Exploratory Study of Right-Wing Populism and the Los Angeles LGBTQ Community

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
of The University of Manitoba
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
for Peace and Conflict Studies
University of Manitoba Winnipeg

Abstract

The 2016 election year represents a culmination of decades-long shifts toward right-wing populism throughout the western world. This change crescendoed with the election of Donald Trump, a person who has never shied away from propagating hateful rhetoric, which has dangerous implications for marginalized communities.

The LGBTQ community in the US has faced a series of challenges in its decades-long battle for fundamental human rights. The Stonewall riots, AIDS activism, and the current struggle for trans rights mark significant moments in this struggle.

Previous examinations of the effects of the 2016 election on marginalized communities reveal its detrimental mental health outcomes. However, some studies examining the topic differ in their analysis of the length and severity of such results. Structural violence in Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) coupled with a Marxist analysis of mental health provides a baseline for thinking about mental health in late capitalism. Literature from PACS and Queer theory offers a valuable landscape for the current study.

The researcher obtained data from 19 individuals who self-identify as LGBTQ. Transcripts from the interviews are coded using grounded theory instruments. Specifically, the researcher relies on constructive grounded theory to examine the interviews.

The findings fall into three inter-related categories. First, respondents highlight intra- community conflicts related to identity and belonging. Additionally, side conflicts center around bias and bigotry targeted at transgender individuals.

Second, the effects of these conflicts fall into two categories- identity and structural violence. Identity manifests in participants' struggles with mental health, such as depression and anxiety. Additionally, participants struggled with reconciling and understanding their coming out experiences. The role of structural violence appears through participants' geographic anxiety and feelings of privilege.

Third, participants respond to these challenges through community and activism. One's community may include given/biological relations and chosen connections. Second, participants had previously engaged in activism and continue to do so in opposing the more extreme choices of the administration.

The study highlights the need for further mental health interventions, preferably centered around coping tools and the LGBTQ community. Furthermore, more exploration of inter-LGBTQ conflict and the coming out experience will add rich data to the field.

Acknowledgments

My deepest gratitude goes to those who agreed to participate in this study. In an age when time is a commodity, yours is priceless, and I am eternally grateful for your generosity, honesty, and willingness to explore.

I would also like to thank my committee for posing thoughtful questions and providing helpful feedback. Dr. Sean Byrne, Dr. Maureen Flaherty, and Dr. Robert Mizzi- the hours you have spent reading over this thesis will never be forgotten. I would like to extend my most profound appreciation to my advisor Dr. Jessica Senehi who never failed to provide thoughtful insight and whose advocacy for me, and this project, is unwavering.

To my friends and family who have been patient and understanding during this process, this would not have been possible without your support. Specifically, I would like to thank Kendra Simon-Krull and Christina Perri for their deep love and steadfast friendship. Also, to the many baristas who welcomed me with kind smiles and warm coffee, you provided the fuel I needed to finish, and I am grateful to you.

Finally, to Sara, thank you for supporting and encouraging this work. I am exceedingly grateful for you and appreciate all you have done.

Dedications

To Asa, when you read this, may it be a faraway artifact of a chaotic point in history. My baby, I hope you see endless possibilities in a landscape of love and service. Every moment we spend together you expand my perspective and teach me new ways to see the world; I am grateful to be your ZaZa.

To all the Queers who came before me- Queer ancestors. Those acknowledged and those forgotten, your courage, tenacity, and love have inspired this paper. Your existence gives me the courage to fight for my own.

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AFAB- Assigned Female at Birth

AMAB- Assigned Male at Birth

Cis- Cisgender

DOMA- Defense of Marriage Act

LGBTQIA+ Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and everyone else

PACS- Peace and Conflict Studies

SCOTUS- Supreme Court of the US

TERF- Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminist WEHO- West Hollywood

Donald Trump's ascendancy illustrates a single event in the broader global shift away from democratic institutions and toward right-wing populism (Bangstad et al., 2019). Initially, in the US, media commentary focused on those who voted for Donald Trump. Specifically, those who voted for Barack Obama in 2012 and Donald Trump in 2016 (Cohn, 2017; Manchester, 2019; Samuels, 2020). In response to his election, demonstrations erupted across the country and around the world. In Los Angeles alone, 750,000 people marched through Downtown LA- perhaps the biggest turnout in the country (Buchanan, Bui, & Patel, 2020; NBC LA Staff, 2017). Unfortunately, much of the media's attention was on these two constituencies—non-urban Trump voters and urban protesters who oppose Trump.

In the year leading up to the election, while he was on the campaign trail, Donald Trump's vitriol led to increased violence against vulnerable individuals. During the campaign, and his presidency, those who would inflict violence against marginalized groups did so at much higher rates than in preceding years (Hodwitz & Massingale, 2021). For example, according to the FBI's database, interpersonal attacks motivated by bigotry were at a 16-year high in 2018, with Latinos suffering the brunt of the surge (Hassan, 2019). The violence triggered a backlash and inspired allies to come to their defense. Civil rights and immigrant assistance organizations received record donations (Chandler, 2016; Mark, 2016). People volunteered their legal expertise and rushed to the border to help.

This study seeks to evaluate the consequences of the rise of right-wing populism on members of the LGBTQ community in Los Angeles (LA), California. The research examines the significance of a Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) perspective in framing the problem and investigating remedies. LA is one of a handful of populous American cities with a rich Queer history whose contemporary issues are mostly ignored in academic literature. The scant contemporary research on the LGBTQ community in LA is quantitative and primarily relates to healthcare. While such research is vital to a thriving Queer community, a well-rounded analysis requires a sojourn beyond quantitative data and into LGBTQ stories.

Purpose

The primary aims of this study are to examine the responses and reactions of the LGBTQ community in LA to the increasing influence of right-wing populism and to contribute to theory and practice relating to social movements and activism. The research also seeks to review how LGBTQ folks define activism and participate in everyday forms of resistance.

Methodology

The study uses in-depth interviews with members of the LGBTQ community in LA to explore the effect of rising right-wing populism. A total of 19 interviews were performed following guidelines from the university's human ethics board. The interviews aimed to understand how people feel about the rise of right-wing populism, Trump's election, and their future in the United States. Once completed, the interviews are transcribed and coded for specific and general themes. Finally, the themes were organized and expanded upon in the findings section.

Rationale

The following explores the thoughts, feelings, and motivations of a sector of the LGBTQ population in Los Angeles. The LGBTQ people in the United States have suffered because of the rise of right-wing populism, as restrictive laws limit their rights. This project seeks to explore assumptions that this community's reactions are predetermined because of the progressivism of the cities in which they reside.

Another aim of this undertaking is to explore whether members of the LGBTQ community increased their activism or political participation because of the rise of right-wing populism. The election triggered an unprecedented upsurge in both activism and political participation generally. This data can help organizers with recruitment for movements and policy development.

Essentially the significance of this study lies in the fact that it investigates how a marginalized community may respond to a single moment. It helps us understand the reactions of a population that is relatively insulated from the policies of right-wing populism. Additionally, we may better respond to such activity by understanding why everyday people participate in activism and social movements.

Limitations

The study focuses on the LGBTQ community in LA and their response to the increasing presence of right-wing populism in our everyday lives. The project was limited geographically. Due to various constraints, this study was performed only in LA; therefore, there was no geographic comparison. Such analyses may be desirable because they allow the researcher to compare results based on geography. Additionally, there was not a significant diversity of voices

from within LA. Most of the people that were part of the study lived on the east side and around downtown and the Silverlake area.

Because of the researcher's use of snowball sampling and limitations on soliciting participants, the range of voices is also limited. Such challenges are particularly true when it comes to the age of participants. The research here did not get feedback from youth or the elderly. Although the researcher did not formally ask the age of participants, participants were likely in their 20s, 30s, or 40s.

The researcher is a member of the LGBTQ community and grew up in LA. However, the researcher had not resided in LA for an extended period when the interviews were conducted. Previously, the researcher had experience conducting interviews for large research projects. The researcher also remained highly aware of their potential biases and acknowledged and dismissed them when they surfaced.

Overview of Chapters

This study is organized thematically and explains participants' challenges and solutions in the face of rising right-wing populism. The first chapter provides a general overview of the topic and the research approach and beliefs. The second, third, and fourth chapters include the context, literature review, and methodology, which provide the foundation for this report. Chapters five, six, seven, and eight elucidate the themes that surfaced from the interviews. Finally, chapter nine sets out the conclusions and recommendations for future research.

Chapter two provides the background and events behind the research. First, the chapter discusses the history of the LGBTQ community in the United States and LA. Then, after setting up the history of the movement, the chapter discusses the last couple of years and the role of LGBTQ people in the United States in the present day. Finally, the context section discusses the rise of social movements and activism stemming from the election.

Chapter three reviews the literature related to themes that surfaced during the interviews. This discussion centers activism and examines why people participate and how this may be related to political or social shifts. This section starts with early theories and shows the evolution up to the current state of the thinking on social movements. The chapter then moves on to a discussion of social movements in peace and conflict studies.

Chapter four discusses the methodology of the study. This chapter describes how the researcher approached the study, recruited participants, and performed the interview. The

discussion begins with a review of the theories that informed the methodological approaches of the researcher. The primary method adopted to analyze the interviews was grounded theory (GT). The chapter concludes with the specific approaches of the researcher in performing interviews.

Chapter five examines the role of intra-group conflict in the LGBTQ community and the effect of hate directed at the LGBTQ community. These include participants' feelings of depression, hopelessness, and fear. Finally, the chapter ends with a section on inter-LGBTQ conflict, which addresses the issues between LGBTQs within the community.

Chapter six looks at how the rise in right-wing populism brings up issues related to identity. The discussion addresses coming out and the process that the participants went through. The following section discusses the mental health issues that have arisen since the recent rise of populism. The chapter also touches on participants' fears for their safety and uncertainty about the future.

Chapter seven addresses how structural violence affects the community by simultaneously oppressing some folks while at the same time making others feel guilty and undeserving. The discussion touches on privilege and geographic anxiety. It reveals the extent to which structural violence can cause suffering.

Finally, chapter eight examines some of the positive ways people in the study have responded to the rise of right-wing populism. Notably, people are turning to community and activism. The first section discusses family, how participants' relationships with their family have changed, or how they have made a family with others in the LGBTQ community.

The final section is a discussion of the relationships between LGBTQ people and how these provide people with comfort. Next, the chapter looks at how participants define activism. This discussion includes bold acts of protest and small everyday choices to oppose oppressive power structures.

Conclusion

In sum, the study will explore how the rise of right-wing populism affects the LGBTQ community in Los Angeles. This analysis uses in-depth interviews of constituent parties. The purpose of the study is to contribute to a base of knowledge around how LGBTQ people may react to the rise of right-wing populism.

CONTEXT

This study took place during former President Donald Trump's first year in office. People were experiencing a new, more ostentatious President yielding violent and frightening rhetoric. Beyond his restrictions on travel for people from predominately Muslim countries and the inhumane treatment of immigrants (including children) at the southern border, his public behavior was unacceptable. The news was replete with images of the president supporting populous strong-men leaders worldwide who use violence to tamp down activists and marginalized groups. The threat of violence and, in some cases, the actual violence of Trump's followers was a salient and real fear for many.

The threat of violence is not new for the LGBTQ community, even in a city as progressive as LA. The United States has a long history of inflicting violence, outlawing, and attempting to erase the community. From the 1950s to Stonewall, the period of AIDS activism, the Marriage Equality Act, and now the fight for trans rights show there has been a fervent push back to Queer people asserting their rights and claiming their just place in society. Donald Trump's portrayal of masculinity as imposing violence and insensitive is especially dangerous for those who do not fit into gender norms or adhere to heterosexist ideals. Even the campaign slogan "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) conveyed a desire to harken back to a sort of 1950s idealism and erase the progress made by LGBTQ people. What follows is a summary of the environment that existed at the time of Trump's rise.

LGBTQ History in the United States

The LGBTQ struggle for liberation in the United States has employed a variety of forms of activism, most of which have focused on recognition and visibility. However, organizing began early, and many believe this specific part of the movement crystallizes in the 1969 riots at Stonewall. This pivotal event ushered LGBTQ people into public life (Baumann & White, 2019). Unfortunately, a decade later, the AIDS crisis swept through the community, killing hundreds, while the government sat idly by refusing to act.

People stepped in to fill the void, often learning about treatments themselves and persuading government and pharmaceutical companies to distribute much needed medicine (Faderman, 2016).

There had always been a desire for federal recognition of same-sex, and the issue grew through the decades. A flashpoint occurred in 1996 with the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) passage. (Brooks, 2015). DOMA prevented gay and lesbian couples from receiving federal benefits, even if they were legally married according to state law (Conrad, 2014). A push to overturn the act resulted in the Supreme Court's 2015 ruling that it is unconstitutional. Two years later, in the first days of 2017, several states introduced so-called "bathroom bills" to restrict transgender people from using bathrooms that most closely align with their gender (Sanchez, 2017). A brief review of this history will provide a road map to how the LGBTQ community arrived at the current moment.

Stonewall

The 1950s saw increasing arrests and prosecution of homosexual acts. During this time, LGBTQ organizations began to form as well. For example, in 1950, the Mattachine Society was founded in LA as one of the first gay organizations in the United States, and it quickly opened chapters across the country (Faderman & Timmons, 2009). Soon after that, in 1955, the Daughters of Bilitis, established in San Francisco, was the first Lesbian organization established in the country (Faderman, 2016).

The following decade marked a time of social upheaval and radical social change. The civil rights and feminist movements encouraged marginalized groups to resist government and social oppression. However, during the sixties, homosexuals continued to experience police violence and repression. It was during this time that resistance to police violence began to proliferate. Examples include the 1966 riot at Compton's Cafeteria in San Francisco and the protests in front of the Black Cat Café in LA in 1967 (Faderman & Timmons, 2009). The Black Cat protests in Los Angeles marked a shift to more radical and public resistance. These events were organized by PRIDE (Personal Rights in Defense and Education), an organization formed in LA in 1966 that exemplified the shift to radical tactics.

The routine police harassment continued throughout the decade, and in June 1969, homosexual–police conflict boiled over. Lesbians, gay men, transgender people, and drag queens participated in a days-long riot and act of resistance at the Stonewall Inn in New York City (Baumann & White, 2019). This event marked a turning point in the homosexual rights movement. Perhaps because of its public confrontation, duration, or location, the riots at Stonewall became a symbol of homosexual liberation. This event is generally considered a catalyst for widespread advocacy and advancements in social reform. In the wake of Stonewall, organizations such as the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) formed. The GLF sought to unite LGBTQ individuals and other marginalized people (Rimmerman, 2008).

Stonewall was pivotal in understanding gay identity and set the stage for activism in the decades to follow. In some ways, Stonewall was a group or community "coming out" for the gay community in the United States (Rimmerman, 2008; McCaskell, 2016). After Stonewall, the term "gay" became more common and eventually replaced "homosexual," a reference previously used by the medical profession to diagnose LGBTQ people as disordered.

Gay liberation spread worldwide and aligned with similar movements of the time. As an intersectional movement, though the term had not been coined, gay liberation sought to put an end to sexism and racism, specifically within the gay community, which proved to be quite challenging and led to widespread debate (Rimmerman, 2008; Gilreath, 2011; McCaskell, 2016). A year after the Stonewall riots, there were marches in New York and LA to commemorate the events (Faderman, 2015). These celebrations and commemorations continued each year and became known as Pride parades. In sum, the struggle for LGBTQ liberation is characterized by various forms of activism.

AIDS Activism

Following the events at Stonewall, there was a backlash on the right against the push for homosexual liberation. A group in the Republican party called the "Moral Majority" was formed for this purpose. Many efforts against homosexual rights were led by Jerry Falwell and Anita Bryant, who passionately advocated against homosexuals. President Reagan was the first President identified as part of the moral majority and ignored the AIDS crisis and accompanying pleas for action.

The 1970s and 1980s saw a rapid increase in the spread of HIV and AIDS throughout the United States. The disease was first detected in homosexual men and intravenous drug users and spread quickly throughout these communities (Signorile, 1993). Despite the loss of tens of thousands of lives, the U.S. government, namely the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Reagan administration, had done little to combat the epidemic. Many believed that inaction from the government was because people living with AIDS were members of marginalized communities (Bronski, 2011).

AIDS activism is said to have begun at a 1983 conference in Denver, Colorado, where attendees penned a manifesto known as the Denver Principles. Setting the course for the next decade, the declaration "described later as the Magna Carta of AIDS activism […] called for a new relationship between people with AIDS, their health care providers, and the society around them" (Wright, 2013, p. 1793). The Denver Principles spoke of people with HIV and AIDS as empowered, whole individuals who are in charge of their own destiny. Among other things, it called for patients to make important decisions about their healthcare and for doctors to explain their diagnosis and treatment options thoroughly.

In the face of government silence and the absence of a promised vaccine, AIDS activists began to organize to provide care for the patients who were falling ill. One such group was the Gay Men's Health Crisis, founded in New York City in 1982 and today the oldest HIV/AIDS service organization in the world (Faderman, 2016). However, in 1987, activists were still frustrated by government inaction as bodies continued to pile up. As a result, they founded the AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power or ACT UP, in New York City (Brooks, 2015).

Teacher and ACT UP activist Douglas Crimp (2011), who was a grassroots participant in AIDS activism during the 1980s, recalls:

> Our takeover of the FDA was unquestionably the most significant demonstration of the AIDS activist movement's first two years. Organized nationally by ACT NOW to take place on the anniversary of the March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights and just following the second Washington Showing of the Names Project quilt, the protest began with a Columbus Day rally at the Department of Health and Human Services under the banner HEALTH CARE IS RIGHT and proceeded the following morning to a siege of FDA headquarters in a Washington suburb. (p. 1)

ACT UP resorted to increasingly drastic measures and audacious acts of nonviolent protest to direct the attention of the government, and the public, to the plight of those living with AIDS. This path had been paved by the movements and activism of the preceding decade.

ACT UP's protests saw a good deal of success, as its bold approaches coupled with its knowledge and understanding of the science behind the disease and the bureaucracy surrounding its research allowed the grassroots political organization to target for protest the primary institutions refusing research specifically. The occupation of the FDA, specifically, changed the movement—spring boarding it forward, as Crimp (2011) describes it:

> [T]he protests at the FDA represented both a culmination of our early efforts and a turning point in both recognition by the government of the seriousness and legitimacy of our demands and national awareness of the AIDS activist movement. This turning point occurred for two interrelated reasons: 1) the demonstrated knowledge by AIDS activists of every detail of the complex FDA drug approval process, and 2) a professionally designed campaign that prepared the media to convey our treatment issues to the public. (p. 1–2)

This turning point marked the beginning of a new era in AIDS activism, in which the news media played an active role. As the visibility of the epidemic increased, so did public pressure on politicians to take action.

The government's unwillingness to act on this issue led to the creation of ACT UP, a grassroots organization that demanded attention be paid to those dying from AIDS. In coordination with Act Up, other activist organizations were created to support their efforts and challenge state inaction on the crisis (Bronski, 2011). Not only did such groups participate in advocacy, but many also assisted those suffering by finding appropriate treatments and medication. In addition, ACT UP led to splinter groups that were less confrontational and assimilationist.

Following the election of President Trump in 2016, concerns were raised over the administration's HIV policy, both globally and domestically. In 2017, the post of Director of National AIDS Policy, which existed to coordinate efforts to implement the National HIV/AIDS

The strategy became vacant and remained so as of June 2019 (Johnson, 2019). In addition, by the end of 2017, all members of the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS (PACHA), which provides advice on the National HIV/AIDS Strategy, had either resigned or been fired.

In February 2019, President Trump used the State of Union address to pledge to eliminate the USA's HIV epidemic within ten years. The goal was a 75 percent reduction in new HIV infections over the next five years and at least a 90 percent reduction in the next ten years. (Cohen, 2019). There was skepticism about whether the administration would meet Trump's goals in the State of the Union. For example, the administration relentlessly sought to dismantle the ACA, which provides healthcare to many low-income individuals. Skeptics also pointed out his poor record of defending the civil rights of LGBTQ people, who make up 70 percent of new HIV infections (Johnson, 2019).

In early 2018, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued a proposed rule that would enable healthcare providers and insurers the right to refuse to provide services to people on moral or religious grounds (HHS Office of Civil Rights, 2020). In practice, this would allow healthcare works to refuse treatment to LGBTQ individuals on religious grounds. A recent study found the passage of religious refusal laws associated with a 46 percent increase in the proportion of LGBTQ people reporting mental distress (Samuels, 2018).

As of June 2018, 37 states no longer prohibited health insurance discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, meaning uninsured LGBTQ people may struggle to afford healthcare (Human Rights Watch, 2018). Young people also have lower health insurance rates than older individuals, and adolescents under 18 faces regulatory, insurance, and confidentiality challenges when accessing HIV services. For example, prescribing PrEP to adolescents without parental or guardian consent is not allowed in many states.

DOMA and Marriage Equality

The organizing that began during the AIDS crisis led to new powerful gay and lesbian coalitions. Following Stonewall many in the gay and lesbian community rejected the institution of marriage and saw it as assimilation (Rimmerman, 2008). However, others wanted to enjoy the same rights as heterosexual couples. Either stance was radical for the times. Throughout the 1990s, several failed court cases attempted to gain legal recognition for same-sex couples (Rimmerman, 2008). Additionally, this period saw the "gay baby boom," which challenged heteronormative ideas about family. The AIDS crisis, the challenge to traditional ideas of family,

and other progress made by the gay and lesbian community caused a backlash by American conservatives.

A year after Stonewall, the gay rights movement was at its height when Richard Baker and James McConnell applied for a marriage license in Minnesota. Their application was denied because they are a same-sex couple, a decision that was upheld in both the trial court and the state Supreme Court in 1971. Baker and McConnell brought their appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1972, but SCOTUS chose not to hear the case, which blocked federal courts from hearing cases on same-sex marriage, leaving the decision on such matters to each individual state. This decision led to a series of disappointments for marriage advocates throughout the country. For example, in 1973, Maryland passed a law defining marriage as between a man and a woman. Other states quickly followed Virginia in 1975; and Florida, California, and Wyoming in 1977.

Even though same-sex couples continued to be denied marriage licenses, in 1992, Washington D.C. passed a law granting the option of registering as domestic partners. Though the law did not give couples the same rights and protections as legal marriage would have, it allowed for some privileges. Most notably, same-sex individuals were allowed to visit their partners in the hospital.

The next year brought with it a bit of hope. In 1993, the ban on same-sex marriage was ruled unconstitutional by the Hawaii state Supreme Court. The case remained tied up in court for the next three years when, in 1996, Congress passed DOMA (The Defense of Marriage Act). DOMA passed both houses of Congress easily and was signed into law by Democratic president Bill Clinton. The law limits marriage to a union between one man and one woman and opens the door for states to pass laws prohibiting marriage licenses be given to same-sex couples. Further, the law restricted federal benefits to same-sex couples, including restrictions on benefits related to immigration, taxes, and social security.

Advocates continued to push for the rights of same-sex couples throughout the 1990s, and their efforts paid off. In 2000, Vermont passed a law legalizing civil unions providing same-sex couples all of the same state privileges and benefits as married heterosexual couples. Finally, in 2003 Lawrence v. Texas found that consensual sexual acts between homosexual adults deserve the same right to privacy as those of heterosexuals. Many saw this as the first step towards the legalization of same-sex marriage federally.

There were still battles to fight. However, a significant moment came when a New York lesbian couple, Edith Windsor and Thea Spyer, got married in Canada. Two years later, in 2009, Spyer died, leaving her estate to her partner. Because their marriage was not recognized at the federal level, Windsor was charged over $300,000 in estate taxes because she did not qualify for a federal exemption. She later sued the federal government in 2010, and the Attorney General under Barack Obama declined to defend DOMA, leading the way for similar cases to be successful in court.

For its part, California continued to go back and forth on the marriage issue. As early as 1999, California was the first state to pass a domestic partnership law. Additionally, the state legislature twice approved laws allowing for same-sex marriage (one in 2005 and one in 2007), but both were vetoed by Republican Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. However, in 2008, the state Supreme court struck down a law restricting marriage. That same year, after a contentious battle and an influx of funding from outside interest groups, voters passed Proposition 8, which banned same-sex marriage. Two years later, the state Supreme Court struck down the ban, ruling it unconstitutional, and it remained tied up in the courts until the Supreme Court made a pivotal ruling.

The ruling came about when Jim Obergafell sued the government because he was prevented from putting his name on his husband's death certificate. Obergefell brought the case based on the Equal Protection Clause and Due Process Clause. Trial courts consistently decided in his favor, but the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals did not, at which time the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear the case. By this time, LGBTQ advocacy had paid off, and a majority of Americans supported the legalization of same-sex marriage. The sentiment was shared around the world as, by this time, many other western countries had already made it legal. On June 26, 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that states are not permitted to ban same-sex marriage and that it ought to be federally recognized.

There is also a debate broiling about religious freedom and the right for businesses to discriminate against LGBTQ people based on religious beliefs. The debate started when a wedding cake shop in a town outside of Portland, Oregon, refused to bake a wedding cake for a gay couple based on the religious beliefs of the baker. Since this incident, many similar issues have arisen, and the Supreme Court has thus far refused to take up the matter. In another related

area, a judge recently ruled that under Title VII, employers cannot discriminate against people based on their sexual preference.

The Fight for Trans Rights

There is evidence of people fighting for transgender rights in the United States dating as far back as the Civil War. Much of the early activism was covert and occurred in the form of providing services and community for transgender people. One of the first public acts of protest by the transgender and gender non-conforming community occurred in LA in 1959 and is known as the Cooper Do-nuts Riot, which, like Stonewall, was a response to police harassment.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, transgender folks, alongside gays and lesbians, began to form a community and advocate more publicly. This activism saw a crescendo in 1969 when one of the main participants in the Stonewall uprising and a significant participant in transgender activism afterward was a transgender woman of color, Martha P. Johnson. However, much of the resources and institutional capacity of LGBTQ organizations following Stonewall was directed toward equal access to the medical, democratic, and social equality of gays and lesbians. For example, resources were directed to ensuring equal access to medical treatment, joining the military, and marriage. Meanwhile, transgender people continued to be targeted, and their issues were not addressed.

Following their victory in the debate over marriage equality, LGBTQ organizations and individuals turned their attention to the plight of transgender people and their fight for legal rights and protections. After marriage equality was granted, there was a predictable backlash from Christian conservatives. Today this debate centers around a few core issues, namely the right of transgender people to serve in the military, state laws requiring people to use the bathroom that corresponds with the gender assigned at birth, and the disproportionately high murder rate of transgender women of color.

Bathroom Bills. Bills restricting the rights of transgender people began passing state legislatures in 2013. The debate between trans advocates and their opponents centers on the rights of transgender and gender non-conforming people to use the bathroom that corresponds to their gender, which may differ from the biological sex listed on their birth certificate. Many states, such as Texas and North Carolina, have introduced bathroom bills.

State legislatures that have passed these bills have received substantial backlash from both the LGBTQ and business communities. For example, in 2016, North Carolina introduced a bathroom bill and received incredible backlash from citizens and the business community and suffered business losses costing over 600 million dollars (Jurney, 2016). Further, after the new administration rescinded a previous order requiring schools to allow children to use the bathroom that corresponds to the gender listed on their birth certificates, 16 states have introduced similar bills (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2017).

Military Service. In June of 2016, then president Obama's defense secretary Ash Carter announced that transgender people were no longer banned from serving in the military. This meant that many could now serve openly and receive medical treatment and assistance from military doctors. Thirteen months later, and in the first year of his presidency, President Trump announced, via Twitter, that he would once again reinstate the ban on transgender troops openly serving.

A month after the ban was announced, though it was unclear whether any official steps had been taken beyond a Tweet, service members took their case to court. Six months later, in March 2018, a ban was officially instated, using security as a pretext. It prohibited those who had undergone gender reassignment surgery from serving alongside those with the gender with which they identify. Additionally, those who experienced "gender dysphoria" were unable to serve, and individuals who were on hormones were banned as well.

Once it was officially put in place, the government was taken to court over the constitutionality of the ban. Lower courts issued injunctions preventing the ban from going into effect. However, in January 2018, the Supreme Court lifted the lower trial court injunctions but did not yet rule on the legality of the ban itself. The public is largely split on most issues pertaining to transgender rights, this one included. The ban had a large impact on trans people in particular because the military is the largest employer of trans people in the United States. This makes the ban doubly impactful, as LGBTQ people have a difficult time finding sustainable employment outside of the military.

The branches of the military are largely opposed to the ban and in favor of allowing those who are competent and qualified to serve. Additionally, there was concern that unilaterally removing people from their positions in a chain of command because they are transgender may affect the ability of the military to do its job well. Given that there are over 15,000 trans people

currently serving, such a shake-up has the potential to cause considerable confusion and instability in the military workforce.

Title IX. Aside from these big attacks on LGBTQ rights, the administration took smaller steps in damaging trans rights. One such move was the administration's attempt to define gender according to genitalia for purposes of Title IX. The law requires government-funded organizations to treat people equally regardless of gender. Opponents of the administration's move sought Title IX protection for people no matter what gender they identify with and despite the sex, they were assigned at birth. Those in favor of trans rights argue that the term "gender" is all-encompassing and includes protections for transgender and gender non-conforming people as well.

The change in status would erase the term transgender from government documents and websites and not give rights to people who are transgender or gender non-conforming. This would touch on a range of institutions and organizations, including homeless shelters, schools, and prisons. The attempt went along with a series of attempts by this new administration to erase any mention of LGBTQ people. This was in addition to the administration's removal of sexuality from the 2020 census, a move that would restrict LGBTQ people from being counted and thereby receive adequate funding and support from the federal government.

In connection with the Title IX reversals, the administration also rolled back Obama-era protections for housing and employment. These orders applied to federal employees and programs that received federal funding for housing. The Trump administration removed these protections almost immediately. They allowed for further discrimination of trans people by giving such entities permission to deny services and protection based on so-called religious freedom.

Indirect Effects. In addition to the new policies that affected LGBTQ people directly, many of the administration's other policies had a more indirect negative impact. One area where their actions hurt LGBTQ people is healthcare. The administration cut back on funding for healthcare to undo the Affordable Care Act, otherwise known as Obamacare. Trans and gender non-conforming people disproportionately require access to medical treatments such as hormone therapy or surgery in order to survive in their gender. A prime example of this is their cuts to funding for Planned Parenthood. Not only is Planned Parenthood a bastion for reliable reproductive health, but it is also a safe place for trans people to get the healthcare they need.

Another area where administration policies inadvertently harm LGBTQ people is immigration. Restrictions on immigration and limits on refugee numbers prevent those who are trans and could be in harm in their home countries from attaining safety in the United States. Further, because of their erasure from government policy and documents, transgender people who are undocumented and detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement are kept with people who were assigned the same sex as them at birth. Therefore, someone may gender-present differently than those whom they are detained with. Such conditions put transgender and gender non-conforming people at great risk.

Rise of Right-Wing Populism

Although it may have felt like the rise of right-wing populism came out of nowhere, one can see its roots earlier, for example, in groups such as the Tea Party and birtherism. For the purposes of this study, the focus will be on the 2016 election.

