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The intersection of cisgenderism and hate crime: learning from trans people's narratives

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The intersection of cisgenderism and hate crime: learning from trans people's narratives

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Introduction

The concept of hate crime is familiar to politicians, activists, criminologists, and social scientists. The scale of the problem, however, is unknown as estimates of prevalence are problematized by discrepancies in how hate crimes are defined, recorded, and measured (Chakraborti & Garland, 2012; Hein & Scharere, 2013). In general, hate crime can be understood as a form of prejudice or hostility based on someone's identity or what it is perceived to be – whether in relation to the person's ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity (Home Office, 2016). These are the five categories that can constitute a hate crime in terms of legal redress (Home Office, 2016). It is, however, important to acknowledge that formal definitions and the five categories can result in the neglect of other aspects of difference and vulnerability, as people often experience hate crime from an intersectional, not a singular, construction of identity (Chakraborti & Garland, 2012). Hate crimes can include everyday forms of harassment and intimidation as well as acts of physical abuse. Victims of hate crime are highly likely to suffer serious psychological effects as a result of their experience, and concerningly, they are more likely to experience repeated victimization (Home Office, 2016). A number of studies highlight the problem that the majority of victims do not report their experiences to the police or, in the United Kingdom, via the third-party reporting system (a framework that offers victims a means to report at locations other than police stations and enables people to report anonymously), and when hate crime is reported directly to the police, the victims are less likely than the victims of other types of crime to be satisfied with the response (Chakraborti, Garland, & Hardy, 2014; Christmann & Wong, 2010).

Despite the noted limitations of the prevalence data, according to recent statistics, the police in England and Wales recorded 62,518 hate crimes in 2015-2016, an increase of 19% compared with the number in 2014-2015 (Home Office, 2016). A total of 858 of these were recorded under the “transgender” strand, which showed a 41% increase compared with the previous reporting period but still represented only 1% of these reported crimes. As such, this figure will be a considerable underestimate of the actual number of hate crimes (Chakraborti & Hardy, 2015), and existing empirical data suggest that some trans victims of hate crime can be targeted over 50 times per year (Antjoule, 2013). It is not surprising that trans-identified victims do not always report their experiences as several studies have found that trans people are reluctant to engage with statutory and public services for fear of a transphobic response (Whittle, Turner, & Al-Alami, 2007; Turner, Whittle & Combs, 2009; FRA, 2014). Outside the UK, research across the Global North similarly indicates that high numbers of trans people experience

hate crime, and this is now considered to be a global public health problem (Jauk, 2013).

This paper will draw on the findings of an empirical study that explored trans people's qualitative experiences of violence and abuse *inside* the home, but during this exploration, narratives of hate crime (abuse experienced *outside* the home) were offered by participants. The study was based in the United Kingdom, and as a result, this paper offers an analysis set within that sociocultural setting; however, the conceptual framework and subsequent analysis are applicable to comparable sociocultural contexts found within the Global North. The paper offers an exposition of the experiences of hate crime and the interplay with transphobia (the irrational dislike of trans people) and cisgenderism (a prejudicial ideology based on notions of gender normativity) (Ansara & Hegarty, 2011). These concepts are explored further below in relation to gender and the ways in which they influence particular practices (trans-related hate crime) and experiences (of the victims).

Four narratives have been purposely selected to illuminate the workings of transphobia and cisgenderism, and to detail and examine the specificity and diversity of trans people's hate crime experiences. As such, this paper offers new insights into a rather limited, yet growing, body of work on hate crime. Moreover, exploring the specificity of trans people's experiences of hate crime offers an explicit value because by problematizing the entrenched nature of normative discourses of gender, the paper moves away from the existing body of literature in this area, which tends to subsume trans people's narratives under the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans (LGBT) umbrella (even though transgender is one of the five hate crime categories). The subsuming of trans in this way effectively silences people and can result in further invisibility and social exclusion (Rogers, 2013, 2016a, 2017). Therefore, this paper adds new insight while problematizing the entrenched nature of normative and dominant discourses about gender and identity.

I begin by offering a discussion of the conceptual framework that underpins the analysis of trans people's experiences of hate crime. Within this framework, I will explore the notion of gender in relation to normativity, cisgenderism, and transphobia, offering the reader some conceptual insights into the narratives presented in the findings section. In this section, I will draw on Perry's (2001) conceptual framework of hate crime as a foundation from which to explore the processes at work in the narrative accounts. In doing so, I acknowledge the limits of Perry's work, which primarily focuses on identity, and integrate Chakraborti and Garland's (2012) notion of difference and vulnerability. The second section will outline the methodology used in the original project. This will be followed by a discussion of the four selected narratives that have been purposely selected to demonstrate not only a diversity of experience but also the range of effects resulting from hate crime.

