learning of her trans identity ("the sweetness left," as she described it, with him becoming verbally abusive). As his behavior changed, he regularly referred to her as a "bitch" and threatened to kill her if she left him. At one point, he connected his demeaning behavior with her trans identity, saying, "This is how it is: you're going to play pussy, then you're going to get fucked like pussy." As Lakeisha began to fear for her physical safety, she decided to break-up with him and to kick him out of her apartment. To do so, her brother threatened the ex-boyfriend with violence, telling him that he had to leave. The threat of violence resulted in her ex-boyfriend leaving the apartment, yet the next morning Lakeisha was attacked by two of her ex-boyfriend's friends. These two men broke one of her fingers, ripped off her clothes, and punched her repeatedly. While punching her, they used transphobic language: "You don't have a pussy, you have a fucking dick" and "you're not a woman, you're a mother-fucking man." They included homophobic insults, as well: "You're a faggot," they said, "who probably has HIV." As Lakeisha explained, "They were calling me every name that you could possibly call a queer."

Lakeisha's experience illustrates the ways in which misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia are often simultaneously implicated in forms of violence against transgender

women. During the physical attack, the two men employed homophobic language to insult a transgender woman, suggesting that trans people may be categorized as homosexual. Moreover, Lakeisha's ex-boyfriend obviously used misogynistic language (e.g., "bitch," "pussy") to demean her, and his attempts to control her movement by not allowing her to break-up with him can also probably be viewed as related to sexism. At the same time, his statement "you're going to play pussy, then you're going to get fucked like pussy" indicates that her "play" of a female identity was the reason for his verbally abusive behavior. That is, her trans identity resulted in him verbally abusing her.

Perpetrators of sexual assault often employed misogynist and transphobic language to justify their actions. For example, Carol, a 39 year-old Latina transgender woman described earlier in this chapter, was sexually assaulted by a male stranger who told her that she "liked it" because she was "asking for it." This violent incident began with the man grabbing her breasts in an elevator. When Carol slapped his hand, he said, "Look at how you're dressed," implying that he had free reign to touch her where he pleased. He then forced himself on her, attempting to rape her. During this time, he also suggested that the violence was her fault. The victim-blaming continued until Carol escaped from the elevator by hitting him in the eye with the tip of her high-heeled shoe. Throughout the violent encounter, he used a mix of misogynist and homophobic language, calling her a "whore," a "nasty bitch," and a "fucking faggot." At the time, Carol did not know whether he was aware of her trans identity, until he called her a "fucking faggot" and kept repeating the word "nasty." Her interpretation suggests that transgender people may sometimes determine that violence is based on their trans identity when perpetrators have used homophobic language. Indeed, the marginalization of

transgenderism from much of mainstream society – and its strong cultural association with homosexuality –makes forms of anti-transgender violence appear as if they are rooted in homophobia, even though transphobia may be motivating perpetrators.

Comparing Forms of Physical and Verbal Violence

This section explores the ways in which LGBT respondents evaluated the severity of their violent experiences, paying particular attention to transgender respondents' perception of hate-motivated physical violence. Previous studies of LGBT hate crime victims have found that physical violence often contributes to more trauma-related symptoms than verbal violence (D'Augelli and Grossman 2001; Herek et al. 1997, 1999). These studies, however, have focused primarily on lesbian women and gay men, ignoring transgender people altogether. Nevertheless, results from this study indicate that transgender respondents described more experiences of physical violence than gay and lesbian respondents. As a result, transgender people, perhaps even more than gay and lesbian respondents, seemed to distinguish among their physically violent experiences. Given that much of the hate crime literature has focused on the severity of hate-motivated physical violence, it seems curious that many studies have also ignored the violent experiences of transgender people. In contrast, this study suggests that we can better understand how LGBT people perceive hate-motivated physical violence by accounting for the experiences of trans people.

Although this dissertation project is an attempt to move away from hierarchical understandings of violence, some respondents did perceive their violent experiences in hierarchical ways. We should, of course, take these voices seriously, even if we do not accept them as absolute. One of the ways respondents ranked forms of violence was by

comparing physical and verbal violence, constructing standards of what they would tolerate. These standards usually involved constructing physical violence as unforgiveable and verbal abuse as something they could endure. For example, Lela, a 48 year-old transgender woman, described a threshold of violence that she would not accept being crossed: "As long as they don't put their hands on me, I don't care what they do…They can call me whatever they want, that's one thing, but if they put their hands on me, that's a whole new thing." These sentiments were fairly common, particularly among lesbian and transgender respondents, as LGBT people often perceived verbal abuse as a "first step" leading into physical violence. In general, respondents seemed to perceive physical violence as more severe than verbal abuse when the former had clearly followed the latter – that is, when respondents perceived verbal abuse as signaling that physical violence was still to come. In these cases, respondents thought that violent encounters had begun with them "just being called names," and then escalated with the onset of physical violence. For instance, Carol, described previously, perceived one of her violent experiences in this way: "Like first he was just calling me names, but then it got worse when he grabbed me."

Comparing their violent experiences, respondents sometimes constructed physical violence as more severe than verbal abuse. In this regard, Carol's comment was characteristic:

> It was worse because he hit me…People have called me names in the past. That I can get over. But putting your hands on me, that's a whole new thing. That's what I can't stand…Like if I walk out of here and someone puts their hands on me, I'm going to look at that as a bigger deal than if they say sometimes to me.

These constructions were fairly common among respondents, particularly lesbian and transgender women. At the same time, respondents sometimes complicated such a

ranking system. As Carol continued to compare her violent experiences, she added: "I guess it depends on how old I was…When I was young, the comments would get to me. Then that stuff can stay with you for life, but now I can just kinda let it go by the wayside." Respondents sometimes pointed to the context of the violence, including the age at which they had experienced it, to complicate hierarchies of violence.

As LGBT people constructed physical violence as more severe than verbal abuse, they often expressed their agency at being able to reject their attacker's insults. Lela, described on the previous page, constructed herself as capable of overcoming hurtful words: "Words can hurt, but they're just words. I can go about my business still, it doesn't get in my way. I can walk down the street, do what I want. Because, really, what do I care what some guy I don't even know has to say to me?" Lela seemed to suggest that insults do not have the same immobilizing effect as physical violence, as she could ignore attackers' meanings ("what do I care") by continuing to go about her daily life ("I can walk down the street, do what I want").

While some respondents constructed physical violence as more severe than verbal abuse, other LGBT people implied that they could not possibly compare these forms of violence. Indeed, they often seemed to experience physical and verbal violence simultaneously, making it difficult to distinguish between them. Dominique, the 23 year-old trans woman mentioned throughout this chapter, described her perception of violence in this way: "I think violence doesn't only have to be physical. It can be verbal, too…But it's hard to tell which is which. It goes back and forth." Even though Dominique suggested that physical and verbal violence occur alternately, most respondents did not make these types of arguments. Rather than perceiving physical and verbal violence as

overlapping, respondents more frequently challenged hierarchical understandings of violence. Interestingly, even though respondents were not prompted to rank their violent experiences, they sometimes addressed arguments concerning whether physical violence should be considered as more severe than verbal abuse. In response to questions about how they defined violence, respondents occasionally constructed some of their verbally violent experiences as more painful than incidents of physical abuse. For instance, Nevada, described earlier in this chapter, understood hir experience of being called "brother it" as more hurtful than hir experiences of physical violence. Moreover, Gideon, a 25 year-old black gay man, perceived verbal abuse from his family members as more severe than some of his physically violent experiences: "People make a big deal about the physical, but names can hurt even more – being called a fag or whatever from your dad." Respondents usually emphasized the severity of verbal violence when it was perpetrated by family members. A few LGBT people, however, mentioned stranger-based forms of violence or discrimination. Eva, described earlier in this chapter, recounted the pain of being perceived as threatening to children: "I can guarantee if I walk past five families, three of them will pull their kids out of the way…That hurts as much as anything that can be done to me physically." Later during the interview, when describing an experience of physical violence in which she was pushed to the ground, Eva constructed insidious forms of violence as more severe: "Being pushed down is not always gonna be so bad. I can get back up. The stares and looks stay with you."

As evidenced from the data above, several transgender respondents emphasized the ways in which discrimination and verbal violence had caused them pain. My sense, however, was that lesbian and transgender women were more likely than gay male

respondents to emphasize the severity of physical violence. Gay men, in other words, were the most likely to focus on the severity of their verbally violent experiences. This trend can probably be explained in part by masculinity norms, as described in the previous chapter, which encourage men to focus on strength. Gay men may have avoided emphasizing the severity of physical violence because doing so would undermine their performance of masculinity. Moreover, lesbian and transgender respondents seemed to link forms of physical violence and sexual assault, either defining the latter as a form of physical violence or perceiving physical attacks as the beginning of a sexual assault. As most lesbian and transgender women perceived forms of sexual assault as more severe than verbal abuse, they also tended to emphasize the severity of physical rather than verbal violence. Given that lesbian and transgender respondents were more likely than gay men to experience sexual assault, one would expect the former groups to emphasize the severity of physical violence more frequently than the latter. Statements such as the following, made by Lakeisha, were much more commonly expressed by lesbian and transgender women than by gay men: "I can take the verbal comments. I'm a big girl…Say what you want, just keep your hands to yourself." At times, female respondents appeared to perceive forms of physical violence as escalating a violent encounter to a new level, where they knew that sexual assault could be imminent. Later during the interview, Lakeisha explained her perception of physical violence in greater detail: "Like that's when I know it'll get out of hand then." Associating physical violence with sexual assault, female respondents generally perceived these forms of violence as more severe than verbal abuse.

The perpetrators' gender may have also played a role here – men perpetrated

almost all of the physical violence that respondents had experienced, and yet women had perpetrated some of the verbal abuse. Since men usually perpetrated physical violence, lesbian and transgender women may have been particularly prone to emphasize its severity. Whereas masculinity norms may encourage men to invade the personal space of women, gay men may have focused on the severity of verbal abuse because it was sometimes perpetrated by women or because the meaning of "fag" may seem particularly harsh in comparison with some anti-lesbian and anti-trans insults.

The gender differences described above can certainly be exaggerated. Indeed, respondents seemed to be more alike than different along gender lines, as they generally perceived the severity of their violent experiences in some similar ways. Respondents, regardless of gender identity, usually perceived *some* of their physically violent experiences as more severe than *some* of their verbally violent experiences, and yet they typically differentiated among forms of violence based on the frequency, location, and perpetrator. As a result, respondents usually distinguished among forms of violence in more complex ways than a rigid physical/verbal dichotomy would suggest.

Moving Beyond Physical/Verbal Dichotomies

Even though respondents did sometimes perceive physical violence as more severe than verbal abuse, this construction of anti-queer violence seems to oversimplify the ways in which most LGBT people viewed their violent experiences. Respondents, for instance, often distinguished between violence from strangers and family members, usually perceiving the latter as more severe than the former. These constructions relied on notions of familial violence as ongoing and inescapable. In these cases, respondents anticipated continually having to deal with their family member's homophobia or

transphobia, while perceiving stranger-based forms of violence as restricted to a particular time and location. In part, these understandings depended on the frequency with which forms of violence would be perpetrated, as respondents viewed familial forms as enduring and stranger-based forms as more short-lived. At the same time, respondents seemed to perceive familial violence as something that could not be easily dismissed because of their long-lasting relationship with the person perpetrating the violence.

Familial forms of violence were most frequently verbal, and respondents sometimes perceived them as more severe than some of their physically violent experiences. At times, respondents became considerably angry during the interview with family members. For instance, Kayla, a trans woman described earlier in this chapter, felt that her sister had responded unsupportively to hearing about her violent experience of being pushed to the ground and called a "nasty faggot": "[My sister] told me that I shouldn't have talked back to him. I was like, 'Thanks, that's really what I want to hear now.'…That almost made me more angry than what he [the perpetrator] had done…I wanted to fucking *kill* her when she said that to me!" Kayla, similar to many respondents, expressed a lot of frustration with forms of secondary victimization, suggesting that her sister's comments "almost made [her] more angry" than her perpetrator's actions. Similarly, Nevada, the intersexed respondents described previously, became very angry when describing the process in which hir family members had approved "corrective" surgery on hir ambiguous genitalia:

> Nevada: I was born with both sexes and they "normalized" me into a boy.
>
> Interviewer: So, when you were born, they "normalized" you? Did this happen throughout your childhood, were there normalizations...