The 2016 Campaign

The 2016 election was contentious and controversial. In the months leading up to the contest, Donald Trump employed racially tinged language and made bold statements about immigrants and other minorities. Even his campaign slogan "Make America Great Again" gestures toward racism, sexism, and homophobia—the implication being that America is no longer great and was great in the past when there were more structural and social obstacles for marginalized groups. His choice of Vice-Presidential running-mate, Mike Pence, was well known for his support of anti-LGBTQ legislation.

His opponent, Hillary Clinton, was shrouded in controversy over the use of a private email server for government business. Generally, people saw a vote for Clinton as a continuation of the Obama years—a time when many felt left behind. Although support for Trump was considered a risk, it was a risk that 80,000 people across three swing states were willing to take. Trump's narrow victory in only a few states stands in contrast to Clinton's winning the popular vote by almost 2.9 million.

The First Six Months in Office

Donald Trump was sworn into office on January 20, 2017, and his administration got to work immediately on the anti-LGBTQ agenda. Within the first two hours of the transition of power, the mention of the LGBTQ community was removed from the White House website. In the weeks to follow, State Department and other federal websites did the same. The administration took questions about sexual orientation off of the census. The erasure continued when the CDC was directed to take a number of words out of its budget, including "transgender" and "diversity."

Perhaps the most widely reported anti-LGBTQ measure that came out of the Trump administration is a ban on transgender people serving in the military. The directive set out to prevent transgender people from joining the military. It also ended gender-affirming medical treatment and surgery for trans service members. Some of the negative consequences of the ban include "trans service members staying in the closet, even when it's dangerous for their service and their personal health and safety; trans troops being discharged or abused; and trans-Americans more broadly receiving yet another signal that society still doesn't accept or tolerate them" (Lopez, 2017).

The 45th President ended his first year in office by continuing his dehumanization and erasure of LGBTQ people. In October 2017, he was overheard joking that his notoriously anti-LGBTQ vice president wants to hang all LGBTQ people. Given opportunities to deny or retract the statement, Trump remained silent.

Conclusion

The history of the LGBTQ community in the United States has led us to this present moment. The struggle for visibility started early on in the nation's founding and has persisted until today. While the fight may look different in parts of the country, it is still a fight nonetheless. The 1969 Stonewall riots were a turning point and acted as a moment of visibility that led to the acquisition of more rights. Not long after gay men began dying in record numbers with little to no assistance from the government, the AIDS epidemic swept in, changing and ending lives forever. Members of the community rallied to the side of those dying and filled the halls of Congress. Those who were able to research medicines and applied pressure on the FDA during this decade-long battle revealed the power that the community can represent.

Following the AIDS crisis, the focus shifted to marriage equality as, at the time, LGBTQ people had separate but unequal versions of marriage available. Many sought full equality, and some states passed measures allowing for marriage while others passed measures denying it. Eventually, the federal government passed the Defense of Marriage Act, which barred LGBTQ people from having the same rights and recognition as non-LGBTQ people in the eyes of the law. After years of protests and legal battles, on June 26th, 2015, The US Supreme Court granted LGBTQ people the same rights in marriage as non-LGBTQ people. Today a majority of Americans believe that same-sex couples should be permitted to marry and have the same rights and privileges as non-LGBTQ people (McCarthy, 2021). Now the fight has turned to trans rights, which are being limited in states across the country in part because of right-wing culture wars. Between attempts to regulate which bathrooms people use and which children are allowed to play on sports teams, many very important trans issues are being ignored, and minor issues that have never been a problem are being sensationalized.

It is in this environment that right-wing populism and Donald Trump have come to prominence in the United States. The 2016 election saw unprecedented vitriol and prejudice fueled by the candidate and leader of a major political party. During the campaign, then-candidate Trump was caught on tape bragging about sexual assault and making disparaging remarks about immigrants at the southern border. In sum, he stood in opposition to progress and forward momentum for social justice initiatives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study takes a grounded theory (GT) approach that seeks new insights, questions, and theoretical hypotheses from a detailed examination of qualitative data. The literature review in grounded theory is a point of contention in academia (Charmaz & Bryant, 2019; Giles, King, & de Lacey, 2013). On one side are those who believe that the researcher must approach their study without any preconceived ideas or expectations about the findings. In order to maintain the required level of openness, this first approach requires that the literature review be done after the field research. The other approach, which may be referred to as constructivist, allows for a preliminary literature review before the study, further development through informal memo-writing, exploration of the literature during research, and a finalized literature review once the data is gathered and analyzed. It is the second constructivist approach that was used in this study.

The findings show that conflicts occurred in three separate domains—intrapersonal, interpersonal, and social. Participants responded to these conflicts by engaging in activism and seeking community. They referred to previous activism in connection with the rise of right-wing populism and found ways to be involved in activism on both individual and group levels. Further, when faced with conflict on these multiple levels, participants also sought out the community and a sense of belonging. Specifically, interviewees mentioned family; some spoke of rejection, and others of acceptance. What is clear is that their identity as LGBTQ determined their sense of belonging and how they built community.

Contemporary activism is informed by the global justice movement and those tactics used in actions, such as Occupy Wall Street. What follows is a discussion of the literature as it relates to such movements. The research cuts across disciplines and evaluates factors such as resources, tactics, and recruitment. There is a dearth of information on how Americans respond to the rise of right-wing populism; the literature looks at activism in the United States after 2011.

Violence

In his writing on violence, Johan Galtung made valuable contributions to the field. His early work has been built on by scholars both in and out of peace studies. What follows is a brief overview of this scholarship and a discussion looking at current conceptions of violence. Early on, Galtung's 1969 article "Violence, peace, and peace research" provided and jumping off point to explore issues of violence. Galtung defines violence as "the difference between the actual and the potential" (Galtung, 1969, p 4). Implicit in this definition of violence is the assumption that

humans desire to seek their full potential and that which prevents them from reaching it is to be considered violent. Accordingly, the potential is where we could be, and our actual is where we are, and anything that prevents us from getting to where we could be is violence.

Galtung provides an analysis of three different types of violence: personal/direct violence, structural violence, and cultural violence. Personal violence is what most people think of when they think of violence—the use of physical force. Galtung sees direct violence as that which disrupts a human's full somatic realization. Direct violence occurs when a person or object interrupts a person's physical potential in a given moment, such as hitting, stabbing, or shooting.

Structural violence is more easily understood using the actual-versus-potential analysis. For example, say there is a cure or treatment for a common disease, and all that is required is a visit to the doctor's office. Anybody can have access to the cure if they go to the doctor, but not everybody can afford to go to the doctor. Because a person *could be* cured (their potential state), but they are not cured because they cannot afford to go to the doctor (their actual state), structural violence is present. However, if there was no cure, then violence would not be present.

Galtung follows up his work establishing these two spheres of violence with an analysis of how this violence manifests. In his article "Cultural violence," Galtung (1990) sees violence as existing in the symbolic spheres of our existence where structural or direct violence are justified. Galtung (1990) provides some examples of cultural violence, and these include religion, ideology, language, science, and art that justifies structural violence and makes it appear part of the natural order of things (p. 296-301). He is highlighting the fact that most of the institutions that we rely on as a society perpetuate cultural violence.

Marx

Much of what we see today as social movements or activism started with Karl Marx and the early communists. Workers' movements laid the foundation for the expansion of rights through activism that we've witnessed in the 20th and 21st centuries. Much of Karl Marx's scholarship addresses the exploitation of workers and their resulting alienation, subordination, and ultimately depression and anxiety. These feelings may also be attributed to a deep sense of alienation that the worker feels from being disconnected from their work—essentially, the worker is generating profit for somebody else and using their body, brain, and talent to do so. The employer treats the worker like a commodity and extracts from them all of the surplus capital in the form of labor that they can.

As one might imagine, such circumstances can cause deep stress and anxiety for the worker. As the employer demands more time and work product, the worker is giving of themselves at the peril of their own wellbeing. This further contributes to the worker's loneliness and alienation. Marx highlights four types of alienation that appear in a capitalist system: the worker is alienated from their work product, the act of production, their own human nature, and from other workers (Ata, 2021). These circumstances lead people to feel lonely, depressed, and anxious. This occurs because their work life consists of tasks they must perform in order to survive and prop up the very system that causes their unhappiness by making them do tasks they do not enjoy. Such circumstances, according to Marx, turn workers into wage slaves.

The above sets a foundation for how to think about participants and their mental state before Trump's election. Exacerbating their anxiety is the cost of living, as LA is one of the most expensive cities in which to live in the United States. Under these circumstances, participants had come into the almost year-long election season and Trump's victory already tired, burnt out, anxious, and depressed.

There are a handful of studies that assess the mental health impact of the Trump presidency on voters (Albright & Hurd, 2020; Daftary, Devereux & Elliott, 2020; Pulice-Farrow, Gonzalez, Lefevor, 2021; Simchon, et al., 2020). These studies largely agree that the election of Donald Trump had a negative impact on those who did not vote for him. The samples varied in size, and most used qualitative methodology to gather data.

The studies differed in the sample size and the length of time between interviews. Although each found severe mental health challenges caused by the election, they varied in the severity, the outcomes, the length of time people were affected by the election, and the implications of the mental health challenge people were experiencing from the election. Simchon et al. (2020) took to task studies that claim negative psychological reactions to the election spanned longer than six months. What is significant for the purpose of the current study, however, is that it is in agreement with the prevailing literature finding that the 2016 election negatively affected mental health.

Albright and Hurd (2021) set out to measure reactions and feelings related to the presidency in people who come from historically underrepresented racial, ethnic, and socio-economic groups. Further, they wanted to confirm that activism is positively correlated with anxiety. They then wanted to figure out if peer support might offset some of the anxiety related to activism. The sample consisted of college students from their predominantly white southern school. As with previous studies, they found that participants experienced negative mental health outcomes from the election. The study further found that students who already had stress about the election and who engaged in activism showed increased symptoms of anxiety. Further, they found that peer support networks did not help to mitigate the anxiety associated with activism.

Daftary, Devereux, and Elliott (2020) examined the effect of the election on women of color who are in college. They found that following the election, there was an increase in incidents of discrimination and bigotry, and this caused more stress and anxiety for women of color. Trump's bigoted rhetoric affects women of color in a multitude of ways, it works to agitate and rile up folks, and it also causes stress and anxiety, which presumably leads to outcomes in other metrics for people of color. These deep emotions, coupled with the bigoted comments and actions that, with the election of Trump, have become commonplace, may also lead to lower academic outcomes. The obvious implication is that such students should get additional support, especially while in college.

Pulice-Farrow, Gonzalez, and Lefevor (2021) examined LGBTQ connections to the community and rumination during the Trump presidency. The authors acknowledge that previous studies focused almost exclusively on gay men and lesbian women, so they set out to study individuals in the LGBTQ community who fall outside those categories. They found that increased community was positively correlated with rumination. Being with others in the

community did not help and made associated symptoms worse. They suggest that perhaps during times of political upheaval or political targeting, such groups may feel unsafe or unseen in LGBTQ spaces.

Simchon et al. (2020) expressed concern about the use of the word "trauma" and a self-diagnosis, or a designation as trauma, of a feeling that is not "real" trauma. Specifically, the authors echoed others in their field who hold that the overdiagnosis and oversimplification of the word will make it difficult to properly label the disorder in those who may have more serious cases. The authors seem to dismiss the intense feelings that accompany a political loss of this magnitude.

To be sure, the study performed by Simchon et al. (2020) was thorough and used a variety of metrics to measure depression. For example, they relied on Twitter to gauge people's continued depressive state. They used Twitter and Google metrics to determine how long after the election those who said they were depressed stayed depressed. The article that explained the study brought up a few times what they called "concept creep," which is when a word's original idea is overused or is used in the wrong way or the way it is not meant to be used, and therefore its meaning becomes too generalized. If the meaning of the word is too generalized, then it cannot be used properly and accurately in a clinical setting.

Activism

This section reviews theories used to understand and study social movements and activism. The theories are presented in chronological order and attempt to tell the story of the evolution of social movement theory. Because of the breadth of scholarship generated by the theories, summaries were the primary source of the analysis. Primary texts were employed to review ideas, expand on key concepts, and confirm interpretations.

Social Movements

Much of the social movement scholarship within North America has maintained its loyalty to resource mobilization, political opportunity structure, and framing theories (Abdul Reda et al., 2021; Buechler, 2011). Though there have been deviations and attempts to focus on the purely cultural dimensions of movements and protest, scholarship during the late 1990s seems to circle back to resource mobilization and political process theories. Much of the scholarship up until this point has focused on refining and adapting older theories rather than proposing original theories.

A glance through the current literature on social movements yields little consensus around prevailing theories to describe contemporary movements. Even during the 2011–2012 collective actions around the world (the Arab Spring, Indignados, Turkey) and across the United States (Occupy Wall Street), new, dominating theories are scant. Instead, scholars drew on elements of older theories and adapted them to contemporary movements. Even in that context, there is little agreement as to which theories and elements are instructive. Below is a quick review of the most widely used theories to explain social movements in sociology.

During the last few decades, aside from iterations of resource mobilization and the political process model, there have been a few theories that are difficult to place within any of the overarching conversations about social movements. Such theories address issues relating to social movements but are not born out of resource mobilization or political process models. Although not as prolific, these theories fill in some of the gaps of older theories, though they also create more questions about the future of social movement scholarship within sociology.

Using resource mobilization to analyze social movements situates resources as the primary requirement for successful collective action (Staggenborg, 2008). The theory emphasizes five key factors: The first is that resources and their aggregation, mostly money and labor, are key factors in interpreting and understanding social movements further, that the resources must be joined for collective benefit. Second, this joining of resources is only possible if there is some form of organization; for this reason, resource mobilization closely examines organizations in social movements. Third, in determining the success of a social movement, there is a focus on the role and contributions of outside actors to the social movement. Fourth, a supply and demand model can be applied to the flow of resources toward and away from specific social movements. (McCarthy & Zald, 1977, p. 1216). The emphasis on resources and the relationship with organizations limits the flexibility of the theory and narrows its scope. The focus seems to be on the success of social movements rather than why they start or why people participate.

Lastly, resource mobilization incorporates an analysis of what McCarthy and Zald call "costs and rewards" to explain participation in social movements. Such a succinct summary of the primary factors of a movement, according to the resource mobilization model, clearly demonstrates the adoption of economic principles and the shift to an analysis of the structures, organizations, and resources that comprise a movement.

Framing

In their article “Frame alignment processes, macro-mobilization, and movement participation,” Snow et al. (1986) proposed an expansion of resource mobilization principles using some of the older social psychological principles. They use the term “frame alignment: to “refer to the linkage of individual and SMO (Social Movement Organization) interpretive orientations, such that some set of individual interests, values, and beliefs and SMO activities, goals, and ideology are congruent and complementary” (p. 464). Frame alignment is a response to the many criticisms of resource mobilization as over-emphasizing rational choice and failing to acknowledge the role of human behavior.

The authors begin by elaborating on the gaps left by previous theories. The first is that they fail to pay adequate attention to the nuanced reasons that people participate in movements. Second, these theories are insufficient because of their underdeveloped view of participation as a static and unchanging decision that individuals make one time. The third shortcoming is that past theories do not pay adequate attention to social movement processes that relate to participation (p. 467), such as means of recruitment, and how they are different across social movements

Peace

Positive peace, or social justice, is more than just the absence of war; it is a system where violence ceases to exist and is replaced by structures of peace. Positive peace is the end goal of peacebuilding. One of the ways to achieve positive peace from a Peace and Conflict Studies perspective is by eroding away structural violence (Galtung, 1969). Only by eliminating structures and mechanisms that perpetuate violence can peaceful societies be developed where people can reach their full potential (Boulding, 2000; Galtung, 1969).

Galtung (1969) sees structures as mechanisms through which humans can harm other humans unintentionally. This can occur by people just performing their job duties as defined by already established structures. According to Galtung, these structures erode life and work slowly through tools such as misery, hunger, and eventually death. Therefore, according to Galtung, by analyzing structures, we may be able to turn violent structures into structures that are less violent (Positive Peace, 2008).

Social movements, by their nature, seek to dismantle institutions that perpetuate structural violence. This fact is exemplified in some of the most prominent movements of the twentieth century, such as the civil rights movement and its goal of dismantling. Literature in the field is unequivocal about this feature, and there are several publications that speak to the nonviolent approach to social movements (Ackerman & Duvall, 2000; Boulding, 2000; Sharp & Paulson, 2005).

In his series, *Social Movements Conflict and Change,* Patrick Coy publishes articles that use existing social movement theories to address topics relating to imbalances of power and brings the conversation under the peace and conflict studies umbrella. Among them is an article by Abby L. Stone (2011) that addresses the movement–counter-movement relationship of the LGBTQ and religious right as they engage with ballot referenda and initiatives. The study in Stone's article provides context for the current study, as it looks at the various tactics used by the LGBTQ community to resist oppressive and regressive politics. Similarly, the current study began as an examination of the #ResistMarch—itself a throwback to early Pride marches of the 1970s—as part of the larger LGBTQ movement and a response to the countermovement brought about by the rise of right-wing populism.

Queerness

Following World War II, there were significant cultural shifts in the United States. Gender roles became clearly defined as women returned from the factory floor back into the home. Consumerism and pronatalism served as the prevailing ethos of the time (D'emilio, 2020; Escoffier, 1998). At around the same time, with an increase in wage labor, people were less reliant on a family unit for survival. Meanwhile, people were moving in large numbers to cities and more urban areas. This shift contributed to a willingness for people to not have to rely on

family. They, therefore, have the choice to move out on their own. These new social patterns provided space to explore sexual identity. (D'Emilio, 2000)

The years following the war were typified by conformity and rigid social and political identities. The 1960s, however, marked a turn away from conformity and the proliferation of literature that saw homosexuality as a valid and valued part of a complex social world. No longer was it considered a threat or condition to generate pity (Escoffier, 1998).

A Note on Homonormativity

American tradition and American culture are inextricably tied to capitalism and consumerism, so much so that it is near impossible to extricate these from any sector of life-including gender. Heterosexuality, then, is the normative or default assumption bolstered and promoted by capitalism and markets. Similarly, homosexuality has gained acceptance in liberal democracies, and as a fixture in the normative framework of sexuality, it too is bolstered by capitalism and enjoys a symbiotic relationship with consumerism.

This brand of homosexuality encourages assimilation and discourages difference. Encourages consumerism and pro-capitalist behavior and discourages that which does not bolster or celebrate limitless accumulation. Homonormativity is respectability politics and polished acceptable sexuality that lets people avoid discomfort. In his discussion of the phenomenon, Branfman (2019) references Lisa Duggan's (2002) pivotal work on homonormativity. According to Branfman:

> [H]omonormativity names how some LGBTQ people seek acceptance by adopting heteronormative values and institutions interwoven with capitalism and state control, rather than challenging these institutions. Because homonormativity seeks acceptance on the terms set by the dominant society, it advances the "most assimilated, gender-appropriate, politically mainstream portions of the gay community" while stigmatizing the rest (2003, p. 41).

By reproducing those features of heterosexuality that oppress and ignore LGBTQ people and punish differences, homonormative structures perpetuate homophobia. What's worse is they also perpetuate and shore up the various structures associated with capitalism and therefore contribute to the alienation and oppression of other minoritized groups.

LGBTQ Studies

LGBTQ studies find their origin in the homophile movement of the 1960s and 1970s and the gay liberation movement that was set off by Stonewall. This homophile group struggled in academia, having to fight protracted and bitter battles for tenure and promotion (Escoffier, 1998). Much of their audience and support came from the community outside of academia. This group of stonewall intellectuals sought to examine homosexuality in a larger historical and pre-determined context. They employed modernist approaches, such as essentialism, to illustrate the history and inevitability of homosexuality. Their essentialist approach draws on a static notion of homosexuality imbued with certain characteristics throughout history.

This essentialist approach was the dominant theory during the beginning of the 1970s. Escoffier (1998) summarizes this succinctly:

> [The] outpouring if lesbian and gay thought and history in the early 1970s initially assumed that the homosexual experience in different periods of history and in different cultures reveals a type of human personality called the homosexual. Scholars looked for their antecedents as a way of claiming ancestors, of validating themselves through the achievements of great and famous Queers and dykes. They searched for evidence that homosexuality is transhistorical, natural, or essential. (p. 110)

Loovas, Elia, and Yep (2006) aptly view this approach as a piece of the wider intellectual movement of modernism. They characterize it as being part of a traditional analysis aimed at uncovering that which is knowable using rationality and scientific methods (p. 4). This approach sees coming out as part of a larger process of both personal and social history. Coming out in this sense is part of an individual's development and self-exploration.

Queer Theory and Identity

The inception of Queer theory can be traced back to an academic conference organized by Teresa de Lauretis at the University of California–Santa Cruz in 1990. She situated the conference and introduced to academia, a term she heard being used by LGBTQ youth in New York in the 1980s. At the time, "Queer" described oddity or anti-sociality and had been considered a pejorative term. Halperin (2003) summarizes De Lauretis's radical decision:

[s]he hoped both to make theory Queer (that is, to challenge the heterosexist underpinnings and assumptions of what conventionally passed for 'theory' in academic circles) and to Queer theory (to call attention to everything that is perverse about the project of theorizing sexual desire and

sexual pleasure). Queer theory was thus a placeholder for a hypothetical knowledge practice not yet in existence but for whose consummation was devout to be wished. (p. 340)

Therefore, it is no accident that de Lauretis chose this precise word, as it served to disrupt both social and academic constituencies (Marinucci, 2016). The use of the word also serves as an abrupt disruption of "normalcy" (heterosexuality), much as the existence of LGBTQ individuals are a political and social disruption to preconceived notions of sex.

When it emerged as an area of study, it was unclear what Queer theory was referring to and how it should be applied. Many point to Michel Foucault's (1990) *The History of Sexuality,* Judith Butler's (1990) *Gender Trouble,* and Eve Kosofsky Sedgewick's (1990) *The Epistemology of the Closet* as foundational texts (Maranucci, 2016). Although written before the term was coined, they mark the first attempt to connect a challenge to gay and lesbian studies with a challenge to the heterosexist configuration of academia.

The rise of Queer theory as an intellectual tradition parallels the rise of social constructionism and the rejection of essentialism in framing homosexuality. Those who adhere to essentialism see homosexuality as a naturally occurring phenomenon that has been present throughout human history. At the same time, those who view sexuality through the lens of constructionism see it as an arbitrarily created category that may not exist or may be viewed differently in other cultures or time periods.

The opaque explanation of Queer theory has persisted by design. One cannot simply put into words how to define an area of study that is intentionally non-normative and hostile to a definition. The approach allows for a cross-disciplinary application to any subject or topic that assumes sexual normativity (Hall and Jagose, 2013). This has created an opportunity for analysis of sexuality in connection with other social and political non-normative subjects, such as those related to religion, race, class, or ethnicity.

Defining what is "Queer" helps to clarify the theoretical approach and, according to Escoffier (1998), provides a clear understanding of what the term has come to mean in terms of gender and sexuality:

> 'Queer' includes those who identify as homosexual, lesbian, or gay; those men (who may not identify as homosexuals) who have sex with men, and those women who have sex with women; bisexuals; transvestites, transsexuals, and transgendered people; sadomasochists and leather people; and all those who have a sexual preference that is not

> normative [...] 'Queer' privileges that which is 'not normal' – it defends the different, marginal, and the oppositional. (pg. 174)

Just as the term "Queer" signifies a rejection of normative sexual orientations and gender identities, Queer theory represents a shift of focus away from white, cis, heteronormative scholarship. In one of the few analyses of Queer theory and peace studies, Mizzi and Byrne (2015) characterize the word as having "been reclaimed by activists and scholars to pushback against the violent use of language, reshift the balance of power, and position the term as a preferable and useful term to challenge heterosexism and heteropatriacrchy" (p. 201).

The specific term was chosen to provoke, specifically to interrupt, what de Lauretis considered to be the complacency of gay and lesbian studies. She believed the field took a formulaic approach to the study of gay male topics and lesbian topics. The field maintained an underlying assumption of equity and the belief that both can follow the same trajectory of research and analysis (Halperin, 2003).

As a parallel ambition, de Lauretis also wanted to move the field away from the domination of empirical social scientists and introduce a theoretical discussion. Such addition may bring into the field what Halperin (2003) calls "a problematic of multiple differences" (p. 340). A phrase meant to convey domination of the field by white, middle-class men who engaged in a homogenized discourse of difference.

Conclusion

We can look to a handful of theoretical approaches to understanding data in peace studies. When it comes to the rise of right-wing populism in the post-Obama era, an analysis of violence, Marxism, social movement theory, and Queer theory are useful in unpacking the data. Activism is a theme that seems to run through all of these theories. Participants voiced a strong desire to participate in activism, and these theories incorporate this principle.

METHODOLOGY

To thoroughly investigate the effects of the rise of right-wing populism in the post-Obama era on the LGBTQ community in LA, an appropriate and intensive course of action is necessary. The review and investigation that addresses this question require an approach that is tailored to the unique experiences of the subjects and is designed to highlight relevant data. In short, the research approach must meet the research purpose.

What follows is a discussion of how the data was gathered and an explanation of the various practices employed to this end. First, the explanation begins by laying out the rationale for a qualitative iterative method. Second, a discussion of the participants in the study and other sources of data is provided. Third, the approach to data collection and analysis is reviewed. Finally, the limitations of the study and the research approach are discussed.

Rationale for Research Approach

Here the justification for the research paradigm is discussed. This is done in the context of the research methodology and research question. I begin by discussing the advantage of qualitative methods for this study. Next, I define Grounded Theory and explain why this method is appropriate for the study.

Research Paradigm: Qualitative Research

PACS provides a lens into human interactions and relationships. Research in the discipline covers a diverse range of topics, including peace education and storytelling. Because the field focuses on the human experience, which is varied and dynamic, a qualitative methodology is appropriate.

Qualitative inquiries aim to unpack and understand how people traverse the world. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2018), it "involves an interpretive naturalistic approach to the world. Qualitative researchers study people in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena and experiences in terms of the meaning people bring to them" (p. 42). It seeks to understand how people interact with their surroundings; therefore, it is constructivist by nature.

Qualitative research is concerned with how participants experience the world. In furtherance of this goal, researchers are the primary instruments of data collection. The

qualitative methodology requires that the researcher immerse themselves in the world of participants while collecting data (Cooper, 2014). Subsequently, the researcher strives to describe the meaning of the data from the point of view of the participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). A thorough and detailed investigation of the research question in this study calls for a qualitative methodology to be used.

Qualitative research uses thick descriptions. Qualitative research "is an important aspect in increasing the complexity of the research by thoroughly describing the study's setting, research participants, and related experiences so as to produce findings and interpretations that will allow readers to derive contextualized meaning" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018, p. 42) Thick description provides a rich context for those reading the study and allows for readers to form their own ideas, views, and opinions of the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

The qualitative inquiry includes several methods, such as ethnography, interviews, and participatory action research. The paradigm itself does not favor any one method. It is incumbent on the researcher to match the method to the research problem, questions, and purpose (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). In doing so, the researcher must consider several factors, including the research participants, the time, the place, and even the political context.

I set out to gain an in-depth understanding of how people are feeling and where they see our society going. Further, I sought to uncover how people were responding to what felt like a significant historical moment. Because some of these issues can be nuanced and maybe even sensitive and I determined a qualitative methodology most appropriate. Going about my inquiry in this manner gave me an opportunity two interpret and make notes of nonverbal indicators. Further, it allowed me to have a friendly connection with participants and provide an empathetic ear for difficult conversations. Finally, qualitative methodologies incorporate principles such as storytelling and narrative, which play a key role in peace studies.

Research Methodology: Grounded Theory

The subject matter and political moment of the study call for a grounded theory (GT) approach because this moment is socially, politically, and technologically unique, and GT allows for an iterative process that allows for an openness to an emergent social phenomenon. Charmaz (2006) sees GT as a loose but organized set of principles that are employed to help researchers build theory out of data. GT researchers approach their subjects with a blank slate and with curiosity instead of with a hypothesis or any preconceived ideas of what they will find. Below is

an overview of GT and the general approaches used in such studies.

Data is anything the researcher may come across during their research, and the data may exist in the research setting or simply relate to one's topic. One can gather data in GT using whatever tools are appropriate for their discipline. Ethnographic methods, intensive interviewing, and textual analysis provide such platforms. The method of data gathering is determined by factors such as the research question and the personal preferences and skills of the researcher. Some may call for interviews, while others use anonymous questionnaires, and other research questions may demonstrate the need for combined or multiple approaches (Charmaz, 2006). Ideally, researchers will choose data-gathering methods that allow for emerging ideas. Emergence is a cornerstone of GT.

Researchers come to the data-gathering experience with a general idea of what they want to explore. Charmaz (2006) evokes Blumer's sensitizing concepts, as they provide the researcher an idea of what to pursue and sensitize the scholar to tailor their questions accordingly (p. 16). Disciplinary perspectives also influence starting points and guiding interests for research as researchers tend to pull from a body of literature and theoretical foundations when approaching the data. GT requires that the researcher remain flexible and pay attention to the topics that surface in the preliminary stages of data gathering. In doing so, early researchers can adapt their data collection accordingly.

With fresh information, one may tweak their interview questions or make other adjustments to enrich their data. Charmaz (2006) summarizes the perspective best: "Sensitizing concepts and disciplinary perspectives provide a place to start, not to end. Grounded theorists use sensitizing concepts as tentative tools for developing their ideas about processes that they define in their data. If particular sensitizing concepts prove to be irrelevant, then we dispense with them" (p. 17). Emergence is the centerpiece of the GT approach. Researchers must not impose

their preconceived ideas or disciplinary interests in the research. Value from the GT method is evident in the concepts and themes that are unexpected. The data defines the direction of the research, and the task of GT is to allow the process to remain free from the imposition of one's own framework.

An interview is a conversation facilitated by the interviewer so that they may better understand the experience of the person they are interviewing (Charmaz, 2006). An intensive interview seeks the participant's interpretation of their own experience. The interview will direct the participant to reflect on the experience and provide an interpretation or perspective about what occurred. GT is served by asking open-ended questions that allow participants to expand on their impressions and experiences. Intensive interviews require the researcher to go deep and ask follow-up questions, which may allow the participant to expand and engage in storytelling (Charmaz, 2006). Much like GT, the process of intensive interviewing is both flexible and emergent.

Research Site: Los Angeles

The location was chosen for several reasons that are specific to the city itself. First, LA has a rich history of LGBTQ history and activism. At the same time, as people in New York and Chicago were starting to resist police violence and police raids, so too were people in LA. As early as 1966, LGBTQ people resisted police raids in the Compton Cafe Riot in the following year at the Black Cat Café (Faderman & Timmons, 2009). LA was also home to one of the first openly LGBTQ organizations, the Mattachine society. The city is home to, and the birthplace of, the Metropolitan Community Churches, which were established in 1968 as the first church to cater to and openly serve LGBTQ people. Three years later, the first Jewish synagogue to cater to LGBTQ people in the world was started in LA. There is a plethora of similarly noteworthy examples of a vibrant LGBTQ life in LA that makes it an appropriate site for LGBTQ research.

