

FEAR OF VIOLENCE AND STREET HARASSMENT: ACCOUNTABILITY AT THE
INTERSECTIONS

by

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B.S., University of Nebraska at Kearney, 2006
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AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

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Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work
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Abstract

Feminists and anti-violence activists are increasingly concerned about street harassment. Several scholars, journalists and activists have documented street harassment during the last two centuries, and the recent development of organizations such as Hollaback! and Stop Street Harassment, as well increased attention from mainstream and feminist press, suggests street harassment is a serious social problem worthy of empirical investigation. In this dissertation, I focus on street harassment, fear of violence, and processes of doing gender. I take an intersectional approach to understand the relationships between gender, race, and sexuality, street harassment, fear, and social control. Furthermore, I investigate how accountability to being recognizably female is linked to street harassment and fear of crime for lesbians and other queer women. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with thirty white and women of color lesbians and bisexuals, I explore street harassment experiences, perceptions of fear and risk, and strategies for staying safe from the perspectives of queer women in rural, suburban, and urban locations in the Midwest. I discuss several key findings. First, there are distinct links between “doing gender” and the types of harassment these women experience, as well as links between “doing gender” and the types of assault they fear. Second, race matters - institutional violence shapes the fears and safety strategies of the queer women of color in my sample, and white privilege affects women’s willingness to consider self-defense in response to their fears. Finally, responses to fear and street harassment are shaped by the incite/invite dilemma. The incite/invite dilemma describes the predicament women face during street harassment encounters when they try to avoid responses that might incite escalated violence while also avoiding responses that might be viewed as an invitation for more aggressive harassment. This study extends research on

accountability and doing gender, street harassment, fear of rape, and the gender differential in fear of crime. There are several practical implications of these findings. Chief among them is the need for activists and scholars to be attentive to the ways in which racism and racial inequality shape street harassment for women of color. In addition, feminists who work to end street harassment should broaden their focus to include a host of other pressing issues that influence the severity of and risks connected to street harassment for members of queer communities and communities of color. There are also theoretical implications for the theory of doing gender. Knowledge about accountability to sex category remains incomplete. Findings suggest the need to further investigate processes of accountability to sex category, with particular attention to diverse arrangements of orientations to sex category, presumptions about sex category, race, and queer gender identities.

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Dedication

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Sociologists have long argued that when an issue is recognized as “bad or undesirable by a significant number of people or a number of significant people who mobilize to eliminate it,” it becomes a social problem (Heiner 2013, 5). In recent years, attention to street harassment, particularly from activists, has risen dramatically, building on the efforts of earlier feminists to Take Back the Night and transform rape culture. Rape culture is “a complex of beliefs that encourages male sexual aggression and supports violence against women” (Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth 2005). One of the efforts to combat street harassment and rape culture was the formation, in 2005, of Hollaback!. Hollaback! is an online network with groups across the globe that operate together as a social movement. Hollaback! uses the power of the internet not only to connect activists and those who resist street harassment to each other but also to publicly display street harassment news, stories and in some cases even photos and videos of the location or offender/s in a specific act of street harassment. Co-founder and executive director of Hollaback!, Emily May, is widely recognized as an international leader in the anti-street harassment movement. Recently, the New York City chapter of Hollaback! received a prestigious grant to “develop a method of providing geotagged street harassment data directly to city government” (O’Donovan, 2013).

The internet and other technologies now play a central role in the battle against street harassment. For instance, CNN reports that “in Egypt, where verbal harassment, groping, stalking and indecent exposure are a common problem for women, an innovative tool...called

HarassMap...uses online and offline technology to invite women to speak out and also mobilize communities to stand up to harassers” (Lee and Kermeliotis 2012). Another leading organization in the anti-street harassment movement is Stop Street Harassment. Stop Street Harassment is a non-profit organization devoted to ending street harassment worldwide; it was established in 2012 after a four year stint as a website operated by prominent anti-street harassment activist Holly Kearl. Kearl is currently raising funds for an international street harassment survey. Kearl, May, and their organizations helped develop the first Anti-Street Harassment Day in 2011.