Conceptual Framework: Gender, Cisgenderism, and Transphobia

There are various paradigms that can be drawn upon in an analysis of gender. Gender may be considered a social category, in relation to positionality, or as a structure resulting from cultural processes that order and organize people according to their bodies and behaviors (Enke, 2012; Rogers & Ahmed, 2017). In the 1990s, Butler (1990, 2004) analyzed the performative nature of gender, while West and Zimmerman (2009) described gender as something that we “do.” This paper adopts a lens whereby the term “gender” references the social identities allied with bodies that are perceived to be sexed in particular ways, whereas “sex” relates to the physiological characteristics of bodies assigned as female, male, or other (Kessler & McKenna, 1978; Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Enke, 2012). As such, gender does not have to be tied to a particular sexed body, as noted by Butler (1990):

When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as a female one. (p. 9, author’s emphasis)

Gender is therefore a social construction produced through cultural processes that enable gender identities to develop, be performed, and facilitate “one’s sense as a gendered person” (Butler, 1990, 2004; Enke, 2012, p.18).

Yet for many years, most scholarship has reflected a landscape where gender is binary, natural, and immutable, and in which it is represented in the pairings of male/female and masculine/feminine. As a result, normative and essentialist discourses have persisted, which until recently has resulted in a rather limit range of available identities with which to identify. This has resulted in the silencing or marginalization of people who do not conform to the norms of the gender binary (Pershaj, 2006). Yet, nonbinary identities have more recently gained visibility and recognition, helping a move away from normative discourses, which are limiting to people who do not ascribe with a male or female identity and which have perpetuated notions of gender as a hierarchy in which man/male is superior to woman/female (Talbot, 2010). Indeed, there is a growing body of work in academia that explores the intersections of gender and social life through the prism of trans subjectivity (Hines, 2007, 2013; Enke, 2012; Stryker & Aizura, 2013; Rogers, 2013, 2016a, 2016b). As a result of problematizing the notion that gender is static and fixed, and clearly evidencing the dynamism of gender categories through this body of work on trans phenomena, a new binary pairing has evolved

that delineates trans and non-trans, or “cisgender” (Enke, 2012). Latin in its origin, the term “cisgender” (or its shorthand “cis”) pertains to remaining with the same orientation, or being on the same side. This binary opposition of trans and cisgender serves to distinguish those whose gender identity is congruent with the one ascribed at birth from those whose gender identity is not.

Throughout this paper, I use the term “trans” as an umbrella category. This category includes a diverse range of identities that sit within, across, or outside a gender spectrum (Ekins & King, 2006; Monroe, 2007; Enke, 2012), including the following: trans* woman/man; transgender woman/man; transsexual woman/man; ftm/mtf or FTM/MTF (abbreviated from female-to-male, and vice versa); queer; genderqueer; gender fluid; butch/femme; and cross-dresser. Clearly, trans identity can be allied with binary gender categories or non-binary/queer ones, and in the latter scenario, trans identity can problematize the ontological assumption that sex and gender are limited to two categories (Monro, 2007). Trans may be experienced on somatic, psychological, visceral, and/or social bases and can integrate temporary modes by adopting gender signifiers (e.g., clothing) and through permanent embodiment practices, such as reassignment of the sexed body through surgical procedures (Prosser, 1998; Wilchins, 2004; Enke, 2012).

The increasing recognition and positive attention given to trans people in the media and the increasing normalization of trans in popular culture (Hines, 2013) may deflect attention away from trans people’s well-documented experiences of inequality, discrimination, and social exclusion (Harrison, Grant, & Herman, 2012; Hines, 2013; Davis, 2014; FRA, 2014; Collier, 2015). For example, in their review of empirical literature, Mitchell and Howarth (2009) found that trans people reportedly avoided public services as they anticipated transphobic responses, and the participants in Rogers’ (2013) study spoke about their fear of transphobia in relation to their ability to “pass.” Passing, or “visual conformity,” is a mechanism or process that enables a person to be recognized or judged in a gender different from that assigned at birth (Begun & Kattari, 2016). In this way, cisgender-based norms and aesthetics are upheld as a standard by which to judge someone’s appearance (Gagné & Tewksbury, 1998), although the concept of passing is not important to all people who identify as trans (Bornstein, 2016). Roen (2002, p. 521) suggests that “many trans people strategically and agilely live with aspects of passing and aspects of crossing in their lives and may regard abandoning either component as idealistic or impossible.”

Although there is little empirical work demonstrating how the ability to pass leads to discrimination or marginalization, there is evidence of an interrelation between these in particular areas of social life (Kattari & Hasche, 2015). In terms of hate crime, as an aspect of

social life experienced by many trans people, Perry's (2001) conceptual framework has been considerably influential. For Perry, this framework embeds an understanding of hate as rooted in ideological structures and hierarchies that govern normative conceptions of identity. Therefore, hate crimes are acts of violence and intimidation toward marginalized groups that draw upon notions of difference and serve as othering devices. Perry's conception has its limits, however, as Chakraborti and Garland (2012) observe that it is more helpful to consider the import of difference *and* vulnerability, whereas Austin Walters (2011) notes how Perry's theory fails to explain why so many hate crimes (particularly those motivated by racist or anti-immigration perspectives) are committed by those most affected by socioeconomic strain. Notwithstanding, Perry's framework offers a foundation to build on by incorporating particular concepts, such as the notion of passing and the prejudicial attitudes and ideology of transphobia and cisgenderism.