Second, the project evolved from its original focus. Initially, the project approach was to interview attendees of the #ResistMarch in LA, which marked the first Gay Pride celebration since Trump was elected. In place of the usual parade with its party-like atmosphere and a quick stroll down Santa Monica Boulevard, organizers planned to take the original route of the first Pride parade in LA. It began on Hollywood Boulevard in front of the Mann's Chinese Theater, and the crowd marched to and convened nearly a mile away on Santa Monica and Doheny, near the border of Beverly Hills. For reasons I will explain below, I shifted the focus of my research

inquiry, but this event helps explain why I committed to doing my research in LA.

Third, I was raised in LA and have firm roots and a network of people who can connect me with potential participants if I struggle to find interviewees. This is significant because it can help me save resources because I have close friends and family and therefore do not need to find a place to stay while performing my research. My sense of familiarity with the area means I will have an easier time navigating the city than I would if I chose a major city elsewhere.

Fourth, at the time of the interviews, politics and society felt unpredictable and unmoored, and I did not feel comfortable conducting this study in an unfamiliar location. That is not to say that rural areas or suburbs are intrinsically unsafe. It mostly has to do with my gender presentation and my own feelings of safety and comfort. Of all the cities in the United States, I feel most comfortable in LA. This was not a primary consideration in the study, though it is a consideration worth mentioning.

Finally, I chose LA as a site for my research because the LGBTQ community in LA is under-researched in the social sciences. Many of the most recent studies involving the LGBTQ community in LA have been quantitative and health-related, namely HIV and AIDS research. Clearly necessary endeavors that one hopes will continue into the future.

Interviews

The interviews were conducted at a place and time that was most convenient for the interviewees. Because LA's geography and density require people to spend a lot of time in their cars, most folks tend to dislike driving. The locations where I met people include coffee shops, apartment, their offices, and the LA LGBT center. Because I recruited participants through snowball sampling, I felt safe going to participant's living spaces

Research sample

Recruitment and Participant Selection

Prior to starting my research, I received approval from the University of Manitoba Joint Research Ethics Board. During the process of seeking approval, I created the informed consent

contract for participants (Appendix 2). The form was clear that research participants could end the interview at any time. It was around this time that I also developed the questions I would be asking in the interviews (Appendix 3).

Initial attempts at recruitment were mostly fruitless. My first attempt to recruit participants for this study was at the #ResistMarch in LA. The march itself took place on June 11, 2017 and presented an opportunity to recruit a demographically diverse group of participants. In preparation, I created five hundred fliers to hand out during the march (see Appendix 1). The fliers briefly explain the nature of the study and provide contact information for the researcher.

With the help of two friends, I distributed most of the fliers. We handed them to those willing to take them and left piles in stores for customers. Perhaps it was distrust in institutions, or a shortage of leisure time, the political and social atmosphere, or simply social anxiety, but only one person reached out to me from our effort that day. The person who reached out was subsequently interviewed and included in this study.

Once I realized that I was not going to get participants from the march, I pivoted and refocused my energy on my networks and connections. I used the REB approved flier for the #ResistMarch to convey the relative information about the study on social media. I reached out to my contacts and posted fliers in places where members of the LGBTQ community may gather during the day—coffee shops, bookstores, and brunch restaurants. I also made announcements and offered fliers at community and local gatherings.

Following the failure to recruit participants at the #ResistMarch and the subsequent adjustment to recruitment, the researcher revisited the interview guide. In doing so, they took care to abide by the questions and topics previously discussed by the committee and approved by the research ethics board. The questions were adjusted to reflect individual experiences, generally considering the rise of right-wing populism. In place of questions specific to the resistance march were questions specific to the individual.

Because the questions were designed for those who attended the resistance march, an activist event, there was no longer a presumption that participants engaged in activism. The focus shifted from activism and the #ResistMarch to participant reactions to the rise of right-wing populism and activism. This shifted the focus from activism as it relates to the March to activism as it relates to individual reactions to the rise of right-wing populism. This shift entails a risk that participants would not have examples of activism or any interest in activism as it is popularly

conceived. The researcher did not have familiarity with participants prior to interviews and therefore did not have knowledge of their political leanings or relationship to right-wing populism. Please See Appendix 4 for the revised interview questions.

In the end, however, participants were selected primarily using snowball sampling. Therefore, most participants were in the same relational group. The study sought out LGBTQ individuals from a variety of backgrounds. Because those whom I sought to interview were members of a marginalized community, I took extra care to make sure that none of the participants felt pressure to participate. I remained cognizant of the fact that the atmosphere at the time of the interviews (the summer of 2017) was tense, and trust in institutions, including institutions of higher education, was waning.

Given the unexpected difficulty of recruitment, I had a few limitations around inclusion in the study. Therefore, the criteria included two non-negotiables: (1) participants were at least 18 years old, and (2) participants were self-identified members of the LGBTQ community. I was sure not to actively solicit participants; people contacted me to be a part of the study. I was concerned that folks would feel pressure or obligation to participate if I asked directly. In other words, if I was out in the community hanging a flier or speaking about the study and someone showed interest, I gave them a flier and told them to send me a message. I did not take their information and contact them; I saw the extra step of them having to reach out to me as a safeguard against peer pressure.

The Pool (or Population) of Sample

Aside from the #ResistMarch and Pride itself, which primarily occurred in West Hollywood, the region I recruited from was the eastern part of the city bordering downtown, which includes Eagle Rock, Silver Lake, Los Feliz, and Echo Park. Though today this area is becoming rapidly gentrified, it used to be a bastion of LGBTQ culture. Now the LGBTQ community in this area consists primarily of gay and Queer women and nonbinary people.

West Hollywood was my other option; it is comprised mostly of cisgender gay men, and I decided not to recruit in West Hollywood because I had already done so during Pride when I dropped off flyers and thought I might have a better chance of recruiting participants on the east side because I knew people there. Further, the areas where there are population centers and shop stores on the east side are a bit more condensed; in West Hollywood LGBTQ folks are spread out more thinly.

The part of town where the interviews were conducted is on the eastern edge of the city and borders downtown LA. The region includes Silver Lake, which is home to the Black Cat Cafe. This neighborhood attracted LGBTQ folks back in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s as many of these adjacent downtown neighborhoods were home to low-income and immigrant communities. The high cost of rent in other parts of the city meant that young people moved into these areas. Currently, home prices in this area have increased to the point that immigrant and low-income communities are being pushed even further to the east of LA. Even so, these neighborhoods still appear diverse and manage to strike a nice balance between honoring the old and welcoming the new.

The group was mostly middle to low-wage earners who range in age from mid-20s to early 40s. The chart below describes the demographic breakdown (F= Female, M= Male, NB= Non-binary) of the research participants. This demographic breakdown is gleaned from interviews and associations with participants (i.e. how they refer to themselves). At the time of the interviews, there existed a volatile and dangerous political environment, and therefore, potentially sensitive information related to gender and sexuality was not elicited from participants.

Table 1. Participants

Pseudonym	Age range	Gender	Occupation
Abby	25-30	F	Teacher
Debby	30-35	F	Admin
Courtney	40-45	F	Counselor
Carly	40-45	F	Retail
Finley	30-35	NB	Mid-level Corporate
Darby	35-40	F/NB	Self-Employed
Mallory	30-35	F	In School
Katy	25-30	F	Designer
Frankie	35-40	NB	Med Tech
Josy	35-40	F	Higher Ed
Joni	30-35	F	Designer
Jackie	35-40	F	Hospitality

Janie	35-40	F	First Responder
Ari	35-40	M	Music Exec
Sammy	25-30	NB	School
Marley	35-40	F	Teacher
Charlie	30-35	F	Childcare
Carey	25-30	F	Med Tech
Casey	35-40	F	Designer

At the time of the interviews, the political environment was increasingly toxic. The president was making threats directed at minoritized populations, and his followers helped follow through on some of his missives. The feeling of impending danger was omnipresent during the interviews. The president was behaving in a manner that was unpredictable and irrational. For safety reasons, I did not collect for publication sexual orientation or other potentially dangerous information.

Technical notes. Once people reached out to me, I scheduled a time and place to meet and do the interview. I remained flexible and amenable to the schedules and preferences of those I was interviewing. If I was connected with someone through a friend, I would go to their apartment to conduct the interviews if they requested. Some of the interviews were performed at coffee shops at the LGBTQ center and even in people's cars.

Before starting the interview, people would review and sign the informed consent. I would go over the main points, emphasizing that they were free to stop the interview at any time, with or without explanation. I also pointed out contact information for my advisor and ways to get in touch with me. Once the form was signed and I was comfortable that people understood what I was and was not asking of them, the interviews commenced.

The interviews were recorded and later transcribed. They were recorded using an old iPhone that I still have in my possession over and are stored on a password-protected computer at my home. After the transcriptions were complete, the recorded interviews were destroyed.

Ethical Considerations

Whenever doing research with somebody from the LGBTQ community, it is critical to make sure they are not outed or otherwise exposed to danger from your interaction. This principle was at the top of my mind during the recruitment and interview process. Although it is a

big city, LA has small tight knit communities throughout. The LGBTQ community and the east side is no exception. Therefore, I took great pains to respect people's anonymity and sense of privacy. Another concern is the nature of the interview topics, and they had the potential to bring up topics that are difficult to talk about or that leave participants feeling depressed or sad. To mitigate this, I remain very aware of where the participants were mentally and emotionally. I reminded people that if they felt uncomfortable, we could end the interview at any time.

Data Analysis

According to Charmaz (2006), coding is the "categorizing data with a short name that simultaneously summarizes and accounts for each piece of data" (p. 43). In other words, the researcher takes chunks of their data and assigns a word or words that name that and similar data. This allows for the categorization of similar chunks of data and provides a clearer view of what the research is trying to say. Coding begins the analytic process of interpreting and understanding the lives and experiences of participants. The codes do not deviate from the data and tend to indicate an action. Codes are short and can add context, show experience, or convey points of view. The coding process will also raise questions, forcing the researcher to revisit their data and perhaps follow up with participants.

Coding provides the vehicle for the researcher to turn their data into theory. The codes highlight significant events and actions that will lay the analytical groundwork for an emergent theory. Charmaz highlights two significant phases of the coding process. In the first phase, the researcher takes a portion of the data and names it. The researcher will also note any questions or leads that require follow-up. This phase requires both a close reading of the data and openness to its theoretical variations.

The second phase consists of categorizing and organizing the data, using the most frequent codes that surfaced during initial coding. The coding process determines what the findings of the research are, and the focus may likely differ from what was in a research proposal as this process is emergent and takes its own direction. Codes are created from the data; they are emergent, and are defined only after the data is analyzed.

When coding, researchers interpret the language of participants and construct codes using their own language and understanding of participant observations and experiences. This highlights two significant elements to consider when coding—language and understanding. The language used by both participant and researcher shapes how data is interpreted and categorized.

The understanding and interpretation of the person doing the coding determines what the codes look like and how they form. The researcher in such circumstances, is not neutral but has a decidedly significant influence on how data is coded. It is incumbent on the researcher to remain reflexive and be aware of their own assumptions and ideas. The process requires the researcher to interpret data and create codes from the view of the participant. The process is interactive, and the researcher's role is to understand the participants by interpreting their actions through their own points of view.

Initial Coding

During this phase, it is important to keep an open mind to theoretical themes as they arise. Researchers must stick close to the data and remain vigilant in their efforts to avoid applying preconceived theoretical lenses. The very cornerstone of GT is the emergence of new concepts and theories in an organic process, which occurs when researchers lay aside prior concepts they have worked with. This is not to say that one must ignore the unavoidable beliefs and ideas they bring with them to the research. However, they must put those aside and look at the data. Gleaning the point of view of the participant is paramount. To do so, one must remain close to the data; it has been suggested (Glaser, 1978; Charmaz, 2014) that using action words and gerunds helps with this.

Line-by-line coding is a process in which the researcher goes through each sentence of the material and proscribes its meaning. The method can be used with a variety of data, such as interviews, ethnographies, or autobiographies. Voluminous and detailed accounts are most appropriate for line-by-line coding. The coding should begin during the data-gathering process. For interviews, it helps get an idea of what participants are thinking about and what they consider important, that is, information that can be further explored in subsequent conversations and participants. Rather than reading field notes or interviews in one go, line-by-line coding allows the researcher to see processes and generate ideas rather than just relevant themes.

Focused Coding

This is the second phase of coding. Here, the researcher takes large segments of data and uses the initial codes to sift through them. A decision must be made as to which analytic codes are the best fit to synthesize the data. At this stage, the researcher may go back and look at earlier data anew to uncover previously missed or glossed-over topics that may fit into your categories. At this point, you can go across your data and make comparisons between codes. As

summed up by Charmaz (2006), "[t]hrough comparing data to data, we develop the focused code. Then we compare data to these codes, which helps to refine them" (p. 60).

Theoretical Coding

Here the researcher reviews their memos and substantive codes and compares categories to one another in search of a code that connects each category to the other. In other words, "a GT study's theoretical code is the relational model through which all substantive codes/categories are related to the core category" (Hernandez, 2009, p. 52).

Theoretical codes emerge from the relationships of codes and categories to one another. They bring together the substantive data uncovered during focused coding. They can clarify and add cohesion to data, assuming there is a fit between substantive data and the code. During the previous stages of coding theoretical codes will begin to take shape, and the researcher will recognize categories for their substantive codes.

GT has its roots in the sociological philosophy of symbolic interactionism (SI) (Chamberlain-Salaun, Mills, & Usher, 2013). SI is seen to be instrumental in integrating the narrative into a conceptual framework. Or, as Charmaz (2006) eloquently describes, "the codes that arose from symbolic interactionist sensibilities give a theoretical foundation or conceptual infrastructure that integrates the narrative" (pp. 65). Although GT is informed by SI, the researcher must take care not to impose any preconceived ideas onto the theoretic codes as they form. Charmaz (2006) warns of assuming objectivity because the theoretical codes may present such an illusion. It is not as though the codes have been agreed on by other scholars or can be blindly and uncritically applied. The theoretical codes are meant to sharpen the analysis, not to be imposed on data or forced to fit around data points.

Subjectivity and Reflexivity

Feminist approaches to research emphasize the experiences and placement of the individuals performing the study. Such an approach highlights the role of the researcher as a human having a subjective experience. This orientation stands in contrast to the traditional conception of the researcher as an objective and passive observer who maintains neutrality and lacks emotion. This inclusive and flexible approach to research has led to the application of feminist methodology across disciplines (Hesse-Biber, Gilmartin, & Lyndenberg, 1999). The multidisciplinary and emergent nature of feminism poses a challenge to researchers to "prevent their own foundational categories" from stifling the emergence of marginalized identities and

ways of knowing (Hesse-Biber et al., 1999, p. 5). On the contrary, it is incumbent on the researcher to practice reflexivity and locate their own personal and political experiences and biography in relation to the research (Gottfried, 1996).

Throughout the research process, the feminist approach calls on the researcher to center their relationship with their subjects and maintain an awareness of their social background and assumptions. Reflexivity is a process that allows the researcher to see how these characteristics and circumstances influence the research (Hesse-Biber, 2014). Thus "by engaging in an epistemology that transcends the binaries of objectivity and subjectivity, feminists are able to embrace the idea that knowledge of social reality is marred not only by the sociopolitical context of 'reality,' but also by the personal concerns and commitments of the researcher involved in the knowledge production" (Menon, 2009, p. 250). Therefore, reflexivity demands that the researcher maintain an awareness of their own motivations and biases while also using such subjectivities for the benefit of the research.

Conclusion

Intensive interviewing was used to gather data in this GT study. While the original plan was to interview those who attended the resist March in LA, participants were recruited using snowball sampling. Interviews were transcribed and coded for both general and specific themes. These themes were then analyzed and organized in a way that is coherent. This study was performed under the supervision of a faculty advisor and the Joint Research Ethics Board of the University of Manitoba.

CONFLICT

The intra-personal struggles that LGBTQ people face often bleed over into their interpersonal relationships. These interpersonal conflicts touch on issues related to identity, belonging, history, and personal safety. In this study, these interpersonal divides fell under two categories, namely inter-LGBTQ conflict and bigotry. One centers on issues within the community and the other on issues outside or external to the community. Given these tensions, it is no wonder participants struggle with belonging. They reported both issues with belonging to the LGBTQ community as well as to society in general.

Those who were interviewed for this study saw much of the inter-LGBTQ conflict arising from tensions connected with identity. These conflicts play out in the community much as they have elsewhere in society; this is particularly true regarding race and gender (Crenshaw, 2014; Hill-Collins, 2019). Participants voiced concern over the treatment of transgender and BIPOC individuals in the LGBTQ community. There was also talk of a class divide in the community between gay men and lesbians. The tension that exists between these groups dates back to the very first LGBTQ organizations.

Participants spoke about bias and bigotry as dynamic features of their lives. Bigotry exists overtly against LGBTQ people, yet it also comes in covert ways. Some struggled to identify specific actions the Trump administration took to curtail the rights of LGBTQ people, yet they felt that something in society had shifted. It is a phenomenon that is not new to the participants, as many acknowledge that it existed before the rise of right-wing populism and that it will persist after Trump is out of office. Regarding bias and bigotry, the participants expressed concern for the transgender community and what they will face.

This chapter explores, through the eyes of the interviewees, the significance of intra-communal LGBTQ conflict in terms of identity belonging, past conflict, bias, and bigotry as it relates to hate and protecting the trans community. What follows is a discussion of these trends, namely, conflict among members of the LGBTQ community and bigotry experienced by members of the community.

Intra-LGBTQ Conflict: The “L,” the “G,” and the “T”

This chapter explores, through the eyes of my interviewees, the significance of intra-LGBTQ violence in terms of identity, belonging, past conflict, bias, and bigotry as it relates to protecting the trans community. Since the start of gay liberation in 1969, there has been tension

between the gay male community and lesbians. The conflict originally centered on access to resources and leadership in LGBTQ organizations. This is perhaps attributable to the disproportionate power of men in society. Another difference lies in the challenges each faces as marginalized groups. Both engage with their sexuality in different ways— creating their own unique cultures. In Los Angeles, for example, each community lives in different parts of the city.

The divide in LA can lead to a sense of alienation and isolation for community members. Considering nationwide bigotry against the LGBTQ community, this conflict is particularly troubling. Mallory sums up this sentiment as follows:

> I feel like the LGBTQ community, in general, is really wrapped around the wrong stuff, I don't know. Like, I don't really feel a huge sense of community living here in LA. I don't know what it's like in other places or whatever. Sometimes I feel like there is a lot of drama and catty that makes you feel like you're not really a part of something.

Mallory speaks to a common sentiment among those interviewed—that of isolation and a dearth in the overt visibility of the LGBTQ community. However, Mallory is searching to be a part of something larger than herself and looks to her community for a sense of belonging. This quest for transcendence may be an issue unique to those in the LA area as there are few structural barriers to being LGBTQ and, therefore, a less urgent need to unite as a community.

Conflict and Identity

An area of contention in the LGBTQ community springs from identity and the labels imposed on them, specifically, the way gay men and lesbians interact with the transgender community. There has been conflict between lesbians about accepting transgender women in women-only spaces. The term sometimes applied to such lesbians is TERF (Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminist) (Burns, 2019). Some lesbians claim that transgender women are not women but are men dressed as women and should, therefore, not be allowed in women-only spaces. Therefore, transgender women are pushed out of some women's spaces; therefore, trans women do not have access to support from these groups.

Both communities—gay men and lesbians—have garnered criticism for their treatment of BIPOC. Activists and anti-racists have been critical of the gay male community in LA for racist behavior and the perception of white men as more desirable than men of color (Han, Ayala, Paul,

& Choi, 2017). This phenomenon surfaces in anecdotal accounts and is exemplified by a recent scandal with the dating app Grindr (pronounced “grinder”) (Hunte, 2020). Like other dating apps, it allows users to filter their preferences using criteria such as distance, age, or gender. However, unlike many other dating apps, Grindr allowed users to filter by ethnicity. This feature caused an uproar in and outside the LGBTQ community and spoke to the intersectional oppression that gay men experience.

Lastly, there is a concern, and sometimes a conflict, related to drinking and drug use in the community. The rates of mental illness and substance abuse among LGBTQ individuals are higher than average. Since members of this community have an increased rate of mental illness and ostracism, dependence on drugs and alcohol is predictable (Williams & Fish, 2020). Given the anxiety of coming out and unfamiliarity with norms around dating and socializing, younger community members may turn to substances to help them feel comfortable. Such behavior has caused some in the community to accuse many of the younger members of not taking the struggle for gay rights seriously. Additionally, those who try to stay sober, or take a break from drinking, may be ostracized or alienated within the community (TheAdvocateMag, 2014).

Need for Belonging

There was a feeling among participants that they feel uncomfortable and that they do not belong in LGBTQ community spaces. Many felt there was a dearth of unity and desired more coalition building between LGBTQ folks and other marginalized groups. The term “community” describes a general feeling that was never clearly defined in the interviews. As to whether LGBTQ people should take their role as Queer people more seriously and focus on creating community Mallory said:

> I am not sure. And just, generally, maybe a sense of community because sometimes I don’t feel that. And it’s strange, because why shouldn’t it be like that? You know what I mean?" And why is it that, when you go out somewhere with people like you, everyone’s judging each other, or people are separated, or things like that? I don’t know. I guess it happens with any group of people, but still. I just wish there was a different sense of community just in general.

Mallory believes that there is judgment among LGBTQ folks and that this judgment hinders a sense of community. Such a feeling connects with the previous section about race in that it makes people feel unwelcome, perhaps alienated, from the community. This feeling of alienation or isolation came up frequently in the interviews. Sometimes, people may believe they do not fit in, or they fail to meet an unspoken standard to "qualify" as a community member. For example, in understanding the culture, Carey put in the effort to learn about LGBTQ history in the hopes that she may feel more connected and welcome. She says:

> [E]ven though I know I am a part of the community, it's really hard to actually feel like I am in the community. […] I remember going out to, like, gay clubs and gay bars and always feeling like I was just observing and never a part of it. And it was so intimidating, too, because I just felt like I wasn't gay enough. Like sleeping with women wasn't enough. Like, I had to know my history, and I am working on that still. Like I was just watching that Michael Alig movie, and I was watching another movie about San Francisco and the gay movement over there. I know it's important but also I want to feel gay enough even though I am gay. Is that weird? I feel like that's my biggest—like, I fight with that.

Carey feels excluded from the community because of gaps in her knowledge of LGBTQ history. It might be instructive to know how people define a community and how they evaluate whether they belong to a community. What is interesting here is that Carey makes a loose connection between feeling like an outsider at a gay club and her knowledge of LGBTQ history. Arguably, in her mind, knowing the history of the community is the price of admission.

That sense of alienation, or separation from others in the community, is a common theme in the interviews. In addition, participants saw division within the community based on how people identify. This is reflected in Debby's answer when asked what the perfect world for LGBTQ people would look like the following:

> In my perfect world, kids wouldn't get kicked out of their houses for being gay or they would have safe spaces to go. We would have more spaces in the LGBTQ community that didn't have alcohol or drugs. There would be—. It would be affirmative, that there would not be some hierarchy with gay white men at the top, then white lesbians, and trans people of color at the bottom. Working together. Harmony. Kumbaya, holding hands. You know?

Debby touches on a few themes that others have mentioned, namely the desire for the LGBTQ community to be more supportive, positive, and inclusive. Debby identifies threats to the community from the outside and then moves on to the divisions within the community itself. It is instructive that she sees forces within the community as a more significant threat than homophobia from the outside.

Echoes of the Past: Lesbians and Gay Men

The desire for a closer connection between community members was present in most interviews. They articulate a particularly controversial and frequently cited schism that dates back to Stonewall and the origins of gay liberation. In expressing their hope for the community, Finley said they wish for connection through

> [m]ore effective coalitions… like here in California, between immigrants and the LGBTQ community. That the male LGBTQ community will become more involved in other issues—like lesbians. I see them everywhere. They show up to Black Lives Matter events. They show up to many things. I see them way more than I see gay men taking on these causes. And, you know, maybe I just notice lesbians, I don't know. But I think that it really is that lesbians tend to be more political in an empathetic way.

Finley's opinion here assumes that their community is more involved in active social change. Finley also refers to the controversy over immigration, which came up in other interviews. There is no evidence that any particular community is more or less involved in activism. Furthermore, there is no way to know whether Finley's participants at the activist events were gay men.

Mallory has similar concerns to Finley. She believes that members of the gay male community are to blame for divisions. She also views herself and her community positively and the others negatively. Despite her confirmation bias, Mallory still desires unity between the lesbian and gay male communities. When asked about her hopes for the community, Mallory said:

> Umm, I guess to have a little bit more unity. I feel like there is a divide between the lesbian community and the gay male community. I feel like—this is completely subjective—that lesbians are really accepting of the transgender community, especially trans men. But I feel like there is a divide. And it might come from a bit of misogyny and

a bit of potential male hatred from the lesbian community. But I think it would be my hope that there would be more unity and less apathy.

Mallory makes an assumption, or observation, about the gay male community and its acceptance of transgender individuals but provides very little material evidence. It appears she is in conflict with herself. While she makes judgments about the gay community in LA, she also discusses a desire for more unity in the LGBTQ community. Both of these sentiments may exist at the same time and present another example of intrapersonal conflict among members of the community.

While many participants see division in the community as a significant problem, they differ in how they see the nature of that division. For example, rather than believing the conflict exists between two groups, Ari saw the schism within a group, namely the gay male community. He described it this way:

> In our community I think one of the biggest things that can change, and should, has less to do with something political and it has to do with the way we interact with each other. There's a lot of division in our community that doesn't make sense to me. Number one—and I wish we would eradicate it—the easiest example, that is kind of sexy and fun to talk about, is Grindr or any app you are using to just meet people, whether that is for something sexual, something social, or just somewhere in between.
>
> People immediately dismiss you because of perceived categories about you. And it's like you don't ever have to meet me or whatever but why can't we treat each other with dignity? We've worked hard to come out or whatever our situation is already. Why aren't we at least treating each other with respect?
>
> You don't have to say you are interested. You can just say, "I don't think that is for me, thanks." How hard is that? Instead of "eww." And it goes way worse—"no Asians" and these things that we see.
>
> What?! How can you dismiss an entire category of people? That doesn't even make sense. If that bothers you so much that you have to say that, what does that say about you?
>
> And don't even get me started about transgender. That's a whole other thing. How

> can our community that is already marginalized have marginalization? That doesn't make any sense. It's like not all Republicans are evil and not all Democrats are social champions. Those are boxes that are convenient for our minds, but let's get to know what people really think and feel and how they vote, and let those things be the decider of whether you support that person or whether you disagree with that person, or vehemently disagree if they are radically in your face.

Ari sees the division broadly and closer to home. He points out a problem that has been generating buzz: the racism perpetuated on dating apps. Ari's calls for tolerance and acceptance of marginalized groups within the LGBTQ community further speak to the desire for transcendence. He also mentions an emerging issue, that is, the treatment of transgender people—an issue frequently mentioned among participants.

The overall consensus of participants is that LGBTQ folks are disunited and, in some cases, apathetic. The responses from those involved in the study reveal deep divisions in the LGBTQ community. Rather than embracing differences, the community seems to fear them, leading to negative conflict. The separations align with the acronym itself L-G-B-T. Abby sums up this division perfectly:

> I think we still spend a lot of time arguing with each other and agonizing over labels, and what does it mean to be bisexual, no bisexual is not a real thing, and like the divide between trans and cis, and the questioning of all this. It's just so counterproductive. It's my hope that we can find our—it's so cheesy—but it is my hope that we can come together over our similarities and stop agonizing over our differences. Because now is not the time. It's never been the time.

While many participants spoke of conflicts within the LGBTQ community, few were very specific. However, where they were specific, it seems that conflict is present most acutely as the interpersonal level. For example, the conflicts over trans women among lesbians and accusations of racial bias among gay men refer to relationships between individuals

Bias and Bigotry

When it comes to bias and bigotry in the post-Obama era, many participants observed a

continuation, and escalation, of existing biased and bigoted opinions. Some recounted specific conversations and examples of a more intolerant environment and some past incidents. They spoke of their concern for others and communicated an overall sense that people, in general, feel empowered to voice their bigotry. Participants expressed deep concern for transgender people and trans BIPOC, a targeted and marginalized group in the LGBTQ community.

Bigotry is Not New

Participants acknowledged that bigotry and hatred predate this most recent rise of right-wing populism. However, the atmosphere at the time of the interviews seemed to affect them more acutely. Josy summarizes this idea this way:

> How could this have happened, where someone of this nature is our president? Obviously there are a lot of people that—, a lot of people that don't give a fuck about women, don't give a fuck about racism, all kinds of things that are allowing someone like this—. Not allowing, but voted for this person to be elected. In a sense it is eye-opening to see how many people can be against the LGBTQ community, minorities, or whatever.

Those who conveyed anxiety and worry about the future expressed fear of the unknown—the perceived potential for the Trump administration to cause harm. At the time of the interviews, right-wing populism was just starting to take hold, and Trump had just been sworn in, so there was an opportunity for further damage.

As previously touched on, participants recognized that there are people in the United States who have bigoted views and that these preceded the rise of right-wing populism. Members of marginalized or minority groups are generally unsurprised by the election results as they have lived with such bigotry for a long time. For example, according to Josy, "it's not surprising that a man like Trump and all the bigoted racist populist right-wingers around him would exist because I know that people don't share my same views." Josy distinguishes her views and beliefs and those of right-wing populists. Norms have shifted in the United States to the point where a group that supports xenophobia and white nationalists are characterized simply as having "different views."

Since such views have always existed, it is no surprise that they have been elevated and given a platform in the current political trend. There is no longer shame surrounding bigoted or hateful beliefs; quite the opposite, these views are moving more and more into the mainstream.

Elevating such ideas spreads hateful beliefs to new audiences, ensuring their resilience. According to Abby:

> Another thing I have always said is that you can change policy, but you can't change minds. And the thing is that people around this country have hatred. And when you give them the green light to unleash their hatred, we live in a less accepting world. And that's what scares me. I feel like that's even scarier than if there was an anti-gay agenda because we can fight that through the courts. But how do you keep people from hating in their core? And I see that. And I feel that I can't give you specific examples, but I feel like we are living in a more hateful world where it is okay to be hateful.

This spread of intolerance transcends any one issue or policy and touches on the way people see the world. For example, some in the United States believe that the rise of right-wing populism and the election of Trump are anomalies and do not accurately represent the beliefs of his supporters. Other participants spoke of experiences with bigotry in a variety of communities, as Sammy recounts:

> There is history behind all this. And there still is, and has always been, this anti-Blackness in every single culture, whether it is Black, whether it is Latinx, whether it is Asian. Everywhere you go, Blackness is at the bottom of the barrel. And even there is colorism within the Black community. So that appropriation piece, where some Black people are like, I don't see where this is an issue—like, really?