That same year, women in Toronto organized a “SlutWalk” to protest a police officer’s public assertion that women shouldn’t “dress like sluts” if they wanted to avoid sexual assault. SlutWalks became a rapidly growing grassroots movement, with SlutWalk events in 2012 in the U.S., Canada, Sweden, New Zealand, Argentina, and elsewhere. Although SlutWalks are organized to protest victim-blaming and slut-shaming (SlutWalk NYC defines slut-shaming as “the derogatory, sexist language and policies that are used to shame self-identified women who are perceived as sexual” (<http://www.csgsnyu.org/2011/09/slutwalk-nyc-october-1st-2011/>)). This appears to be a fairly standard definition of the term), the issue of calling sexually active women degrading names and blaming women for men’s violent or aggressive sexual behavior is clearly connected to street harassment. At the least, the two movements are linked in that both are aimed at resisting and dismantling rape culture, and both were started by young white women. The swiftness with which the SlutWalk movement took root and became a global movement suggests increased levels of intolerance for both victim-blaming, woman shaming, and street harassment.

In addition, activists, bloggers, and journalists in mainstream media have focused on street harassment in locations such as India, the United Kingdom and other places across the globe. In 2010 and 2011, street harassment in Egypt, for example, received attention from

mainstream media and feminist activists. Even artists are jumping into the conversation. Artist Tatyana Fazlalizadeh has become known for posting her anti-street harassment artwork in Brooklyn, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. Fazlalizadeh's artwork comes with unmistakable messages to street harassers, such as "Women do not owe you their time or conversation" and "Stop Telling Women to Smile." (For more information about her work, see <http://fazstreetart.tumblr.com/>). A film titled *Cairo 678*, released in 2010, is a major motion picture that tells "the story of three fictional women from different backgrounds as they search for justice from daily sexual harassment" (Davies 2011). Another bit of compelling evidence that street harassment is a growing concern for activists and women across the globe is that Anti-Street Harassment Day became the first annual International Anti-Street Harassment Week in 2012, marked by rallies, public presentations, educational campaigns and other events in cities across the world, including the countries of Afghanistan, Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Egypt, Germany, India, Mexico, Pakistan, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, and Yemen (<http://www.meetusonthestreet.org/action/>). Efforts to bring an end to the practice of street harassment are now being described by activists as part of a growing social movement. Increased attention to street harassment – including social action directed at resistance, intervention and elimination – emphasizes the absence of research about this very common social problem.

Street harassment and fear of crime, especially fear of rape, are connected. Moreover, street harassment, and gender inequality are connected.

The street harasser communicates to women that the street belongs to him, not her; that she is not free to go where she likes, when she likes; that if she behaves as though she is free, he will prove to her that the street is his by sexually violating her. Sexual harassment by "the man on the street" is so frequent in women's lives that we have learned to see this behaviour as normal for men and inescapable for women. (Graham, Rawlings, and Rigsby 1994, 11-12)

Street harassment and fear of men's violence operate to enforce women's subordinate position but empirical studies have not adequately explored how race and sexuality influence street harassment experiences, women's fears, and the interactional processes that take place during street harassment encounters. The purpose of this dissertation is to examine street harassment and fear of crime as experienced by a racially diverse sample of queer women. My overarching research questions are:

- What are the relationships between gender, race, and sexuality, street harassment, fear, and social control?
- How is accountability to being recognizably female linked to street harassment and fear of crime for lesbians and other queer women?

I take a feminist approach to understand the lived experiences of the women I interviewed for this research, and to investigate the relationship between gender, race, sexuality and street harassment and fear.

Outline of Chapters

I discuss the theoretical framework and review the relevant literature in chapter two. In chapter three, I provide information about the methods I used and I discuss positionality and my analytical strategies. I detail the findings in chapter four, organizing them into three main sections: fear; street harassment; and responses to fear and street harassment. In the final chapter I discuss the major findings and the theoretical contribution to doing gender, as well as implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

I come to this study as a white, anti-racist feminist, a lesbian, and a sociologist with interests in social control, violence against women and the complex ways that gender, sexuality, race, and class intersect to shape each other and to shape both social control and violence against women. Some of the theoretical questions that surface from my interests concern the relationships between fear and social control of women of color and white women, and between fear, social control and interlocking systems of power. The literature provides an incomplete understanding of how accountability to being recognized as belonging to a sex category is linked to street harassment and fear of crime, how it is linked to and interacts with intersecting social locations, and how that results in social control and resistance. The theoretical starting point for this project is in “doing gender” (West and Zimmerman 1987). It is useful to discuss some terms before discussing West and Zimmerman’s theory and how it relates to this project.