Various authors have debated the roots of transphobia, with Serano (2007) offering a persuasive treatise on trans politics and the misogyny that undergirds transphobia. Within her account, Serano identifies varying forms of sexism – from traditional sexism (the belief that male and masculinity are superior to female and femininity) to oppositional sexism, which Serano defines as “the belief that male and female are rigid, mutually exclusive categories, each possessing a unique and nonoverlapping set of attributes, aptitudes, abilities, and desires” (2007, p.13) – and offers a critique of cisgender privilege (the hierarchy in operation, which gives power and privilege to those who identify as cisgender). She argues that the operation of these concepts is integral in shaping negative attitudes and beliefs toward trans people in general, and trans women more specifically. Offering a potential counteraction, Bornstein (2016) argues for removing the categories of men and women in the quest for acceptance and the removal of prejudice. Other writers have moved away from the notion of transphobia as an individualized bias or hatred and have argued that the exclusion and marginalization of trans people are due to a structural form of prejudice – cisgenderism (Kennedy, 2013; Rogers, 2017). Ansara and Hegarty (2011) define cisgenderism:

First, unlike “transphobia,” cisgenderism describes a prejudicial *ideology*, rather than an individual *attitude*, that is systemic, multi-level and reflected in authoritative cultural discourses. Second, ... cisgenderism problematizes the categorical distinction itself between classes of people as either “transgender” or “cisgender.” (p. 4, author's emphasis)

This definition is comparable to the ideologies of racism or sexism as pervasive and discriminatory, which “involves multiple intersecting

assumptions that construct people's own designations of their genders as less valid ... [and] constructs the world as having only two valid genders and sexes" (Blumer, Ansara, & Watson, 2013, p. 269). Cisgenderism results not only in discrimination and marginalization; in her study of domestic abuse, Rogers (2016a, 2017) highlights the ways in which trans people can be invisible within dominant discourses that promulgate knowledge about recognized global challenges. National statistics provide another example of socially constructed "evidence" in which trans people are invisible. Statistics represent just one means of shaping cultural discourses, and if the members of a particular group, such as trans people, are invisible or enjoy very limited representation (as in the case of hate crime statistics), then they can experience silencing and the invalidation of their experiences. Serano (2007, p. 189) would claim this to be a systemic practice known as trans erasure, resulting in a knowledge gap in relation to the specificity of trans people's subjective experiences – an example of the entrenched nature of cisgenderism.

Methodology

The findings presented below are drawn from a small-scale, qualitative study that aimed to produce an empirical account of trans people's perspectives and experiences of domestic abuse and service responses. The limitations of small-scale research in terms of generalizability, validity, and bias are noted, but the value of this study lies in the richness and depth of the data. The study's epistemology and ontology drew on a pluralistic approach. Feminist social constructionism formed the underpinning theory, and this was complemented by a critical perspective – queer sociology. Queer sociology is rooted in the key principles of post-structuralism (e.g., that social reality is constructed and so can be deconstructed and reconstructed), yet it also acknowledges power and subjectivity as central to the analysis (Hines, 2006; Roseneil, 2000; Seidman, 1996). Consequently, pluralism enabled a theoretical frame that incorporated and validated trans narratives by moving beyond the discursive limitations of binary gender.

Recruitment strategies were pursued through purposive sampling and a snowballing technique: advertisements in virtual chat rooms and trans organizations, attendance at social/support groups, and negotiations with a domestic abuse local partnership. Of the 15 trans people recruited, 12 had experienced domestic abuse and 3 had supported trans survivors. The ages of the members of the cohort ranged from 21 to 70 years. Reflecting the spectrum of trans identities detailed previously, the trans participants self-identified with a number of different identity positions, including the following: trans woman, preoperative/postoperative transsexual woman, woman with a transsexual history ($n=11$); trans man ($n=2$); and nonbinary/genderqueer

($n=2$). These self-identity labels are incorporated into the findings discussion below. Nine practitioners who worked across the domestic abuse sector took part in the study, and although these narratives offered valuable insight with regard to the barriers to and potential for services, their voices are not represented within this paper (see Rogers, 2013, 2016a).

Data were collected through narrative interviewing conducted with both groups of trans participants and domestic abuse practitioners. This allowed a synthesis of different perspectives about domestic abuse within trans people's lives and the potential for social care intervention. The sensitive nature of the interview discussion (e.g., negotiating trans identity with family and intimate partners, abuse experiences) was acknowledged from the start. All participants were familiar with the study aims and research questions, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Interviews were digitally recorded, coded, and transcribed by the researcher. Each participant was given the opportunity to validate the transcript produced from his/her/their interview; only one participant made use of this opportunity.