Sammy stated the above while telling a story about cultural appropriation (when a dominant culture integrates components of another, often minority, culture for their benefit or enjoyment) and the acceptance of such behavior in the Black community. They bring up an excellent point that illuminates one of the nuances in the discussion about race—there is also bias and bigotry *within* marginalized communities.

Getting a Handle on the Hate

At the time of the interviews, while participants did not feel that the increased bigotry has significantly affected their daily life, they seemed to recognize its existential threat. Abby

elaborates on this point:

> I don't feel that our current administration is specifically out to target the LGBTQ community. I really don't feel that way. I feel that our current administration is bigoted and uninformed.
>
> So, banning transgender folks from the military. That hit me hard on a personal level because I have so many friends who are trans and so many friends who are trans and in the military.
>
> Does that change my day-to-day life? I can't say that it does. But I do feel that a major risk with this administration is that while they may not specifically—. Like, I think that banning trans folks from the military was an unthinking command. It was groundless. To me, it was not a strategic move. It felt like it was just a hot-headed dictator playing god with people's lives and not knowing what he was doing.
>
> And I think the bigger problem is that the administration is fostering a culture of bigotry in our society. While they may not, in my opinion, be specifically targeting the LGBTQ community or have an anti-gay agenda—because Trump is a businessman and everyone's money is green. So, there's that.

Abby touches on the argument that what is occurring is an anomaly. This school of thought claims that President Trump is only interested in making money and consolidating power and is not bigoted. The claim is that he perpetuates oppressive and bigoted policies to the extent that they appeal to his base or otherwise benefit him personally. Further, this theory implies that once he is no longer president, things will go back to normal, and those who are bigoted will go back into hiding. Such thinking ignores the policies and structural mechanisms that allowed Trump to be president.

Participants see the rise of right-wing populism as something that transcends the President, and even the administration. The shift in public belief and sentiment is clear to Janie:

> Obviously, socially, there is a lot of stuff too with now having not just a singular puppet, but a core team that promotes, or advocates, whatever. Bigotry, racism, and you know make-the-rich-richer-and-the-poor-poorer type thing. A whole team of that. So I don't know.

Janie continues:

> Right, so I guess just having a whole team of them, that way it's like even if one goes it's still going to be that. So that's my fear is it's just slowly going to slip away at everything that is supposed to make America great that doesn't, you know. It's so backwards.

The threat of a whole team of people pushing an agenda that promotes bigotry and perpetuates the wealth gap is ominous for Janie. She even mentions her belief that Trump is not a mere figurehead but part of a larger group pushing a social agenda that is antithetical to the direction she believes the country should be going.

Casey also acknowledges that people are hateful and that there is still much disdain for the LGBTQ community. However, because so much advocacy and resources were invested into the battle for marriage equality when same-sex marriage became legal many assumed the bigotry toward the LGBTQ community was minimal or non-existent. Indeed, as time passes, the tolerance level goes up, and in many social and political institutions, it has become taboo to be homophobic. There is a factor, though, that provides bigots with relative anonymity and distance from their targets. As Casey explains:

> I feel like there is so much hate surrounding sexuality for no reason. You read Facebook comments and Instagram comments and there's still angry and hate-filled remarks people are saying behind their keyboards. And it is scary because that's how they really feel and they wouldn't say it so definitely still exists a lot more than I would like to believe or think it does. So I wish everyone would get over it. And I don't understand why it bothers people. It doesn't make sense to me it never has.

> Social media not only provides people with a platform to spew their bigotry, it also provides them a buffer between themselves and those who they feel animosity towards. Casey points out that this buffer allows people to say what they believe, and that they would not share their bigoted views without the cloak provided by social media.

Others interpret the bigotry as affecting their lives in a more personal way. While nobody I spoke with for this project experienced violence as a direct result of this current flash of

populism, many changed how they viewed society and adjusted their lives accordingly. For example, Debby voices some concerns shared by her and her transgender partner:

> Aloe is not really into the U.S. as a military state, but the fact that the U.S. is trying to make it impossible for trans people to serve. Just the lack of respect they have for trans people, the way they *other* them—that's disgusting.

Debby connects the ban on transgender people serving in the military with an overall increase in bigotry towards transgender people. That this ban was allowed to occur with very little political pushback demonstrates the continued intolerance people in the United States have toward trans people:

> The American military is arguably the biggest employer of trans people on the planet. Therefore, the ban is not only intolerant and bigoted, it also hinders the financial livelihoods of a marginalized group.

Debby continues:

> Just the way he tried to *other* people by saying that we don't want Americans paying for trans medical care. And, like, people kill themselves. And that's a lifesaving thing. You're helping someone exponentially.
>
> It's also just like a small fraction of that budget. And like how many fucking dick-hardening medications do we make available to people? I don't give a fuck if you have a hard on. Do I want my money going to that? Probably not. But whatever. Live your life. Debby is referring to the large sum of money the military spends on Viagra, a drug typically prescribed to treat impotence.

The ban on trans people serving in the military is controversial and complex and has implications both inside and outside the LGBTQ community. On the one hand, is the illiberal denial of equal rights under a western democratic model. On the other hand are homo-nationalism considerations, which would look to equal access to healthcare and jobs for all people, rather than allowing trans folks to join the military so that they may receive these benefits. The idea is that one should not have to align themselves with the state to gain specific rights only for that group when others in the world do not have the same rights and access. The

achievement of rights, like marriage equality and military service, is based on western imperialist ideals.

Protecting The Trans Community

Participants seem to be specifically concerned about the health and well-being of transgender people. Many mentioned seeing this part of the LGBTQ community disproportionately targeted for violence and bigotry. According to Charlie:

> My fears for the community are mainly for the transgender part of the community because I feel like not everybody understands that or because there is such a struggle changing sexualities. And I know that through my friends. And I feel like so many people are afraid to come out, and the whole [dead name] Jenner. When she came out as Caitlyn, a lot of people—, is like a meme now. She is kind of a joke to a lot of people, and I don't want the transgender community to be viewed as a joke because it is very serious, and a lot of people take their lives over not being understood. I think that is my biggest fear for the community, I feel like it is such a small sector. There needs to be more awareness so it can grow.

Even as she dead-names a transgender person, Carey voices concern for the wellbeing of the community. There is a learning curve within the LGBTQ community regarding appropriate language to talk about trans folks. As with most vibrant cultures, the language used in the community is changing and expanding. Words that were once taboo, such as "Queer," are being reclaimed; and words that were once acceptable, such as transsexual, are less frequently used and can be considered offensive.

Losing the right to marry was a significant concern for respondents. In addition, the increased acceptance of bigoted politics and ideas has people alarmed who are afraid of further encroachments. When asked what she fears most with the rise of right-wing populism, Mallory mentions her fear of violence against trans folks and the repeal of same-sex marriage:

> I am nervous about rights taken away. And I would want to marry [my partner] anyway. But I am planning on proposing, and I think that probably a part of that is my fear that

> our rights are getting taken away, and I want to be with her for the rest of my life. So I would do it anyway. But it has definitely been a real fear for me, also all the violence against transgender. It has always been going on, but it just made everything more apparent.

When the topic of bigotry came up in interviews, most respondents were worried about hateful rhetoric and bigotry directed at other marginalized groups, not at themselves. Mallory's concern for trans people above is just one example.

The administrative and legal likelihood of repealing same-sex marriage is minimal, given the significance of a Supreme Court decision. Even so, participants are fearful that they will lose the right[*]. Jackie demonstrates this in her response to a question asking how the administration has affected her or her community:

I see that it's definitely had an effect on people as far as there is a lot of fear about friends that are undocumented that might be deported. That is a huge one I have seen recently, that is both in and outside of the Queer community. I also heard something about them wanting to take away gay marriage again, so I don't know if that is happening or whatever. And obviously, that could affect me in the future potential and other people.

Marriage is, for a handful of participants, one way that respondents see the rise of right-wing populism affecting them personally. It tends to be brought up, as with Mallory, when talking about their concern of others' losing rights as well.

Conclusions

This section discussed interpersonal conflict in the LGBTQ community and outside the LGBTQ community. The tension between groups who identify as LGBTQ was discussed in the context of how people are marginalized within the community. Participants recognize that some of these conflicts go back a long way and have a rich history. The conflict between those in the LGBTQ community and those outside it invokes a relationship with direct violence and the threat of direct violence. Participants spoke of experiences in which they directly experienced bigotry or were fearful of experiencing bigotry or violence. What follows are further conclusions.

[*] The interviews occurred prior to the supreme court's decision repealing Roe v. Wade.

Identity

Identity is connected to how members of the community interact with others and with society. Those who are not LGBTQ can take their gender and sexuality for granted; however, LGBTQ individuals are reminded of their membership in this community. Whether they are experiencing direct violence, or the threat of direct violence, or they are simply aware of their difference, this part of their identity is almost never taken for granted. This poses a challenge for any sense of belonging or fitting in. Even within the LGBTQ community, there are differences that can be quite significant, and there are degrees of marginalization just as there are in the wider society and with straight people.

Violence

Because of these differences, LGBTQ people disproportionately experience direct and structural violence. Many participants conveyed stories about their experiences with homophobia, transphobia, or bigotry. Recently, right-wing groups have targeted transgender and non-binary people. This not only aims at one of the most vulnerable communities in society but also instills fear in non-transgender people for their trans comrades.

Findings

Intra-group conflict is influenced by mainstream or societal norms.

Since the beginning of gay liberation, there has been tension between groups within the LGBTQ community. This conflict has taken different forms throughout the decades, the interviews here show that these conflicts persist. The conflicts center on identity and access (or lack of access) that LGBTQ community members may have to resources.

One such schism surfaced between lesbians and gay men. Since the inception of the Gay Liberation Front in 1970, women have felt left out of significant decisions about the movement and denied necessary resources (Faderman, 2006). In LA, this played out in the disproportionate power and influence that gay men had over the direction and focus of the LA LGBTQ Center (Faderman & Timmons, 2009). Today, this divide manifests less clearly. However, those interviewed expressed a disconnect between lesbians and gay men and lamented the absence of community between the two groups.

Others spoke about anti-trans sentiment in the LGBTQ community; those with intolerant beliefs toward trans people are generally referred to as Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists (TERFs). Transgender women are sometimes not accepted in women-only spaces as some

lesbians see trans women as imposters or in a different category of women than cisgender women. This has been a long-running dispute in the lesbian community and is highlighted most clearly by the events that led to the cancelation of Michfest, otherwise known as the Michigan Women's Music Festival. Once hailed as the woman's Woodstock (Anderson-Minshell, 2015), the women-only and mostly lesbian music festival became divided over allowing transgender women to attend. The leaders of the Festival were so adamant about excluding trans women that they chose to discontinue the event rather than allow them to attend (Anderson-Minshell, 2015).

There is no real sense of community as the relationships are artificial and not genuine.

Although many LGBTQ people are denied entrance into mainstream culture, participants revealed that they also felt a lack of community with other LGBTQ people. Participants said they feel uncomfortable in Queer spaces because they believe they are being judged and worry that there is a standard of Queerness they are unable to live up to. What precisely people feel they are being judged about remains unclear. It seems that LGBTQ spaces are not welcoming to some, and those feeling uncomfortable attribute their own meaning to the feeling. Respondents mentioned feeling that they are not "gay enough" because of limited knowledge of gay culture and history. This sort of policing of thought may lead people to believe that they must hold certain beliefs to be welcomed into the LGBTQ community. This speaks to the sense of alienation and isolation that can characterize LGBTQ spaces.

Others spoke of an unacknowledged hierarchy in the community with white gay men at the top, followed by white lesbians. This is yet another recognition of the racism that exists within the community. This may be what others are speaking of when they communicate a sense of alienation and not belonging. Participants long for a community free from stratification and where people are harmonious. Even this intent of wanting to be peaceful and harmonious can cause conflict, as those seeking a harmonious environment may unintentionally separate themselves from other LGBTQ people. This is evident in the way some privileged LGBTQ people may live in areas that are unaffordable for others. Therefore, by seeing themselves as isolated or as separate from those who operate in a hierarchy, people are creating divisions.

There is marginalization within the male gay community, especially around race and politics.

Membership in a marginalized community does not shield people from racism and intolerance. Like any group in the U.S. the LGBTQ community is comprised of a cross section of people, and marginalization, bias, and white supremacy crept their way into the membership.

(Riggs et al., 2017) Racial resentment among LGBTQ individuals has been largely ignored by those who claim to advocate for social justice. To be sure, the LGBTQ community in LA, and elsewhere is comprised of people whose lives are dedicated to activism and who have given much of themselves in furtherance of LGBTQ liberation.

People of color have long spoken of the racism they experience using online dating apps, primarily Grindr (Shield, 2019). Grindr, an app used to connect men to one another for dating and one-off sexual encounters, provided filters for users to exclude specific races or ethnicities from their search (Robinson, 2015). This feature was intended to help people match with their "type" but instead created a separate Caucasian dating class in the gay community. Grindr has since removed this feature, though its existence highlights the racism that has long existed in LGBTQ spaces and the wider community. (Snorton, 2017)

The above reflects an ongoing and under acknowledged conflict in the LGBTQ community. There is a long history of erasure when it comes to individuals who are not white. The violation is not specific to any particular group but extends to Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender populations. (Snorton, 2017) A glance at most books and media recounting LGBTQ history confirms the negligence of forgetting. With few exceptions, the portrayal of LGBTQ heroes and advocates from history are largely white; examples include Harvey Milk, Billie Jean King, Larry Kramar, activists at Stonewall, AIDS activists, etc. It is relatively recent that some LGBTQ people of color have been acknowledged and elevated in pop culture and the larger media ecosystem (Han, 2021). To be sure, such representation is welcome but does not correct their erasure in the annals of gay liberation.

Hatred of BIPOC, women, and gays is historical and grounded in structural violence

Such treatment is not unique to any single group but is woven into the fabric of the US. Participants are aware of the racism and gender bias that pervades society and largely attribute this to the election of Trump. Therefore, many were not surprised by his election despite feeling anxious, depressed, and fearful about the future. All of the interviews imply the sense that BIPOC, women, and LGBTQ people experience the intersecting forms of structural violence that accompany their positions in a racist, misogynist, homophobic society. Given such experiences, members of these groups were not surprised when a figure such as Donald Trump, someone who espouses such hatred, was elected president.

This provides insight into the lack of awareness of those surprised by the election and those who were not. The pearl clutching of those shocked by the election results speaks to structural violence's hidden and subversive nature. It operates invisibly; therefore, it is difficult to expose and address. For every attempt to reveal structural violence, some deny and obfuscate its existence. The election of Trump makes this denial less potent. It is not as though he is introducing this hatred and his followers are new to these beliefs and therefore think he is an insightful leader. However, the hatred has always been present, lingering just under the surface, as is a common characteristic of structural violence (Demmers, 2012).

Those who do not experience such daily degradation may ignore, or fail to understand, its prevalence. Galtung (1969) coined the term *latent violence* to refer to circumstances where violence simmers under the surface, and any nudge will make the violence manifest (Galtung, 1969). This refers to the type of violence that exists typically unacknowledged by most people or acknowledged and tacitly accepted. It is not the ostentatious and dramatic form of personal violence that appears in movies or violent revolutions. Latent violence is what is constantly pushing up against a thin layer of civility. According to Galtung (1969) latent violence “indicates a situation of unstable equilibrium” (Galtung, 1969) and is most often applied to racial conflicts.

Although it is becoming taboo to spew overtly bigoted rhetoric, people with these beliefs find a shield in social media. Platforms such as Twitter and Meta (formerly Facebook) provide a sense of protection and anonymity that gives people permission to spew hatred. While LGBTQ folks, and others, go about their lives perhaps believing that bigotry and homophobia are relics of

the past all they need to do is have a look at the phones to see indeed there are still people who have hateful beliefs and are eager to share about them, online of course.

The mindsets are programmed to be hateful.

It is a common refrain that Trump and Trumpism are an anomaly that inaccurately represents the US. Following a racist or sexist comment, or after the events of January 6, 2021 news stations are filled with dower politicians saying "this is not who we are" followed by familiar buzzwords: freedom, democracy, strength, together, etc. Such statements ignore the troubled history and tortured present of race relations in the US.

It was not as though there was a sudden embrace of racist policies and beliefs that Trump demanded and his followers abided by. Beyond an acknowledgement that racism exists respondents spoke of the deeply entrenched bigoted beliefs that are weaved into the fabric of American cultural, political, and social structures. In reflecting on the election Sammy succinctly summarizes these issues as follows:

> There is history behind all this and there still is, and has always been, this anti-Blackness in every single culture, whether it is Black, whether it is Latin X whether it is Asian, everywhere you go Blackness is at the bottom of the barrel and even there is colorism within the Black community. This goes to the core of what has always existed, and what Trump exposed with his rhetoric and exclusionary policies.

The anti-Blackness Sammy refers to above is deep within the mindsets of many, and this has always been true. The further the country moves away from Jim Crow and into more global social and political structures the more taboo overtly racist rhetoric has become. Trump came along and violated the taboo and in doing so provided the permission structure for others to behave abhorrently as well.

Trump created a chaotic milieu and gave his followers permission to be hostile.

A common description of Trump by the news media is that he "says the quiet part out loud" (Stokols, 2018), which can be framed positively by conservative media. He is often painted as a leader who is willing to stand up against an evil and corrupted elitist establishment. This idea is so pervasive that an elaborate conspiracy theory has cropped up that contends that democrats are baby murdering pedophiles that Donald Trump is secretly fighting to save the

country and, of course, the children. (Mike Wendling, 2021) For his part Trump does nothing to dismantle these beliefs but works to support and perpetuate them if it means that he will receive more praise or followers.

People who freely give this much time and energy to a leader are bound to follow their lead. This tendency, together with groupthink, causes Trump's followers to behave in ways that reflect the man himself. By breaking the social taboos that stood in the way of such behavior he implicitly provided permission. By goading his followers and spreading lies he created an atmosphere of chaos, and often, personal violence. The query is not whether Trump exposed latent and unacknowledged, but long held, beliefs or whether he introduced ideas that people, perhaps those predisposed, found compelling.

Though he created the permission structure for people to be hateful Donald Trump was not the first to exploit divisiveness for political gain. Whether it started with the Southern Strategy or the rise of the Tea Party the days of Regan Republicans or Compassionate Conservatives gone. A new populism accompanied by fresh forms of cruelty and hatred have come to define the Republican party.

It is as though Trump's populism has amplified traditional conservative principles to the point of cruelty and his followers and other Republicans are going along with this project. For example, reducing immigration has been a conservative ideal since the rise of the Tea Party, but it is this new brand of populism that has led to mass arrests, deportation and detainment of both those who are documented as well as those who are undocumented. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) arrest people in a roughshod manner and often fails to distinguish between those they have the legal authority to detain and those whom they do not.

Participants are concerned that the atmosphere created by Trump will be dangerous for the LGBTQ community. Generally, when there is a hateful or intolerant environment LGBTQ people suffer. This is true even if the focus of the hatred is directed at another group. Whenever any sector of society is targeted so are members of the LGBTQ community since the identity exists within other groups. Aside from the fact that LGBTQ people exist in every group, and are affected when anyone is targeted, as their own group they also suffer. Participants were concerned that this atmosphere would become the new normal, with little

Conservative Agenda.

There was also acknowledgement that Trump and the rest of the Republican party seek to

dismantle FDR era policies. There was fear that Trumpian policies and entrenched Republican operatives will have success undoing some of the most vital social programs in the country. This too speaks to the cruelty of Republican policies and the fear that Trump will amplify and expand them. The conservative plan to achieve this relies on the appointment of Supreme Court Justices by a Republican. When Trump won the election, this project became closer to fruition, and during his term appointed four Supreme Court Justices. At the time of the interviews participants were unsure about what was to come. Some worried about perhaps the Supreme Court doing away with same sex marriage others considered bleaker, more dramatic, possibilities. Social media acted to contribute to a sense that there was extreme bigotry, and a possibility that same-sex marriage may be overturned. The space these platforms provides people to spew bigotry creates an unrealistic view into how the general public feels about same-sex marriage.

The fears that participants expressed were not unfounded, however Conservative attempts at creating culture wars around LGBTQ identity were not aimed at same sex marriage but at the transgender community. During his time in the White House Donald Trump banned transgender people from joining the military and attempted to end medical care for those already serving. What makes this especially cruel is that the US military is the largest employer of transgender people. Therefore not only did this policy contribute to the hate and bigotry that transgender people experience it also acted to limit access to resources.

The right wing turned their attention to transgender children playing sports at school. They initiated a push to prevent kids from playing on a team that matches their gender and instead sought to force children to play on teams who define them in accordance with the sex assigned on their birth certificate. As is true with many right wing culture war topics this is a solution without a problem. Trans children were playing sports well before this. Issue became a right wing talking point. The cruelty of bringing children into this fight over identity shows the extent to which the right has gone.

IDENTITY

The data suggests two components that reflect intrapersonal violence in the LGBTQ community—coming out and mental health. The former reflects the significance of LGBTQ individual history and the role that social structures play. The latter is drawn from a perceived imminent threat felt by participants because of the rise of right-wing vitriol. Both touch on the internal struggle that participants associate with being LGBTQ.

During the narrative interviews, participants volunteered their coming out stories while answering interviewers questions (Appendix). These stories came out unexpectedly and consistently. The range of stories was notable as they spanned the spectrum from elaborate recounting to passing mention. For many, it was a milestone that signifies a transformation in how they engage with others, and it shifts their relationship to activism. The need to come out is itself a form of cultural violence—to use Galtung's (1990) phrase—as it acts to normalize, or justify, the othering of LGBTQ people.

Participants brought up their mental health and the role that the rise of right-wing populism has played in its deterioration. Their stories conveyed a sense of hopelessness and depression, demonstrated through their avoiding the news or feeling an increased sense of self-deprivation. In some cases, this feeling led to a sense of dread and despair. Such reactions reflect an overall state of real and existential fear. The fear of violence went beyond the LGBTQ community and extended to other vulnerable or marginalized groups, such as undocumented immigrants, BIPOC, and those who practice religions other than Christianity. The fears ranged from a general idea that the administration would lash out at everyone to specific fears of their friends getting deported. Most of the mental health discussion here is related to participants' fear. Consequently this chapter explores mental health as it relates to depression, fear, and a sense of hopelessness and despair, and as it connects to struggles with coming out

Mental Health: Depression and Anxiety in the Post-Obama Era

Participants expressed a range of negative emotions, including depression, fear, worry and anxiety. Many situated these feelings in the context of future events and their fear around right-wing populism and violence directed at the LGBTQ community. They were clear about the beliefs of those in power and feared they would lose rights. There was widespread perception that the government would roll back recent victories of the LGBTQ community. Other participants expressed hopelessness over past and current violence and feared increased bigotry and hostility.

Josy clearly names the problem in her description of the hatred and violence that surfaced during the 2016 election. This is what she has to say on the issue:

It makes the future really depressing first of all. It's a mental health issue in a way, the surprise of the election. It is not surprising that people would—, that certain people would want to—. It's not surprising that a man like Trump and all the bigoted racist populist right-wingers around him would exist because I know that people don't share my same views and being open to different types of people and wanting different types of people to flourish and diversity and things like that. But that's not surprising to me.

It is surprising to me that he was elected as president. So I think that surprise just—. I am no longer—. I was surprised a year ago, but now just seeing everything that happened—you know, like all the shameful acts that are happening in our government.

Nothing is surprising me anymore. I am just depressed about it. I am depressed about the future. I want to have kids and I am depressed about their future. It is just a mental health thing.

Participant's fear leads to a conclusion that LGBTQ rights would be infringed on or cut back. They consistently voiced their concern that marriage equality was in danger and that LGBTQ people would no longer have access to its benefits. Even those who prefaced their concerns with the assurance that they do not want to get married, expressed fear that the freedom will be taken away.

Finally, some participants mentioned that fear and depression influences their actions and decision-making. Participants mentioned being afraid to travel out of California, and even being afraid to travel to the more rural parts of California. They indicated that they lost trust in people

that they did not know before the election. The knowledge that open and obvious bigotry had a platform and was being perpetuated led to this hyper-vigilance and fear. Because people experienced more fear, they also experience more depression since by its nature fear and anxiety pose an impediment to community.

Depression

Few used the actual word, but even those who did not, expressed feelings or beliefs strongly associated with depression. In some cases, people even avoided learning about politics and current events so that they were not confronted with what they perceived to be sad and scary information. For example, a few participants said they avoid the news as a strategy to take care of themselves emotionally. When asked about this, Courtney responded by saying,

I don't listen to the news as much because it is too depressing and I can't. I am only allowed to listen to the news twice a week, I can read it a few times a week but I can't watch any television news whatsoever, and it really makes me depressed and upset.

She remains engaged and prepares herself to read the news in a limited way so that she may manage her negative feelings about current events.

Mallory remains more measured although she feels triggered when she watches the news and follows current events. As with many of the other participants, she has created coping tools that allow her to stay abreast of important events and prevent her from becoming upset or triggered. She reported on the issue as follows:

I used to be an avid NPR listener. And just because of my own issues with depression, I haven't been able to watch the news. I follow LGBTQ news stuff and that is pretty much it. And there is this news written by women. And I get an email with a brief synopsis because it is less triggering for me because I was finding myself being so depressed all the time because everything is really scary.

Mallory finds comfort in following news that intersects with her marginalized identities. Doing so enables her to stay abreast of issues she may encounter and provides her an opportunity to feel seen as a member of these communities. By reading news synopses written by women and LGBTQ outlets, Mallory further found community and a palatable way to stay engaged.

For others, the rise of right-wing populism highlights, what they believe, are negative feelings toward the LGBTQ community. The perception of increased hate did not make such

individuals feel unsafe, instead it made them feel depressed and sad. Finley expresses this in the following manner:

> I hear clips or see reactions to things, and I am like oh my god it is depressing how much certain people or certain parts of the country seem to hate gay people, and it can make it feel like the future is not bright.

Negative reactions or clips about LGBTQ people make Finley feel that there is hate directed toward the community. Here the depression stems from homophobia generally, or homophobia that Finley witnesses, not from anything directed at them specifically. Not everybody felt depressed at the time of the election and in the subsequent months. Some did not mention feeling depressed at all, and others found the presidential election results to be harmless. Ari, for example took a wait-and-see approach:

I wasn't rejoicing per se, but I wasn't depressed because at the time I don't think we knew what he was going to do. He had not stated what his positions were on all things but especially about the issues socially in that sense that might affect me as a gay man.

Because he had not heard about anything that affected him personally, Ari did not worry. Indeed, there has been no legislation that affects cis-gendered gay men specifically. However, since this interview there were executive orders and legislation that affect the community and their ability to adopt children; the rights and freedom of the transgender community; cis-gendered lesbians and bi-sexual women having abortion rights; and the rights and freedoms of LGBTQ folks crossing the border from Mexico.

Hopelessness

Participants' feelings of hopelessness came through in their responses to interview questions. This sentiment was common although not many participants used the word "hopeless." They expressed a sense of resignation and defeat. Participants felt as though things in the country were getting worse and that this trend would continue. The hopelessness, therefore, extends past the present moment. Carly captures this perfectly, as she processes what the future might look like:

> I don't think the future looks good. Hopefully he gets kicked out of office, Mike Pence takes over—that might be scarier for gays. But

> I am not really an optimist for the future. I hope good things will happen but I feel like the world is at its worst, and it's scary.

Although she expresses anxiety for the future, Carly still tries to be positive.
Mallory, however, feels no hope for the future or for LGBTQ rights in the United States. When asked whether she feels any hope at all, she said: "Not for the near future really to be honest, the mere fact he was elected really brought to light how the whole country really feels." Mallory is expressing the sentiment, not necessarily that things in the country have changed, but that the administration has uncovered a truth that has long existed in the United States.

Finley sees things differently and interprets the message from the election and the Trump administration to be part of an overall strategy: "Just information overload. I don't feel hopeless. I think everybody feels tired. I don't feel overly hopeless. That is kind of the strategy right? That's the move. They can't notice everything if you are flooding them with information." This exhaustion may also be connected to why others no longer consume the news daily although they identify their feeling as information overload and not hopelessness.

Fears

In each interview people were asked specifically about their fears. The responses ranged from general observations and misgivings to specific highly personal thoughts about violence. Each participant had a unique perspective, and wisdom, to explaining their specific fears. There were, however, some common themes that were repeated and emphasized by the respondents. One fear that seemed to materialize in our conversations was increased racism and bigotry directed at BIPOC. Jonie sums up this fear as follows:

> A pretty large portion of our society is racist, and you can certainly lump the Queer community in with that. I think the way that people are lashing out at people of color is really scaring me a little bit more—like, we keep hearing stories of people having issues with family members and coworkers. I guess it is something that has always been there, but is scares me that people have permission now to be so open.

Although her concerns are general and broad, such as the use of the term "lashing-out," from which one can glean a variety of scenarios, Jonie acknowledges that racism is not a new phenomenon in the United States. She also mentions a concern that came up in other interviews,

namely that racism has always been an issue and the rise of right-wing populism in the post-Obama era has given people permission to overtly act on their racism.

Jackie also worries about increased racism:

There is a lot of fear about friends that are undocumented that might be deported, that is a huge one I have seen recently, that is both in and outside of the Queer community.

This is something that is not commonly considered an LGBTQ issue, namely, that among the refugees being turned away at the border and those being held in custody are also LGBTQ. One of the most prominent concerns is that those who are transgender are in custody at the border in cells corresponding with the sex they were assigned at birth, not their gender at the time they are detained.

The general rise of intolerance and bigotry has been ever-present with the Trump administration. This rise has become evident on social media because these platforms provide anonymity and some protection from the social forces that have previously discouraged such beliefs. Marley noted the following:

> It's scary for sure. I think that I need to take that social media break every so often because everything also just gets blown up. Because I was just on Facebook and always reading shit. I think it's scary. But I guess I am an optimist because I see things—. We just need to fight harder and knowing the power from like defunding planned parenthood to like the fear of this validation of this white supremacy group taking over and like influencing… validating a lot of people's hate is what scares me the most that scares me.

This perspective is similar to Jonie because it acknowledges that hate and bigotry have always been there and the rhetoric from this administration and the rise of right-wing populism has only given people permission to express their views.

Along those lines some feared harm to themselves and to the rest of the community. When asked about her concerns for the LGBTQ community, Debby reported on it as follows:

> There are all these small, weird things. And then there are the big paranoid fears that like the—, that because the wingnuts have taken over—or are like slowly taking over—that those people who have been talking about putting gay people in concentration camps may someday that might be a reality. And that's a little bit

> paranoid. But like the culture we're living in is right now—, is so fucking tenuous and so polarized that, like, I wouldn't be super shocked if we started seeing stuff like that, because we've done it before in this country.

One might surmise that these are the types of things people envision happening, or fear happening, when they use broad general statements to describe their fears for the community. Unfortunately, Debby's prediction is not that far off as thousands of migrants and refugees have been picked up at the border and transferred to holding camps. Undoubtedly, among those housed in these facilities are members of the LGBTQ community.

LGBTQ people living in the United States have an ever-present and very real fear that harm will come to them. One need only look a few years back to remember the massacre at Pulse night club in Orlando, Florida. Transgender women of color are a group within the community who is disproportionately targeted as well. Aside from personal acts of violence, some were also worried about systemic violence that may occur because of the policies of this administration. These worries are not limited to harm in the LGBTQ community but reach into other historically targeted communities, such as BIPOC and women.