> Nevada: <angrily>They *operated* on me! The normalization process was them *forcing* me to be a boy. Even though they knew it was hurting me, they didn't care. They just forced me to present a male image, so they could have the functional family.
>
> Interviewer: And your parents had to sign off on these "corrective" surgeries?
>
> Nevada: You know, I don't even know, I don't have a clue. <angrily>I was an *infant*!
>
> Interviewer: Were your parents, they were often attaching it to homosexuality?
>
> Nevada: Yea, they were saying, I can't be a homosexual, I can't be gay. "I hate fags, I'll kill you if I think you're gonna be a fag."

The moment when Nevada said, "They *operated* on me," was very tense. I recall feeling slightly threatened and ashamed for having possibly asked the wrong question. My follow-up question ("your parents had to sign off on these "corrective" surgeries?") was said sympathetically, as I tried to acknowledge Nevada's pain. Regardless of whether or not my tone helped defuse the situation, Nevada was only momentarily angry. These moments of anger during interviews almost always occurred when respondents described their family members. In these situations, as respondents expected to receive love and support, they came to perceive familial forms of violence as particularly painful when their expectations were not met.

Respondents also distinguished among forms of violence that were based on their sexuality or gender identity and forms that were not. I had the sense that gay and lesbian respondents made these distinctions more often than trans respondents, as the former sometimes implied that their violent experiences would have been less severe if they were not based on their sexuality. For instance, Jacob, a 40 year-old white gay man, suggested that the use of a homophobic insult increased the severity of his violent experience: "It wouldn't have been as bad if he hadn't called me a fag." Along the same

lines, Dorothy, a 49 year-old white lesbian woman, described a violent experience that was not based on her sexuality and suggested that it would have been more severe if the perpetrator had used a homophobic insult: "It would have been worse if he said something about me being a lesbian or something like that. It would have felt more personal then."

Jacob and Dorothy were the only two respondents who explicitly ranked forms of homophobic violence as more severe than forms of non-homophobic violence. Two people, of course, does not make a trend. Nevertheless, among respondents in this study, I had the sense that lesbian women and gay men were more likely than transgender people to emphasize the severity of anti-LGBT violence and to stress the importance of hate crime legislation. Gay men, in particular, seemed to construct homophobic violence as more severe than violence that was not based on their sexuality; these distinctions were often made subtly and therefore are difficult to cite. In contrast to Jacob and Dorothy, transgender respondents did not usually make distinctions between violence that was based on their gender identity and violence that was not. Of course, transgender respondents may have considered anti-trans violence as more severe than forms of violence that were not based on their gender identity, yet they did not express these sentiments verbally. One possible reason for this difference may be that homophobic violence has received considerably more attention in public discourse than anti-transgender violence. Thus, gay and lesbian respondents may have been more likely to reinforce traditional hate crime discourse which constructs violence based on sexual orientation as more severe than violence that is not.

Conclusion

My point in this chapter has not been to add new ways of dividing types of violence. In outlining the ways in which transgender respondents differentiated among their violent experiences, I am not suggesting, for example, that hate crime research should begin to explore the differences between familial and non-familial violence. Instead, part of this chapter has focused on familial violence to illustrate that respondents often distinguished among their violent experiences in more complex ways than the dichotomies of physical/verbal or hate-motivated/non-hate-motivated would suggest. Moreover, given that every form of violence is unique in some sense, I would suggest that any way of classifying LGBT people's violent experiences is an arbitrary decision.

Rather than dividing forms of violence based on some characteristic, hate crime research would be improved by challenging dichotomous understandings of violence. Constructing these dichotomies has the effect of not only overlooking similarities between the constructed categories but also privileging one category over the other. If we hope to move beyond hierarchical understandings of violence, then hate crime research should refrain from lumping vastly different forms of violence into broad, mutually exclusive categories. Hate crime research can, in effect, recognize that all forms of violence are not equally harmful, while also challenging hierarchies of violence.

As outlined in the next chapter, respondents evaluated the severity of their violent experiences differently based on their race and social class position. In particular, middle-class white respondents were more likely than low-income LGBT people of color to perceive their violent experiences as severe, even though the former experienced less physical violence than the latter. These results suggest that respondents who experienced the most physical violence – low-income LGBT people of color – were the least likely to

perceive their violent experiences as severe. As implied in this chapter, these results also seemed to apply to transgender respondents, as they appeared to describe more experiences of physical violence than lesbian women and gay men, and yet gay and lesbian respondents more frequently emphasized the severity of their violent experiences. Together, these results indicate that the social position of LGBT people plays a significant role in structuring how they evaluate the severity of hate-motivated violence.

Chapter 6

Evaluating the Severity of Hate-Motivated Violence: Intersectional Differences among LGBT Hate Crime Victims

In the previous three chapters, I focused primarily on gender and sexuality differences in terms of how respondents perceived and responded to their violent experiences. This chapter, along with the following one, focuses more on race and class differences among respondents. These chapters also address research questions that have been examined in the hate crime literature – specifically, how LGBT people evaluate the severity of their violent experiences (Chapter 6) and how they determine whether violence is based on their sexuality or gender identity (Chapter 7). By using an intersectional approach to examine these research questions, this part of my dissertation reveals the ways in which LGBT people of various social positions may respond to their violent experiences differently.

Given the demographic characteristics of the interview sample, I have combined race and class categories in this chapter. Building on feminist and intersectionality scholarship that has explored how individuals' experiences differ based on their social location (See Guiffre and Williams, 1994; Lovejoy, 2001; Menjivar and Salcido, 2002; Patillo-McCoy, 1999; Rasche, 1995), this chapter examines differences among respondents in terms of how they evaluated the severity of their violent experiences. In particular, this chapter compares the perceptions of middle-class white respondents with the perceptions of poor and working-class LGBT people of color. Findings suggest that white, middle-class respondents were more likely than low-income LGBT people of color

to perceive their violent experiences as severe, even though the latter experienced more physical violence than the former. These results indicate that the social position of LGBT people plays an instrumental role in structuring how they evaluate the severity of hate-motivated violence.

As outlined in Chapter 1, previous studies reveal that LGBT hate crime victims tend to perceive forms of bias-motivated violence as more severe than forms of violence that are not motivated by bias (Ehrlich, Larcom, and, Purvis 1994; McDevitt et al. 2001; Rose and Mechanic 2002). This body of research is typically psychological, examining the relationship between violence and trauma (Craig 2002; Herschberger and D'Augelli, 1995; Otis and Skinner 1996). Some of these studies suggest that victims perceive forms of physical violence as more severe than forms of verbal abuse and most of this research implies that the amount of trauma that victims report depends on the type of violence they experience (D'Augelli and Grossman 2001; Herek et al. 1997, 1999). As such, these studies tend to reproduce hierarchical understandings of violence, constructing hate-motivated physical violence as more severe than other forms (Herek et al. 1997; Iganski 2001; McDevitt et al. 2001).

Differences among Respondents in Terms of How They Evaluated the Severity of Their Violent Experiences

Many respondents, as described in the previous chapter, suggested that their physically violent experiences had caused them more pain than their verbally violent ones. Moreover, they sometimes perceived forms of violence directed against their sexuality or gender identity as more severe than violence that was not. In this sense, results from this project do not entirely contradict the findings of previous studies.

Nevertheless, results from this study indicate that the degree to which LGBT people perceived their violent experiences as severe often had less to do with the severity of the violence and more to do with their reference groups – the groups of people with which they compared themselves. That is, LGBT people's reference groups structured the ways in which they evaluated the severity of violence, with LGBT people being the most likely to construct their violent experiences as severe when comparing themselves with individuals who had experienced relatively little violence. In contrast, respondents sometimes downplayed the severity of their violent experiences when comparing themselves with individuals who had experienced a lot of violence.

Some of the contrasts among respondents seemed fairly stark, both in terms of the groups with which they compared themselves and the severity with which they perceived their violent experiences. For instance, Diamond, a 51 year-old black women, characterized being pushed to the ground and called a "bitch dyke" as something that was "not that big of a deal." Similarly, Daniel, a 26 year-old black man, described his violent experience of being stabbed in a homophobic attack as something that "could have been worse." As Diamond and Daniel described their violent experiences, they compared themselves with individuals who had experienced a lot of violence. Daniel compared himself with someone he knew who had died from being stabbed in gang-related violence and Diamond described her violent experience in comparison with a gay man who had been in the hospital due to a homophobic attack.

Other respondents, in contrast, said that they did not know anyone who had experienced physical violence; these respondents were typically white and middle-class. In general, these respondents were also the most likely to emphasize, rather than

downplay, the severity of their violent experiences. Bob, a 54 year-old white man who worked as a high school teacher, described his violent experience as "really bad"; he was called a "fag" by a male stranger on the street. Along the same lines, Julia, a 28 year-old white woman who worked as a pediatrician, described her experience of receiving a homophobic letter from her girlfriend's mother as "a really bad thing." Both of these respondents said that they did not know anyone who had experienced homophobic violence and they generally compared themselves with a friend or family member whom they perceived as someone who had not encountered violence. Bob, for example, characterized the violence he confronted as "really bad" when comparing himself with a gay male friend who had not experienced homophobic street violence. Of his friend, Bob said, "He made it seem like I should be like, 'Oh, whatever, no big deal,' but he hasn't had that happen to him, so it's easy for him to say that when he hasn't had something really bad happen to him like that."

I first noticed these differences in terms of how respondents evaluated the severity of their violent experiences on a day when I conducted two interviews – one with Julia, described above, and another with Jericho, an unemployed 48 year-old Latino man who had his face cut with a knife during a homophobic attack. I interviewed Jericho first and noticed that he continually downplayed the severity of his violent experiences, saying things such as "it could have been worse" and "it didn't end up being so bad." In contrast, Julia, described in more detail later in this chapter, repeatedly emphasized the severity of receiving a homophobic letter. To me, these two interviews suggested that the degree to which respondents may perceive their violent experiences as severe sometimes has relatively little to do with the type of violence they confront. As I moved forward

with the interviewing process, I began to test this hypothesis, eventually concluding that the groups with LGBT people compare themselves play a significant role in structuring how they evaluate the severity of their violent experiences.

I have compared the experiences above to emphasize that respondents who had encountered physical violence sometimes downplayed the severity of their violent experiences, while respondents who had not encountered physical violence sometimes constructed their violent experiences as severe. Nevertheless, by comparing these respondents, I have arguably constructed the violent experiences of Julia and Bob as less severe than those of Daniel, Diamond, and Jericho. Am I not, then, reinforcing the hierarchical understandings of violence that I claim to be against? My point here is not to dismiss or belittle Julia or Bob's violent experiences, as they were undoubtedly painful, but rather to suggest that the severity with which LGBT people perceive a form of violence does not automatically spring from its form or how much physical harm it may cause. Instead, the groups with which LGBT people compare themselves, as well as their social positions, seem to play an important role in structuring how they evaluate the severity of their violent experiences. At the same time, I did perceive Jericho's violent experiences as more severe than those of Julia. Similar to respondents, I have my own ideas about which forms of violence I would perceive as severe if I were to encounter them. These ideas have undoubtedly structured the data I have presented throughout this dissertation. Still, while recognizing my own ideological positions, I have tried to avoid constructing a hierarchical model based on them. Even though I may perceive some forms of violence as more severe than other forms, it does not mean that other people would. Indeed, as suggested in the previous chapter, respondents frequently disagreed

about the severity of certain forms of violence, with some LGBT people constructing physical violence as more severe than verbal abuse, while others made the opposite argument.

I would also suggest that the severity of a violent experience cannot be quantified or objectively determined. In particular, evaluating the severity of violence is not a static process, but one that varies based on the context in which the violence occurs and the life experiences of the person who is evaluating it. Thus, attempts to categorize forms of violence become exceedingly difficult and arbitrary, as every incident of violence differs in some way.

The categories of "downplaying" and "emphasizing" the severity of violence should be understood as heuristic devices rather than labels that apply to a particular respondent. Indeed, respondents constantly moved back and forth from downplaying and emphasizing the severity of their violent experiences. For instance, Bob, described above, certainly emphasized the severity of his violent experiences throughout the interview, yet he also asked me whether being called a faggot by his father "counted" as violence. When describing this experience, however, Bob continually emphasized its significance, saying that it "hurt a lot" and "really fucked with [his] mind at the time." These apparent contradictions were fairly common among respondents, as they seemed to fluctuate in and out of these categories – downplaying the severity of a violent experience at one moment and then emphasizing its significance at a later time. Despite these variations within a particular interview, respondents differed along race and social class lines in important ways.