Pseudonyms were used for all participants to ensure anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy; although several trans participants were indifferent about the requirement for anonymity, pseudonyms were still employed. The sensitive nature of the research was acknowledged through a pre-planned strategy for participants should anyone require support or become distressed by the experience of narrating an abuse history. A high degree of reflexivity enabled me to remain alert to the latter and any other ethical issues, as did my extensive professional experience of working with DVA survivors. The study was approved by the University of Sheffield Ethics Committee.

Briggs (2007, p. 552) asserts that interview narratives “produce subjects, texts, knowledge, and authority,” and this project was value-driven in that it enabled a marginalized community to have a narrative voice. Analysis was undertaken with a voice-centered relational technique, the Listening Guide, which required multiple readings of the interview data (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008). The Listening Guide incorporates an epistemological paradigm situating research participants as active agents who construct meaning and knowledge of their world through narrative; they are “the narrated subject” (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008, p. 399). Further, Doucet & Mauthner (2008, p. 399) claim that with each reading, the Listening Guide “provides a multi-layered way of tapping into methodological, theoretical, epistemological, and ontological dimensions of the narrated subject.” Each reading required a different focus; the first was a reflexive reading, and subsequent readings functioned to identify relational aspects between the research subject and micro, meso, and macro factors (i.e., family,

significant others, communities, societal frameworks, and gender norms).

Findings

In this section, four narratives have been purposely selected to illustrate the ways in which hate crime can present in trans people's lives. Here, I introduce Ann, Max, Polly, and Sarah; each narrative has been chosen to exemplify different contexts for and the effects of hate crime incidents. The influence of gender normativity, cisgenderism, and transphobia will be shown in the presentation of the findings and subsequent discussion.

Ann (56 years, identified as a postoperative transsexual woman)

Ann had begun to transition during the 1980s. She located her narrative within the geographical backdrop of a small town in the north of England. Ann described a period of experimentation during which she began to cross-dress and walk around her local streets. During this time, Ann first experienced a hate crime that resulted in physical violence. Ann made sense of this as action resulting from the intersection of homophobia and her gender nonconformity:

So, I used to go out at night dressed as a woman to see how I felt and it's been hard. ... Living in [town], when I used to go out, once I walked past the [public house] and I got assaulted off this lad because he thought I was gay.

In this scenario, Ann described her failed cisgender performance (Pitt & Fox, 2012, 2013) as she was intelligible as a gay man by her assailant. Reflecting on why she was wrongly ascribed this identity, and not recognized as a cisgender woman, Ann felt that this was because at the time trans people were not recognized or accepted in society:

It was a taboo subject; that's why I used to stay at home. Recently, when I moved off the estate, I've built the confidence and started going out, and socializing, and thought to myself I'm not going to lock myself away. I've got nothing to be ashamed of.

Ann elaborated on what she meant in the latter part of this excerpt when she stated, "I'm not going to lock myself away"; she explained that for years she lived in stealth. Ann chose to maintain a quiet life, for much of the time avoiding family, without friendships, and with no employment and no other means of a social life. Ann's lifestyle choice exemplifies the importance of ontological security (Browne, Bakshi, & Lim, 2011) and the choices that one can make if this is absent or restricted in some way.

Ann reflected on the effect of living in stealth in terms of intimate relationships:

Well, this is it. This is one of the reasons why I've been so isolated because I've had to be careful of who I met. That's probably one of the reasons why I didn't go out. Because if I did go out and get somebody that was very abusive ... so I had to shut myself away and that was out of bounds, kind of thing.

Here, Ann illuminates what she sees as the most significant consequences of her early (and frequent) experiences of public harassment and abuse: loneliness and isolation. Trying to make sense of her hate crime experiences, Ann depicted the early days of transitioning as ones in which she was experimenting with female clothing and signifiers, trying to work out what suited her. Ann articulated her perception of the reasons for the harassment and abuse as her failure to pass as cisgender:

That's another thing, being isolated, nobody has shown me when I was wearing clothes, I bought what I thought suited me. I didn't know it didn't.

Here, Ann points out that as a masculine woman, she did not visually conform to a dominant, cultural norm of gender (Turner, Whittle & Combs, 2009; Begun & Kattari, 2016). It was only during the last few years that Ann's physical presentation had changed as she became more sophisticated in terms of her ability to dress in a feminine way. Ann's presentation had been enhanced by the help of new friends made through her participation in a local trans social network. Ann explained:

Now, I've had my friend doing my hair and my makeup and people see ... she's coming on Saturday and we're supposed to be going to a singles night and then [different town] next Saturday'.

As such, Ann demonstrates agency and resilience as she transcends the effects of her earlier experiences of hate crime and strives to maintain her new-found freedom and social life. This change had occurred when Ann moved to a new area in England where she met other trans people. Ann moved to a coastal town with a vibrant LGBT community, as she explained:

I moved here, I thought I'll go out and not lock myself away. I've got nothing to be ashamed of. Like people that thought that it wasn't normal, because at the end of the day they

think there's two sexes – male and female. There isn't. There's us ... and we aren't going to go away. There's more and more people having the operation done and I was lucky enough in 1993 on the National Health Service.