Sammy identifies these fears well in the following manner:

> That is a scary thin—planned parenthood stuff, women who need healthcare, especially in these smaller rural communities, especially where access is more limited.
>
> How I present as a Queer individual more masculine in nature. At night people can think I am male and me wearing a hoodie that stuff is real. I try not to bring fear into it because that attracts a certain type of energy, so again I am—. All of these things I am aware of and concerned about for sure.

Systemic fears, such as those derived from structural violence, and personal acts of violence, or direct violence, are present in many of the participants. These fears extend to the safety of other people, as is evident in Sammy's statement above, and also linger in the minds of some participants.

Mallory expresses these dual fears of experiencing both personal violence and systemic oppression in the following:

> I am very aware when I go to lesbian nights and stuff like that that there could be another Orlando. It doesn't stop me from going but there is definitely a heightened amount of fear—my

fear that our rights are getting taken away.

This too speaks to the disproportionate anxiety that people in the LGBTQ community must deal with. This injustice is compounded by the fact that throughout much of the history of LGBTQ people in the U.S., nightclubs and bars have served as a refuge. Underground gay bars, such as the one in the Stonewall Inn, provided places for Queer people to meet and interact with one another. These had been places of relative safety and a significant component of LGBTQ culture.

Those participants who were not concerned about direct personal violence were still worried about setbacks systemically. Notably, they voiced concern that rights and freedoms that have already been granted will be taken away. For example, when asked what her fears for the community are Frankie had a simple answer: "That we are going to lose everything we have gained—being set back." This fear reverberated throughout the responses to the inquiry.

Jackie also reflects on this idea as follows:

I think one of my biggest fears is that certain rights that we have now will be taken away. Or that the progress that we've made so far will be either stunted or set into reverse.

Those are probably the main things—just that we will continue to be set back and not be making moves towards equality because this fucking asshole will be in the way of that. And by "this fucking asshole," I mean Donald Trump.

Jackie was not the only one who explicitly acknowledged the gains that the community has made might be clawed back, and the relative safety many members have felt previously has evaporated. Such recognition speaks to the tenuousness of feeling safe as a marginalized community. This indicates that some do not feel that there are enough systemic safeguards in place to protect them from a bigoted president.

When asked about her fears for LGBTQ folks Casey has the following to say:

I would say that it's definitely scary. It's scary to think like—. I felt, like, with Obama we felt really safe. We felt safe, and like finally someone's on our side. And as far as the future, like, it's all built up to this, and we're good. We're in the clear. And then Trump came into office, and we're, like, "Fuck! Now what do we do? Everything we just worked so hard for is, like, regressing you know."

I feel like a lot of us felt that way after he won the presidency. We got together with like ten or fifteen girls and just sat in a circle because we were like an emotional mess. We sat in a circle and kind of discussed how we were feeling, and processed

everything. And everyone was on the same kind of page. This is scary because we don't know what he is capable of doing. Already he has proven our worst fears.

Here we see that Jackie felt safe until the election, and after felt a sense of anxiety because she did not know what would happen to LGBTQ rights. This unknown and resulting anxiety caused her and her friends to become an "emotional mess." The unknowns and mystery surrounding the beginning of the Trump presidency caused great fear in the LGBTQ community. His unpredictable and brash nature elicited fear and worry in people both in and outside the LGBTQ community (Turner, 2016).

Some folks had fears that were more personal, less physical, and more long-term. For example, Abby is afraid of complacency and the perpetuation of systemic inequality and personal acts of hatred:

> I'm afraid we may not be continuing to speak up the way we were. I'm afraid we're going to get complacent. Because, like I said, you can change policy, but you can't change people's minds overnight. Like, just because Jim Crow laws weren't in effect any more didn't mean everyone was hugging and singing kumbaya. Race is still a thing.

This is a fear that is also discussed in some activist circles. It also ties in with the assumption that racism and bigotry started with the shift to right-wing populism in the United States and Europe. On the contrary, racism and bigotry paved the way for the rise of right-wing populism. That leaders feel safe to be brazen with their beliefs is revealing. Especially with new national elections coming up, many were worried that the droves of people who came out for the Women's March and to protest the Muslim ban will no longer engage in activism if a Democrat would be elected president. Finally, Charlie is concerned that the changed political climate will cause her to live her life differently so that her fears will take over and she will be unable to see past them.

A new trend in the activist community is to engage in self-care. Activists need to take care of their physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional selves to show up for their causes. Charlie succinctly defines that struggle many are experiencing as follows:

> My biggest fear is that I am going to let fear run my life. That I want to be able to do what I want to do and do what I feel in my gut is the right thing to do and step outside of that fear. But I don't. On good days I believe I am capable of it, and, on

days that are a struggle, I don't know if I can.

The general reaction to the rise of right-wing populism has been fear among those who are members of marginalized communities. Sometimes people channel that fear into civic engagement such as protests or reaching out to their representatives. Although, as stated above, when people are unable to channel their fear, they often experience the mental health challenges that the foregoing participants mentioned in their stories.

Coming Out: How History Informs the Present

In the interviews, participants referred to their identity as LGBTQ people when examining their place in the country and their place in the future. This conversation led to a recounting of their coming out, the role that played in how they engage with the world today, and how they look at politics. Coming out and the accompanying anxiety, fear, worry, and shame weighed on participants

Coming out is a transformative experience for many LGBTQ people in the Western world. Participants brought up their stories on the topic so frequently that it could not be ignored. Perhaps coming out is a significant experience for people that is connected to their identity as an LGBTQ person. Undoubtedly it is an experience that most LGBTQ people share.

Galtung (1969) defines violence as the difference between the potential and the actual. For example, if someone has a disease and there is a cure for it, but they lack the resources to access the treatment, violence is present. If there is no cure for the disease, then their actual experience (living with the disease) is not being restricted from their potential (treatment for the disease) experience and there is no violence. Later on Galtung expanded on this concept by examining the way violence is perpetuated through culture. In his article, "Cultural Violence," Galtung (1990) conceives of cultural violence as those elements of culture that are used to justify structural and direct violence.

Coming out provides more of an overall benefit to those the LGBTQ person is coming out to. The process and preparation have a profound impact on the person coming out. The participants who spoke about coming out had negative experiences. These range from anxiety leading up to it and pressure to participate in the community after to being forced to attend conversion therapy. People who are not LGBTQ are not compelled to come out; this prevents

them from having negative experiences connected to their sexuality. Because LGBTQ people are expected to go through this process they experience violence according to Galtung's (1969) definition since this experience prevents people from reaching their full potential. That full potential may be living life unencumbered by an obligation to come out.

For some, coming out is accompanied by internal turmoil that entails doubt and negative feelings. How one engages with this side of themselves is largely determined community responses to coming out. Negative responses may force a sense of low self-worth and may even prompt people to try and go back into the closet.

This was the case with Abby, after her mother found a note from her girlfriend, and had a strong reaction to learning of Abby's sexual orientation. As she recalls:

I had a horrible coming out experience as a kid. I was raised by two very Catholic parents. I came out when I was 16. I didn't mean to, that was a mistake.

My mother immediately took this as the worst news of her life. She started heaving and crying, and she absolutely could not believe that I could be gay. She told me I was never to tell my father or my brothers, that this would absolutely kill my grandparents.

And so I just took everything back and she took me to conversion therapy. This was the summer after my junior year of high school so I took everything back, started my senior year of high school, found a nice boy to take me to the homecoming dance.

Abby is now in her 30s and has moved away from where she grew up in Michigan, to LA where she is a middle-school teacher. Abby stayed in the closet for years after this incident, trying to gain her parents approval.

Others spoke of the harm of *not* coming out, of invalidating their own instincts and experiences, as with Abby, who was continually forced back into the closet by her family after coming out as a lesbian. The thought of her being openly LGBTQ was so anathema to her family that it caused them to have beliefs and take actions that caused her harm:

> I should add that my mother is of Lebanese decent so there is some really strong tradition there. And another outgrowth of my experience was the need to force myself into really emotionally and sexually harmful experiences with men over the years, which my family completely supported and turned a blind eye to when I was in some really compromising situations.

> However they kept me home from school when I was in high school so that I wouldn't see that bull dyke of a girlfriend because "you don't give a drunk a drink, Abby" and the whole thing. Like the 14 steps of homosexuals anonymous was about your will versus god's will. And god's will, conveniently, is that you be straight and your will is that of the SSA, same sex attraction, as they like to call it.
>
> So that is what characterized my youth and what has colored my experience to this day, why I get on stage, why I feel this need to work with young people, why I like to volunteer and be open about my story.

Here Abby's family would rather put her in danger and hinder her schooling than have her be LGBTQ. For her, coming out was not a freeing and liberating experience, it was one that caused harm and negative reprisals from loved ones. Abby copes with her parent's intolerance by attributing it to tradition and to their upbringing and sense of right and wrong. Abby's experience is not unique. Other participants have mentioned the intolerance or tacit pressure of their parents for them to participate in heterosexual relationships, even at the peril of their own safety and security.

Although not as extreme or obvious, the pressure can come in the form of praise or rewards, but the result is the same, as is clear with Mallory's experience:

> I tend to get more male attention than female attention, and I can be like, "Oh, that person is aesthetically pleasing but when it comes down to the sexual act, everything is wrong and I feel horrible afterwards.
>
> And it was really sad because I was 29 before I accepted that I am gay. So even though my family is considered liberal, I was getting rewarded for sleeping with men. But I think that speaks volumes though that it took me this long to realize that I should never be with men because it makes me feel horrible.

Members of the community, such as those who do not read as LGBTQ, come out almost daily. The process of continually coming and acknowledging deviation from the norm can be exhausting and defeating for some.

Being Out

Those who may have felt physically safe and maybe even have been protected by their family worried about judgment from their wider community. This fear led to a situation where folks would prolong or avoid coming out as they succumbed to social pressure, or what they perceived may have been social pressure. Katy, for example, faced confusion because she felt trapped between two worlds, fear of not fitting in with her community on the one hand, and on the other fear that her coming out story did not fit into a certain mold. Katy recounts,

> For a long time, I—. And even when I did passively come out, I was uncomfortable that I didn't fit into the classic coming out story, like struggling in high school.
>
> And recently I've come to realize that I did struggle. I was just pretending to be a different person instead of expressing myself in any way. But I was really uncomfortable about that for a long time, and I was too scared to not fit in. So I just fit in.

Coming out can also cause further alienation as many do not necessarily know how to navigate the LGBTQ community either. While most Queer people have in common the experience of coming out and often experience connection with others through this shared process, it may not prevent feeling alienated or excluded from the LGBTQ community as well.

This fact is reflected by Carey's experiences:

> It was really hard coming out. It was really confusing. And I love how when I meet other Queer people that we have that commonality—like, "What's your coming out story?" And we can bond over that. But even though we do bond over that, it sometimes does feel hard to be a part—. Even though I know I am a part of the community, it's really hard to actually feel like I am in the community.

Others believe that the practice of coming out as LGBTQ should not occur—that is, that people who are not LGBTQ are not required to come out and that the double standard is unfair and unjust.

Some respondents suggest that coming out should be an affirmative choice, and that this choice will coincide with wider acceptance and less discrimination. According to Jonie:

In an ideal world I would like people to be able to choose the type of family they want without facing additional discrimination with adoption agencies. Ideally people able to identify themselves accurately as nonbinary or Queer in any capacity at work without having to feel like—unless they wish to—but without feeling like they have to come out or not that there has to

be a decision made about whether to do that weighing consequences.

This speaks to the longstanding debate in the LGBTQ community between the assimilationists and the radicals. Applied to the above quotation the more radical members of the community would want a world where everybody is out and their Queerness is celebrated. Assimilationists would likely agree with Katy and want people to be able to blend in with the heterosexual cis world.

Coming Out and Activism

It was common in the interviews for participants to tie their coming out to participation or involvement with activism. Such involvement can also serve as a conduit to a larger community of activists or LGBTQ folks. Coming out provided outlets to process and resist the marginalization of other oppressed communities as well. Further, for those who came out in or around 2016, the election seems to have given them permission to participate in activism.

As Katy explains, the new administration made her feel bold and ready to engage in social action:

> It's made me be a lot more brazen—or not feel more brazen but able to express it or a need to express it, I guess. It kind of happened at an interesting time for my specific coming out story because I came out or started dating women like only six—, eight months before the election. So it was like a crazy time to jump into the community like a big shift.

Here Katy's activism is specifically tied to her coming out. The election gave her the inspiration and courage to participate in activism. She sees her Queerness as tied to her activism, Katy continues:

> Yeah, I felt like I had more of a voice once I could identify as—. Once I was comfortable enough to identify as Queer, even though I was still pretty uncomfortable, I felt like I had more of a voice to stand up than just as like a white female, and that I had more to fight for, for myself, and like allyship.

Clearly, becoming part of a marginalized community gave Katy more courage to participate in activism. It's almost as if she felt like less of an impostor, and coming out acted as a sort of

neutralizer for her privilege. Additionally, the oppression gave her more of a stake in the election and more investment into her activism.

Marley is a musician who grew up in Orange County, a conservative area in southern California. Coming out led to her playing music as a form of expression and further authenticity. She notes, as well, that her coming out allowed others in her community to also come out. As Marley explains:

> I think coming out as a teenager at the same time I found music—. I think it was this whole coming to find yourself, and, like, from that just finding friends who are going through the same thing.
>
> And our group of friends in particular—. It's funny, once we came out, everybody came out. So funny. And we were all in an area where it was really conservative. It was like conservative and safe so you had to come out but you couldn't come out too much. And like it was this weird middle space.
>
> So I think that having that identity part of who we are also encouraged us to start pursuing music outside of that area because, through music, we were able to find other communities to connect with, and write songs about how we felt, and have that connect with someone in the middle of Illinois or something, and then have them email us. But I think it all started with being a dyke.

Marley values the community that she discovered upon coming out. This is similar to others who felt like they fit into activist communities or the larger LGBTQ population.

The Anxiety of Being Out

Participants spoke about fear of reprisal from their community in the form of social exclusion and alienation. Some even invalidated their own coming out experiences as not good enough or atypical of the commercialized stories that one may see in a movie or on television. Even those who knew that they were safe and well supported feared coming out, such as Carly who says "I've had it pretty easy in terms of being gay and nothing really bad has happened to me other than being afraid of coming out to my family. I am pretty lucky."

Much as the decision to come out is driven by social progress, the decision not to come out is driven by social prejudice. Once out, however, one can fathom a situation where it is near

impossible, both intrapersonally and interpersonally, to go back into the closet. Debby expresses her concern for people that are at risk who have already come out:

> I'm afraid. I think in the short term, I am afraid we are going to roll back a lot of the progress we have made, which is hard because so many people are now out, because so many people felt safe enough to do that. And it is going to be very difficult for a lot of people to get back into the closet so that they can live their lives. And I am worried about the irreparable harm that going back in the closet could do for people.

Here Debby explicitly ties the reversal of LGBTQ progress to going back in the closet. Much as the march forward for LGBTQ rights is a progressive step forward for society, coming out is a progressive step forward personally. These processes differ, however, in the ease with which they can be reversed. It is easier to roll back political or legal protections, to have a reversal in policy, than it is to go back in the closet. Therefore, social change is a necessary component in the conversation about moving rights forward. It would stand to reason that a single government body, or president, can easily roll back freedoms and protections for a minority group than it is for said group to change their identity as they readjust to such reversals.

Findings

The rise of right-wing populism and the 2016 U.S. election caused participants to experience negative mental health outcomes. These include feelings of depression, fear, anxiety, and hopelessness. The depression, and feelings associated with depression, tended to surface when participants watched the news or kept abreast of current events. By expressing fear that increased hatred and vitriol towards the LGBTQ community is inevitable and that their future looks bleak, participants conveyed their hopelessness. This sense of hopelessness lends itself to deep fears across a wide spectrum. These fears ranged from harm to oneself to harm of others around the world.

Coming Out and Community

The pivotal experience of coming out acts as coming-of-age or official entrance into the LGBTQ community. However, unlike other traditions there is no prescribed age for the person coming out or steps to follow to do so. Instead it is a process that most LGBTQ people have a story about. In this study, participants volunteered their coming out stories unprompted. The prevalence of this offering speaks to the significance, and commonality of the experience. One may see it as an element of identity formation in LGBTQ people. Something that is almost

inevitable, even if it is not done in a formal ceremony or conversation with loved ones.

Segments of the LGBTQ population come out many times daily. When someone reads as LGBTQ—in other words, when their gender presentation reveals their membership in the community, they essentially come out every time they walk into a room. Those who are not identifiable members of the LGBTQ community come out when they choose but, given the common assumption of heterosexuality, must come out nonetheless. Although LGBTQ people may come out in the way we commonly associate with coming out—sitting down with family and friends and having a conversation. This ceremony is significant in the coming-of-age process of most LGBTQ people, but it should be noted that it is the beginning of a life-long journey and not an end in itself. This area is ripe for further development with more robust and focused research.

Mental Health Struggle as Intrapersonal Violence

The study has revealed that even the threat of transformation, or perversion, of political and social structures can cause mental health issues for marginalized communities. Even though, at the time of the interviews, participants were unable to articulate any particular incidents of violence connected to the election they still experienced negative mental health outcomes. Therefore, the mere existence of a threat caused negative outcomes in the small group of interviewees.

The mental health outcomes that participants said impeded their happiness and prevented the realization of an actualized life fit neatly within Galtung's (1969) definition of violence. If violence is the difference between the actual and the potential, as Galtung (1969) contends, the existence of anything that prevents an individual from reaching their full potential (where such impediments could have been avoided) is violent. Since participant's mental health struggles were caused by an avoidable situation, namely the rise of right-wing populism, violence is present.

Coming Out is Significant

Almost all the participants volunteered their coming out story or otherwise mentioned the process. They were not prompted or led to the topic, but felt it was helpful in providing context for understanding how the new administration, and the rise of right-wing populism, will impact the LGBTQ community. The recounting of this pivotal moment also speaks to the significance of storytelling and the connection between our stories and politics.

Participant's experiences of coming out vary; there is not a universal experience that can be conveyed in writing. However, even those who received positive feedback when they came out, felt stress and anxiety leading up to the conversation. The reactions of friends and family are only one factor in the struggle LGBTQ people have in coming out. Even before the actual event of coming out participants expressed stress, fear, and anxiety. Therefore, the build-up of anxiety about the unknown leading to the conversation leaves an impression. Perhaps it is this build-up and this time of acute pressure that causes a person to remember their coming out so vividly.

The LGBTQ individual carries the brunt of the anxiety of coming out. In this way coming out has become a sort of institution or a moment of transition in the mind of the person one comes out to. Had the institution never existed, had the LGBTQ individual explored their sexuality as a matter of course, perhaps they would be spared the anguish that leads to coming out. In other words, had they expressed their LGBTQ identity without that singular moment of transition, perhaps there would not be a precedent of belonging. The shared experience of stress and anxiety is a significant commonality that contributes to a sense of community by LGBTQ people.

Being Out as Permission and Responsibility

Given the effort and stress of coming, out one may be tempted to believe that the anxiety will ease. But being out has a new set of concerns for the participants. Not surprisingly, being out also provided a permission structure for some interviewees to enter LGBTQ spaces or participate in activism as it relates to the Queer community. This permission structure is based in a sense of belonging and being a part of the Queer community.

The permanence of being out infuses a stronger sense of identity into being LGBTQ. Some participants spoke about their fear for others and the fact that, once someone is out, it is difficult, if not impossible, to go back into the closet. Perhaps it is this identity, and its lack of pliability that leads folks to embrace being LGBTQ and participate in activism and other community-related activities. For example, one of the participants started playing music in a band once she came out. Much of the music appealed to the LGBTQ community, and this allowed her to express herself and feel a sense of liberation.

Other participants felt as though they were part of a community once they came out. This sense of connection with others who are similar provided these folks with a permission structure to engage in LGBTQ activism. As is common with marginalized identities, out members of the

LGBTQ community occupy a unique, even radical, place in society. When people venture out of the closet, then, they become political actors in a way they were not previously. This experience can lead to the radicalization of people who are newly out. It also gives them permission to enter Queer spaces and participate in Queer activism as members of the community.

The Media

While President Trump was in office, social media and cable news were papered with apocalyptic stories and events. From the President's racially tinged (and often overt) rhetoric to his and his family's blatant corruption, for many, the country seemed to be falling apart. This led many participants to feel a sense of hopelessness and perpetuated isolation. Because of the elevation and availability of sensationalist news, stories participants felt that these stories represented mainstream thinking. The "if it bleeds it leads" approach to the news led some to avoid the news altogether. It led others to limit their news intake to certain times of the day or certain outlets. Because of the sensationalist approach by the media, homophobia and transphobia were highlighted and often made to seem like the prevailing beliefs. For example, the ban on transgender people serving in the military and the President's comment about Vice President Mike Pence wanting to hang gay people received wide coverage and cemented in the mind of LGBTQ news watchers the homophobia that many already feared.

As exemplified by the transgender military ban and the rollback of protections for LGBTQ federal workers, the policies of the Trump administration also led to a perceived, and perhaps actual, loss of safety. Further, participants observed, that many of the policies that targeted and effected the LGBTQ community had few adverse consequences for cisgender heterosexual men. This observation furthered a sense of isolation and alienation.

Uncertainty for the Future

The rhetoric perpetuated by the news media and social media led some participants to feel uncertain about their own future and the future of the country. This uncertainty led to feelings of fear and hopelessness. The election of someone who is vocal and unapologetic about racist and bigoted views unsurprisingly led to increased bigotry generally. The hyper-focus of the media on his bigoted statements fed uncertainty for the future and exhaustion.

The support that bigoted rhetoric and populist politicians received led participants to feel uncertain about the future. Participants were not aware of any regulation or check on President Trump's rhetoric, aside from the whims of a few unhinged politicians. They reported having

paranoid and catastrophic fears. It had already seemed that Trump was pushing the bounds for acceptable behavior. He was crossing lines and engaging in behavior that was previously considered unfathomable. The idea, then, that he would go further in violating the rights and freedoms of marginalized groups became increasingly vivid.

The implications for LGBTQ people are especially intersectional. One only need to look at those incarcerated at the border. Among the many indignities people are experiencing, transgender people who are imprisoned are held in facilities that are split up according to gender as assigned at birth (Fernadez, 2020). This carceral decision both puts the transgender population at the border in serious physical danger and causes acute psychological damage. Such disregard highlights the lengths to which the administration will go to fulfill its agenda, and the lack of consideration it takes in furtherance of this goal. This is just one example of the harmful disregard for members of the LGBTQ community that fuel the fear and paranoia some folks might experience.

There was also a sense of fear and uncertainty for the future of the country, and for marginalized communities other than LGBTQ people. With the election, it was unclear in what direction politics and policies were moving. For example, some of Trump's ideas during the election seemed quite drastic—such as expanding the wall on the U.S.–Mexico border and putting tariffs on Chinese imports. Whether or not these were enforceable or how they would be implement remained unclear. Trump's domestic policy was even more opaque, and seemed to be encompassed in his signature phrase—Make America Great Again. The meaning of this phrase has never been explained. Therefore, it is easy, with such unclear terms and ideas, to feel uncertainty.

Fear for Safety

The anxiety people felt for their safety took on a handful of different iterations ranging from hyper-vigilance to fear of being killed, and therefore both structural and direct violence posed perceived threat to LGBGTQ people. Participants connected feeling unsafe with the previously mentioned feeling of uncertainty. Fear and uncertainty collectively led to a hypervigilance that people carried into their everyday lives, a feeling that permeated their very existence.

A significant concern among participants was that the administration would introduce laws and policies rescinding rights that have been granted to LGBTQ people. During the years leading to the Trump administration the community had significant legal, social, and policy victories, such as the legal recognition of marriage by same-sex couples and recognition of trans rights by the Obama administration (Jaffe, 2015). The fear was not unfounded, considering some of the extraordinary measures taken by the Trump administration such as putting a hold on civil rights protections for transgender children and rescinding bans on medical discrimination directed at the LGBTQ community (The Human Rights Campaign, n.d.).

Beyond the actions of the administration itself participants expressed fear about how the actions and policies of the administration will encourage other actors to behave in a way that is harmful to LGBTQ people. This concerns centers around the fear that Trump and his administration give people permission to act in a way that is harmful to the LGBTQ community and to racial minorities. Because racism and bias are deep within the fabric of our society Trump's rhetoric acts as a sort of dog whistle that ignites these latent sentiments. Alt-right and far-right forces such as far-right Christians or white nationalists feel freer to voice their beliefs. In a sense, Trump's rhetoric provides permission for these groups to act on their harmful beliefs. It's not as though LGBTQ people were unaware of such beliefs. The danger and fear though are more salient with a leader like Trump providing a platform and sense of impunity for those who are bigoted.

This allows the policies and beliefs of the administration to reach beyond the sphere of politics and touch on people's everyday lives in a way that goes further than policies. To be certain policies have a significant impact on people's everyday lives. However, by inciting his followers' intolerance the threat of his vitriol is multiplied. This expansion causes people in the

LGBTQ community to be that much more afraid in their everyday lives. Therefore, not only does the rhetoric actually cause people to behave in a more bigoted way, it causes those in marginalized communities to fear for their safety.

Participant's fears were varied and ranged from losing a general sense of safety to more specific concerns such as discrimination or rights taken away. Many participants said that they were worried about discrimination in their everyday lives. Others were worried about their security and some of the progress made in the preceding years being rolled back, causing rights to also be rolled back as well. Some were apprehensive about their actual physical safety and worried about being targeted and severely hurt, or even killed.

Perhaps one of the more tragic consequences of this fear is that participants worry people may revert to the shame and fear they had previously, before coming out. The suggestion was made that people may go back in the closet. This is a salient fear, and we saw this behavior with Abby who was forced to go back in the closet in high school when her parents discovered she was gay and threatened to send her to conversion therapy. Abby was able to go back in the closet, but many people who come out in all areas of their life cannot go back in the closet. For these individuals, any progress erased by the election of Trump permeates the areas of their life where they have already come out, and they are stuck with the consequences of being out of the closet.

Concern for Intergenerational Knowledge

Participants expressed concern for the effects that right-wing populism would have on young people. Even just the fear of what Trump might do can cause damage. For example, if people are choosing not to come out of the closet, or go back in the closet, young LGBTQ people miss out on vital mentorship (McAllister, Harold, Ahmedani, & Cramer, 2009). Those in the community typically step up, in both a formal and informal way, to explain to newer generations how to exist as an LGBTQ individual. If people stay closeted or go back in the closet youth will not have such guidance.

Further, participants were worried that the rhetoric coming from the top levels of the government would make it unsafe for people to be LGBTQ in their families. A disproportionate number of homeless youth are LGBTQ (U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness). People are either kicked out of their homes for their gender or sexual orientation or decide to leave because

conditions are unsafe. Participants told stories of their own families and the struggles they had growing up, and worry that the rise of right wing populism, and the normalization of hate, will make it more likely for this to happen to others.

Conclusion

This chapter examines the intrapersonal conflict that LGBTQ individuals experience in relation to their identity. The mental health challenges manifest as anxiety, fear, and depression. Their intrapersonal challenges were also manifested in their journey to come out. The lead up to coming out and the responses of friends and family caused LGBTQ people great harm. However, once participants felt came out they experienced a sense of freedom. Further, they felt as though coming out of the closet provided permission to participate in LGBTQ activism and community events.

THE IMPACT OF STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

Introduction

Though most were in agreement that LGBTQ people are safe in LA, participants expressed fear and anxiety for others. An analysis of such turmoil reveals the structural nature of these experiences. As set forth by Galtung's (1969) article "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," structural violence is anything that prevents somebody from reaching their full potential. Here, this fear stands in the way of people feeling at peace and free from mental torment. A corollary to this is the guilt that comes along with living in an area that is relatively safe during a time when coming out is not a death sentence. This mixed sense of guilt and acknowledgement of privilege as expressed by participants is complex and harmful, and caused fear, worry, and depression.

One area where structural violence had an effect on participants was the knowledge that though they are relatively safe, other LGBTQ people are at risk. This juxtaposition both fuels their anxiety and contributes to a sense of guilt for their own relative safety. This can also lead participants to feeling trapped in California or the LA area because they feel less safe in other parts of the country. This can lead to a bubble, where those who feel safe in progressive cities do not move to areas that are more conservative, leading to people in both regions becoming entrenched in their beliefs.

Participants acknowledge a disparity between their lives and the lives of others who might be differently situated. They experience complex emotions related to their privilege, and see their safety and freedom differently. Some see their privilege as related to their geographic location, while others see their privilege as coming from their social or economic location. Either way, the disconnect is clear, and contributed to participants' anxiety and depression. Participants speak openly about this anxiety in what follows. The tension between the anxiety that people experience and the privilege they acknowledge is also clear in the interviews below.

Geographic Anxiety: Knowing You Are Safe When Others Are at Risk

Along with the general feeling that others are at risk and that they are protected is the sense that LGBTQ people are at risk in more rural, or not urban, areas. Even those who believed they were safe living in LA, feared for their safety. As Casey, a lesbian in her late thirties who has lived in LA for decades, put it:

> I feel, like, in LA, I feel safe. But even an hour away it is still not safe out there, you know? So I am trying to put myself in the position, like middle America, like all those people. I am more scared for them because coming out is hard in the first place.
>
> Like, now we were just getting to a place where it was starting to feel safer for everyone. Now it is not again. Like our youth was coming to a place where they were realizing their sexuality and stuff like that. And now it is still scary for them. I don't think it is getting easier for them, where, with Obama, I felt like we were moving to a safer place.
>
> As far as gay marriage I don't think it can be taken away. Like, if he could he would. So yeah that is mostly what I am scared of our younger generation that we were going in the right direction with and I don't feel as positive anymore.

The sense of sadness, or negativity, was a common refrain among participants. People who mentioned Obama either mentioned a sense of hope when he was in office; or a sense of hope when he was running for election, and disappointment with his presidency. Either way, those who were interviewed felt let down by the old administration, and a sense of fear for the new one.

Worry for Those Outside of L.A.

While generally experiencing a sense of safety and insulation from bigotry and violence, participants demonstrated great concern for others. Specifically, they voiced worry about people who do not live in LA, or those that live outside of California or other major cities. Their fears tend to be tied to geography and their own beliefs about how people in certain regions respond to the LGBTQ community and other marginalized groups within the United States. Often folks downplayed their own vulnerabilities and fear in expressing their worry for others.

Participants mostly said they felt safe living in LA and California and that they feel safe with public displays of affection (PDA). If they were in another state or country, they would not display affection for fear of homophobic reprisals. Folks conveyed the idea that before the rise in right-wing populism, there was less risk, and that there is increased bigotry due to the shift. This runs counter to the idea that prejudice and bigotry have always existed and that the current climate allows those with such beliefs to voice their opinions.