Differences between Middle-Class White Respondents and LGBT People of Color: The Role of Friends and Family Members

As outlined above, results from this project indicate that LGBT people's reference groups – the groups with which they compare themselves – affect the degree to which they perceive their violent experiences as severe (England 2010; Hyman and Singer 1968; Merton 1957). Respondents, in particular, were the most likely to emphasize the severity of their violent experiences when comparing themselves with someone whom they perceived to have experienced relatively little violence. Since poor and working-class LGBT people of color were typically friends with individuals who had encountered a lot of violence, and white, middle-class LGBT people were not, the latter were more likely than the former to perceive their violent experiences as severe.

Poor and working-class LGBT people of color were often encouraged by their friends and family members to compare themselves with individuals who had encountered a lot of violence. For instance, Jayvyn, a 33 year-old black gay man who worked as a secretary, felt that he was consistently compared with people who had experienced more violence than himself: "For the longest time, I didn't see it as a big deal. Everyone kept telling me, 'Well, you weren't hurt, you weren't killed, like so and so.' But I *was* hurt. I mean, I had the scars to prove it." When Jayvyn expressed the severity of his violent experience – he was called a "punk faggot" and had several glass bottles thrown at him on the street – others diminished its importance by classifying it as commonplace. By suggesting that Jayvyn could have been murdered, others constructed his violent experience as comparatively insignificant.

While Jayvyn rejected others' discourse, some poor and working-class LGBT people of color seemed more accepting of the reference groups that were suggested to

them. Jasmine, a 44 year-old black lesbian woman who worked as a security guard, described her brother's response when she told him about being assaulted for revealing her sexuality: "He told me that I was fortunate not to end up in the hospital like his friend Chris [who was stabbed in gang-related violence]….It made sense, what he said. It could have been worse. I could have ended up in the hospital. I guess I *should* feel lucky that I didn't." Jasmine's brother downplayed the severity of her violent experience by suggesting that she could have been hospitalized. By doing so, he seemed to minimize her experience, comparing it with a violent incident that he perceived to have resulted in more serious injuries. Low-income LGBT people of color frequently described this type of response, in which they were encouraged to view their violent experiences as less severe than those of someone else, usually the friend of a family member. As a result, poor and working-class LGBT people of color may have sometimes perceived their violent experiences as relatively insignificant because they had been encouraged by others to think of the violence in this way.

White, middle-class respondents were sometimes encouraged to downplay the severity of their violent experiences, too. In these situations, however, others usually compared middle-class white respondents with individuals who had encountered relatively little violence. For instance, Ted, a 33-year old white gay man who worked as a lawyer, described his mother's comparison of him with one of her friends: "Right after I told her about [being mugged and called a "faggot"], she told me this story about her [gay] friend who was *almost* mugged….It had nothing to do with him being gay and he wasn't even mugged….I just thought, 'What does this have to do with me?'" Ted felt that his mother had diminished the severity of his violent experience by comparing him

with someone who had not encountered violence. This comparison, which seemed unfair to Ted, equated his violent experience with an incident that he perceived as trivial. Similar to most middle-class white respondents, Ted was compared with someone who had encountered less violence than himself. Poor and working-class people of color, in contrast, were usually compared with individuals perceived to have experienced more violence.

Although both middle-class white respondents and low-income people of color sometimes felt as if others had downplayed the severity of their violent experiences, middle-class white respondents were more frequently encouraged to perceive their violent experiences as severe. For instance, George, a 45 year-old white gay man who worked as a college professor, described the reaction of his friends to him being pushed and called a "fag": "Everyone said that I should go to the doctor's…[One friend] told me that I should report it as a hate crime…Another friend set me up with a therapist. He was a big help." White, middle-class LGBT people encountered this type of response – in which others emphasized the severity of the violence – more often than poor and working-class LGBT people of color. Furthermore, middle-class white respondents were more frequently encouraged to seek help in dealing with the violence. Indeed, the support that George received was essential in motivating him to find institutionalized support. After receiving encouragement from others, George went to the hospital, met with a therapist and reported the incident to the police.

The friends and family members of middle-class white respondents frequently served as a support network, assisting LGBT people in navigating through institutionalized settings. In these situations, service providers may have – perhaps

unwittingly – underscored the severity of anti-queer violence as they tried to alleviate the suffering of white, middle-class LGBT people. Indeed, through their involvement in institutionalized settings, middle-class white respondents had others listening and responding to their demands.

At times, poor and working-class LGBT people of color also received support from their friends and family members. Even so, this assistance rarely connected low-income people of color with institutionalized support; it rarely involved helping them find a doctor, lawyer, therapist or police officer. Instead, it usually focused on providing emotional support. Consequently, low-income LGBT people of color did not interact with service providers as frequently as middle-class white respondents.

The Expectations and Reference Groups of Low-Income People of Color and Middle-Class White Respondents

Middle-class white respondents and low-income people of color had different expectations concerning the likelihood of experiencing violence. Most low-income people of color, for example, thought that anti-queer violence could conceivably happen to them because they knew others who had experienced it. For instance, Tamika, a 53 year-old black lesbian woman who lived in a homeless shelter, expressed little surprise at being assaulted for revealing her sexuality: "I wasn't surprised, I almost expected it to happen. Most of us have to go through something like this, I think….Most of my friends have had similar experiences." Tamika's response was common among low-income people of color, many of whom expected to encounter anti-queer violence because their friends had already experienced it.

The expectations of poor and working-class LGBT people of color seemed related not only to their sexual identities but also their race and social class positions. Diamond, a 51 year-old black lesbian woman, explained the various types of hate-motivated violence that she could experience:

> [Being attacked by someone homophobic] might happen again, I have no way of knowing….It's a tough world out there. Someone could beat me because I'm black or gay or a woman or some other thing that I have no control over. I mean, I look at my friends and see that most of them have been harassed for at least one of these things.

Low-income LGBT people of color often anticipated experiencing violence in the future, given that their race, class, gender and sexual identities had been attacked in the past. Furthermore, they frequently compared themselves with their friends and noted that most LGBT people of color seem to experience violence at some point in their lives.

In contrast to low-income people of color, most middle-class white respondents said that they did not know anyone who had encountered anti-LGBT violence. Frank, a 51 year-old white gay man who was called a "homo" and had a glass bottle thrown at him on the street, explained the effects of not knowing others who had experienced homophobic violence: "It seems like it doesn't happen to most people because I don't know anyone who it's happened to. So, yeah, it was surprising." Frank perceived homophobic violence as relatively rare because he did not know anyone who had experienced it. This understanding of homophobic violence then structured his expectations – he expected that it would not happen to him.

This finding that low-income people of color and middle-class white people had different expectations concerning the likelihood of experiencing anti-queer violence supports much of the sociological research on reference groups, in which individuals'

expectations depend on the groups that they use as a standard of comparison (Anderson 2002; Runciman 1966). Middle-class white respondents, comparing themselves with their friends, often did not expect to experience anti-queer violence because they did not know others who had encountered it. Low-income LGBT people of color, in contrast, usually knew others who had experienced some sort of violence, leading these respondents to perceive violence as something they could encounter in the foreseeable future.

Evaluating the Severity of Hate-Motivated Violence

The different expectations and reference groups of low-income people of color and middle-class white people seemed to affect the ways in which they evaluated the severity of their violent experiences. Low-income people of color, for example, sometimes downplayed the severity of anti-queer violence because their experiences had turned out better than expected. In such cases, they often compared themselves with individuals who had experienced a lot of violence. For instance, Daniel, a 26 year-old black gay man who worked as a receptionist, was beaten by a white police officer who called him a "faggot." When describing this incident, Daniel compared himself with a gay male friend who was also the victim of homophobic police violence: "The cops beat [my friend] much worse. He got it really bad, so I sorta see myself as lucky, in some respects." Many people would probably not refer to Daniel – who was hit several times in the face – as "lucky." In comparison with his friend, though, Daniel could perceive himself as relatively fortunate. After all, his friend was beaten "much worse," in a comparable situation. Similarly, Latoya, a 50 year-old black lesbian woman, was physically assaulted on the street by a man who called her a "bitch" and a "dyke."

Latoya seemed to downplay the severity of her violent experience by comparing herself with a friend who had also encountered homophobic violence: "It was never too violent…Yeah, I had some scrapes, but it's not like I had to go to the hospital or anything, like [my friend] Jacqueline....I know that it could have been worse." Since low-income LGBT people of color knew others who had encountered a lot of violence, they sometimes focused on how their violent experiences seemed minor in comparison with those of their friends.

While low-income people of color sometimes downplayed the brutality of their violent experiences, middle-class white respondents almost always highlighted the severity of theirs. White, middle-class LGBT people often responded to questions concerning the severity of violence with phrases such as "it's a big deal" or "it's a really bad thing to have happened to me." In contrast, poor and working-class LGBT people of color rarely used these phrases.

Middle-class white respondents often perceived their violent experiences as severe in comparison with what other LGBT people had not experienced. For example, Mark, a 46 year-old white gay man who worked as a lawyer, underscored the severity of his violent experience – two men called him a "faggot" and stalked him on the street – by comparing himself with other gay men: "I wanted to kill someone after it happened…It just seems like this sort of thing doesn't happen to most gay men. So, I guess maybe that's why it pissed me off so much." Constructing his experience as relatively rare – as something that "most gay men" do not encounter – made it seem extraordinarily awful.

Other white, middle-class respondents highlighted the severity of their violent experiences by comparing themselves with their friends. For instance, Julia, a 28 year-

old white lesbian woman who worked as a pediatrician, received a homophobic letter from her girlfriend's mother. Comparing herself with other people whom she knew, Julia emphasized the severity of this experience: "It seems like a really bad thing, looking back on it now. I mean, I felt like, 'Why would this happen to me?'…Sure, I wasn't killed or anything, but how many people have to go through this?…It's just not something anyone I know has to deal with." Julie later explained during the interview that she did not know other LGBT people who had experienced violence and she thought that she would not have received a harassing letter if she identified as straight. These comparisons with the people she knew led Julia to perceive herself as relatively deprived, viewing her experience as infrequent ("how many people have to go through this?") and severe ("it seems like a really bad thing"). Along the same lines, Jacob, a 40 year-old white gay man who worked as a doctor, was shoved to the ground for kissing his boyfriend. Assessing the severity of the violence, he compared himself with one of his friends: "It felt like such bullshit…My friend Ben, he's always making out with his boyfriend in public, and *this* has never happened to him…So, I thought, 'Why does this have to happen to me, and not him?'" Jacob expressed a sense of unfairness by comparing himself with someone who had engaged in similar behavior, which made his own violent experience seem atypical and extreme.

These differences between middle-class white respondents and low-income people of color correspond with sociological research indicating that middle-class people frequently convey a sense of entitlement (Lareau 2003; Williams 2006). Indeed, white, middle-class LGBT people often expressed entitlement concerning rights to their personal space, highlighting violations of these rights as reasons for viewing their violent

experiences as severe. Low-income people of color, in contrast, less frequently described their rights as being violated.

Of course, poor and working-class LGBT people of color are not a monolithic group. Although they may have been more likely than middle-class white respondents to downplay the severity of hate-motivated violence, low-income LGBT people of color did sometimes emphasize the brutality of their violent experiences. When doing so, they usually constructed anti-queer violence as widespread. For instance, Lela, a 48 year-old black transgender woman, described her friends' violent experiences to emphasize the severity of anti-LGBT violence in general: "It's a big problem. All of my friends have experienced something negative because they're trans or gay. Every single one of them…We're not going away anytime soon, either. The violence just has to stop." Lela mentioned other LGBT people's violent experiences not to construct her own as more severe – as many white, middle-class respondents seemed to do – but to construct anti-queer violence as a serious social problem. Similarly, Jetta, a 28 year-old black lesbian woman, perceived anti-LGBT violence as ubiquitous: "It hurts because you can't escape it. It's everywhere. I know for a fact that I'm not the only one who has experiences like this. I'm not alone. If everyone could just come together to put a stop to it, then the world would be a lot better off." Knowing others who had experienced anti-queer violence, poor and working-class LGBT people of color often perceived homophobia and transphobia as affecting large numbers of people. Furthermore, low-income LGBT people of color usually knew others who had experienced violence related to their race and social class positions. In contrast, middle-class white respondents, not knowing

others who had experienced anti-queer violence, usually constructed their violent experiences as atypical rather than widespread.