By forging a life in a new area, Ann felt empowered to establish connections with people within the LGBT community, and as she developed friendships, Ann gained the confidence to re-establish a social life. She also decided to seek employment. This did, however, lead to another episode of abuse:

I had a job at Morrison's and used to work nights. ... I enjoyed that. ... I was then on cleaning and I was changing the toilet roll in the cubicle and there were these two ladies and there was this girl going into one of the cubicles and I just explained to the girl that I was in the middle of changing the toilet roll and one of these ladies said to her friend, "I'd like to know who HE thinks HE is."

Ann did not explain how she responded but that she "got suspended and got sacked." In essence, an incident of hate speech triggered events that led to Ann losing her employment and income. This incident was notable as Ann had held down few jobs in her life. Reflecting on her experiences of hate crime, Ann said:

I remember my cousin said to me, I don't know why, I bet if you wanted to you could knock someone out with one punch, because of all the abuse I've had to put up with [from] narrow-minded people.

Ann also reflected on recent experiences while socializing with friends:

It's like I went out on Friday with my friend, Pam, and got chatted up off this man and I thought to myself why are the idiots calling me because, like, all the right buttons were pressed. Went out again on Saturday and went in this take-away and there was this lad verbally abusing me, "Oh my God. Is that a man or a woman?" ... Then at the hotel on Saturday night, these blokes, in from Wales, were saying, "Do you stand up to go to the toilet?" So, I completely ignored them.

While all these incidences may result from transphobic attitudes, they may also (particularly in this last quote) embed cisgenderist ideology, which is built upon essentialist notions of what it is to be "male"

and what it is to be “female,” and how bodily practices should be performed in particular ways.

Max (25 years old, identified as male, trans male, and genderqueer)

Max was part way through a social work degree at the time of the interview, studying in a major city in the United Kingdom. Mostly, Max had experienced positive responses since coming out as trans, and his identity had been accepted by his family, but he had received mixed responses from friends and acquaintances. Max commented:

I'm in a relationship with a woman for whom my being trans isn't an issue. However, I'm aware that some of her family members may react badly when they find out.

Max was worried about the reactions of his partner's family, but also about the effect that this would subsequently have on his relationship. Max explained how life had become more complex in general since he had come out as trans and begun a period of transitioning:

I feel that my social life has become more complicated since I came out as trans. It's got a lot better since I had top surgery and since I've been on hormones for a while, but for a while I was experiencing a lot of harassment when I was out in public, because of how people interpreted my gender presentation. I received a lot of verbal abuse, both from people who didn't like the fact that they couldn't tell whether I was male or female, and from people who saw me as an effeminate man and didn't like that.

In this excerpt Max alludes to the abuse and harassment that he had experienced because of his physical presentation and the interplay with transphobia and homophobia. Max made sense of his experiences by assuming that as he did not perform gender in a stereotypical and recognizable way (i.e., in which he clearly presents as one gender [male] rather than the other [female]), this enabled people to feel entitled to be abusive toward him. Max's sense-making process exemplifies Blumer et al.'s (2013) argument that cisgenderism is an underpinning ideology that constructs the world as having only two valid genders: male and female. In this way, anybody who appears to have an identity or presentation outside this construction is evidently “less valid” and open to ridicule and hate (Blumer et al., 2013, p. 269). Max described how different aspects of his life intersected to create problems in terms of his physicality, stature, and stage of transitioning:

I have issues sometimes getting into clubs these days because my voice hasn't properly broken yet, and I don't have much facial hair, altogether I look very young for a man of my age. So even though I have ID which shows I'm over 18, I can experience a lot of hassle at clubs and bars, which may seem like a little thing but it's one of many little things that just adds a subtle difference to how I experience nights out since transitioning. ... I didn't used to generally care about whether or not I was going to a straight or gay pub, as apart from a few exceptions I didn't used to feel unsafe at the thought of the people in the pub knowing I identified as lesbian. I don't feel as relaxed about people in a pub that I don't know is trans friendly knowing that I'm trans – even in gay bars I don't feel relaxed about that because a friend of mine has been attacked for being trans in a gay bar. Is nowhere safe?

In this excerpt, Max illuminates the hierarchies that can occur across LGBT collectives as some members enjoy greater privilege (in terms of class or race, but in this case in relation to gender and sexuality) and also the way that divisions can form. Indeed, research has shown that LGBT people can perpetrate abuse against each other in gay spaces (Browne & Bakshi, 2013). While Max described harassment and abuse in gay spaces (bars and nightclubs), he also raised another area of concern in public spaces:

Another issue is public bathrooms. There is always a level of risk assessment involved for me before I decide whether or not to use a public toilet. There is potentially real risk involved at times, and it's another issue which affects how safe and at ease I feel when I'm out socializing.

Max depicted a range of personal and psychological effects resulting from his experiences of hate crime:

I felt very threatened and stopped going out as much for a while, and I experienced a lot of panic attacks when I did go out. ... The threat of violence permeates a lot of areas of my social life these days. Though I have had to deal with issues around my sexuality when I was living as a lesbian, I didn't feel as potentially at risk of violence and abuse as I have done since coming out as trans.