Geography also came up for some to make the argument that people in the United States are less safe. Because some of the renewed threats related to the rise of right-wing populism and some of the policies and laws in the United States, some participants feel that other countries, such as Canada, are safer alternatives. While participants are critical of this administration and more conservative regions of the country, and view LA and California as safer, many are still generally critical of the country.

Living in a Bubble

Participants see their safety connected to the region they live in as existing in a bubble and being separated from what the rest of the country experiences. As Katy sees it:

We're in LA and we're in a bubble. But, like, people in middle America who identify openly as gay—that must be a lot scarier every day, especially during this administration, and I wish that could change more quickly especially because it's, like, 2017 and it's really crazy that we're going backwards in a lot of ways.

This idea that those who live in LA or California are safe and live in a bubble was voiced by multiple respondents. The general notion seemed to be that those who live in the bubble are safe from homophobia, and those who do not live in the bubble have a more difficult time being LGBTQ or marginalized in some other way.

Finley sums this opinion up aptly:

> I mean, we have the privilege of having our state protecting us. If their state isn't protecting them, and the federal government isn't protecting them, that is a very sad state of affairs.
>
> So, like, it's good to be aware that not everybody has rights. Just because we have rights in California and feel protected in California, we are unique here.

Feeling unique for living in California and protected by the state leads to both a sense of hopelessness and a sense of denial with respondents. Some feel privileged, and perhaps a bit undeserving, for the protection provided by the state, which seems to lead to more guilt.

This outlook of living in a bubble while those in middle America who are gay misses the nuances and entrenched ways that homophobia and transphobia exist. While it is true that LA, and to a lesser degree California, has left-wing policies and is generally accepting of LGBTQ and trans folks that is not the whole story. There are people in California who are homophobic and conservative, and, in the middle of the country, there are rural areas that are liberal and accepting.

One concern some may have is that the general sense of safety that folks feel may lead to complacency and hinder further progress. LGBTQ folks still do not have federally mandated workplace protections; there is a ban on trans people serving in the military; businesses are permitted to discriminate based on sexual orientation; and trans women of color are increasingly murdered and targeted for violence.

When asked if the rise of right-wing populism has affected the way she thinks about the future, Frankie said: "You know I try—. It does and it doesn't. I kind of want to live in this 'I am special and it doesn't affect me' kind of bubble." Complacency and an unwillingness to speak out against these things can lead to a situation where people are tacitly permitting bad actions. People like Frankie believe that these things do not affect her.

The concern about complacency leads some to conclude that because there are fewer overt challenges to the LGBTQ community in California that folks will not push for change. Finley captures this feeling in the following statement:

> But when I came out there wasn't a lot of pressing issues to be political about, as far as LGBTQ issues go, there's definitely still problems, there's definitely still issues, just not in this state. It's not a concern here, you just don't see Californians really erupting about LGBTQ issues because there is nothing too much of concern.

One may question what qualifies as a pressing issue for LGBTQ people, as many still face a variety barriers. There are also intersecting components of identity that operate to prevent progress on such issues such as racism, classism, and sexism. Still, folks seem to be predominately concerned with the issues that generate that most attention, and complacency is the alternative.

This is evident in the way Finley talks about her biggest concerns in the present moment:

> I guess complacency is my biggest concern that I would have because we live in California, and there is nothing to really fear and that is the problem. These other things seem unreal. Like, I heard a story about a woman being sued because she slept with another woman, and she gets sued by the husband.

California has many protections and opportunities for LGBTQ folks. Aside from having a dense and vibrant LGBTQ population, California has progressive and protective policies supporting LGBTQ individuals and families. However, LA has a very high homeless population. There are 60,000 homeless people in the city at last count. LGBTQ youth disproportionately comprise the nation's homeless. Therefore, even in this progressive state, there are issues affecting the Queer community that remain unaddressed.

Generally, participants feel grateful to be living in LA and experience a sense of safety. Even with the recognition that they are less safe in other parts of the country, folks still feel privileged. As Charlie says:

> I feel really lucky to be able to live in a city that is very much aligned politically with me. Of course, there are people that aren't. I mean I think that—. Again I am in a really big place of privilege living in LA. I don't feel like employment-wise it is harder for me because I am gay. Like I don't feel any more safety risks with this government in LA than I did with the last one. People are still hateful.
>
> In terms of my personal safety outside of LA, I feel like those things are heightened.

Though a number of participants voiced concern about marginalized communities in other parts of the country, they also worry for themselves. Respondents worried about traveling or leaving the LA or California regions.

This hesitation leaves people feeling trapped in LA and afraid to travel outside of the region. Even though they may not have imminent plans to do so, such circumstances can cause people to that they have limited options on where to live. When asked how the new president and the rise of right-wing populism has affected her, Debby sees her options as limited:

On a very simple level, Aloe and I were hoping, like we're thinking in a very vague way about maybe moving outside of California. With basically the rise of the political movement that is going on the right that isn't really possible for us anymore since he is trans and I am a Queer woman who cannot keep her mouth shut about that. So we're definitely more confined to California.

This demonstrates two sides of the perceived security provided by living in California. On the one hand participants are gifted with feeling safe in California, on the other hand that safety makes them feel trapped.

Such a perception poses a political problem as well. If, as the country becomes more polarized politically, people who are marginalized and tend to vote Democrat sequester themselves to certain regions, such as coastal states or urban areas, then there will be no systemic change. For example, if a chunk of the marginalized population moves from Mississippi to New York to feel safe, then Mississippi will have that many less likely Democratic voters. This will cause further polarization, division, and intolerance. Josy touches on this sentiment:

And then just, sort of the outlook on the future—are we just going to be more and more in our bubbles? Like, I am fine here in LA. but is that helpful to the rest of the country to be ,like, "Well I am in bubble so—."

While it is important to have states and cities where people feel safe it is also important that people work to make the areas where they already live into areas where everyone can feel safe. Sadly, the trend seems to be going in the other direction, people are concentrating more and more in big cities, and creating these insular bubbles.

Outside of LA, in other cities people have different concerns. LA is comprised of a large number of people that did not grow up in the city, but moved from other cities around the country. One such transplant is Jonie, who reflected on living in LA and the overall mood in Washington DC, where she moved from about a year before this interview:

> It's better here being in LA now, since I just moved here a couple months ago. But in DC, it was just exhausting because so many of my friend's jobs were impacted. Some of my friends lost their jobs, which is normal with a change in administration, but it was scary to see people talking about having to back everything up because, you know, that the next day everything was gonna get wiped out, all of the work they had done over the last two years. Every fucking obstacle that could be put in place was going to be put in

place so that they couldn't do their jobs.

After the results of the 2016 election employees of the federal government were worried that their research and any other data that did not conform to the new administration's politics or beliefs on topics such as climate change or immigration that the data would be purged. The administration took a different approach and left key posts within the government unfilled so that people were unable to do their jobs effectively. As of March 2019, 140 top-level positions had not been filled[1] posing substantial obstacles to employees of the federal government

Beyond regional national concerns, participants also commented on the relationship between the United States and the rest of the world, specifically with the country's neighbors, Mexico and Canada. The rise of right-wing populism has had implications for immigrants and asylum seekers, Debby's comments touch on this issue:

I'm worried about immigration issues as they relate to LGBTQ issues, people who are seeking refuge from countries where you can be killed for being gay—legally be killed for being gay, and our government not recognizing that as a legitimate means for being a refugee.

In the months following the change in leadership, and a rightward swing, in the United States undocumented immigrants have been imprisoned and an increasing number of asylum claims have been denied. This trend has coincided with a rise of nationalism, and is underpinned by the idea that to be a citizen of the United States is to be white and Judeo-Christian.

Beyond their acknowledgement of the horrible conditions of immigrants and asylum seekers at the southern border participants have strong opinions about the how the United States compares to its northern neighbor—specifically, when it comes to healthcare. Advocates for healthcare reform often point to Canada as a model for the single-payer system, and to allay concerns that such a system would turn the United States into a socialist country.

Janie recounts a traumatic medical situation and relates it to her frustration with the U.S. healthcare system:

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[1] https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/donald-Trump/help-wanted-Trump-administration-riddled-vacancies-n983036

There's this one time before the Affordable Care Act[2], Marley and I were—. Actually, I think, we had gone to San Francisco Pride, and on our way back we stopped for gas and there was a car that was parked in a Del Taco or something. And this woman was running around the car pretty much, like, freaking out. And I heard her on the phone. And I was, like, "What the heck?"

And I saw the driver was like passed out in the front seat and she's like, "Ohh, she had a seizure" or whatever. So I was, like, "What the fuck!" She was on the phone with, like, her friend. She wasn't even on the phone with 911.

So I got on the phone with 911. And the woman on the line had me walk through step by step by step with this woman. And ultimately the woman passed away in her car, right there. And she is on her way to see her kids and her friend. She had an aneurism, and her friend said she had issues with high blood pressure and other things that were going on. And she didn't see the doctor because she didn't have healthcare.

And it is so fucked because places like Canada, places like Switzerland, they have their shit together. Why the fuck don't we? If we are supposed to be some big great country that's better than everybody else, why can't we get that shit together?

The above demonstrates the pain and trauma that occurs regularly in the United States because, unlike their similarly situated industrialized counterparts, the United States has not figured out a way to insure that all citizens receive proper medical treatment. This also demonstrates the degree to which many Americans, specifically on the left, romanticize the healthcare systems in Canada and European countries. Though most rational thinking people would like a system that provides for everybody that needs it, every approach has its drawbacks, and it is easier to see those drawbacks when living within the system rather than looking at it from the outside.

Privilege: Acknowledging What We Have

Participants were quick to recognize where they have advantages over others, both in, and outside, the LGBTQ community. Almost every interviewee spoke of feeling some sort of advantage, a sentiment that was accompanied by a sense of guilt. The LGBTQ folks interviewed

[2] A relatively new system in the U.S. that mandated everybody have health insurance and provided subsidies to help low income and middle class individuals and families have at least basic coverage.

largely feel safe living in LA, many describe living in a bubble. The sense of safety that participants felt appears to them to be privilege. Their acknowledgement of, what some might call, geographic privilege, led some participants to recognize other areas where they have to step up. Mallory voices this sense of responsibility:

When I hear someone being wronged—really in any kind of group that has less privilege—. You know, I am white and I appear more feminine so even I will have more privilege than a lesbian who is less fem presenting. I try to always be supportive and speak up for people who are not speaking up for themselves. I am a feminist, too.

Here Mallory is reflecting on the sense of responsibility she feels because of her privilege. She ties action to this responsibility, and feels compelled to step in for people who do not share her gifts.

The word privilege is used here to refer to a situation in which a participant describes having any sort of unearned advantage, or where they themselves use the word. The concept is fraught, causing strong reactions from people on both sides of the debate. Use of the term can invoke some to feel that their specific struggles remain unacknowledged and that recognition of privilege somehow discounts or minimizes their own adversity. Therefore it is important to state that there can be, and often is, conflicting characteristics of privilege.

For example, lesbians and some trans women who present their gender as feminine may pass as straight cis women. “Passing” protects them from homophobic micro-aggressions or violence. Because they don’t have to worry about homophobic violence based on their appearance and can “pass” as straight they are privileged. However, because they appear straight these individuals are invisible to members of the LGBTQ community. This phenomenon, known as “femme invisibility” can cause folks to feel isolated and unwelcome in the LGBTQ community. This then is a clear example of how privilege in one area translates into isolation in another area.

Participants tend to believe they have not had to struggle because they have not experienced severe consequences for being members of the LGBTQ community. Carly reflects this idea:

I think I’ve had it pretty easy in terms of being gay and nothing really bad has happened to me other than being afraid of coming out to my family. I am pretty lucky.

This ignores the inherent struggle of being a member of a marginalized population. This also discounts issues that are specific to the LGBTQ community. Coming out, experimenting with gender, and familial rejection. Even those that have struggled with these feel privileged for having avoided some more severe homophobia.

Some participants see their privilege as a factor of geography, that they are fortunate because their rights will not be infringed on because they live in LA and the state protects them. Finley voiced this sentiment:

I guess, honestly, I am in a position of privilege. I live in LA. I live in California. My life hasn't actually changed so just the thought of what I just said that things could change or that things are changing in other states with other people. And rolling back federal protections and employment, which doesn't affect me.

Finley sees the potential for federal laws that infringe on the rights of LGBTQ individuals, but does not fear that they will affect her. There was an overall sentiment among participants that those living in LA are privileged, and that those outside of California are at risk.

Participants also acknowledged privilege and oppression as being intersectional. In other words, that they can experience privilege for multiple reasons and can also experience oppression in intersecting ways as well. For example, when asked about her activism in the Queer community and her feminism, Mallory sees the two as inextricably connected:

I feel really strongly towards both issues, and they are both groups that lack in privilege. There are people who have less privilege than I do. It can also cause resentment. too. I can be resentful towards cis white males, especially if they are Christian.

The problem is that the people this is going to affect are people with less privilege. That is the problem.

My dad is, like, "Well, you know, you have nothing to worry about. I will help you out."

It is just really scary. And I think it is a time to be really cognizant of people with less privilege than you. Okay, I am a woman. I am gay. I am Jewish. But there are people that have so much less and the whole female presenting—. I go home and I get looks from people around town. Imagine when my partner comes around. You know what I am saying?

Mallory touches on an element that is present in the LGBTQ community, as it is with the rest of our society—class. Socio-economic class variations makes some folks more susceptible to the harms of homophobia and transphobia, such as violence job discrimination, and housing discrimination. For example, the military was the largest employer of transgender people in the United States. The executive order banning trans people from serving in the military, a transphobic policy, stymies the economic development of a large portion of the trans community. Some participants acknowledged class explicitly, as an element of their own privilege.

Much like Mallory (and previous participants). Jonie also claims that her privilege is tied in with her gender presentation and the fact that she appears heterosexual: "I am very fortunate because (a) I present as pretty hetero and I am a cis white female that grew up in a middle class family. So I am fortunate in the short-term. This administration is not impacting me financially like it is some people." The class component seems to be inextricably tied in with race and gender presentation. This relationship may be both interdependent as well as determinative. One may ask whether folks are able to ascend to the middle class because they are white and heteronormative or are they white and heteronormative simply by default and happen to be in the middle class.

Others saw their privilege as a barrier to activism, and their Queerness as an opportunity for liberation. Participants may feel shame for having advantages and that those advantages preclude them from entering spaces where they can advocate for those who are marginalized. In one interview a participant highlighted that they experienced a shift when they came out and became a member of the LGBTQ community. For example, Katy said:

I have always felt a lot of guilt growing up in a white privilege community and wanting to be able to help more, but feeling uncomfortable stepping in, as if it is not my place. So I felt more comfortable—. Even just going to my first Pride march was really fun.

This evokes the very nature of being Queer. Just by existing as a member of the LGBTQ community, one is drawn into activism. Here Katy feels that being LGBTQ makes her feel more comfortable in the world and assuages guilt about her privilege. Not only does her participation help her feel more comfortable, but it also allows her to more confidently participate in activist activities.

Even though people might not have explicitly used the term "privilege" they recognize their good fortune. Some even see this advantage as the very reason they should participate. For

For example, Ari recognizes the freedom he has and uses it to explain his participation in protests against the persecution and violence against gay men in Chechnya:

> Right now, because of what's on the table in the next few months, even currently, I am more afraid for others in my community, like the fact that we haven't opened our doors to Chechnya. People are trying to escape, and that concerns me a lot, that doesn't affect me I am not from Chechnya but that wasn't a choice of mine it just happens to be where I was born, so that issue bothers me for example.

Ari recognizes that the circumstances he was born into were an accident, and that he has a duty to help others. He further acknowledges that he is willing to participate even though the persecution is happening an ocean away, in Chechnya.

Key Findings

Intersectional Connection

Eight key findings emerged from the data. First, intersectional connection is critical as the data demonstrates that participants generally felt a sense of connection and empathy for those who live outside of LA and other big cities who are a part of marginalized communities. This worry extended beyond members of the LGBTQ community and included immigrants at the southern border and others who may be targets of violence. Participants feared these people would endure either social rejection or direct violence because of the increasingly charged environment created by the campaign, and election of, Donald Trump.

These concerns, while genuine and heartfelt, seem to be based on assumptions and generalizations rather than actual experience. None of the respondents spoke of any direct knowledge aside from what they saw in the news or social media. There seemed to be a consensus among respondents who expressed worry about those outside of LA that other areas of the United States outside of big cities are unsafe for people in marginalized communities. This does not negate the sense of connection that participants felt it does however convey their own biases. This perceived danger also revealed feelings of connection which may have been harmful to the respondents because it causes anxiety.

Perhaps this focus on LGBTQ individuals who live outside of big cities minimizes the homophobia and transphobia that people may experience in LA. Being a big city or having a

progressive reputation and passing progressive legislation does not shield someone from the degradation and humiliation that comes with the type of homophobia and transphobia That exists in society but remains largely unseen and unacknowledged.

Guilt

Second, given their concern for those in the community and other similarly situated marginalized groups being targeted some participants felt guilty. Trump's rhetoric is dangerous and hateful, and at the time of the interviews it seemed likely that violence would follow. However some people who were interviewed aren't worried that they will be the victims of violence because of T rump's hateful rhetoric. Some did mention feeling guilty about living in Los Angeles. The guilt stems from a feeling of privilege and unearned safety and resources. Participants acknowledged that they live in a bubble relatively insulated from the experiences of LGBTQ and other marginalized people in Other parts of the country.

The guilt came up when participants were discussing the privilege their privilege when it comes to their location their privilege for being able to exist in a bubble their privilege for the life they were in the access to resources they have. Interesting is that they perceive privilege was based on participants belief that they were safe where they live geographically and that those who lived in outer suburban and rural communities are more at risk. In some cases participants even acknowledged their belief that an hour away from where we were conducting the interview they could experience some of the same things they're worried about for others. unfounded belief it may be based on the feeling there are people who have it worse off generally. It may be a perfunctory recognition out of obligation. One cannot ignore the role of capitalism and economic inequality in creating this guilt and it's partnering belief that those who do not live in metropolitans areas encounter more homophobia or are in Increased danger.

Participants also appeared guilty or uncomfortable about existing in a bubble in a media bubble in a social bubble who they spend time with in an academic bubble what people are learning about. It was almost as if participants felt like they had no control over these things that they I have no other choice but to exist in a bubble. It is as if all of these components that make up of this "bubble" that people exist in our immutable and that what is born into this but they can't change it. Given the anxiety and constraints of being LGBTQ and existing in a world that may not want you perhaps staying in a bubble is a means of survival. Respondents may not see it

that way, however, it's as though they have resigned themselves to things as they are without the possibility of change.

Bubbles

Third, most participants brought up this idea of living in a bubble. It comes up around living in LA and it comes up around having access to diverse communities and having a choice of people to spend time with. In almost every conversation or this idea of a bubble came up people privileged or elevated there are circumstances over others. Again, like they did this sense that because the state of California has passed laws that are more progressive than other states they are free from homophobia or from threat of violence and that people in other states typically the Midwest was brought up are not safe they're vulnerable and they don't have a state that protects them. His opinions it came out during emotional conversations and which typically not validated with any data or personal experiences.

Those who spoke about being in a bubble can be talking about it in a bubble in these conversations as in much of mainstream society there is an elevation and favoring of cities of high culture and judgments and assumptions and generalizations about rural and exurban areas. To be sure it would be arrogant and dismissive could not mention the safe home that major cities in California, each with its own storied past, have provided for millions of LGBTQ people. There is no denying the comfort and appreciation one feels when they are acknowledged and even honored by the people and government of their state. However, the elevation of liberal voices ignores the fact that homophobia is present in every sector of society even in California. It also relieves government leaders from being held to the standards and principles that's sustainably protect LGBTQ people and other marginalized groups.

For example, right on the California border people are being locked up and detained and it doesn't seem that like the state is doing much about that or about those who are round it up in California. Among youth runaways LGBTQ youth are disproportionately represented and many live on the streets today without food or shelter, this isn't something the state our country for that matter is putting a lot of focus on. Every year a Depressing and unnecessary number of transgender women, mostly women of color, are murdered there is no group or task force looking into this to make sure it doesn't happen in California. These are just a few examples there are many more bye being a bit better than other states California has managed to stand out

as a beacon of hope the bar has been put sadly very low and there is still a lot of work that needs to be done. this is all to say that wow people in areas outside of California may experience in color and sand rejection in ways people in California do not the state is by no means a panacea. like almost any major metropolitan area ice Angeles has a diverse population with the diversity and backgrounds beliefs values and political parties. old area is largely defined by its progressivism there are a lot large swaths of the population that are conservative that elect conservative members of Congress that have conservative values that align with the Republican Party. if people are interested in seeking out alternate points of view in understanding what those they disagree with my belief the opportunity is there. This idea about being in a bubble is self-imposed. People in LA, as they do in most other places in the US, have access to different news stations different newspapers talk shows and mostly whatever other format through which people consume media. the bubble can be popped it requires awareness pulling her ability and emotional acuity. one must recognize the challenges and implications of leaving their bubble, their zone of safety and comfort, and engaging with antithetical ideas and sometimes volatile people. the suggestion is not that people who identify themselves as being in a bubble needs to go do all those things otherwise they're some sort of hypocrite the idea is to acknowledge that we are all in a bubble and perhaps that bubble causes us to see things Askew. Identifying where that lens reveals itself and how it affects our behavior is a lifelong unraveling and the principal at the center of peace and justice studies.

Concern for youth

Many respondents voiced their sadness for young people during these times. They recall the process of coming out and discovering their identity and exploring it and the anxiety of coming out. Some felt that things were getting better and that it was becoming easier to come out. The fear was that Trump, with his hateful rhetoric, and the chaotic atmosphere he created would discourage young people from being themselves and coming out when they otherwise would have.

Young people who identify as LGBTQ are marginalized in their own communities. They may experience bullying or rejection by their family or some other sort of abuse. These circumstances pre-existed Trump and the rise of right-wing populism, the fear is that they will be exacerbated. His rhetoric and the overall hateful environment he creates and fosters make it

unsafe for any group living on the margins. His romanticism of hypermasculinity and exploitation of American's nostalgia for a time that never was make him especially dangerous for the LGBTQ community. whose most vulnerable members include young people.

Precarity

At the time of the interviews most participants were not directly affected by the results of the election. Most, however, felt Vulnerable and believed that there rights or their jobs or their marriages Or their medical care may be taken away. This reality feels especially sharp considering the astronomical cost of living in LA. There are certain segments of the LGBTQ community that rely on doctors and medical professionals more than others. Those receiving hormone replacement therapy, those living with HIV/AIDS those who are unhoused, those living on the street are just a few segments of the community that demonstrate the role that low cost and subsidized health care plays in the lives of LGBTQ people.

The unexpected nature and unhinged personality of the president lead participants to feel a sense of unsureness and likely contributed to the anxiety and depression that many people were feeling at the time. One cannot ignore the cognitive dissonance or confusion some participants felt While discussing their sense of dread and vulnerability in one breath and in the next proclaiming their feelings of safety and gratitude for all the privilege they have in California. This is a conflict that came up in most of the interviews. In one sense participants were very fearful about the future and felt unsure about the present and kind of lived each day waiting for another shoe to drop. In another sense participants saw all that was going on in the country and all of the people who are directly targeted all the people who are so severely hurt by trump and policies that they felt gratitude and appreciation that they themselves and their families or mostly safe.

Cruelty

Forth, participants were tired and saddened by the policies of the administration and the senselessly cruel and unprincipled manor in which they were enforced. Immigrants, asylum seekers, and those from majority Muslim countries all populations who call LA home. Witnessing those groups being targeted and being unable or largely limited when they needed

help contributed to the feelings of precarity and despondence of participants. There were so

many events in so many instances I love cruelty not many people I spoke to simply stopped engaging. Some stopped watching the news altogether others reduced their news intake and still others just didn't bother going to protest or activist events because so many things felt hopeless. One can see how, for secondary reasons this strategy works well for someone like Donald Trump.

Participants mentioned the white supremacist political agenda and power grab that they saw in the White House. Such an agenda has given participants an understanding Events as they occur in each day during this administration. The constant malicious references to non white countries, Just interest in diplomacy and the exultation of autocrats Paint a very clear picture who the president is what he believes about power. Putting the man himself aside for a minute the actual policies and agendas put in place at this time looks like many other politicians.

Trump's loudness and ostentatious performances obscure the fact that the policies and social philosophies behind the approach to governing of this cruel and insensitive person have been entrenched in American government since the founding. Although Trump was the first president to say horrible and racist things out loud, he likely is not the first president to think and believe them. It only takes a glance through American history to see evidence of this- from the early days of our venerated, slaveholding, founders to the civil war, reconstruction, Jim Crow, and stop and frisk. What's more astounding than the gruesome details of these events is that they were done legally and were propped up by the most prestigious and venerated power structures in the country. From this perspective someone with the beliefs and the opinions trump has becoming the nation's leader is unsurprising. What's notable here it's how little things actually changed with trump.

This is mostly true with one glaring exception- the attempt to overturn the 2020 election. That year is not the first time in modern American history that an election was contested and that many Americans, including the losing candidate, disagreed with the outcome. A scant 20 years earlier the 2000 election was very controversial and the closeness in the number of votes was real not a fevered delusion. The issues were so complex that the election was decided, by the Supreme Court. Perhaps a system, and its institutions, that lead to circumstances such as those above would benefit from reform.

Privilege

As has been stated previously participants have a complicated relationship with privilege. Privilege typically follows those who appear to be white appear to be straight and appear to be men. In the LGBTQ community the presence of privilege for some members and the lack of privilege for others is as stark as it is in the rest of society. Many LGBTQ communities are hyper political, therefore those who have accumulated wealth may feel guilty or alienated.

There are several ways that those with intersecting identities that are oppressed have found to survive and thrive. Most do what they can to help where appropriate., given the prevalence of racism, sexism, heteronormativity, and classism and sis gender ISM those who are experiencing any of those or all plus more will struggle true have sustainable resources. This is where guilt seems to crop up for those with privilege. when people begin to talk about their fears of the trump administration and convey their worry 4 people living in places that they perceived R less accepting in LA they felt it was necessary to almost prove their reflexive knowledge of privilege. In some of these conversations where participants were both providing acknowledgement of their own privilege and sympathy for those they perceive to be suffering one could almost sense sort of pity. Instead of seeing those suffering as comrades perhaps they are thinking of them as victims. This relationship only furthers the divides between sections of the LGBTQ community and alienates those who are already marginalized it also perpetuates a number of -isms.

It seems to be more revealing in these Conversations about privilege that which participants took for granted or neglected to mention then that which they felt needed to be said. Those that spoke of homophobia outside of LA had an almost universal recognition that LGBTQ people who did not live in a metropolitan area we're experiencing homophobia differently than those in big cities. the assumption seems to be that those who live rurally suffer more because of their gender identity or sexual orientation than those who do not. speaks to the rampant classism that has been present in the LGBTQ community as far back as there are records of LGBTQ people in LA and many other parts of the country.

In acknowledging their privilege most people focused on their material well being. Often racial and gender privilege. That is not because helps me believe let those forms of oppression no longer exist, quite the opposite. These forms of repression that's so prevalent so frequent but they tend to be dismissed as a given. The attitude it's almost one of resignation And tacit

acceptance. This may Enable participants to ignore these factors when they consider the oppression of others For example those who worry about youth in the Midwest, and who acknowledge their own relative safety living in LA, neglected to examine how they came to live in LA. They failed to interrogate why they are living Anna major city surrounded by like minded community while those in rural areas or far outside the city center have not relocated similar safety. I just glossing over certain aspects of their privilege people end up reinforcing it and miss opportunities to critically engage put their own intersecting identities.

Conclusion

The rise of right-wing populism causes a variety of emotions in those who were interviewed. These relate to their own safety and the safety and security of others in the LGBTQ community. The worry for others outside the community causes participants minimize their own fears and feel guilt for the safety they do feel.

RESPONSE

Introduction

Family was a salient theme in the research, the topic came up in two specific instances- family of origin and chosen family. Family is a sensitive topic for members of the LGBTQ community. A disproportionate number of LGBTQ people are estranged from their given families. This is an acute issue especially among youth. Because of this estrangement the significance of chosen family cannot be understated. Individuals turn to chosen family for support, in times of need, for community, and recognition. Even among those who are not estranged from their family but feel judged and misunderstood, chosen family proves to be a significant source of support. Even for folks outside the LGBTQ community the rise of right wing populism has caused conflict and disagreement with family.

When it comes to starting their own family many LGBTQ folks are beholden to laws in regulations governing this arena. Many participants mention the Supreme Court decision allowing same sex couples to marry as influencing how they think about family. While this decision and it is a significant step forward there's still a lot of work to be done when it comes to granting seems sex couples if equal rights when it comes to family. Some participants expressed hesitation about expanding their family because of the recent election and the state of discourse in the United States.

Almost uniformly participants voiced the desire to put their energy and anxiety into action that is positive and productive. Many met this goal by participating in activism. Such involvement took different forms in accordance with each participants needs and desires. What stood out from the interviews were the different ways that people defined activism. There seemed to be a certain way participants defined activism generally, and the way they defined they define LGBTQ activism specifically. Interviewees disproportionately mentioned the passage of Proposition 8 (a controversial referendum that banned same-sex marriage) as an event that first inspired them to become involved in activism.

Some of those interviewed had a long history of organizing and participating in, what they define as, activism. Some of that participation has been obvious and overt- such as marches

or protests. Others framed their activism as covert- such as participating in drag shows, playing music or community organizing. Participants acknowledged that LGBTQ people play a significant role in many protest activities whether or not they are centered around LGBTQ topics. Further, there tends to be higher than average turn out at events that are LGBTQ centered as well.

One event that many of those interviewed said was their introduction to protest and activism was the passage of proposition 8. One of the most significant bans on same-sex marriage, prior to the Supreme Court ruling such bans illegal, Prop 8 represented an opening for many LGBTQ people to become involved in activism. It is this involvement and participation that laid the foundation for further involvement, including participation in the resist march.

Community

Given Community

Many see the election as a statement of American attitudes toward women. The election marked a defeat of the first woman to run for president as part of a major party, despite her earning almost three million more votes. Additionally, some tape of Donald Trump was released before the election that revealed his attempts at sexual assault and disparaging language about women. Josy's outrage at these circumstances affected her relationship with her father:
How women should be treated have come to the surface has definitely changed my relationship with both of my parents, especially my dad. It has deepened the divide.

It is unfathomable to me that person, especially a person with an eight-year-old daughter, that a public figure of any kind—. Saying things about violating women so openly, not just without any repercussions, but with full blown celebration is an offense to women. There's just been a real—. It highlighted a lot of things, and then it halted the discussion at the same time
It is a common sentiment that the shift to right-wing populism- and the election,- has opened a space for people to voice their latent racist, sexist, and xenophobic opinions. One may think of the classic chicken and egg scenario—whether the rise of right-wing populism ignited the flames of hate or whether it fanned the flames. The truth may be that it did both.

Others have learned how to communicate with their family around sensitive topics. Those who are members of marginalized communities were less shocked by the rise of vitriol accompanying the election. Having experienced discrimination for years they already knew that this hate was stewing. They may also, therefore, have been better equipped to communicate with family and loved ones around sensitive topics.