Given the qualitative nature of this study, it would be impossible to generalize about the types of violence confronting low-income LGBT people of color and middle-class white people; these data may not reflect societal trends. Moreover, caution should be taken in assuming that violence is normalized for low-income LGBT people of color (Moran 2000). Indeed, as highlighted above, low-income LGBT people of color were often not willing to accept anti-queer violence, perceiving it as a serious social problem that needs to be addressed. Caution should also be taken with regard to associating perpetrators of anti-queer violence with marginalized race and class groups – namely, low-income heterosexual people of color (Moran 2000; Taylor 2007). As other scholars have noted, focusing on random acts of stranger violence in public has led to race and class biases in the criminal justice system, with an overarching emphasis on low-income people of color's violent actions (Moran 2000). Thus, this chapter's results may apply only to public forms of anti-queer violence as perpetrated by strangers.

Despite these limitations, low-income people of color in this sample were the most likely to encounter anti-queer physical violence. Approximately half of the middle-class white respondents did not describe an incident of anti-LGBT physical violence; their violent experiences were verbal. Even though the poor and working-class people of color in this sample also described many incidents of verbal violence, all of these respondents had at least one experience of anti-queer physical violence. Thus, low-income LGBT people of color seemed to experience more physical violence than middle-

class white respondents, and yet the former were less likely than the latter to perceive their violent experiences as severe.

Conclusion: Moving Beyond Hierarchical Understandings of Violence

In this chapter, I have emphasized that hate crime research should account for not only the type of violence that victims confront but also the social position and reference groups of LGBT people. At the same time, I have been skeptical of arguments that seem to reinforce hierarchical understandings of violence, as respondents ranked forms of violence, if they did so at all, in radically different ways. Respondents, for example, sometimes perceived forms of physical violence as more severe than verbal abuse, and yet they also made the opposite argument at other times. Moreover, constructing some forms of violence as more severe than other forms brings us dangerously close to diminishing the violent experiences of many LGBT people. Given that many respondents spoke of the pain they felt when others had diminished the severity of their violent experiences, hate crime research should reject hierarchies of violence in order to avoid making it seem as if some forms of violence do not "count" as legitimately severe.

Respondents, particularly LGBT people of color, often confronted arguments that diminished the severity of homophobic violence. As described in this chapter, these arguments often suggested that LGBT people's violent experiences "could have been worse." These sorts of suggestions are problematic to the extent that they seem designed to reduce the importance of homophobia or transphobia. Suggesting that something "could have been worse" is sometimes tantamount to implying that it is not a very big deal. Of course, almost any violent experience "could have been worse," which indicates that this phrase can be employed at almost any moment in time, in response to almost any

violent experience. Yet, when these sorts of phrases are employed may have less to do with the type or severity of the violence and more to do with power relations. Indeed, heterosexual people seemed to use phrases such as "it could have been worse" as a way of ending the discussion, preventing a further exploration of racism, homophobia, or transphobia.

The experiences of black gay and lesbian people suggest that their friends and family members sometimes diminished the severity of homophobic violence as a way of making the effects of homophobia seem minor or insignificant. Black lesbian women and gay men noted that some of their heterosexual friends and family members – most of whom were also black – had implied that homophobic forms of violence were not as severe as non-homophobic ones. Black LGBT people, in effect, suggested that some of their friends and family members had reproduced hierarchies of violence in homophobic ways, constructing violence against black LGBT people as less severe than violence against black heterosexual people. These patterns can be explained largely by the intersection of racism and homophobia. As intersectionality scholarship suggests, black LGBT people are sometimes pressured to identify with race-based groups rather than sexuality-based ones and pressured to privilege their racial identity over their sexuality (and vice-versa, in white LGBT communities) (Lorde 1984; Thomas 2001). Moreover, openly identifying as gay or lesbian takes on different meanings for black and white LGBT people, with people of color facing pressures to represent their race or ethnicity in a positive way, while white lesbian women and gay men do not confront these same pressures (Collins 2004; Thomas 2001).

Although respondents most frequently emphasized heterosexual people's dismissal of homophobia or transphobia, this process may be equally likely to occur with racism. Black respondents also described these sorts of "it could have been worse" reactions in their encounters with white people. For instance, Daniel, a black respondent described at the beginning of this chapter, told me about a time when he had described an experience of racism to one of his white friends: "He just looked at me like 'what's the big deal?'…I don't remember what he said, but it was basically like 'So? So what? Who cares? You got off easy.'" These sorts of responses did not seem to happen randomly, but instead seemed to occur when the person who was hearing about an experience of oppression did not want to discuss that form of inequality. Hate crime research should be cautious about reinforcing sentiments such as those confronted by Daniel; sentiments that seem to dismiss experiences of discrimination and verbal violence. To reject arguments that construct some experiences of oppression as insignificant requires moving beyond hierarchical understandings of violence and toward an analysis of oppression that views all of its forms as harmful.

Daniel's experience of racism involved a white man saying that even though he "had no problem with black people," he "didn't understand why so many of them had to be on welfare." Daniel interpreted his friend's reaction as the equivalent of "what do you expect," implying that he should "get over" the experience. His friend's reaction seemed rooted in ideas that construct racism as an explicitly racist insult or an act of physical violence. Within this framework, anything short of physical violence or explicitly hateful language becomes understood as non-racist. Hate crime is part of this discourse, in which racism and homophobia are constructed as physical attacks against someone who

belongs to a minority group. As outlined throughout this dissertation, some LGBT people do experience these sorts of physical attacks. Still, even though these forms of physical violence are important to acknowledge, prejudice and discrimination against LGBT people usually works in more insidious ways. While some people will make explicitly racist or homophobic comments, such statements are often stigmatized. As a result, people frequently express racism and homophobia in less overt ways, associating black people, for example, with stigmatized policies such as welfare (Roberts 1997). In these contexts, prejudice seems to operate unconsciously, with people distancing themselves from racism and homophobia at the same time that they engage in discriminatory acts. Individuals, in other words, come to think of themselves as unprejudiced, while simultaneously engaging in discrimination (Bonilla-Silva 2006).

Conceptualizing racism or homophobia in extreme terms allows people in privileged positions to overlook the ways in which they may support and benefit from these systems of oppression. That is, it allows people in privileged positions to distance themselves from racism and homophobia, relegating these systems of oppression to the actions of highly prejudiced people. Furthermore, to understand racism and homophobia as the behavior of an extremely bigoted person ignores the ways in which systems of oppression are institutionalized throughout society. Thus, as hate crime research focuses on stranger-based forms of physical violence, we should also be cautious about relegating racism and homophobia to the actions of a few bad apples.

Examining the interconnections among race, class, gender, and sexuality, the following chapter continues the intersectional framework advanced in this chapter, but extends it to include a deeper analysis of gender. Chapter 7 focuses on another research

question that has received considerable attention in the hate crime literature – how LGBT people determine that violence is based on their sexuality or gender identity. Results from this chapter reveal significant differences between LGBT people of color and white gay men, as the latter found it easier to determine that violence was based on their sexuality, in large part because of white privilege.

Chapter 7

Determining Whether Violence Is Rooted in Homophobia and Transphobia: Race, Class, and Gender Differences

In this chapter, I employ an intersectional approach to explore how LGBT people determine that violence is based on their sexuality or gender identity. This approach augments our understanding of the ways in which LGBT people perceive their violent experiences, revealing differences along the lines of race, class, and gender. Building on previous research, data from this study suggest that significant intersectional differences existed in terms of how respondents perceived anti-queer violence. In particular, results indicate that LGBT people of color were more likely than white gay men to express uncertainty as to the cause of their violent experiences. As described in this chapter, these differences along racial lines seemed to occur in large part because of how race and gender are socially constructed: white gay men could view their violent experiences as emanating primarily from homophobia because of the privilege granted to them along race and gender lines. LGBT people of color, in contrast, sometimes found it difficult to determine whether violence was rooted in homophobia or transphobia, given that their violent experiences may have been based on their race, class, or gender identity.

Previous Studies of Lesbian Women and Gay Men

Several studies of hate crime victims have documented the ways in which lesbian women and gay men determine that violence is based on their sexuality (Herek et al. 1997, 2002). Herek and colleagues (1997, 2002) found that lesbian women and gay men often examine their perpetrators' statements to determine whether violence is rooted in

homophobia. In most situations, gay and lesbian people determined that violence was based on their sexuality as they confronted explicitly homophobic insults. In other, less common situations, they identified incidents as anti-lesbian or anti-gay by relying on contextual cues. For instance, gay and lesbian people perceived violence as rooted in homophobia when it occurred near a gay-identified location or when it happened after public displays of affection between a same-sex couple (Herek et al. 1997, 2002).

Herek and his coauthors (1997, 2002) deserve credit for bringing attention to an important sociological research question. Focusing on the ways in which gay and lesbian people determine that violence is based on their sexuality helps improve our understanding of hate crime victims. Rather than accepting abstract definitions of hate crime as given, this approach constructs victims' understanding of hate crime as significant, allowing them to explain their perception of hate-motivated violence in their own words. By examining this research question, these studies have privileged rather than marginalized the voice of victims. At the same time, however, these studies have overlooked the effects of race, class, and gender. In fact, both of these studies make no reference to systems of oppression, as if to suggest that gay and lesbian people determine that violence is based on their sexuality in uniform ways. Instead, as outlined below, results from this study reveal significant differences along the lines of race, class, and gender, indicating that all of these systems of oppression affect how LGBT people determine that violence is rooted in homophobia or transphobia.

Determining that Anti-Queer Violence is Rooted in Multiple Systems of Oppression: The Intersection of Gender and Sexuality

One of the ways in which gay and lesbian respondents determined that violence was based on their sexuality was by examining what their perpetrators had said about gender. When describing the relationship between gender and sexuality, lesbian women and gay men often acknowledged societal processes that associate gender nonconformity with homosexuality. For instance, Dorothy, a 49 year-old white lesbian woman, addressed this dynamic when arguing that violence directed against her gender identity was also rooted in homophobia. The violence occurred when she was attacked by three men on the street, one of whom punched her and stole her purse. The men called her a "bitch" and said she had "no business being on the street." Describing the violence, Dorothy believed that her gender nonconformity marked her as visibly "out," as she was dressed "very aggressively – suit and tie." Although the perpetrators never mentioned homosexuality, she perceived the violence as homophobic: "I wasn't doing anything, but it was obvious that I was a lesbian. That's why they attacked me. They hated gay people."

Most respondents perceived a relationship between how they performed gender and how their sexuality was perceived, arguing that gender nonconformity signaled to others that they may be queer. As respondents described this relationship between transgressing gender norms and being perceived as queer, they often argued that nontraditional gender performances led to an increased likelihood of experiencing homophobic violence. For instance, Jericho, a 48 year-old Latino gay man, described his "coming out" process as one in which he appropriated a feminine appearance. He wore eye-liner and occasionally came to school in drag. As he explained, the amount of

violence he experienced at this time increased: "When I came out completely – when it was obvious to a blind man – that's when I got more of the violence and the comments and stuff like that….It intensified." Jericho's appropriation of a feminine gender display, which marked him as visibly gay, increased the amount of violence directed against him. Conversely, if he had performed gender in a more traditional way, he thought that he would not have experienced violence: "If they couldn't tell that you were gay, you won't experience violence, you might get away with being gay." Although Jericho's statement could arguably be understood as an oversimplification (LGBT people may still experience violence when conforming to gender norms), he addressed a trend consistent with the interview data: homophobic violence often occurs when lesbian women and gay men subvert dominant gender constructions.

Given that LGBT people understood gender nonconformity as marking themselves as visibly "out," they often perceived violence as related to their sexuality even when their perpetrator did not explicitly mention it. In such cases, they understood violence directed against their gender identity as forms of homophobic violence. For instance, Paul, a 57 year-old white gay man, perceived violence directed against his gender identity as an attempt to punish him for publicly identifying as gay. He was attacked by three strangers on the street. His perpetrators told him "you're not a woman" after pushing and hitting him. Paul thought that he was targeted because of the way he walks – "very feminine," as he described it. Moreover, he saw a relationship between how he performed gender and how his sexuality was perceived: "I think it happened because I'm gay. They didn't like that I'm feminine because it showed that I'm gay."