In this way, Max pointed to mental health effects, implications in terms of mobility and social life. Max also references earlier experiences

in relation to his previous sexual identity as a lesbian woman. This was a time during which Max struggled on a personal level, explaining how being intimate “was a problematic issue” as his female partners saw his body as female whereas Max did not. It was only when Max reached his early twenties, when he met another trans person, that his understanding of trans expanded and his identification as trans emerged; before this, Max describes his limited framing of trans as meaning “drag queens and trans women.” Max reflected on his psychology:

I had a lot of internalized transphobia at that stage, which I'm still working through. ... One of the major barriers and delays in my coming to terms with my identity as a trans man has been the fact that due to the society I've grown up in, I struggle to not compare my body in an unfavorable way to the bodies of cis men. It has taken a lot of re-educating myself for me to get to a point where I now understand that I am no less of a man than a cis man, and as I say, this is something I am still working on.

The distinct thread through Max's narrative is the centrality of materiality and aesthetics of the body, both in terms of Max's experiences as a lesbian woman experiencing some dysphoric feelings in relation to her body, and through transitioning to an identity as a trans male.

Polly (70 years old, identified as a transsexual woman)

There were many occasions of hate crime peppered throughout Polly's life story, but Polly clearly felt that the ones that had the most consequences for her took place when she was living in a small village in Wales. Although Polly had experienced the types of hate crime depicted by Ann and Max (i.e., ones committed by strangers in public), what makes the crimes reported below distinctive is the notion that Polly believes that her experiences of hate crime interconnected with events in her personal life.

Polly had moved to the Welsh village with a partner, Liz, and her daughter, Maisie. When the relationship broke down, Liz moved out, but Maisie stayed with Polly for a period of time. Eventually, Polly asked Maisie to leave after a series of arguments, and this is when things changed for Polly. Setting the scene, Polly said “living in a Welsh village – they are VERY close knit – if you sneeze in front of one person the rest of the village gets the flu. It was that close.” After Maisie left, Polly experienced a number of hate crimes that she perceived to be orchestrated by Maisie and her mother, Liz, as Polly noted how “maybe I shouldn't have asked my stepdaughter to leave. I don't know, but I'd

been all right up till then.” Polly offered an account of her hate crime experiences that implicated various community members:

I ended up with broken ribs when I took the dogs for a walk one evening; two local yobs jumped out from behind a tree and gave me a good seeing to. Next door would come over and have a go at me, take my hair off me, take photographs of me without my wig, with no hair on. Even the police in the end said they couldn't do that much. One night I think we had seven police there. That's when the windows got broken. They even had CCTV cameras on, but there were objections about it and ... the caravan window was broken twice.

This narrative demonstrates a range of crimes (physical violence, property damage). Some were overtly transphobic in nature as the act of physically removing Polly's wig and photographing her without hair was experienced by Polly as an attack on her trans identity. Illustrating intersecting factors, Polly also considered that her socioeconomic status caused resentment, or another reason to target her, as she said, “Maybe I shouldn't have had a Mercedes, I shouldn't have owned my own house.”

Polly described how she became isolated in the village and her mental health was affected too as Polly admitted that “seven years ago when I was in North Wales I was diagnosed with clinical depression.” It was only when Polly was considering medical intervention to enhance her feminine appearance (“rhinoplasty, I think [my nose] is too big”) that life changed radically:

I got an appointment in [English town] and thought if I go through with it, I'll stay up here and no one will see the plasters. I booked myself into a small [caravan] site near [English town] and came up with the caravan, and I went to see about the operation, and because of the medication I'm on because of my back and other things, the reassignment surgery and that – the medication I'm on because things haven't gone right with that – they wouldn't do it. So, I thought well I've got a fortnight up here, I might as well stay and I never went back home again.

By physically leaving the Welsh village, Polly had inadvertently broken the cycle of abuse that she had been living with. She was then able to make a psychological break from the village and her home. Polly explained:

Because I went onto this site, and then I went into [English town] and no one took any notice of me. No one bothered. I went out and about. It's a different world up here. ... So, I rang the estate agents up down in North Wales and said, "Sell my house." The only time I went there was with my trailer on to pick the stuff up. ... I rented up here, then I bought my own place where I live now.

Polly then relayed a story of recovery. She rebuilt her life in a new town and decided to share her experiences to inform others by becoming involved in the local university:

On the one hand, it's all the things I've gone through – would I have been able to teach the health and social care students with all the authority I've got if I hadn't gone through all that? It's firsthand information I'm giving them of what can go wrong and what can go right. I'm on the hate crime committee, presenter on the local radio. ... If somebody had told me that I'd be sat here talking to you in the middle of the university, saying that I'll get up and talk to 200 or 300 students, I don't know whether it would have freaked me out or I'd have told you where to go in no uncertain terms. I just don't know.