Jackie is used to being around family that may not be accepting of who she is so she learned how to negotiate space around them:

I don't know in my family or whatever there's a lot—. My mom's side of the family is completely Republican and Christian and all that stuff. And over the years I have just been myself and I haven't rubbed it in anyone's face, and have just done me over the years. I have gained a lot of respect and people are like, "Okay." Like I was kind of saying before, we coexist in disagreement, and it is okay.

While others may not choose to take this approach, it works for Jackie. The very nature of existence and taking up space can be an emancipatory, and radical, act for members of marginalized communities. Here, Jackie takes a gradual approach to conflict transformation, and maintains relationships with her family members whom she disagrees with.

Even those who have been engaged in outspoken activism, when it comes to their immediate family, politics and LGBTQ issues can present a challenge. Marley and Janie met in Orange County California, an historically conservative community just outside LA. In discussing their upbringing and family Janie provides some insight into how Marley balances her relationship with her family:

She and I have been heavily involved in the community for like ten years or something like that. We both have pretty conservative backgrounds, and she still isn't out to her family—like, the older people. The younger people, yes.

Marley uses similar tactics to Jackie by avoiding direct confrontation with family so as to avoid negative conflict.

They also create their own family with their partners. When asked what keeps her going through tough times, Josy immediately referred to her wife and family. In thinking about what she wants for others, Josy reflected on this topic: "In an ideal world I would like people to be able to choose the type of family they want without facing additional discrimination with adoption agencies."

Josy reflects how others have responded to this question. As is evident above, respondents do not receive the emotional and psychological support to sustain themselves from their given family. Charlie echoes how important this relationship is to her, and when asked what a perfect world would look like she emphasizes feeling that she is not being judged and can live with whoever she wants, she reflects: "In my mind that looks like a world where I can be free to love whoever I want to create a family for myself that looks however feels comfortable to me without other people telling me that that's not real, that I am living in a way that is sinful." Charlie continues,

> I have the support of a spouse who shows up for me and gives me—. You know that. You just asked me what I imagine that world would look like. And my world looks like that already. My little family already is safe. And we are allowed to look however we want to look. Like, if we are alone, just us, I have that already. I wish that for everybody. But I have that when I don't venture outside of my apartment so that is really helpful that I have that support, and I have that life that I wish everyone could have.

Charlie's life looks how she wants it to and has that sense of safety and security that one may receive from their given family. Members of the LGBTQ community must put in the extra effort to create a sense of family. A step that others who may come from unhealthy or toxic families might also have to take as well. The difference is that with Queer folks their need to create their own family stems from systemic violence such as homophobia and transphobia.

Chosen Community

Participants consistently voiced concern for other LGBTQ people. Given that respondents' relationships with their given families are strained, their relationships with chosen family are important. Members of the LGBTQ community make their family out of friends, mentors, and the family of others. Given that they felt mostly privileged and protected from violent homophobic or transphobic reactions, many worried about those in the community who were not awarded such safety. Some referred back to their own experiences and others based their concern on assumptions, or random bits of news reporting hate crimes.

Folks also found purpose and fulfillment working with other LGBTQ folks and sharing their experiences. They have participated in PRIDE events, and have used their skills and talents

to contribute to the community as a whole. It also seems very important to participants that they be in community with other LGBTQ people. Participants repeatedly tell stories demonstrating their efforts to seek out other community members.

The feeling that they belong to a wider community comes into stark relief as they face increasing oppression and marginalization. Such circumstances leads people to seek out connection, for example while talking about what brings her comfort during hard time, Finley refers to both her intimate and wider community:

> My fellow homos, my fellow homosexuals. I don't know. We have a fun community, and so sometimes you look at the way everybody else—. Like, sometimes I hear clips or see reactions to things, and I am, like, 'Oh my god, it is depressing how much certain people or certain parts of the country seem to hate gay people.' And it can make it feel like the future is not bright.
>
> But I think that when I am with fellow people from the community, it is fun. It's light, but it can also be meaningful. And so I think that, at the end of the day, I am happy for myself this is my lifestyle, and I don't feel regret, and people can think what they want to think—.
>
> I don't know who every single gay person in the community is, but I know we have each other at the end of the day and only we understand this experience and we share it and we have that at least. So political things may happen. They come and go. Even if there is a down slope, it just pushes us together more, and I guess that is the upside. Things can go bad, but—. If you look at the Trump presidency, when things go bad and things go south, people are forced not only to get closer to their own group, but are forced to look outside their group for coalitional support from other groups and so it pushes all these people together.

The statement provides an idea about what this time or other challenging times may do to community. Marginalized groups tend to coalesce around specific issues that may broadly affect its members. In this instance, the bigotry that has increased in the post-Obama era has led to a closer connection for Finley and others in her direct community.

Others prefer being around only those in the LGBTQ community over being with folks who are straight. People can feel as though their gender or sexual orientation is not acknowledged or is minimized by people who are not LGBTQ and may not understand the

significance of these identifiers. Even aside from these topics, folks may feel alienated around non-LGBTQ folks. Mallory echoes this sentiment:

> I really stay around the Queer community a lot. I feel less a part of when I am around a straight community. And I think it is because I can play straight. Not act straight. I don't know how I act. I can't see that. But I feel unseen.

Mallory distinguishes between "playing straight" and "acting straight" a distinction that harkens to the idea of "passing" itself a correlate to assimilation. Spending time with other members of the LGBTQ community provides Mallory with a sense of belonging and safety. She goes on further to describe what keeps her going through difficult times: "I guess just my group of friends, like I mainly have Queer friends so just staying connected in that way, and connection for me is really huge." The connection allows Mallory to be herself without having to fit in with straight people.

Finding Community During Hard Times

Casey sums up the feelings of some participants who have a supportive family but may also prefer to spend time with their chosen family as well- "I have a great family. don't get me wrong. But I have always had a great network of friends and community. When I am down, I call someone and go to brunch and just kind of be okay." She echoes the sentiment of many participants, who may feel conflicted about their relationship with their family and with the LGBTQ community. While relatives may be accepting of their LGBTQ relatives, they may not understand the community, which leads to people seeking connection in the community rather than with family

Marley turns to her LGBTQ community when she is going through difficulties. She may reach out to people while engaged in activism, such as protests and marches, or in other ways. Marley relies on the nature of the connection, not necessarily on the nature of the relationship. Here's how she characterizes this:

> Finding connection through others—to other Queers, real authentic connection. Again, that can be at a march. I think that is why I love LA so much—because so many people are here to connect and find that same thing, like rock camp or volunteering, because

> again you're also around the same energy people who are there for the same reason. So I think just connecting to people with like mindedness.

Marley finds this connection with other members of the LGBTQ community through action. She finds comfort in being with folks who share a similar worldview. Though it is advisable to be exposed to different ideas and ideologies, one may seek out likeminded individuals when looking for comfort or experiencing difficulties.

Some participants were creating Queer community for the first time. Though some may have been acquainted with people who identify as LGBTQ they may not have felt as though they were a part of a community. When she is struggling Frankie, also relies on other Queers to help get her through challenging times:

> I think [I rely] on the new friendships I have just recently made. I have never had a Queer community, and that is something I have always wanted. And I have just recently come into that in the past year and a half, two years. And to me that is what drives me because that excites me getting to go and do things, like Dyke Day. I love that. That's my new favorite thing right now.

Folks that are new to community or to acknowledging and celebrating their sexuality find comfort in connecting with others who are in a similar situation. Respondents' answers varied in response to when they found Queer community. While some found community after being out for a while, others found it at a young age as budding LGBTQs.

Participants were coming into being part of the community at the time of the interviews. People who are just discovering Queer community, like Frankie above, provide a bird's eye view into the process. Katy's experience speaks to this:

> [Previously,] I had no sense of community and then last spring, it was very minimal, but I felt very comfortable identifying as Queer. And I feel like this year will be very different, and I am looking forward to it. I feel like I am starting to be involved just generally in the Queer community which I have never been, just having friends who are gay. So I am on a path that I want to be on, which is good.

For Katy her journey in the Queer community is just beginning. She states that she has felt no sense of community up until now and that this will change her experiences, namely during Pride month.

LGBTQ folks may define community differently among themselves. To some it may mean just being around other LGBTQ people, to others it is making contributions to the wellbeing of LGBTQ people, and others may define community as an intense connection with other members. In the interviews for this work it was Charlie who provided the best analysis of what it means to be in the LGBTQ community:

> I am an active member of the LGBTQ community, I feel like just my existence and the way I live my life involves me in the community. I am married to someone who is Queer, and our friends are Queer, and we give our money to Queer shops, we support Queer community.

Charlie continues:

> For me that looks like a family—like a community of people who looks out for each other, who don't have to worry about their safety, and can start doing all the other things.
>
> Like, if we as a community didn't have to worry so much about our physical safety and our human rights—. The Queer community is disproportionately affected by drug addiction, homelessness, violence. And I believe the current government is a big factor for that and if we didn't have to worry about those things, that's what I imagine our community— that would be a life that I could dream of for our community.
>
> For me, when I picture what the Queer community looks like, it doesn't just look the same as the rest of the world lives. It just doesn't. It looks like a world with radical tenderness and radical self-care and radical community. It looks like us putting each other—, putting ourselves on the line to support each other and showing up for each other in that way.
>
> Yeah that's what it looks like for me—a place where everyone feels safe to gender present the way that they want to and to be in relationships however that looks like, however they want to, and to raise kids and families that look the way they want them to look without anyone telling us the way that our lives are supposed to look and what good gays look like what the "acceptable gay" looks like.

Charlie's ideal for the Queer community is that folks may exist without fear of violence or marginalization. For her, safety is a life where LGBTQ people can thrive and be themselves. The idea is that Queer people are not merely accepted but are celebrated and that they are not looked

at the same way as straight people but are looked at as members of the Queer community.

Participants also expressed that their sense of community, in conjunction with the attack on LGBTQ rights, has empowered them to speak up about injustice and engage in their Queer community. For some folks that entails working with youth or participating in drag shows, and for others participation may consist of marches, protests, and organizing. One example of someone who has been empowered by the rise of right-wing populism is Janie:

> I don't know if I told you about the bathroom thing. I am still working on that right now, umm, but something like that I wouldn't have done before. But, right now, I feel so much more empowered, especially being around the people I surround myself with. I told you about earlier with just the communities I am around all the time has really empowered me to speak up when something isn't right. And for sure this administration has something to do with it—cuz you can't just let that shit slide anymore.

It is significant that Janie credits this rise of right-wing populism with making her more politically engaged and more willing to speak up. She is not alone in this experience. Both folks who have previously participated in social movement activities and those who are new to the LGBTQ community, and are new to social actions, were galvanized to participate.

The rise of right-wing populism in the United States and the further marginalization of minority populations has pushed LGBTQ folks to advocate more for themselves and for others. The experience of being in a community that is being targeted inspired participants to get involved in civic discourse in ways they may have not otherwise been involved. FINLEY sums up this idea perfectly:

> If I was a straight white female, I might not get as involved with things. I think that, you know, it's just, like, the nature of being a member of one oppressed group. You feel solidarity with other oppressed groups so you insert yourself into situations where you are welcomed in order to be an ally with whatever group is suffering at the moment.

Finley sees herself as part of a bigger community that extends beyond LGBTQ folks. Her membership in, what she calls, an oppressed group connects her with others who are being oppressed. Oppression is intersectional, as is allyship. Members of almost any community can also be members of the LGBTQ community—whether someone is an immigrant, a person of

color, or physically challenged, they may be LGBTQ. Therefore, being an ally to other groups is also advocating for those who are also in the Queer community.

Debby feels a sense of responsibility and is compelled to participate in activism because of her privilege and access. She considers herself a member of the Queer community but also "passes" as a heterosexual white woman. According to Debby:

As a Queer person who lives in this country in this really uncomfortable time, I wanted to make sure that my voice was heard, that I was there with my community because there has been such a backlash against minorities and oppressed groups. And I'm only a Queer woman. I'm still white. I was raised middle class. I pass really easily because I am femme.

It is important to me to make sure that I show up for those sorts of things so that my voice is also counted and so that any narrative that is spun by creepy ass people see that people like me, people that they would probably relate to more are also part of the community and are also uncomfortable with what they are doing.

Debby feels a sense of responsibility to represent the LGBTQ community in a way that allows people to relate. She feels especially compelled at the time of the interview because of the heightened vitriol and judgment of marginalized groups.

Some found comfort in protesting, specifically the Resist March in LA. The was connected to the first Pride sense the 2016 election. That year, instead of having a traditional Pride march in LA, LA Pride organized a resistance march. Floats and music were replaced with chants and homemade protest signs. The march followed the route of the original Pride march in LA. This decidedly political turn brought LGBTQ folks together in community. Debby expands on her relationship with the community and reflects on her participation in the RESIST march:

> I guess when it comes to those sorts of protests, it seemed more like a community-building activity, and it seemed more like a way to speak out against general policies. It felt important to be within community. That's what it felt like it was more about, to just, like—. Just the act of turning the parade into something that everyone could walk in, that we're all part of this community, that we're not performing for each other—that was pretty cool.

I didn't expect it to turn into anything actionable. It felt good to run into people I know, people that were affected by this administration in various ways. And also, it was just—. It was nice to be a part of a crowd of people who were like-minded. It felt less isolating. Debby

participated in the Pride march to connect with other members of the LGBTQ community. She showed up for that sense of community rather than to make any sort of substantial policy change. In this way we can see the intersection of activism and community, folks are participating in activist activities as a search for connection and community

Others found that the activist nature of the Resist march had the opposite effect. Ari, for example thinks that the political nature of the march caused more discord and separation than connection and community. Ari describes his feelings:

> I am glad I was there. I think it is important to stand up and be counted, at least as a Queer identifying person, in any way—because it was about more than LGBTQ issues this year, which is why I have mixed feelings about it. I thought, for me, it is too political.
>
> While I do, like everyone should, have political opinions, I don't hate the President like a lot of my counterparts in the community seem to. And a lot of the hate speech against him, or anyone, as evil as some of the things human beings might be doing on the planet, evokes the opposite of what I feel like what our response should be.
>
> The best speech there I thought was the one RuPaul did, which was just about love. And it is gay pride so why aren't we showing our joy and our pride? In short summary that is my mixed overall view of the whole thing.

While Ari was happy to be at the event and show his support for the community, he found the political criticism to be in contrast to, what he believes, is the overall message of Pride. He says he wants the politics out of Pride. Because he does not have negative feelings about the President he feels others, who consider the president evil, as hate speech. This is not an isolated phenomenon, there are a lot of members in the LGBTQ community who either want to avoid discussions about politics, or who view critical analysis about the United States as unpatriotic.

Participants largely favor community and look to Pride events as one place to fulfill this need. When asked what keeps her going when things are difficult, Jackie refers back to community: What keeps me going through the tough times? My support group, being with other people in my community, and just having that comradery. One may assume this community connection provides a substitute, or supplement, to family.

Though she searches for this community, Jackie is conflicted because she is also critical of the LGBTQ community and the party-like atmosphere associated with the community and specifically surrounding Pride. As Jackie describes it:

> People are just completely wasted and they are doing drugs and just being like—. Well I don't want to say a bad example because I am not judging that. But I just feel like sometimes the way that we represent ourselves as a community is not something to be taken care of from an outside perspective, or at least it looks that way so, I wish there was more, like a sense of community and not centered around this weird "Woohoo, I am naked and on drugs!" kind of bullshit. So maybe there is that here, and I just haven't found it.

Jackie expresses the sentiment that, perhaps, if the LGBTQ community behaved in a more subdued manner then those outside the community might step up more and work to protect its vulnerable members. This burden of having to be a representative of a whole community tends to fall on the most marginalized communities.

Participants found their own ways to take part in LGBTQ activism. They also had unique and personal definitions of activism and LGBTQ advocacy. For some, marching and protesting are too adversarial, others started out with these activities and transitioned to other forms of participating.

> Abby, for example has had a fascinating journey and relationship with activism:
> Well I came out as a lesbian at 16. I spent many years quite closeted but, in my 20s—this was in greater Detroit, Michigan—I became a youth coordinator with PFLAG Detroit. I also spoke on youth panels about my experience as a gay person in colleges and in health classes at a couple local high schools.
>
> I am an entertainer. I do drag shows. And I have done that in Michigan, and then in Kentucky where I moved a few years ago, and all around the country, in various regions on the east coast, out here on the west coast, in the southwest, in the south, basically the whole country. In Canada, once. I have done Pride marches and events.
>
> And, as a high school teacher in Kentucky, my students came to me to start a gay straight alliance at their school. They had never been able to get one started in the school's 44-year history. So before I left—I was only there for one year—but before I left

> we kicked it off. We got approval from the principal who had gone on record for being anti-gay because allegedly she fired a teacher for being gay a few years before that.

Abby's involvement in the LGBTQ community when she was younger, was primarily within already existing civil structures and organizations.

However, as she became older she found her own place within the community, and her own means of political participation:

> I have to admit, it's been a really long time since I—. I've done the thing. I've marched in the parades. I've collected the signatures, I've signed the petitions. I've gone to the rallies. I have done that stuff. It's been a long time since I have.
>
> It is mostly because my involvement with the community has been on stage. I have been doing shows. I have been doing fundraisers. For me, it is a very personal thing to get on stage and be visible that way. I am very passionate about doing drag shows. And it is one of those things that is not political, but it becomes political.

Abby is just doing something that she loves, being herself, and performing at drag shows. She is not purposely trying to make a political statement or draw attention, but the very nature of her performance does so. Abby is participating in a conversation about gender without intending to or wanting to create controversy.

Abby finds connection with others in the community through her performances. She also uses this Queer activity to connect with individuals outside of the LGBTQ community as well. She uses, what she calls "an entertainment space" as an escape from the challenges and chaos of her life. As Abby frames it:

> Regardless of whatever craziness goes on out there, I love that I am involved in the LGBTQ community in an entertainment space, in a space where I can be creative and share my passion and my Queerness with, not only our community, but with a mainstream audience as well. And it is just such a beautiful thing to be able to—. It is such an organic moment when you go out on that stage and they don't know who you are, and you have a matter of seconds to win them over.

Whereas some in the LGBTQ community are visibly Queer and carry their Queerness with them as they traverse the world and others may pass as straight, Abby holds these performances as an opportunity to share her Queerness.

Abby is not alone in using a creative outlet to connect with LGBTQ folks. Creativity combines with Queerness to provide people an opportunity to both perform and consume art in a way that is validating and transcendent. For example, Marley uses music, and her band, to reach out to other LGBTQ folks:

> I think that having that identity part of who we are also encouraged us to start pursuing music. Because through music, we were able to find other communities to connect with and write songs about how we felt, and have that connect with someone in the middle of Illinois or something, and then have them email us. But I think it all started with being a dyke.

Her identity provided her with the means to find folks to connect with, and being out and open about her identity, it appears, also informs her music. Not only is she able to make a connection with people through her music, but she is able to create community with them. She is contributing to the community as well, just by doing something she is passionate about.

For Marley connecting with her community is an intentional goal of her music and her activism. The way she states it:

> I just try to focus on the positive communities that are coming and doing something and then I try to be a part of it, you know, really getting up and doing something to connect to the community.

Marley wants to connect with folks who are active and making positive contributions.

While Marley has found ways to connect with others and help spread the word about acceptance and identity, she also suggests that folks hold their own community accountable. This speaks to the importance of intersectionality and looking outside one's own community. Marley expresses that sentiment:

> Everyone should be comfortable with themselves to conquer that depression and anxiety of self-identity and sexual expression and all that. But I think also to be aware of other peoples, other community's oppression. Knowing your own and to talk about it because I think a lot of—. I can't think of anyone off the top of my head but—. Just anyone as an oppressed minority can still be hateful towards other minorities, and I think hopefully there's a way, at least starting with the Queer community, to conquer that.

The idea she is expressing is that while it is important that minority groups focus on their own emancipation, they must not do so at the peril of other marginalized communities. While lifting

up their own community, marginalized folks must reach out to others who need to be pulled up as well.

Finally, Ari experiences community through engagement with an LGBTQ organization, namely the historical LA LGBTQ Center. He maintains connection to the Center either by giving money, showing up at events, or participating in programs as his time allows. Here is Ari discussing his relationship with the Center:

> Yeah they've certainly helped me a lot. It is a tremendous resource—certainly for anyone—but, of course, for gay lesbian and transgender youth, in particular, but just people.
>
> Their healthcare service are tremendous, their education, what they're doing for homeless youth, and all of that. It's such a beautiful place and all the people that work there, I've supported them, not substantially, like I want to eventually, but financially, a little bit here and there.
>
> And if there is something I can make it to, whether it is a film screening or announcement of a rally, or an art project, whatever it is, I try to do that, try to go.
>
> I've been looking for some kind of mentorship opportunity, which I know they do. They were actually overbooked, which is actually kind of nice. Instead of thinking, "I wonder if anyone else is doing this," I realize that there is more. And my time is very limited, too, which is unfortunate but I try to do what I can.
>
> So when I find out about something like the Chechnya event or the Resistance March or some of the things they in particular are involved in, I do what I can to go.

People have been turning to the LGBTQ Center in LA since the 1970s for community support and guidance. As the Center grows, they are able to reach out to more individuals, and have become a vital resource, as Ari mentions, for the community.

Another important topic for Ari in the current political conversation is healthcare. In his own words:

> The healthcare repeal stuff bothers me because I have tons of friends that are HIV-positive and get their medication from programs that are covered by this. Healthcare policies disproportionately affect low income LGBTQ people, specifically those who are living with AIDS and HIV and for transgender folks.

Activism

A History of Participating in Activism

Participants turned their energy, anger, and joy into activism and civic participation. At the time there was activism in the air, participants noticed a sense of resistance and saw others turning toward protest and other forms of social resistance. As Marley describes:

> Everywhere that I look there is something resistance-like in everything that is going on, especially in LA. We were on tour the day after the election and it was in your face the resistance. But now there are just like these subtle moments of power.
>
> Like, we were in Oakland and it was just everywhere, like, if you just really look and absorb the community. It was just resistance. The art on the walls, the people, what they were talking about, the Queer cafes that were being louder than they were before, the community—. I think everyone is just subtly being louder or more drastically being louder but, like, again, it is all, I think, intentional, this resistance because you have to be loud. And I think you have to try to be loud because it's not just going to happen, and you have to do it smartly. So yeah, I think that's something.

Marley provides a rich description of the activism and resistance that arose after the election. The election pushed to action those who consider themselves activists as well as those who are new to political engagement and activism.

Participants spoke about activism in a way that includes both big bold acts of resistance, and small everyday actions that build up over time. Many had a broad and inclusive definition of activism. Folks see their political engagement in small tasks coordinated to create big change. Marley expresses this feeling in discussing her experience at the LA Resist March:

> We've been doing marches forever. I was like raised in it. This march in particular really opened the eyes to, like, these first timers who really didn't know what it meant to unite and organize for anything, for something. I think people forget you need to do these things to get—, versus, like, education and the theories that come out of it. People need to organize and do the groundwork I've done stuff for Filipino workers center, like really small, you know. And they'll do things that are big. But in the grand scheme of things, it's just like these small movements essentially is what causes a big wave in the future. And these things have to happen. So it's like doing these small marches in our past—,

in my past, and then seeing this big march—. It kind of—. That big wave. It just shows how things can progress over—. And I think for me that is what I took away from it.

Marley alludes to those who are new to protesting and one may infer this increase in participation is connected to the sense of urgency of those who oppose Trump. She also talks about the action behind the theories and conversations in academia that often accompany protests and social movements.

When asked about activism, most of the participants acknowledged some sort of involvement. A few acknowledged deliberate concerted efforts to participate in frontline protest, i.e. what we commonly think of as activism. Others saw their activism as low-profile and indirect, but still significant and worthy of recognition.

For example, Abby discusses her participation and its indirectly political nature:

> It's really incredibly political. and yet none of what I do. at face value—like dressing up in a costume and making people laugh—is completely apolitical. But when you get the gender in there and you get sex because it is a male-dominated field—even if they are dressing up as queens, it is very male-dominated—and I have had the opportunity to be among a few women who are really pushing and are really working in that field who are getting on stage and having visibility. And it's my dream to be—. I want to be a part—. This is what brought me to LA. I want to be a part of the movement that brings drag kings into mainstream culture, the way that we have seen drag queens emerge. And that in of itself—, I don't have a political agenda, but I think in making it something relatable and fun, like putting a face on something, inherently then becomes a political issue.

Here Abby sees her drag king performances as inherently political, even though she herself is apolitical. She sees the movement to bring more drag kings to the stage as being part of a movement.

Abby's activism is tied to performance, she takes a nontraditional approach to being political or being an activist. In this analysis Abby recounts a personal story:

> On Sunday I went to a drag brunch and my friend has a daughter. My friend who is bisexual has a daughter who also identifies as bisexual. The daughter just turned 14.
>
> She wanted to do a drag show, and at this brunch, which is all ages, the show director had given me—, had given her the opportunity to do this show. So I went and helped her get into her costume and it was amazing to see her have her first experience.

> And to me that's activism because its out there for a mainstream audience. And it's so important to give young people opportunities and to get ourselves onstage and to play with gender that way and show people that it's not scary, and it can be fun, and it can be family friendly.

Abby sees the normalization of changing gender norms as its own kind of activism. By playing with gender in a family and child friendly environment she seeks to take the stigma off of gender non-conformity.

Janie similarly saw activism through the lens of performance and entertainment. Even though the music itself may be apolitical, just the sheer act of playing music, for Janie, is a radical act. In explaining her activism, Janie refers to her LGBTQ identity:

> I guess Queer-oriented or LGBTQ-oriented things with our music always. When we were in Portland the last time—and we always do this—we do a lot with the girls rock camp, the lady rock camp. So we're like this with them. And they helped us get this gig we played underground. It's like the Queer youth something in Portland. and I guess they were like homeless kids. And we went there and we played to these kids.
>
> And it was like right after the election so there were, like, these Nazi people rioting outside. And, like, these poor kids are like down there [thinking] "eghh, I have to find a place to sleep tonight" so it was nice to get to share that moment. So we like do that kind of stuff you know.

Janie is one of many participants who mentions the election or inauguration as a reference point. She sees her band playing the music as a respite for the LGBTQ homeless youth at the show. In the quotation, Janie also draws a distinction between the chaos of the election and the everyday struggle of homeless youth.

Marley said that the inauguration changed the way she sees her art. She wants to be more intentional with it and release her feelings through music while also reaching out to others who may be having similar emotions:

> I think I am more conscious of being intentional with my art. Now it's not like. "Oh I have to sit and express my feelings." Now, like—which is awesome, I will do that, but in regards to sharing and releasing and what to write about when doing art, I think it is intentional. "What is this trying to say? Like, "Who will hear it? Who can it touch—?

> Like, "What would I want to hear right now?" So that's the number one thing for me ,just seeing the intentional—in everyone's art, too.

Marley's desire to make music that has meaning and that is made intentionally is also a shift since the election. The above was a response to a question asking her how this administration has affected her life. Her response that she is more intentional with her music and thinks more about what she is trying to say speaks to the seriousness that many participants expressed about the election.

Defining Activism

Casey acknowledges that her age and stage of life prevents her from attending protest and other activist oriented activities:

> When I moved to LA I started a woman's night it was called PYT. So, uh, we would have a weekly party basically. I also produced an event for JQ International, which is like a Jewish Queer kind of group. I used to work for them a lot. I also used to work for Olivia Travel which is a lesbian travel company. I've done all sorts of gay things in my life. But, yeah, I am 38 now so I don't go out as much. But I still, you know, I'm still super connected to all the girls, some boys, and all the girls.

Others saw the energy and resources dedicated to federal recognition of same-sex marriage as unnecessary considering some of the other challenges facing the LGBTQ community. Debby reflects on this sentiment:

> In some ways the marriage movement—, like great. I understand cultural context of why that was the step after the AIDS crisis, but also there are a lot of other things that we probably should have been fighting for more. That was partially symbolic. Like you see the state of Texas being, like, well we can decide that your marriage, even though federally it is the same, we are not going to give you the same benefits. We are not going to treat you the same. If we had fought for things like housing or job discrimination, I think that it would be a lot less scary for people right now.

Debby's statement reflects a common complaint about the direction if activism in the years after the AIDS epidemic. Even though marriage equality had been a significant issue since before the Stonewall uprising. During the fight to defeat DOMA, some LGBTQ folks were frustrated by the

focus in the one subject, when they felt that there were other issues that are more urgent, such as the fight for trans rights.

Others see activism in alternative ways as well. Casey identifies it in the rise of feminism and her participation in organizing lesbian and women's activities. She also connects the resurgence of feminism with previous movements in the 1960's and 70's:

> Not like, I don't volunteer at like the LGBTQ center or anything. One of my good friends—. Well she used to be my good friend we don't really talk that much anymore. She started something called Mothership, which is like that feminist camp getaway thing. So I helped her out a lot with that, just finding sponsors and I volunteer at, not last year but the year before.
>
> I feel like that is what is going on right now, like a lot of feminist movements and you know, it's just, especially this younger generation. Like, my age I didn't really focus on that. I don't remember really any of my friends kind of talking about it much. Like, I feel like there was a little gap between the 60s, 70s, 80s. And then like 90s early two thousands no one really talked about it, maybe a little bit. but not that much. Now it is kind of coming back.

This was Casey's response to an inquiry about her participation in activism and how she sees activism in her activities. The response harkens to earlier findings chapters and illustrates the significance of community.

Some of those interviewed acknowledge a more direct link between their activism and feminism. Although, feminist movements and feminism have undoubtedly played a role in current protests and social movements, that role tends to be ancillary. It is rare that feminism plays as prominent of a role as it did for Charlie:

> I was an organizer of Dyke March in the city I am from for a few years. I was a co- founder—, oh, not a co-founder a co-organizer, sorry. And I was involved in every part of running it—finding people to speak and the daily work and fundraising. And I became involved in Dyke March because we found that, as a community, Pride was becoming very hetero-centric. And we felt like our community as women weren't being represented. So we wanted to figure out a way we could take up space at a grassroots level and honor the people that came

before us and celebrate Pride that way.

What's significant here is Charlie's work within the LGBTQ community. Since the early days of the gay liberation movement. there has been a schism between gay men and lesbians in the LGBTQ community. This conflict was tense in the early days, and subsided during the AIDS crisis when lesbians helped gay men as they were getting sick and dying.

Similarly, Mallory sees activism in some of her past behaviors and the current actions she takes to speak up for others. Mallory does what she can to participate in activist activities, whether vocally advocating for people or helping to support people's use of chosen pronouns. Mallory reflects on her activism:

> It started in high school, I would take classes that would talk about those issues. At the time I would identify as bisexual and was always open about that and would go to the gay straight alliance club and stuff like that. And now I make donations where I can. That's how I got the flag. And I try to adhere and respect people's wishes as far as gender pronouns and stuff like that. I tend to be very vocal about my opinions. My therapist likes to call me an activist—just like have an activist mind.