While gay male respondents were the most likely to describe this relationship between violating gender norms and being perceived as queer, some lesbian women described this relationship as well. Lisa, a 36 year-old heterosexual woman, perceived the violence she experienced from her mother, which was directed against her gender identity, as a form of homophobic violence. Throughout her adolescence, Lisa wore combat boots and had purple-colored hair. During this time, she was physically beaten by her mother. When beating Lisa, her mother exclaimed, "You're a fucking girl, what the fuck is wrong with you?" Although her mother never mentioned homosexuality during the beatings, Lisa understood the violence as an attempt to control her sexuality as well as her gender performance. Lisa thought that the violence was rooted in homophobia, since societal forces associate homosexuality with gender nonconformity.

As the examples above illustrate, gay and lesbian respondents sometimes perceived violence which seemed to be directed solely against their gender identity as violence that was also directed against their sexual identity. When doing so, they recognized societal processes linking homosexuality and gender nonconformity. Indeed, in a culture in which "acting gay" has become synonymous with acting similar to the "opposite" gender, attempts to punish gender nonconformity could be perceived not only as an attempt to enforce gender conformity but also as attempts to restrict homosexuality.

Previous studies of hate crime victims have also outlined some of the ways in which gay and lesbian people may perceive violence as related to their sexuality even when perpetrators do not directly address it (Herek 1997, 2002). These studies, however, have overlooked the intersection of gender and sexuality; indeed, they contain no mention of it. Given that gay and lesbian respondents often perceived violence as

homophobic when their gender identities were attacked, previous studies have ignored one of the ways in which hate crime victims may determine that violence is rooted in bias or prejudice. These findings suggest that analyses of anti-queer violence that do not take gender into consideration cannot fully account for how lesbian women and gay men determine that violence is based on their sexuality.

The Overlapping Effects of Race, Gender, and Sexuality

While some gay and lesbian people highlighted the importance of gender and sexuality in structuring their experiences of violence, other respondents argued that anti-queer violence could not be reduced to these two aspects of their identity. These arguments were particularly common among LGBT people of color. Many queer people of color highlighted the role of racism, as well as homophobia and sexism, in structuring anti-LGBT violence. Kevin, a 62 year-old black gay man, maintained that his violent experiences could not be separated from his race: "I've experienced violence because I'm black *and* gay. When the police beat me up, they called me a fag...I would be surprised if they had done the same thing to a white gay guy, though." Here, Kevin argued that violence directed against his sexual identity was also rooted in racism. He highlighted the significance of race in structuring forms of anti-queer violence and he suggested that if he were white and queer, he might not experience homophobic violence to the same degree or in the same way.

Many LGBT people of color determined that violence directed against their racial identities was at least partially rooted in homophobia. Andre, a 24 year-old black gay man, perceived violence directed against his racial identity – a white police officer called him the n-word – as a form of homophobic violence. The police officer sodomized

Andre with a nightstick after he had revealed his sexuality. During the sexual assault, the police officer called Andre the n-word and told him that he needed to "learn how to keep his mouth shut." Andre thought that he would not have been victimized had he been heterosexual: "[The police officer] would not have done that if I was straight. He called me that because I'm a *gay* black man." Andre believed that the violence either would not have occurred or would not have occurred in the same way had he been a black heterosexual person.

Although queer people of color generally thought that their violent experiences were partially rooted in homophobia, they usually thought that violence was based on more than their sexuality. When doing so, they advanced arguments that seemed to borrow from intersectionality. Page, a 45 year-old Latina woman, argued that her violent experiences could not be explained by only a few factors: "It's much more complicated politically than 'I'm a woman so this happened.' Things are just not necessarily about any one category, misogyny or homophobia or whatever." Similarly, Aisha, a 53 year-old black lesbian woman, argued that her violent experiences could not be reduced to a few aspects of her identity: "I'm a black lesbian woman who works in a job where mostly men work. Change any of those things and [the violence] would not have gone down in the same way." Highlighting how multiple systems of oppression structured her violent experience, Aisha argued that homophobic violence can only be fully understood within the context of a racist, capitalist, and male-dominated society.

Expressing Uncertainty: Differences along Racial Lines

Until this point, I have emphasized situations in which gay and lesbian respondents determined that violence was at least partially rooted in homophobia. Many

LGBT people, however, found it impossible to determine whether violence was based on their sexuality or gender identity. They frequently responded to questions concerning why they thought the violence had occurred with phrases such as "I don't know or "I'm not sure." In these situations, they expressed uncertainty as to whether violence was based on their sexuality or gender identity.

LGBT people usually responded with a sense of uncertainty for two reasons: (1) perpetrators had insulted many aspects of the victim's identity; or (2) the violence had occurred in situations in which the perpetrator said very little about the victim's sexuality or gender identity. These two situations are, in some sense, opposites. The latter occurred when perpetrators said very little; the former occurred when they said a lot. In both of these situations, however, victims struggled to make sense of their violent experiences.

Queer people of color were more likely than white gay men to express uncertainty as to the cause of their violent experiences. This difference reflects the reasons outlined above: LGBT people of color often faced situations in which many aspects of their identity had been attacked and they frequently encountered situations in which their perpetrators did not mention homosexuality or transgenderism. For these reasons, queer people of color often found it more difficult than white gay men to determine whether violence was based on their sexuality or gender identity.

When LGBT people of color experienced violence in which their perpetrators did not mention homosexuality or transgenderism, it was usually intra-racial violence – that is, the victim and the perpetrator were the same race. In contrast, when queer people of color felt as if many aspects of their identity had been attacked, the violence was most

typically interracial. Thus, patterns of activity reveal that these two situations were raced – they differed with regard to the racial make-up of the victim and the perpetrator.

Queer people of color had the most difficulty determining whether violence was based on their sexuality or gender identity when their perpetrators were white. In such situations, they often felt as if multiple aspects of their identity had been attacked. Dominique, a 23 year-old black transgender woman, described this dynamic rather succinctly: "When I'm called a fag or a freak by a white person, I have a hard time telling if they hate me because I'm trans or because I'm black." White perpetrators often mixed racist insults with homophobic or transphobic ones. This blurring of racist and homophobic language then made it difficult for queer people of color to determine whether violence was based on their sexuality or gender identity. In these situations, they could not be certain that violence was rooted in homophobia or transphobia because racism may have played an equal or even more significant role.

White perpetrators typically used a wide range of insults when attacking queer people of color. For instance, Gideon, a 25 year-old black gay man, confronted a lot of racist and homophobic language when he was attacked in a group home as a teenager: "They called me so many names that I'm not even sure if it happened because of my sexuality. It could have been because I was black or how I behaved or any number of things. There's just no way of saying." Confronting homophobic and racist insults made it difficult for Gideon to determine the reasons he was attacked. He felt as if many aspects of his identity had been attacked, which made any single explanation for why the violence had occurred seem simplistic.

Many lesbian women of color encountered violence that was simultaneously racist, misogynist, and homophobic. As outlined previously, lesbian women of color sometimes argued that their violent experiences were structured by multiple systems of oppression. An equally common response, however, was to express uncertainty. Tina, a 21 year-old Latina lesbian woman, found it difficult to determine why she was attacked by three white men:

> Did it occur because I'm a lesbian? Who knows. They called me so many names…So, it's really hard to tell [why it happened]. I wonder if they weren't just calling me any name they thought might hurt me.

Tina's experience illustrates the degree to which racist, misogynist, and homophobic forms of violence can intersect, leaving victims confused as to the reasons for their violent experiences. That is, her experience suggests that lesbian women of color may be reluctant to determine whether violence is based on their sexuality when many aspects of their identity have been attacked.

While queer people of color sometimes found it difficult to determine whether interracial violence was based on their sexuality or gender identity, white gay men almost always argued that their violent experiences were rooted in homophobia. Responses such as "it happened because I'm gay" or "it happened because of my sexuality" were common among white gay men. Even when perpetrators had mentioned race, white gay men usually determined that interracial violence was based on their sexuality. For instance, Greg, a 43 year-old white gay man, believed that he was attacked by two Latino men because the men were homophobic. His attackers called him a "fag" and told him to "take that white shit somewhere else." He described his perpetrators' motivations in a rather matter-of-fact way: "Oh, I think it happened because I'm gay. What else could be

the reason?" In stark contrast to the uncertainty expressed by some queer people of color, white gay men almost always determined that interracial violence was based on their sexuality.

This difference between how queer people of color and white gay men responded to interracial violence can be explained in part by the social construction of white privilege (Frankenberg 1993; McIntosh 2004). Given that social norms construct whiteness as an invisible social status, white gay men could perceive their violent experiences as rooted entirely in homophobia. White privilege, in other words, allowed them to overlook the ways in which they may have been attacked based on racism and it allowed them to view their sexuality as the most salient factor in structuring their violent experiences.

Racial differences in terms of uncertainty were the most pronounced in situations in which the violence was interracial. Nevertheless, queer people of color sometimes expressed uncertainty when they were attacked by heterosexual people of the same race. In such situations, LGBT people of color usually expressed uncertainty because perpetrators had not explicitly addressed homosexuality or transgenderism. For instance, Jericho, a 48 year-old Latino gay man, found it difficult to determine why he was beaten and mugged by three Latino men: "I don't know. It could have been because I was gay or because they just needed money...I really want to know why they chose me, but they didn't say anything. I really have no way of knowing." When perpetrators did not mention the victim's sexuality or gender identity, respondents had to speculate as to whether the violence was based on those aspects of their identity. In such situations, they often expressed uncertainty because they were forced to rely on contextual cues. Jericho,

for example, thought that his violent experience may have been rooted in homophobia because his perpetrators went out of their way to degrade him: they slapped him during the mugging and then spit on him after it. Nevertheless, because they did not mention homosexuality, he could only hypothesize that homophobia was one of many possible reasons for the attack.

LGBT people of color were more likely than white gay men to describe violence in which their sexuality or gender identity was not explicitly addressed. Some gay and lesbian people of color focused on race when speculating about the reasons their perpetrators had not mentioned homosexuality. For instance, Cole, a 33 year-old black gay man, explained the reasons his perpetrators had not used homophobic insults:

> Interviewer: So, they didn't use any homophobic slurs?
>
> Cole: Slurs? Well, you see, in the black community, it's a little different. They don't always say "faggot." They'll say "too sweet mother fucker" or they'll just call you a sissy...It's more about you being weak than being gay...For them to call me a "faggot" would have meant that homosexuality exists, so they'd rather just beat me and not say anything.

Here, the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality seems particularly stark. Cole's argument suggests that black gay men frequently encounter violence in which perpetrators focus on gender nonconformity rather than homosexuality. As described in Chapter 5, many transgender respondents said that perpetrators had not addressed their trans identity; most of these transgender respondents were black or Latino as well. Thus, some LGBT people of color may confront forms of violence in which perpetrators do not explicitly mention homosexuality or transgenderism.

Differences between Gay Men of Color and Lesbian Women of Color

While black and Latino men of color sometimes experienced violence in which perpetrators did not explicitly mention homosexuality, lesbian women of color encountered such situations even more frequently. Gay men of color most typically reported violence in which perpetrators had used homophobic insults such as "homo" or "faggot." In contrast, lesbian women of color reported comparatively more violent incidents in which perpetrators did not use explicitly homophobic language. In some of these situations, their perpetrators used misogynistic insults rather than homophobic ones. For instance, Latoya, a 50 year-old black bisexual woman, was spat on and called a "bitch" by a man on the street. She thought that the violence might have been rooted in homophobia because it occurred when she was with her girlfriend. Still, she found it difficult to determine whether the violence was based on her sexuality, since it also seemed to be rooted in sexism: "I don't know if it happened because I'm lesbian...It could have happened just because I'm a woman, but it seems like it happened because I'm gay, too. I don't know why they chose me and not [my girlfriend], though."

Lesbian women of color sometimes found it difficult to distinguish between misogynist and homophobic forms of violence. Judy, a 43 year-old Latina lesbian woman, encountered misogynist and homophobic discourse when she was sexually assaulted. The sexual assault – a man grabbed her breasts and tore open her t-shirt – occurred at a party when she was 20. When the man could not forcibly remove her pants because Judy was holding onto her belt, he told her, "All I want to do is fuck you and I bet you'll come back straight." As he continually tried to remove her belt, he called her a "bitch" and a "whore." Before he could remove her belt, another woman entered the

room where the sexual assault had occurred. The two women yelled and threw items at him. Shortly thereafter, he left the party.