Sarah (58 years old, identified as a trans woman)

Like Polly, Sarah reflected upon safety and hate crime in her home neighborhood in a northern city in the United Kingdom, but she also offered a different context for her narrative of hate crime; she spoke about her experiences in the workplace. Sarah had worked for the probation service for many years and for the most part had presented as Sarah (and not in the gender identity ascribed at birth).

Sarah began by talking about personal safety in general but placed this within the context of being trans:

Yeah, generally speaking I don't give a damn, but I don't want the nasty [people] 'round here because I will end up with more holes through the window or I'll get beaten up because [trans people] are 22 times more likely to be murdered than the average person. That is the reality. Nearly all of us get abuse from time to time, but yeah, you don't want to encourage it. ... For example, I'll go on Manchester radio but I wouldn't go in the local paper – that's just drawing attention. Just hearing me on the local radio, they're not going to know really.

Asked whether those kinds of decisions about safety and vulnerability are part of everyday life, Sarah responded:

Yes, definitely, but it's just like any "normal" woman. You have to think about safety. You don't go walking down a dark road on your own at night ... you've got to be sensible.

As such, Sarah did not consider that the ways in which she had to consider her safety and well-being were different for women, whether trans or cisgender. She did, however, contest that "but we do get more than the average person. Some of it is deliberate." Sarah then shared her experiences of harassment when in her working role for the probation service. She said:

When I first joined probation, I was asked to go and see a trans offender at [prison]. I did a couple of visits on probation business, but we had also organized a friend for her to go and visit and I had to go to speak to her as there had been some inappropriate comments. So, I had a normal visitor's pass to go in, and when I got there and I asked for this individual and I knew there would be problems, so I just asked for her surname and the officer on the desk said, "Oh yeah. HE's in the hospital wing, isn't HE?" So, I said, "Yes, SHE is." He said, "Oh sorry SIR." And I said, "It's not SIR." He just thought I was another of these "weirdos" and not with the probation service, but he did find out that I was with the probation service.

In this example, Sarah explicitly demonstrates how pronouns can be used as hate speech, as a form of degradation and harassment. This is a clear illustration of the ways in which cisgenderist and essentialist attitudes underpin practices in daily life and serve as othering processes (Perry, 2001; Wara & Munkejord, 2016).

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper has added to an emerging body of literature that explores trans people's experiences of hate crime specifically, rather than subsuming trans people's subjectivities within the larger and broader umbrella of LGBT. In addition, I offer a unique analysis by employing the lens of cisgenderism as a prejudicial ideology, similar to racism and sexism, but one that to date has been used sparsely in analyses of gender diversity and gender inequality. The lack of attention to trans-related violence and abuse is, perhaps, because of the lack of a "figurehead" hate crime case – a case that achieves considerable media reporting and activates the public's imagination (Asquith, 2015). In the

United Kingdom, the horrific and race-related murder of Stephen Lawrence is etched in most of our memories, and the legacy of his murder continues through the activism of his family and others. Yet, when trans people have experienced hate-related abuse or have been murdered, there has not been the same level of sustained media interest or, indeed, public outcry.

The social situation in the Global North is slowly changing, however, as trans people are gaining more positive attention in the media and public life (Hines, 2013). Furthermore, in 2016, the Women and Equalities Committee of the British government reported its findings of a holistic inquiry into trans equality, and in relation to transphobic hate crime the inquiry concluded that in addition to legal change, “cultural change [is needed] too – by society but also by those who enforce the law” (House of Commons, 2016). Therefore, this paper builds on an emerging body of work and a growing sociopolitical movement that recognizes transphobic hate crime as a contemporary problem that needs further attention in terms of a statutory response but also, as I argue, in terms of understanding how transphobia and cisgenderism operate in everyday life (see, for example, Turner, Whittle & Combs, 2009; Browne et al., 2011; Rogers, 2017).

To understand trans people’s experiences of hate crime, the concepts of transphobia, cisgenderism, and trans erasure help to illustrate both the explicit and nuanced acts of abuse that are constitutive of hate crime in all four of the above participants’ accounts (Serano, 2007; Ansara & Hegarty, 2011; Rogers, 2016b). Moreover, through a reading of the participant’s narratives, what is clear is that visual conformity with cisgender norms – the ability to pass – is critical as a performative mode to counter the potential for transphobic or cisgenderist action. Another cogent factor that supports the successful negotiations of self and others in public space is that accorded to connectedness and to the role of critical associations (Davies & Heaphy, 2011). Critical associations are represented by friendships and relationships with like-minded acquaintances, mostly found through support and social groups within trans communities. Ann’s narrative exemplifies the importance of critical associations.

In fact, for most of the participants in Rogers’ (2013) study, social groups were viewed as avenues where psychological and social needs were met in a safe space. This indicated that many trans people have a tendency toward relationships based on the principle of homophily. However, this is not straightforward as the notion that queer space – that which is inhabited by LGBT people (Halberstam, 2005) – equates to safe space was disputed by Max, who, in congruence with empirical studies (e.g., see Browne et al., 2011), pointed out that there is a hierarchy and tension in the LGBT collective that can result in abuse and maltreatment perpetrated by one person against another. Therefore, Perry’s (2001)

framework for understanding hate as rooted in the ideological structures that govern normative conceptions of identity to some extent is useful. However, it is more helpful to consider the import of difference and vulnerability (Chakraborti & Garland, 2012) as the participants in this paper bring attention to their experiences by drawing on a number of intersecting factors (gender norms, age, socioeconomic status, professional status, isolation), not just identity, as central to their hate crime experiences.