Mallory refers to the rhetoric being used by the right and what the president says about minorities and other marginalized folks:

> It's such violent language. It's times like those where I absolutely speak up when you were talking about the activism. It's like I am not just impish and like—, and there is nothing wrong with people that can't feel like they can vocalize it, but feel it in—, do it in a less—, well not less—, yeah, a less personal one on one way but do it in the marches and like it's just hard to have hope right now.

Here she draws a distinction between people that protest in large groups and those that address issues individually, in a more one-on-one manner. She prefers to confront people one-on-one, but leaves space those who prefer the other approach. Mallory is not alone in seeing herself as an

activist for speaking up, according to Carey, she says that as an activist what she has done is "talked to my republican family about where he [Trump] stands and how it IS a big deal that his view and him being in such power, how it can affect other peoples opinion on our community." Here Carey speaks directly to the effect of the president's rhetoric on the LGBTQ community. For her activism is illustrating for her family how his rhetoric affects people.

Some see the new administration as igniting passions that get people involved and fighting back. Many who disagree with the more egregious policy decisions of this administration see this resistance as the silver lining to an otherwise disastrous tenure. For example, Carey sums up this thought well:

> I have seen a lot of resistance against Trump and Pence and the things that they have been doing in the White House so far haven't been successful and very controversial and there is so much swing back from that we are finally coming together, and people are reading the news and having opinions on that kind of stuff.

According to the above statement, Carey sees this administration as resulting in a net benefit for the country. At the time of the interview she recalls that the administration was not able to enact any of their policies because of pushback. Therefore, in addition to not having to suffer from Trump policies people are also becoming more politically engaged.

Most participants saw activism as it is portrayed in mainstream media, such as limited to marches and protests. This definition of activism was what people initially referred to when asked about their involvement and the ways in which they have participated in activism in the past. Some that saw activism in this manner trace their most recent participation back to this administration, for example Katy's account reflects this:

Since the inauguration, I was involved in a resistance group for a little while and posted different activities and went to a lot of marches and got more involved in that way but I was still really uncomfortable and felt like I didn't fit in. I guess mostly I get involved through design, which is what I am good at and most comfortable with.

> So I designed our logos and posted an Ides of Trump postcard party thing where I

> designed these like—, Actually, it's on the back of my truck. Fuck Trump postcards that are funny and really gay, and got a printer to donate like 300 postcards. And we sent a bunch of them on the Ides of Trump day to the White House. I guess recently through marches and resistance stuff and graphic design, I guess.

Katy engaged in activism both directly, through marches, and indirectly, by aiding an activist group that is resisting Trump. She uses her skills as a graphic designer to contribute what she can to the resistance against Trump.

Many participants, like Katy above, became involved when the administration was sworn in on inauguration day. Though their activist participation was not always, or solely, involved with the LGBTQ community, it seems to be on the forefront of their minds. In recounting her activism Jonie reflects on her role in activism since the last election:

> I would say, since this administration, I have been more involved—not just for the LGBTQ community but also—, especially when I was in DC, participated in marches like at the airports for refugees. Yeah, I don't know, specific, now I just feel really guilty for not being more involved.

Jonie is one of a handful of people that expressed, whether directly or indirectly, guilt about not being more directly involved in activism. This sentiment suggests the spectrum of perspectives and opinions as to what counts as activism. While some consider their art or performance activism, others expressed guilt for having no direct activist involvement. Most of those with this guilt tend to view activism as consisting of marches and protests.

LGBTQ Activism and Prop 8

Janie saw activism as emanating from many different areas in her life, and that her activities serve a specific purpose. For example, in her account of the RESIST march during Pride LA, she has her own analysis of the march and participation in it:

> Also what I learned with marches this time, like with what's going on, releasing that energy in a march goes a long way, so people that may otherwise be quiet about their feelings had a platform to do that if they were going to Pride or the parade anyway that would have been a good platform for that, I guess that would have been my idea for that. Because we are not going to change the world with

> one march. It doesn't work that way, So, I guess for people to, like, I saw a lot of cool shit, so—, well you were there.

Janie characterizes the marches as an opportunity to let off steam, or as a means of expression and a way to participate. Much like Mallory she refers to the march as a way for people who may not otherwise have a platform to express their feelings and bring their grievances.

Others did not like politics entering into other areas of life. For example, although he found the RESIST March (the march connected to LA Pride) to be too political Ari recounts his involvement with a protest to bring attention to the conditions for gay people in Chechnya[3]:

> I've done events at the Gay and Lesbian Center, too. I stop short of involving myself when I saw that it became too political. But my inclination to go, I am happy with that because I do think it is important to be among those that are counted and seen in terms of volume, and to speak out.

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[3] This refers to the 2017 rise in popularity of the purges of gay men in Chechnya. The purges included the murder of at least 27 men, and the detention, expulsion, and beating of many others.

> I went to a protest a couple weeks ago downtown and more of an awareness, not a protest, to talk about what is going on in Chechnya. I ended up speaking there, which was not the plan, but they gave me Adam Schiff's[4†] statement, because they're, like, "Will someone read this?" and I'm, like, "Absolutely" and it was a really humbling beautiful moment, it was hot as can be and there was maybe 50 of us but absolutely, not everybody knows about what is going on there and it is important.

One may consider Ari's participation in the event to highlight was is going on in Chechnya as political, but Ari considers it as a gathering to raise awareness. It seems that Ari considers what is partisan to be political, the abuse in Chechnya was not by either party.

Ari's idea of activism is non-partisan and is more in line with those who want to assimilate with heterosexual culture. This approach extends to other areas, such as work, for Ari as well:

> I used to work for an organization—or an event is a better way to say it—called the Gay Life Expo and it was a radical cool idea, especially at the time because it was before gay marriage was legalized. The basis for the event was to get different companies like Coca Cola to show support for the community, and then have people from the community, or allies or whatever word you want to use for the community, come out to New York, the drop in center, and say, "These people love us. Maybe I'll chose this soda because they came out and showed us support."

The organization that Ari describes working for here is engaging in what some call rainbow capitalism. This concept refers to corporations that use LGBTQ culture or lifestyle in marketing their products. Such approaches are highly visible during PRIDE month, and typically garner criticism within the Queer community.

Almost all the people interviewed had participated in marches or other sorts of direct activism. Some of those activities were connected to LGBTQ activities, others were not. When asked about her activism Finley recalls her most recent participation:

[†] Adam Schiff is the member of the House of Representatives for the area in LA where this event took place.

> Marches tend to be so heavy on the LGBTQ, just the people in attendance, that it almost feels like an LGBTQ event. But I mean the Women's March or the DACA and the ban. But I haven't had a lot of direct involvement in the LGBTQ community.

Here Finley observes that many of the marches have a strong LGBTQ contingent, and therefore feels like an LGBTQ march. Undoubtedly, there is significant presence of the LGBTQ community, as these issues are Queer issues. Members of the community are affected by issues taken up in the Women's March and DACA protests.

Many of the participants spoke about their past involvement in marches and protests, though the nature of their involvement in activism seems to change and looks different at the time of the interview. Frankie describes her involvement in this context:

> I volunteer for the Center so that's kind of more of a new thing for me and that's kind of recent. That's really because I have been wanting to get more involved so its only up until recently. When I was younger, I didn't really do much except go to marches here and there.

Those interviewed expressed that their participation, whether the type of engagement or level of frequency has changed over time. Frankie and others see work/volunteering at the LGBTQ Center as activism in the same vein as marches or other forms of protest.

There was a time when volunteering at the LGBTQ Center itself was considered a radical act of rebellion. That tradition has some hold over today. For many who are visibly LGBTQ their mere existence is a radical form of activism. Josy acknowledges this, along with her past participation:

> I guess when I lived in San Francisco I was more involved. I don't know how I would be involved just being gay. I am involved, yeah, when I lived in San Francisco, 2000 to 2005, I was more involved in just a community of LGBTQ people. And here, I don't know, just sort—, I have friends but I am not necessarily involved in the community.

Although she says that just being gay is a form of involvement in LGBTQ activism Josy reveals her doubts about this by then acknowledging that she used to be more involved.

Alternatively, Josy may be referring to the fact that just by virtue of being gay in San Francisco, other LGBTQ people rally around her and create community.

Findings

Participants spoke of their involvement in past activism and desire to become involved in the future. They saw participation in their in a number of creative ways, such as graphic design and drag shows. These are also ways that they engage in subversive activities in their daily lives. They did speak of a desire to be involved in what we traditionally think of as activism or social movements.

A handful of people mentioned barriers to entry into protest spaces. They said it felt as though they did not know enough about the subject to actually be involved. Another thing that became clear is that people do not see themselves as social movement participants. This may indicate why people had a creative definition of activism in their own lives.

Perhaps the most significant finding in this chapter is the way LGBTQ people relate to family. The community as a whole has a fraught relationship with the idea of family many having come out and bend banished from their homes by parents or close family members have had to create their own family. In a time when people are still getting used to the idea of LGBTQ people and all the various forms we take is a tension between wanting to accept and old perhaps ingrained beliefs. Therefore, some may feel tolerated by their family of origin but truly accepted in their chosen family of other LGBTQ people. This is a phenomenon that is unique to few groups those who are marginalized because of the color of their skin or their ethnicity or their religion typically have family built into those categorizations have support and assistance navigating the world.

With a few notable exceptions most of the people interviewed for this study did not experience outright rejection from their family when they came out. What did become a salient issue however hello is fear of letting family down by coming out. For some this cause deep anxiety for others it delayed their coming out foremost it conveys a sense of inadequacy. Generally participants sought comfort in the days during the election and those to follow from their chosen family from the connections they had with other LGBTQ people.

Family

Women play a significant role in many families and the election of a proud misogynist may cause a bit of discord in the household. Donald trump routinely engaged and the

objectification of women publicly and has a number of sexual assault charges pending against him as they were throughout his tenure as president. During the election support for trump was viewed by some as support for 4 overlooking the abuse and mistreatment of women. Respondents noted that the election had a deleterious affect on the relationship with their biological family.

Engagement

While some engage others choose to take a longer path toward relationship building and conflict transformation. It is tricky for members of the LGBTQ community to have controversial or incendiary conversations with their families. For some it may mean humiliation and rejection for others it may mean loss of housing and resources. The relationship participants have with their family may differ from how they behave in the community or activist settings. Others would rather break away from their biological family and strictly rely on they're LGBTQ family. so others separate themselves from their biological family so that they may start their own blended family. This provides yet another reminder that Queerness can mean many things and it's not bound to any single definition or relationship- familial or otherwise.

It is for this reason that chosen family is so important. Such relationships can provide folks positions of safety and community. Creating a family with a partner can also provide people with a sense of hope and a sense of calm, care, love, and security. Some LGBTQ people may have previously never experienced a sense of home and unconditional love. This highlights the importance and the strength of relationships in LGBTQ communities.

Homemade

The data reveals that for LGBTQ people creating their own chosen family, perhaps with a partner, provides a sense of care love security and protection in the face of homophobia. Participants felt comforted and supported when surrounded by people that understood what they were going through and that understand our experiences. This provides a hopeful path forward for others who may feel lonely or who may not have yet found that sense of belonging. Further as people create welcoming communities they provide a model for others to follow. Is this solidarity among LGBTQ people, and allies come on that has helped participants get through difficult times especially during the rise of white right wing populism.

Community

There's an overwhelming sense, from the interviews, that LGBTQ people at least the

ones interviewed here preferred being community with one another. Participants convey a sense of comfort and ease when they are with other LGBTQ community people that tends to be missing otherwise. There are shared experiences and often a shared worldview Among those who share an LGBTQ community. Shared experiences may come from the highs and lows of everyday life or from similar circumstances and similar experiences being part of the LGBTQ community. This may be true even when folks come from supportive and understanding families. While family may continue to love and support they're LGBTQ family member they may not understand them.

The choice to build a family outside of and separate from, our biological familial ties speaks to A desire for meaningful connection. The community connection extends into every Sector of life. LGBTQ folks show up for each other when there's a big event someone celebrates a milestone someone graduates someone has a birthday and so when gets their heart broken when someone gets a job. We shop in each other stores we cook each other food We show up for each other, like a family

Class

This is by no means an exhaustive discussion about the varied and wonderful iterations of LGBTQ community. Something that participants agree on is that LGBTQ people have a right to live free from violence, hate, persecution, and judgment. This is an existence where people have dignity because they are human. For some there is a belief that being a "respectable gay" will somehow transcend or avoid homophobia. There is no avoiding homophobia there is no keeping it at bay. Hiding the trauma it has caused in the name of being a "respectable gay" may not be sustainable.

A respectable gay is a member of the LGBTQ community who does not offend anyone, who stays out of trouble, who plays a role, who follows gender norms and binaries. To be sure one can point to many examples of such people the point isn't that folks have to be anything else the point is that being respectable is not going to end homophobia it's not going to make people who wouldn't otherwise respect you suddenly respect you. There are many people in the LGBTQ community who are houseless and suffer from trauma and mental health challenges. These folks should not be required to meet any sort of standard of respectability to be met with basic human dignity.

On the contrary those LGBTQ folks who are experiencing houselessness are the ones

who activists need to seek out and help. Those who are marginalized are especially vulnerable. Further, to experience trauma and harm around fraught topics such as gender and sexuality present an even more urgent need for members of the community to rally around and help. The classist tensions that have long existed in the LGBTQ community interrupt such efforts.

Solidarity

Ideally members of the LGBTQ community will be workers for social justice. This means organizing protests and marches and working in solidarity with other marginalized groups that suffer because of the rise of right-wing populism. Beyond being only an act of solidarity advocating for other marginalized groups also means advocating for LGBTQ people since they exist in many of those groups as well. Therefore, Queer activism Is intrinsically tide to connection with other marginalized communities. Gathering in community then, is it self a form of activism. Struggle against Trump's racists, xenophobic, and neoconservative policies it's not only a political act but is also an act of love.

Some of the participants believe that in order to be effective advocates and activists LGBTQ people, especially young people, need to dial back LGBTQ people as partiers And Work too reduce the party atmosphere. This poses Multiple benefits Including LGBTQ people being taken more seriously by mainstream society and folks taking better care of theirs physical and spiritual well-being. This is not to say that in order to being community LGBTQ people cannot party. Mostly this came up with participants who are frustrated by the way the community is perceived. Additionally the LGBTQ population is over represented among those who suffer from substance abuse.

Youth Activism

For most people who came out young being involved in activism Was an integral part in coming out and in identity development. Participants acknowledge that early on in their lives they participated in a wide range of actions spanning a swath of issues but as they grow older they become more discerning. Feedback from participants suggests that as people age they narrow their focus and therefore where they direct energy and resources are directed. In an environment rife with homophobia and cruel judgment young people may find it encouraging they support they receive in activist spaces.

Such involvement will also empower younger LGBTQ people in finding "Queer elders" who they might learn from and be mentored by. Such relationships prove to be a lifeline for

people During times of political or social upheaval. The community needs to have existing networks that people can rely upon during emergencies can protect people and are more efficient in delivering services. As many have recently experienced with the response to COVID-19 cooperation and collaboration our vital in carrying folks through such a period.

It is also important for younger members of the LGBTQ community to know how to engage in activism and to be aware deep history of activism that's the LGBTQ community has grown out of. Some participants mentioned feeling intimidated and it's secure and activist environments because they felt like they didn't know enough about LGBTQ history. Others shared that the 2016 election encouraged people who had never participated in activism and who are eager to learn from those who have.

Approaches

Participants describe activism in a variety of different ways. However, it was apparent that everyone had different ideas about what activism consists of. It's not that people's ideas were in conflict, it's that participants provided exceedingly creative and innovative There were a lot of creative, yet forceful, examples of activism and political participation. For example, many saw activism in smaller acts of resistance, others may emphasize the importance of large actions that capture the follower's attention.

RECOMMENDATIONS/CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study is to discover how the LGBTQ community in LA is responding to the rise of right-wing populism in the post-Obama era. With research questions and findings as a guide the following conclusions can be drawn: (a) there are segments of the LGBTQ p opulation that would benefit from coping tools to proactively confront potential mental health challenges; (b) they may struggle for a sense of belonging, even within the LGBTQ community; (c) the LGBTQ community would benefit from opportunities to help other marginalized groups conversely, they also seek connection within the community, and seek out chosen family when faced with adversity; (e) LGBTQ people may see activism as liberatory and have a wide definition of activism. What follows is a discussion of the conclusions that were drawn from the foregoing research.

Conclusions

The first major finding of this research is that LGBTQ people experience mental health challenges connected with coming out and with the rise of right-wing populism. A conclusion to be drawn from this finding is that there are segments of the LGBTQ population that would benefit from coping tools to proactively confront potential mental health challenges. This finding is perhaps not a surprise, and while mental health challenges in the face of political upheaval may not be unique to LGBTQ people, the history they carry is distinctive.

Most participants in this study mentioned their coming out stories unprompted, which indicates a strong connection to the experience. As noted above, there were also substantial mental health outcomes associated with coming out. In this study respondents reported anxiety, shame, and depression, even when coming out to family they knew would be accepting and tolerant.

The second major finding is that some LGBTQ people struggle to feel a sense of belonging, even among other LGBTQ people. A conclusion to draw from this finding is that LGBTQ people may benefit from community building. Participants felt alienation within the community for a handful of reasons including differences in gender presentation and “passing”

as straight, knowledge of LGBTQ history, confusion over sexuality and feeling like frauds. These are all topics that can be addressed and mitigated through community building in LGBTQ spaces. This may include social events, career enrichment opportunities, or public lectures.

The third major finding is that a segment of LGBTQ people in LA are concerned about marginalized groups who live in other places. Though respondents consistently mentioned their concern for other LGBTQ people, many also spoke of their worry for groups such as immigrants, asylum seekers, or those in the Muslim community. A conclusion to draw from this is that people in the LGBTQ community would benefit from opportunities to help other marginalized groups. Such opportunities may quell feelings of helplessness as it provides a chance to take proactive steps. These may include fundraisers, letter writing campaigns, or activist/social movement participation.

The fourth major finding is that LGBTQ people sought out community by both going to their family of origin and creating new family within the LGBTQ community. A conclusion to draw from this is that they may desire connection within the community and seek out chosen family when faced with adversity. Some of the shared experiences of LGBTQ people, such as coming out of the closet, can create a deep understanding that someone's family of origin may not have. This differs from other marginalized groups who may turn to family of origin for a shared understanding of a mutual life experiences perhaps connected to a common culture or religion. Even where people may have parents or older members of their family who are LGBTQ there may still be that separation. Queer culture has spread very quickly, as has the acceptance of LGBTQ people. Therefore, different generations may struggle to relate to one another.

The fifth and final research finding is that LGBTQ people have participated in social movements and other forms of activism as it relates to LGBTQ issues and laws. Most of the people interviewed also engaged in activism related to issues outside of the LGBTQ community as well. A conclusion to draw from this is that activism is a way for LGBTQ people to feel empowered. Further, activism is steeped in LGBTQ culture as the Stonewall uprising led to the gay liberation movement, which sparked the series of moments that followed, leading to today and the fights for trans rights.

Recommendations

The findings here unequivocally lead to one overall conclusion- LGBTQ people seek community. Therefore, more research on how to facilitate LGBTQ in their search for community would benefit the community. Specifically, researchers may want to look at how LGBTQ centers may be used more effectively. Further research in this area may also be done to figure out what community may mean to people, and whether that may be fostered in areas outside of big cities or outside of LGBTQ centers. There may be places where people seek LGBTQ community, but are unsafe to be "out" therefore alternative forms of community should also be explored.

The study demonstrates that there is a need for LGBTQ specific mental health interventions. For example, participants who shared their coming out stories spoke about depression and anxiety related to these experiences specifically. There are more examples of LGBTQ specific mental health issues that to be developed by further research, and be the topic of Queer specific interventions.

Finally, between coming out and struggling to belong both in LGBTQ communities and straight communities some LGBTQ people may struggle with identity. At the risk of speaking generally, it would be helpful to have more research about how LGBTQ relate to one another and to the outside, straight, world. Such information may be useful in implementing the two previous recommendations as well.

Theories informed by the research

What follows are summaries of the theories that have been informed by the research. Grounded theory is an iterative method, and therefore calls for the development of new theory rather than testing pre-existing theory. The theory is developed after research has been conducted and coded. The theory then is a final consideration to be tested in subsequent research. What follows are the theories that have been extracted from the above data.

LGBTQ people feel like they are under constant threat

What is clear from the interviews is that respondents perceive harm to themselves or other LGBTQ people is imminent. Theses messages may come from their own minds, their

family or from society at large. What is significant here is the perception, or the existence of the fear, and the toll that may take. There are few areas of daily life where one's gender or sexuality does not play a role in how they interact with the outside world. Those pedestrian parts of normal life become points of fear or anxiety. A simple greeting "hello ma'am" can be gut wrenching or common questions to make small talk "so, do you have any kids" may lead to anxiety or awkwardness.

The threat is not necessarily limited to direct violence, though such forms of violence have been on the rise in the U.S. The threat also entails anxiety over the awkwardness or the heartbreak of being mis-gendered. These are what Galtung (1969) would label as psychological violence. The violence then is not the actual act of being misgendered or being forced to explain why it is difficult to have kids. The violence is the fear and anxiety leading up to and accompanying those conversations. This is why LGBTQ people seem to live under constant threat.

LGBTQ people are resilient

Given such challenges LGBTQ people manage to thrive and experience joy. Despite being members of a group of people that has been accused of monstrous crimes or is labeled a certain way, or met with strange ideas and assumptions we engage with society. In other words, despite forceful attempts to ostracize and alienate LGBTQ continue to show up and be authentic.

Since the events at Stonewall, and as LGBTQ people have gained rights, there has been a fervent backlash. This has forced the community to fight vociferously to maintain their rights and gain more. Attacks come in social, political, and legal forms. Politicians spew hateful and dangerous rhetoric, while also introducing, primarily, state level laws aimed at controlling or regulating the bodies of LGBTQ people. Given these circumstances the community continues to be themselves and to make gains. Future research similar to that done *by The Measure of America, 2010-2011: Mapping Risks and Resilience* (2010) on LGBTQ people would further test this assertion.

Coming Out as Compulsory Trauma

This study has also revealed that coming out has a significant impact on LGBTQ individuals. Even in cases where folks were met with acceptance and love the time leading up to coming out is filled with extreme anxiety. These experiences stuck with respondents in such a significant way that most of those who were interviewed brought up their coming out stories unprovoked. These stories were so significant that people felt them relevant in an interview about the rise of right-wing populism.

The stories had a wide range of severity. For example, in one of the stories a respondent was outed and subsequently sent to conversion camps, and repeatedly told she was a sinner. This is clearly traumatic, and one can see how this connects to the interview. In most of the stories coming out entailed a sort of familial rejection or caused conflict. The interviews clearly reveal that coming out as a singular event with ones close family or loved ones is traumatic, and therefore is outdated and unnecessary. This may be further investigated using a metric to gauge trauma and perform extensive interviews of the LGBTQ community.

LGBTQ experiences are intersectional and Queer

LGBTQ people exist in every race, religion, ethnicity, or other designation of people. LGBTQ folks are rich and poor and middle class, they live in cities, on farms, and in suburbs. There are many different identities that make up a person, and LGBTQ people are no exception. These statuses may also operate to oppress and further alienate Queer folks as well. For example, the resources and prospects of a poor, transgender, woman of color will differ from those of a cis-gendered gay white man. This is for reasons mostly outside of the LGBTQ community, though as we saw in the preceding research, also exist within the community as well. Therefore, a peace studies approach to the analysis of, or insistence on liberation for, LGBTQ folks can be described as intersectional peace.

Another wonderful and unique characteristic of LGBTQ people and Queerness itself is fluidity, for example people are not tethered to any gender, sexuality, orientation, or other description. These characteristics may change or shift over any given period. There is also the issue of time, identity, and its relationship to how we think about Queerness and coming out. For example, putting aside debates on essentialism and universalism, as we currently understand it,

when does being Queer become a part of a person's identity? When does it start to affect the way, a person engages with the world? Or when does it start to have an impact on the way they are treated, on the way the world engages with THEM?

We say that people are born gay, and this is a belief that has perhaps helped folks understand LGBTQ people and perhaps prevented some from violence. But is it true? Are people born Queer, are they LGBTQ before they know they are? Before they understand what gender or sexuality are? What if someone never comes out of the closet and lives as a non-LGBTQ person? Are the still Queer? The implication here is that intersectional peace, while undeniably necessary is not enough. What is called for is an approach that is Queer and intersectional. An intersectional-Queer-peace considers oppression and acknowledges the limits of what is knowable in developing peace interventions.

Intersectional Queer peace is an analysis of violence and peace as first conceived by Johan Galtung, in *Violence Peace and Peace Research.* He acknowledges that people experience violence structurally and includes those forms of oppression that are unknown, unseen, and unacknowledged. From his analysis, one may conclude that both actor and cause are unidentifiable- there is not a specific person that one can point to as perpetrating the violence. The same is true with the causes of structural violence, though there may be ideas and theories describing causes, there is no way to know definitively.

The proposal here extends our understanding of structural violence and expands the boundaries of definition. If our understanding of structural violence is shifting so too is the way we think about structural peace, or social justice. As Galtung has claimed, they are different sides of the same coin. Therefore, not only can the perpetrators of violence exist in a way that is multi-faceted, unclear, and invisible so too can violence itself. Further if we are to accept an expanded definition of violence we must also accept that there are circumstances where violence exists, but we do not know it is present

One can queer intersectionality by recognizing the unintelligibility of those who experience structural forms of oppression. Judith Butler has referred to a certain cultural unintelligibility that queer people experience. Butler sees intrinsic knowledge of gender norms as "a preemptive and violent circumscription of reality" Butler continues:

To the extent the gender norms (ideal dimorphism, heterosexual complementarity of

> bodies, ideals and rule of proper and improper masculinity and femininity, many of which are underwritten by racial codes of purity and taboos against miscegenation) establish what will and will not be intelligibly human, what will and will not be considered to be "real," they establish the ontological field in which bodies may be given legitimate expression. (Butler, 1990, p. xxiii)

This unintelligibility is embodied in the queer and extends beyond, to other areas of marginalization and difference. Queering intersectionality calls for an understanding of intersecting oppressions as both obvious (For example racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, transphobia, and others we recognize and give voice to) and also indescribable. This acknowledges, and elevates, scholarship elucidating systemic barriers that converge to perpetuate and multiply the oppression experienced by marginalized individuals. It also recognizes those limitations that are difficult to identify but still impede social and political mobility. Queering intersectionality means recognizing those intersecting factors outside our understanding or capability to express.

If we use this analysis in our examination of peace, we must first explain our conception of peace. The word itself may be associated with almost any situation where violence is not present. In such a situation, we may say that there is negative peace. When a war ends, for example, we often say peace is present.

Positive peace refers to a situation where violence ceases, and social justice is present. Therefore, an explanation of peace and violence is helpful to understand positive peace. The work of Johan Galtung, is instructive on this topic.[‡] Positive peace signifies the presence of social justice, which can be distinguished from negative peace, which is merely the end of direct violence without the affirmative principles of equity.

[‡] Though once a prolific figure in the field, over the last decade, his fervent support for Palestinians has come to include anti-semitism. The author of this dissertation condemns any such statements and acknowledges the harm they can cause to the Jewish population both inside Israel/Palestine and in other countries, such as the United States.

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Appendix 1

Looking for Research articipants

Who: Anybody over 18 who participated in #ResistMarch Los Angeles

What: I would like to interview you for 30-60 minutes about why you came today.

Why: I am a Ph.D. student at the University of Manitoba, and am doing research for my thesis.

No money or remuneration is being offered for your participation.

If you would like to participate, please email: ResistMarchLosAngeles@gmail.com

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

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UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

Appendix 2

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | Ph.D. Program in Peace and Conflict Studies

Arthur V. Mauro Centre
for Peace and Justice
at St. Paul's College
252-70 Dysart Road
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
Telephone: (204) 474-6052
Fax: (204) 474-8828

Informed Consent

Queer Rising: LGBTQ Resistance to the Rise of Right-Wing Populism in the Post-Obama Era

Principal Investigator: Danielle Filecia, fileciad@myumanitoba.ca
Research Supervisor: Jessica Senehi, (204) 474.7978, Jessica.Senehi@umanitoba.ca

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to uncover techniques and strategies that members of the LGBTQ community, and allies, use to resist right-wing populism in the United States.

Procedure: This will be a conversation between the two of us during this one meeting. I expect for our talk to last 30-60 minutes.

Recording Device: I am using this digital recording device and taking notes to remember key ideas from our discussion.

Confidentiality: I am not including your name in the study, instead I will use a pseudonym to refer to you. I will send you a copy of the transcript from this interview so that you may edit it appropriately. Further, once the transcript is finished and edited I will destroy this recording, this will occur no later than January 2018. Once the recording is destroyed your confidential data will be rendered anonymous. I will be using the transcript from our conversation as data for my dissertation and possibly other publications such as articles (academic and non-academic), book chapters, op-ed pieces, and journals. In my writing, I plan to use direct quotations and may refer to our conversation using the pseudonym I have assigned you.

Withdrawal: ***You can withdraw from this study at any time*** without any negative consequences, simply tell me that you would like to end our conversation. Following our meeting you may withdraw from this study any time before October 15th 2017. You can contact me by sending an email to: ResistMarchLosAngeles@gmail.com.

Results: If you would like to see a summary of the data gathered in this study, please visit- lgbtqresistance.wordpress.com after January 1, 2018. A final copy of the dissertation itself will be available on the same site no later than September 2019.

Risks and Benefits: The risks of participation in this study do not differ from those inherent in daily life. The benefits of the study are that it provides a counter-narrative. It will show that there are members of marginalized groups opposing the current administration. Further, it will provide a summary of the various tactics and strategies that individuals and

organizations are using to resist populist right-wing policies.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project, you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at humanethics@umanitoba.ca or 204-474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participants Signature _____Date _____

Researcher Signature _____Date _____

Appendix 3

What was it like for you to be at the march? What brought you there?
What do you hope the march will achieve? How did you feel about the march?

What involvement have you had with the LGBTQ community prior to this – as a member or an ally?
If you have been involved, in what capacity? Have you been involved in activism prior to this?

How, if at all, has the new administration impacted you? The way you go about your day(s)?
The way you think about your life? The way you think about the future?

What are your fears for yourself/the community?
How is your organization responding to homophobia?

What are your hopes for yourself/the community? Could you describe the world as it should be?
As you can imagine it being when all is as it should be?

What keeps you going through the tough times?

Is there anything else you would like me to know about yourself and the community?

Appendix 4

Did you attend the Resist March or any other events associated with LA Pride? Why did you decide to attend/not attend? What is your overall impression of the march and the decision to have one single march instead of the typical Pride parade?

What involvement have you had with the LGBTQ community– as a member or an ally?
If you have been involved, in what capacity? Have you been involved in prior activism?

How, if at all, has the new administration impacted you? The way you go about your day(s)?
The way you think about your life? The way you think about the future?

What are your fears for yourself/the community? How are you responding to the shifting political landscape that has been brought about because of the rise of right wing populism?

What are your hopes for yourself/the community? Could you describe the world as it should be?
As you can imagine it being when all is as it should be?

What keeps you going through the tough times?

Is there anything else you would like me to know about yourself and the community?