Judy's experience illustrates the difficulty of unpacking misogynist and homophobic forms of violence, as it becomes difficult to determine where the line for one begins and the other ends. Would Judy have been sexually assaulted had she been a heterosexual woman? Was her attacker trying to punish her for what he saw as a deviant sexuality? Did he actually believe that he could make her "come back straight," as he stated? Or was her sexuality merely the most readily available discourse that he could draw upon to justify his own behavior while simultaneously shifting blame onto her? These questions, it seems to me, may be impossible to answer. It seems unlikely that even the attacker could fully explain all of his unconscious thoughts and feelings at the moment. Nevertheless, while these questions may be unanswerable, my research suggests that lesbian women often ask themselves such questions as they struggle to make sense of their violent experiences. Indeed, Judy had asked herself many of these questions following the sexual assault. Examining the violence approximately 23 years later, she concluded: "I can't be sure if it occurred because of my sexuality or just because I'm a woman. Both probably played a role."

Lesbian women of color usually expressed uncertainty because their perpetrators had not used homophobic insults. Gay men of color, in contrast, more frequently encountered violence in which perpetrators had used many homophobic insults. These differences can be explained in part by patterns of victimization: heterosexual men perpetrated most of the anti-queer violence reported by respondents. Given this pattern of victimization, one would expect that male perpetrators would use homophobic insults

more frequently against gay men than lesbian women. Using homophobic insults against gay men, male perpetrators could distance themselves from homosexuality. These insults, in other words, allowed heterosexual men to construct themselves in opposition to the deviant men – the "fags" or "homos" – whom they had attacked (Kimmel 2001; Pascoe 2007). Thus, as heterosexual men perpetrate most forms of homophobic violence, lesbian women may encounter fewer homophobic insults than gay men. Unsurprisingly, the gender of the victim and the perpetrator had an effect on the degree to which LGBT people of color confronted homophobic insults.

The Effects of Social Class on Whether LGBT People Expressed Uncertainty

Social class also seemed to affect how queer people determined that violence was based on their sexuality or gender identity. Middle- and upper-class respondents usually expressed more willingness than low-income LGBT people to examine their perpetrators' motivations. Eva, a 46 year-old black transgender woman, described herself as middle-class and worked as a receptionist at a nonprofit organization, but also said that she had very little money when she had experienced transphobic violence several years prior to the interview. When describing her struggle with poverty, she argued that being poor affected her willingness to determine whether her violent experiences were based on her gender identity: "I didn't want to think if it was a hate crime. I didn't have heat. I didn't have heat!...How was I supposed to sit around and spend time thinking about whether I had been bashed?" Eva's experience suggests that low-income LGBT people may have more pressing concerns than determining whether their violent experiences are rooted in bias. She indicates that poverty often hinders the willingness of queer people to determine whether violence is based on their sexuality or gender identity.

Some low-income respondents began to wonder over the course of the interview whether more of their violent experiences were rooted in homophobia than they had previously thought. Nevada, a 36 year-old white person who identified as intersexed and lived in a homeless shelter at the time of the interview, conveyed this feeling: "I had never thought about all of this as related to my sexuality. Maybe it was now that I think about it." Nevada's response was fairly common among low-income respondents. They often began the interview by describing a violent incident that they thought was rooted in homophobia or transphobia, and then as the interview progressed they began to perceive more of their violent experiences as related to their sexuality or gender identity. Middle- and upper-class respondents, in contrast, seemed to have spent much more time considering whether their violent experiences were rooted in homophobia or transphobia. They frequently responded with phrases such as "I've thought about that before" or "I've thought about this a lot" when analyzing their perpetrators' motivations. Thus, social class often seemed to affect the degree to which queer people were willing to determine whether violence was based on their sexuality or gender identity.

Conclusion

Previous studies that have examined the ways in which lesbian women and gay men determine that violence is based on their sexuality have made no reference to race, class, and gender (Herek et al. 1997, 2002). As I have argued throughout this chapter, all of these systems of oppression structured how LGBT people determined whether their violent experiences were rooted in bias. Results, for example, revealed that LGBT people often examined what perpetrators had said about gender in order to determine whether violence was based on their sexuality. That is, acknowledging the intersection of

gender and sexuality, gay and lesbian respondents frequently determined that violence directed against their gender identity was also rooted in homophobia.

Race also seemed to structure how LGBT people determined that violence was based on their sexuality or gender identity. White gay men generally expressed certainty as to the cause of their violent experiences, usually believing that violence had been directed against them because their perpetrators were homophobic. In contrast, LGBT people of color sometimes found it difficult to determine whether violence was based on their sexuality or gender identity. They often felt as if multiple aspects of their identity had been attacked and they frequently encountered violence in which their perpetrators said very little about homosexuality. For these reasons, queer people of color were more likely than white gay men to express uncertainty as to the cause of their violent experiences. As a result, the degree to which LGBT people may determine that violence is based on their sexuality or gender identity appeared to differ along racial lines.

If white gay men are more likely than LGBT people of color to express certainty as to the cause of their violent experiences, then hate crime statutes may primarily serve the interests of white gay men. Hate crime statutes, which increase criminal sanctions against perpetrators of hate crime, benefit victims who are willing to define violence as bias-motivated. Victims who cannot classify violence as motivated by bias may be less likely to report it as a hate crime and, consequently, less likely to have it prosecuted as one. Accordingly, victims who find it easiest to determine that violence is rooted in bias may benefit disproportionately from hate crime statutes. As my research suggests, white gay men found it easier than LGBT people of color to determine that violence was based

on their sexuality. Thus, hate crime statutes based on sexual orientation may serve the interests of white gay men more than queer people of color.

Of course, the relationship between determining that violence is rooted in bias and pursuing hate crime statutes is not a direct one; the latter does not necessarily follow the former. As a result, white gay men may determine that violence is based on their sexuality but choose not to report their violent experiences to the police. Nevertheless, among the LGBT people whom I interviewed, white respondents had more frequently pursued hate crime prosecution than low-income LGBT people of colour. Four middle-class white respondents (two lesbian women and two gay men) had pursued hate crime prosecution, while no low-income LGBT people of colour had any involvement with hate crime statutes. This finding is particularly surprising given that low-income people of colour described more experiences of anti-queer physical violence than middle-class white respondents. Still, the low sample size here indicates that further research should explore the processes by which victims utilize hate crime statutes.

Gender differences among black and Latino respondents also seemed significant. Considering the experiences of lesbian women of color suggests that they may find it particularly difficult to pursue hate crime legislation, as they often confronted violence in which perpetrators had not used homophobic insults. Given that perpetrators' hate speech is often used to prosecute bias-motivated violence, hate crime statutes may rarely serve the interests of lesbian women of color.

In this chapter, I have compared the experiences of white gay men with those of LGBT people of color. I would have liked to include white lesbian women in these comparisons, but only three white lesbian women participated in this study.

Consequently, generalizations concerning their violent experiences could not be made. Future interview studies of hate crime victims should include more white lesbian women in order to explore gender differences among white LGBT people.

Social class further complicates the ways in which LGBT people may pursue hate crime statutes. The experiences of low-income respondents suggest that they may choose not to take advantage of hate crime statutes because of the financial demands of their lives. Financial anxieties, in other words, seemed to make it increasingly difficult for victims to pursue hate crime statutes. Thus, middle- and upper-class LGBT people may benefit disproportionately from hate crime legislation.

My research also suggests that hate crime statutes may be employed more often against heterosexual people of color than white heterosexual people. Indeed, respondents only reported violence to the police as a hate crime in situations where heterosexual people of color had attacked a white respondent. Moreover, while several white LGBT people had pursued hate crime statutes against heterosexual people of color, LGBT people of color had the most difficulty defining violence as homophobic when their perpetrators were white. As a result, LGBT people of color may not frequently pursue hate crime statutes based on sexual orientation against white heterosexual people. Of course, queer people of color may choose to take advantage of hate crime statutes based on race rather than sexual orientation. Further research should explore the context in which LGBT people of color decide to pursue all forms of hate crime legislation.

The results outlined in this chapter may be limited in part by this study's recruitment method. Prior to the interview, participants typically had some contact with a LGBT advocacy organization and had usually determined that at least one of their violent

experiences was rooted in homophobia or transphobia. This research method, then, may have limited the variation in how LGBT people perceived their violent experiences, as respondents who participated in this study may have been more likely than LGBT people in general to perceive their violent experiences as related to their sexuality or gender identity. Future research should explore whether the results of this study apply to LGBT people who have not contacted an advocacy organization and have not defined at least one of their violent experiences as rooted in homophobia or transphobia.

Considering the experiences of queer people of color reveals that racism makes possible certain forms of homophobic violence and homophobia makes possible some forms of racist violence. As a result, queer people of color face situations that neither heterosexual people of color nor white LGBT people must confront. Of course, queer people of color are not a monolithic group. In this chapter, I have tried to emphasize that LGBT people of color often perceive forms of anti-queer violence in different ways. For instance, while some queer people of color argued that both racism and homophobia were implicated in anti-LGBT violence, others expressed uncertainty as to the cause of their violent experiences. Although I have tried not to ignore these differences, my primary focus has been to examine the obstacles confronted by LGBT people of color and to explore how their violent experiences may differ from those of white gay men. This chapter, then, comes closer to unifying the experiences of LGBT people of color than it does in exploring their differences. Further research should examine these differences, as we know little, for example, about the ways in which racial minority groups differ from one another in terms of how they perceive anti-queer violence.

Given the exploratory nature of this research project, I have highlighted the voice of victims as much as possible throughout this chapter. In order to privilege rather than marginalize their experiences, hate crime research should continue to examine how victims perceive hate-motivated violence, exploring differences along the lines of race, class, and gender. Indeed, as I have shown throughout this chapter, an intersectionality approach can provide a better understanding of the ways in which hate crime statutes concern the lives of all LGBT people.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that hate crime research should abandon hierarchical understandings of violence. Ranking forms of violence seems problematic given that many respondents found it painful when others had diminished the severity of their violent experiences. To argue, for example, that physical violence "hurts more" than verbal abuse seems to reinforce the sentiments that many queer people encounter – that some of their violent experiences are not severe (Iganski 2001: 626). Instead, I would suggest, along with other feminist and intersectionality scholars, that a more useful understanding of violence would define it broadly, constructing all of its forms as harmful (Collins 1998; Richardson and May 1999). This conceptualization of violence allows hate crime research to focus on traditional forms of hate crime – physical violence from strangers in public – while also examining the more insidious and everyday forms of hate-motivated violence (Blee 2007; Moran and Skeggs 2004).

Previous studies of hate crime victims have suggested that LGBT people usually perceive hate-motivated physical violence as more severe than verbal violence and property-based attacks (D'Augelli and Grossman 2001; Herek et al. 1997, 1999; McDevitt et al. 2001; Rose and Mechanic 2002). Results from this study, in contrast, revealed significant differences between middle-class white respondents and low-income people of color in terms of how they evaluated the severity of their violent experiences. Even though low-income LGBT people of color described more experiences of physical violence than middle-class white respondents, the former were less likely than the latter

to perceive their violent experiences as severe. These findings suggest that researchers examining the severity of anti-LGBT violence should account for not only the type of violence that victims experience but also the social position of queer people. Indeed, it seems curious that most studies of LGBT hate crime victims have constructed bias-motivated physical violence as more psychologically harmful than other forms of violence, while simultaneously marginalizing the experiences of poor and working-class LGBT people of color – a social group that may experience physical violence more frequently than other groups. Some studies of anti-queer violence have also described the challenges confronting LGBT people of color without consulting them (See Cobb 2006).

In some sense, a tension has been present throughout this dissertation. While cautioning against hierarchically ranking forms of violence, I have suggested that low-income LGBT people of color had more experiences of physical violence than middle-class white respondents, which might imply that the former had more traumatic experiences than the latter. My point has not been to suggest that middle-class white respondents did not confront traumatic experiences of anti-queer violence, but merely to suggest that they did not confront physical violence with the same frequency as LGBT people of color. In this sense, I have argued that while being cautious about conceptualizing violence in hierarchical terms, we should also recognize that real differences exist in terms of the degree to which social groups may experience violence. Still, this emphasis on the differences among social groups should be balanced with sensitivity to the traumatic experiences of all groups. As a result, this balance entails avoiding endless debates over whose traumatic experiences are the worst, while at the

same time attending to the ways in which social groups may confront violence in different ways.