In this paper, a focus on trans people's experiences by using a narrative approach assists our understanding of how hate crime is perpetrated in varying contexts. Narrative also helps our understanding of how hate crime is experienced, and of how victims make sense of their experiences through storytelling (Ahmed & Rogers, 2016). Serano (2007) offers a persuasive theoretical framework for making sense of these experiences in her exposition of cisgender privilege (the operation of a gender hierarchy that gives power and privilege to those people who identify as cisgender) and trans erasure (systemic or institutional practices that render trans people invisible). Polly's narrative of hate crime in a Welsh village provides an example of cisgender privilege in operation as she described how a number of physical abuses were perpetrated against her property and also against her person (sometimes directly targeting her presentation as a woman). Polly's perception was that her value as a trans person was deemed to be less than that of a cisgender woman, resulting in her becoming "public property," open to ridicule and maltreatment as a trans woman by cisgender people. Polly was not alone in describing this process, as Sarah agreed that there was a gender hierarchy and that trans people remained at the bottom. In terms of trans erasure, Sarah's experience of institutional practices in prison environments is an illustration of cisgenderism directed toward the prison inmate, the inmate's visitor, and Sarah, and it was a clear attempt to negate their identities as trans people.

The use of narrative also helps to illuminate the many effects of hate crime in terms of social, psychological, and physical harms. Max summed up the effect for him in relation to how (un)safe he felt in public space, which for him always held the potential for hate crime experiences:

It definitely feels like there are less safe spaces these days. I monitor the kinds of conversations I have when I'm out in public because I don't feel safe about strangers on the street and on the train knowing that I'm trans. I'm certainly less relaxed and a lot more alert to my surroundings now when I'm in public spaces. I try to be aware of and avoid

potential risks around people finding out and reacting badly to my being trans.

Max had begun to normalize abuse, to see it as an inevitable part of everyday life, and this is consistent with extant work in this field (Browne et al., 2011). While the other participants may have normalized hate crime to a certain extent, unlike Max, they did not see it as something that always constituted an ongoing possibility; for them, hate crime experiences were not inevitable or something that should be accepted as part of life. The other participants reacted differently to their experiences, offering narratives that illuminated various forms of resistance. For example, Ann did not accept abuse as part of everyday life, but when it occurred, she ignored it (a central tactic in self-preservation); Polly used the criminal justice system by reporting her abuse to the police, and eventually she moved away, finding a life without regular hate crimes taking place in everyday reality, whereas Sarah challenged hate crime directly in personal and professional life. It may be that age was a mitigating factor in the diverging narratives; the older participants (at 56, 58, and 70 years of age) had literally spent more time living in their gender identity, and through this they had gained more life experience and had, over time, been able to develop individual means of coping.

Polly's response to hate crime is unusual in that she was the only participant who had attempted to take redress through the criminal justice system. The Women and Equalities Committee inquiry clearly states that "there are significant problems relating to the reporting and prosecution of hate crime against trans people" (House of Commons, 2016, p. 55) (and Polly did note that the police had advised her that there would be little chance of a successful prosecution in her case). The inquiry also reported that transphobic hate crime is "massively underreported," while as a criminal act, the "experience of hate crime is pervasive and everyday" (House of Commons, 2016, p. 55). The fear of exposure and in/ability to pass are significant barriers to engaging with the criminal justice systems – fears that are fundamentally interrelated to cisgenderism and the fear of a transphobic response (Rogers, 2016a; Whittle et al., 2007).

From the earlier section setting out my theoretical framework to the reported findings, throughout this paper the concept of cisgenderism has been interwoven to help the reader understand its ubiquity and pervasive nature. There is much to applaud in societal change toward a more inclusive paradigm of gender difference, but it would be remiss to consider that this will continue to move positively toward trans people's equal positioning in society with lives free from marginalization and discrimination without further intervention. Indeed, the discussion above shows this not to be the case. As such, there is still work to do to

understand the ways in which cisgenderism and transphobia can be countered in the public conscience, and the ways in which trans people can be understood to have equal value and equal rights and not be seen as “less valid” or as “public property,” as depicted by Ann and Polly (Blumer et al., 2013, p. 8). This work must be informed by the advances in empirical knowledge offered by hate crime researchers and activists (Chakraborti, 2015), as well as through judicial process and policy change. This paper also demonstrates the ways in which advances in such knowledge should be informed by the concepts proposed here (of cisgenderism and transphobia), but also in terms of taking into account heterogeneity and the distinctiveness of experience because while the participants reported in this paper have trans identity in common, their narratives illuminate varying experiences of difference and vulnerability.

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