Much of this dissertation has focused on patterns of victimization among respondents, particularly along the lines of gender. As stated in Chapter 2, it would be impossible to generalize from my data to the larger population of LGBT people. To accomplish such a task, quantitative work would be more appropriate (See Herek 2009). Nevertheless, among the LGBT people whom I interviewed, there were several noteworthy trends. Lesbian women, for example, often experienced homophobic violence for public displays of affection with another woman, usually their girlfriend. In some of these situations, heterosexual men seemed to direct their anger and physical abuse toward the lesbian woman whom they perceived as "masculine," while also objectifying and sexually harassing the woman whom they perceived as "feminine." At other times, lesbian respondents encountered homophobic violence for rejecting the sexual advances of men. These situations often involved heterosexual men approaching lesbian women, and, unaware of the respondent's sexual orientation, the man usually either asked the lesbian woman on a date or made sexually harassing comments toward her. When the lesbian woman rejected his sexual advances, the men in these settings either became increasingly verbally aggressive or began to perpetuate physical violence. In these situations, street harassment, which may also be experienced by heterosexual women, seemed to escalate as lesbian women made their sexuality known. Regardless of the way that anti-lesbian violence began, it typically involved a sexual component and seemed primarily male-centered. At times, men also perpetrated sexual assault against lesbian women.

While lesbian respondents frequently experienced sexual harassment and assault, violence against gay men often resembled a masculinity contest, with perpetrators trying to construct gay men as weak. During the interview, gay male respondents emphasized their physical and emotional strength as a way of undermining the meanings their attackers had tried to map onto them. These results suggest that rather than being passive recipients of homophobia, gay male respondents tried to reject their perpetrators' ideologies by drawing on or reconfiguring traditional masculinity norms. In some cases, gay men appeared to reinforce traditional gender ideology by constructing themselves as physically stronger than their attackers. More frequently, however, gay men highlighted their emotional resolve, associating ideal expressions of masculinity with emotional rather than physical strength.

Patterns of victimization differed in other ways as well. Gay male respondents seemed to encounter police-based violence more often than lesbian respondents and some heterosexual men accused gay men of "hitting on" their perpetrators. In contrast to anti-lesbian violence, which often served to punish lesbian women for rejecting the sexual advances of heterosexual men, homophobic violence against gay men more frequently served as a social control mechanism to *prevent* an encounter from becoming sexualized. Given that most forms of violence were perpetrated by men, respondents' violent experiences frequently seemed to be about maintaining male dominance. In turn, most respondents, regardless of gender or sexual identity, mocked heterosexual men for believing that they were sexually desirable or for thinking that they were strong. Moreover, respondents regularly constructed their perpetrators as weak-willed and hypocritical, as susceptible to peer pressure and self-righteous but morally bankrupt.

Transgender women, like lesbian respondents, often experienced forms of sexual assault, yet anti-trans violence differed in that it usually took on a dehumanizing quality. Perpetrators frequently constructed transgender respondents as inhuman, using words such as "it" or "thing" to characterize a trans person. At the same time, perpetrators of anti-transgender violence sometimes couched their insults in homophobic terms, describing trans women, for example, as "faggots." Among the people I interviewed, transgender respondents seemed to have the most experiences of physical violence, which suggests that hate crime research should account for their violent experiences. As studies of hate crime victims continue to explore the experiences of transgender people, results from this project indicate that we should be cautious about collapsing anti-transgender violence with forms of homophobia, as the experiences of trans people seemed to differ from those of lesbian women and gay men in some important ways.

The reactions of respondents' friends and family members also appeared to differ along gender lines, with lesbian and transgender women describing many times when they had been blamed for their violent experiences. Previous research suggests that discourse on domestic violence tends to obscure men's role in perpetrating the violence and tends to place the burden of responsibility on women for ending the violence (Anderson and Umberson 2001; Berns 2001). Other studies indicate that victims of homophobic violence are more likely than many other social groups to be blamed for their violent experiences (Lyons 2006). Results from this study support previous research, as respondents described many occasions in which they felt unsupported by their friends and family members. Lesbian women also seemed to think, perhaps even more than gay men, that their sexuality was not taken seriously by male perpetrators.

Given cultural messages that construct lesbian sexuality as a voyeuristic tool for men, these gender differences may not be surprising.

Previous studies have suggested that hate crime usually occurs when "a group of bored and idle teenagers or young adults goes out…looking for someone to intimidate or assault (Levin 2007: 63). Levin (2007), in fact, refers to this type of crime as the "typical hate offense" (p. 63). Other studies, however, suggest that many cases of hate crime cannot be classified in this way (Phillips 2009). Among the LGBT people involved in this study, very few experienced violence at the hands of a teenager and many of the physical assaults were not perpetrated by groups of people. Obviously, my interview data may not reflect societal patterns of anti-LGBT violence, yet some macro-level studies indicate that queer people experience violence in different ways than stereotypical understandings of hate crime, where a group of thrill-seeking teenagers attacks a LGBT person on the street (See Herek 2009). There is a danger, then, that the discourse of hate crime may conceal much of the violence that LGBT people experience.

If much of the violence that LGBT people experience is not represented by the discourse of "hate crime," then it could be argued that we should abandon this discourse altogether. The phrases "identity-based violence" and "anti-LGBT violence" are suitable alternatives. Nevertheless, this discourse of hate crime – a relatively recent construction – appears as if it will continue to be used in the near future. Rather than arguing for abandoning the term of hate crime, I have suggested that we should expand its meaning, conceptualizing all forms of identity-based violence as motivated by bias. At the same time, there is a danger of expanding this definition to the point where almost everything becomes understood as hateful or homophobic. Thus, expanding the definition of hate-

motivated violence also necessitates placing some limits; words such as hate, homophobia, or even prejudice should be used cautiously in order not to render them meaningless. Moreover, different groups may be invested in these definitional struggles to varying degrees. As suggested in Chapters 6 and 7, middle-class white respondents were much more likely than low-income LGBT people of color to define an experience as homophobic. These definitional concerns and debates will undoubtedly remain important as hate crime research continues and further quantitative research may be necessary to uncover the many varieties of anti-LGBT victimization (Blee 2007).

In addition to outlining patterns of victimization, this dissertation has focused on two research questions that have been explored in the hate crime literature – namely, how LGBT people evaluate the severity of their violent experiences (Chapter 6) and how they determine that violence is based on their sexuality or gender identity (Chapter 7). Results from these two chapters suggest that previous studies have overlooked significant race, class, and gender differences among LGBT people. Chapter 6 compared the perceptions of low-income people of color and middle-class white people to illustrate how intersectionality theory can be used to complicate existing hate crime scholarship – an approach similar to the work of intersectionality scholars examining domestic violence victims (See Crenshaw 1991; Rasche 1995; Richie 1996). Whereas those analyses often outlined the common challenges confronting women of color, Chapter 6 focused on how the challenges confronting poor and working-class LGBT people of color differed from those confronting white, middle-class queer people. This comparison revealed that the social position of LGBT people plays an instrumental role in structuring how they evaluated the severity of hate-motivated violence, as middle-class white respondents

were more likely than low-income people of color to perceive their violent experiences as severe, even though the latter experienced more physical violence than the former.

Results from this project also suggested that black and Latino respondents did not rank systems of oppression. Aware that multiple forms of inequality shape their experiences, queer people of color most typically pointed to the effects of racism and homophobia in their lives. At the same time, these systems of oppression appeared to operate in different ways, as homophobia in heterosexual communities of color constructed black and Latino LGBT people as weak-willed and traitorous, while racism in queer communities constructed them as exotic and hypersexual. There were, of course, respondents who focused more on racism than homophobia (and vice versa), but their emphasis seemed to depend on the particular experience they were describing. As a result, scholarship exploring the intersection of racism and homophobia can emphasize their different effects – as well as the ways in which they draw upon and reinforce one another – without constructing one system of oppression as more fundamental than another.

Chapter 7 expanded on the intersectional approach advanced in the previous chapters by examining the ways in which LGBT people determine that violence is based on their sexuality or gender identity. In contrast to previous research which has overlooked gender, results from this study revealed that respondents often perceived gender-based violence as forms of homophobic violence (Herek et al. 1997, 2002). Given that LGBT people regularly experience violence for violating gender norms, it remains imperative for hate crime research to address the cultural intersection of gender and sexuality. At the same time, caution should be taken with regard to conflating gender

and sexuality, as they remain separate, yet overlapping, systems of oppression. Results from Chapter 7 also suggested that white gay men found it easier than LGBT people of color to determine that violence was based on their sexuality or gender identity. The social construction of whiteness allowed white gay men to view their violent experiences as emanating primarily from homophobia, while LGBT people of color sometimes found it more difficult to determine whether violence was based on their sexuality or gender identity because their violent experiences may have also been rooted in racism. Moreover, results from this chapter revealed significant gender differences, as lesbian women of color had difficulty unpacking misogynist and homophobic forms of violence from one another, sometimes expressing uncertainty because their perpetrators had not used homophobic insults.

I approached this project with a lot of ambivalence toward hate crime statutes, as I was sympathetic of progressive critiques, but also thought that statutes might increase the amount of attention that police direct toward hate-motivated violence (Bell 2002). Some of my ambivalence remains, yet through the interviewing process I became increasingly skeptical of the benefits of hate crime legislation. Progressive critiques have emphasized that hate crime statutes protect the interests of middle-class people by increasing criminal sanctions against low-income offenders. With regard to this project, most of the LGBT people whom I interviewed knew very little about hate crime statutes; unsurprisingly, those respondents who did know about the statutes were usually white and middle-class, which may suggest that progressive critiques have some validity. The findings outlined in Chapter 7 also indicated that hate crime statutes based on sexual orientation may serve the interests of white gay men more than those of LGBT people of color, particularly

black and Latina lesbian women. Moreover, very few respondents said that they would have liked to have seen their perpetrators punished by the police, even when asked this question specifically. If our goal is to reduce incidents of hate-motivated violence and to help victims with its aftermath, then perhaps services designed to support victims and to educate heterosexual people would be more effective than increasing criminal sanctions against hate crime perpetrators (See Franklin 2000, for a more detailed explanation of this argument).

The Strengths and Limitations of this Project

As outlined in Chapter 6, respondents differed along race and social class lines in terms of how they evaluated the severity of their violent experiences. Despite these differences among respondents, we should be cautious about generalizing from these results, as my social position may have structured how participants responded to my questions. As feminist and intersectionality scholarship suggests, interview data is affected by the social position of not only the research participants but also the interviewer (Harding 1991; Reinharz 1992). As a result, my identity as a white, middle-class gay man inevitably affects the results of this study. Middle-class white respondents, for example, may have been particularly prone to emphasize the severity of their violent experiences to someone they perceived as similar to themselves. Indeed, these respondents often asked if I had also experienced anti-LGBT violence; none of the poor and working-class LGBT people of color whom I interviewed asked this question. This difference suggests that some white, middle-class LGBT people may have underscored the severity of their violent experiences in the hope of impressing someone of a comparable social position. Nevertheless, during the interview, middle-class white

respondents described fewer experiences of anti-queer physical violence than low-income people of color. Thus, middle-class white respondents did not emphasize the severity of their violent experiences to such a degree that they described more incidents of physical violence than poor and working-class LGBT people of color.

Another possible weakness of this project is that the differences between me and some of the respondents made it difficult for them to be forthcoming in their answers. At times, I felt as if the interviews with black lesbian women – and, to a lesser extent, transgender people of color – were fraught with more complications than the interviews with other respondents. The interviews with gay men, regardless of race, and the interviews with white respondents, regardless of gender, seemed comparatively smooth. I am not entirely sure of the reason for these differences, but perhaps I simply differed from lesbian and transgender women in too many ways, as we differed along race, class, and gender lines. Nevertheless, even though the researcher's social position invariably affects the development of an interview, and the results presented throughout this dissertation should be viewed as contextually dependent, the data hopefully still reveal much about violence against lesbian and transgender women of color.

One of the challenges of writing a dissertation on anti-queer violence is that LGBT people's agency may be overlooked. Indeed, there is a substantial body of literature outlining problems with employing the term "victim," as it seems to strip the person who has experienced violence of any agency (Best 1999; Fassin and Rechtman 2009). Domestic violence studies have frequently referred to those who experience

violence as "survivors," as a way of highlighting their agency[1]. In this dissertation, I have used the word "victim" rather than "survivor," as the former is most commonly employed in studies of hate crime. Viewing this project as a first step in advancing an under-researched area of study, I have used the terminology of previous research, while also trying to augment studies of hate crime victims by focusing on LGBT people's agency. As this line of research advances, we should continue to pay careful attention to our terminology, thinking about its implications (Blee 2007). I have tried to avoid falling into the trap of making LGBT people appear as passive victims rather than active agents by emphasizing the ways in which respondents rejected the meanings of their attackers. By doing so, I hope this dissertation has underscored how LGBT people are not only victimized by violence but also active in responding to it.

As feminist scholars have noted, intersectionality has been theorized more frequently than ethnographically explored (Bettie 2003; McCall 2005). One of the difficulties with employing intersectional approaches is that they can sometimes appear as a checklist, where every system of oppression has to be covered. To analyze all forms of inequality at the same time is obviously impossible, yet studies often seem incomplete or reductive when they overlook some systems of oppression. This balance between covering too much and not enough is difficult. The number of inequalities addressed seems less important than the relevance of those inequalities, yet it remains important for intersectional scholarship to theorize about the conceptual loss that occurs when some systems of oppression are not included in our theoretical models (Bettie 2003; Taylor 2007). On the other hand, including every form of inequality at once produces

[1] For a balanced discussion of the debates concerning whether domestic violence research should use the terminology of "victim" or "survivor", see Lamb's (1999) edited volume.

disorganized scholarship. Here, I have tried to cover those forms of inequality most relevant to participants' experiences, yet this dissertation has also overlooked important dimensions of oppression such as those based on religion and disability.

Despite these shortcomings, this project has revealed some of the ways in which institutional power structures affect the lives of LGBT people. Rather than focusing on intersectionality in the abstract, this study has examined the lived experiences of LGBT people and how their lives relate to systems of stratification. Descriptions of trauma and violence often seem to end on an uplifting or hopeful note, as if to suggest it can all be overcome. While hoping to avoid such a narrative here, I wish to end by suggesting that studies of anti-LGBT violence can continue to focus not only on the traumatic experiences of queer people but also on their agency.

Appendix A: Recruitment Flier

Earn $20

For 1 Hour of Your Time

Have You Experienced Violence Because You Are (Or Were Perceived to Be) Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgender?

If You, Or Anyone You Know, Are Willing to Be Interviewed Please Contact:

Doug Meyer
The Graduate Center of The City University of New York
dmeyer07@yahoo.com
917-836-3098
If you would like your phone call to be anonymous please dial *67 before you place your call to eliminate caller I.D.

Participants need to be at least 18 years old to participate. In the interest of confidentiality, you do not need to leave your name in your telephone message or e-mail. Please leave me a phone number at which I can reach you, and an appropriate day and time to call you. When I call you back, we will set up a meeting time and place.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Background questions (try to get them comfortable with the interviewing process):

"Can you tell me a little bit about yourself, in terms of where you grew up and your family background?"

"How would you describe your childhood? Your teenage years?"

"Did you like your childhood? Your teenage years?"

If unclear ➔ "Whom did you live with while you were growing up?"

"How would you describe your family life at that time?"

"Did you like school when you were young?"

Transition into the violence:

"Can you tell me about a time when you experienced violence because of your sexuality/gender identity?" ➔ Improvise (find out what happened) = what happened? Who did it? What happened afterwards?

How they Perceive their Perpetrators' Motivations:

"As you look back on this incident, why do you think he/she/they used violence?"

Possible follow-ups ➔ "What do you think they were trying to accomplish by committing the violence?"

"What purpose do you think the violence served for them?"

"How do you think he/she/they justified it to themselves?"

Identity questions (how they perceive themselves):

"How would you describe yourself, in general, in terms of your identity?"

Possible follow-up ➔ "How do you see yourself in comparison to the man/men/woman who used violence against you?"

Agency issues (if applicable):

"What ways do you think you were able to fight against, or rebel against, what the perpetrator was trying to say to you?"

OR: "It sounds like you were rejecting what the perpetrator was trying to tell you….in what ways do you think you did that? How did you fight against what the perpetrators was trying to say to you?"

Verbally Responding to Violence (if applicable):

"How did you make the decision of when you would say something back to someone who was harassing you and when you wouldn't say something back? How would you make that determination?"

Determining that the violence was based on their sexuality/gender identity:

"How did you figure out – or determine – that the violence was based on your sexuality/gender identity?"

OR: "In general, how do you determine that someone is attacking you because you're gay/lesbian/transgender?"

If it seems obvious ➔ "In this case it seems obvious [because…], but in other cases it might not be so obvious…so how do you *know* that someone is harassing you because you're gay/lesbian/transgender?"

Telling Others about the Violence:

"Have you told anyone about the incident?"
If so ➔ How did they respond?
If not ➔ How did you decide not to tell other people?

[Use this discussion of other people to lead into "evaluating the severity of violence"…]

Evaluating the Severity of Violence:

If they told others ➔ "Did other people perceive your violent experience as a (quote-unquote) "big deal"?"

"How was that person's response different from how you saw the violence?"

Possible follow-up: "Do you think that person saw the violence as less of a big deal than you did?"

If they did not tell others ➔ "Were you concerned that other people wouldn't think of your violent experiences as a (quote-unquote) "big deal"?"

Next form of Violence:

"Have there been other times you have experienced violence because you were perceived to be L/G/B/T?"

[repeat questions above if they answer "yes"]

Definitions of Violence:

"How would you define violence?"

"What does the word 'violence' mean to you?"

[some overlap with "Ranking forms of violence" = ask those questions if they appear to rank violence]

Ranking forms of Violence (physical vs. verbal):

"What's your opinion on the difference between physical and verbal violence?"

"Some studies on violence have argued that physical violence is often more painful than verbal violence…do you agree or disagree with that idea?"

If no response (or confusion) ➔ "Would you agree with the statement that physical violence causes more pain than verbal violence? Why or why not?" ➔ Improvise here, if necessary

Ranking forms of Violence (hate-motivated vs. non-hate-motivated):

"Many of the same studies that I mentioned a second ago also suggest that violence against someone's sexuality/gender identity tends to hurt more than violence that is not based on someone's sexuality/gender identity…what's your opinion on that idea [how you do feel about that idea]?"

Knowing Others Who've Experienced Violence:

"Do you know others who have experienced violence because they are L/G/B/T?"

"Have any of your friends experienced violence?"

If no ➔ "Do you *know* anyone who has experienced violence?"
"Have you heard about anyone who has experienced violence because they're L/G/B/T?"

If yes ➔ "What have your friends experienced?"
If unclear ➔ "How many people are we talking about?"
"Have you talked about your violent experiences with them?"
"Have you ever seen them experience violence?"

Stereotypes:

"What stereotypes – or misconceptions – do you see with regard to L/G/B/T people?"

"What do you think is harmful or bad about these stereotypes?"

Stereotypes = intersection of race and sexuality (if applicable):

"Do you think stereotypes are different for L/G/B/T people of color (black/Latino/Asian) than they are for white L/G/B/T people?"

"Are stereotypes of LGBT people different in black/Latino/Asian communities?"

Prejudice/Discrimination:

"Have you experienced *discrimination* because of your sexuality or gender identity?"

Follow-up, if necessary ➔ "Have you experienced homophobia or prejudice because you're gay/lesbian/transgender?"

"Have you been treated differently because you're gay/lesbian/transgender?"

"Have you experienced *discrimination* because of other aspects of your identity?"

Follow-up, if necessary ➔ "Have you experienced racism? Sexism?"
"Have you experienced racism/sexism/ transphobia in gay or lesbian communities?"

Positive reactions:

"Have you had positive reactions when you've told people about your sexuality/gender identity?" ➔ "What happened?"

Hate Crime Legislation:

"What is your opinion of hate crime legislation?"

[explain what it is, if they don't know, and then ask again]

Media Representations:

"What do you think about media representations of hate crime victims?" [bring up Matthew Shephard, if necessary]

"What do you think about media representations of L/G/B/T people who have experienced violence?"

Change (Identity issues):

"Do you think that you've changed since these violent experiences that you've described? How so?"

Follow-up, if necessary ➔ Tie their answer back to how they identify…e.g., "Earlier I asked you how you identify [and you said…], so do you see what you just said as related to what you said earlier? How?"

Social Class Background [use as a lead-in to handing out the questionnaire]:

Work history ➔ "I'm not sure we covered this, but can you tell me a little bit about your work history?" [If unclear, ask if they work now and what they do]

Follow-up to clarify: "So, were you working 5 years ago? What kind of work were you doing?"… "10 years ago?"

"You said that you lived with your X while you were growing up…what did he/she/they do in terms of work? [or: "What did your parent(s)/guardian do while you were growing up, by the way?"]

Appendix C: Questionnaire

Please fill out all of the following questions. Feel free to ask me if you're unsure of anything.

Participant # _____

Age _____

Gender _____

Sexuality _____

Race/Ethnicity _____

Job/Occupation (write "unemployed," if not currently employed)_____

_____

Education (describe highest year of school completed)_____

_____

Appendix D: Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

Gender and Sexuality (with pseudonyms)	Age	Race/Ethnicity	Occupation	Educational Attainment
Lesbian Women:				
Aisha	53	Black	Dental assistant	College degree
Catherine	46	White	College teacher/activist (non-profit work)	Postgraduate degree
Diamond	51	Black	Unemployed	High school diploma
Dorothy	49	White	Security guard and auxiliary NYPD	College degree
Jasmine	44	Black	Security Guard	High school diploma
Jetta	28	Black	HIV/AIDS counselor	High school diploma
Judy	43	Latina (Puerto Rican)	Non-profit work (counselor for drug abuse)	College degree
Julia	28	White	Pediatrician	College degree
Latoya	50	Black	Balloon decorator	College degree
Maria	26	Latina (Columbian)	Adjunct instructor (college teacher)	College degree (in a PhD program)
Page	45	Latina (Puerto Rican)	Unemployed	High school diploma
Tamika	53	Black	Unemployed	High school diploma
Tina	21	Latina (Chicano)	College student	Some college
Bisexual Women:				
Leslie	50	Black	Unemployed	High school diploma
Ling	29	Asian	Office work (temp jobs)	College degree

Heterosexual Women:				
Anne	41	Black	Unemployed	8th grade
Lisa	36	Latina (Puerto Rican)	Homemaker	College degree
Gay Men:				
Andre	24	Black	College student	Some college
Bob	54	White	High school teacher	College degree
Cole	33	Black	Cook at a restaurant part-time	High school diploma
Daniel	26	Black	Receptionist	Some college
Frank	51	White	Auxiliary police department	College degree
George	45	White	Adjunct Lecturer (College teacher)	College degree
Gideon	25	Black	Unemployed	High school diploma
Greg	43	White	Paralegal	College degree
Jacob	40	White	Doctor	Postgraduate degree
Jayvyn	33	Black	Secretary	High school diploma
Jericho	48	Latino (Puerto Rican)	Unemployed/restaurant work (custodial work)	10th Grade
Kevin	62	Black	Non-profit work (receptionist/coordinator)	College degree
Mark	46	White	Public interest law	College degree
Paul	57	White	Corporate work/paralegal	College degree
Ted	33	White	Lawyer	Postgraduate degree
Thomas	41	Asian	Marketing consulting firm	College degree
Walter	24	Black	Unemployed	9th grade

Male-to-Female Transgender People:				
Carol	39	Latina (Puerto Rican)	Non-profit work	High school diploma
Dominique	23	Black	Sex worker	Some college
Ebony	20	Black	Sex worker	11th Grade
Eva	46	Black	Receptionist at a non-profit	High school diploma
Kayla	36	Black	Unemployed	Some college
Lakeisha	38	Black	Non-profit outreach work (coordinator)	8th Grade
Lela	48	Black	Unemployed	High school diploma
Mary	47	White	Physician	Postgraduate degree
Female-to-Male Transgender People:				
William	29	Latino (Chicano)	Clerical work (temp jobs)	High school diploma
Intersexed:				
Nevada	36	White	Unemployed	High school diploma

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