Scholars often conflate the terms sex and gender, despite a fairly long history in the literature about the distinction between the two (e.g., Connell 1987; Dozier 2005; West and Zimmerman 1987). I use the term sex to denote the categories of male and female into which we are placed at birth (generally via social interpretation of biological criteria). West and Zimmerman (1987) maintain that “placement in a sex category is achieved through the application of the sex criteria but in everyday life categorization is established and sustained by the socially required displays that identify presumed sex and proclaim one’s membership in one or the other category” (127). The concept of gender, on the other hand, is a social and structural construct that rejects essentialist views of sex-linked behaviors, characteristics, and norms.

Gender is the “socially constructed correlate of sex” category, “the concept that creates and defines sex differences” (Dozier 2005, 298). In plain terms, when we talk about sex we are talking about female and male (questionable though the binary is); and when we talk about gender we are talking about men and women, and femininity and masculinity or more precisely femininities and masculinities. One way to think about gender is as a “routine accomplishment embedded in everyday interaction” (West and Zimmerman, 1987). It is important not to be misled by the simplicity of this statement. How gender as a social construct and structure is embedded in everyday life is far from simple; gender presses us from all levels, micro (personal interaction and action), meso (our family arrangements demonstrate this), and macro (our institutions). In this sense, we can imagine using gender as a verb in the following ways: individuals gender, schools gender, parents gender, governments gender, jobs gender, media genders, sports gender, sexual partners gender, churches gender, healthcare genders, and so on.

Scholars have been critically analyzing and developing concepts to understand and explain gender for at least three decades (e.g., Chodorow 1978; Connell 1987; Dozier 2005; Fausto-Sterling 2000; Goffman 1976; Lorber 1994; Messner 2000; Stacey and Thorne 1985; Thorne 1993; West and Zimmerman 1987). Although several have made considerable contributions to our current understanding of gender, West and Zimmerman’s “Doing Gender” (1987) arguably offers one of the most influential theoretical advances in recent years. Building in part on Goffman’s (1977, 1976) earlier theoretical concept of “gender display,” West and Zimmerman’s (1987) work detaches gender from the individual and individual characteristics and recognizes instead that gender is contextualized action. Gender is not in who we are; rather, it is in what we do.

When we view gender as an accomplishment, an achieved property of situated conduct, our attention shifts from matters internal to the individual and focuses on interactional and, ultimately institutional arenas. In one sense, of course, it is individuals who “do” gender. But it is a situated doing, carried out in the virtual or real presence of others who are presumed to be oriented to its production. Rather than as a property of individuals, we conceive of gender as an emergent feature of social situations: both as an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements and as a means of legitimating one of the most fundamental divisions of society.” (West and Zimmerman 1987, 126)

West and Zimmerman describe gender as emerging from within social interactions, “both as an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements and as a means of legitimating one of the most fundamental divisions of society” (1987, 168). Their understanding of gender as a social and structural force informs my own understanding and my approach to this study.

Doing Gender

The core assumptions of “doing gender” are that gender is not a personal characteristic but rather emerges from socially located interaction; that individuals are held accountable for being recognizably a man or boy or a girl or woman and for “doing gender” accordingly (though there need not be a relationship between these things and one’s sex, male or female); that enacting a sexual identity is linked to first being categorized and recognized as either a man or a woman; that gender as it emerges in this way provides the “interactional scaffolding of social structure” (147) that reinforces gender inequality; that doing gender is “unavoidable” because “sex category is used as a fundamental criterion for differentiation” (145) and because of the

interpersonal, social, and institutional consequences; and, finally, that social change that would eradicate or diminish gender inequality must be pursued at the “institutional and cultural level of sex category and at the interactional level of gender” (147). Although all of these facets of this theory are relevant for this study, the relationship between gender and sexuality and the notion of accountability are particularly relevant, as is the idea of interpersonal, social, and institutional consequences.

Although “the relationship between heterosexuality and gender oppression remains undertheorized in social science research” (Schilt and Westbrook 2009), doing gender is inescapably linked to sexuality. The enactment of sexuality requires first that we recognize to which sex category others belong so that we select the object of our desire from the category that permits us to enact the kind of sexuality we are seeking to enact, e.g., homosexuality or heterosexuality (West and Zimmerman 1987). In essence, social norms dictate that we be able to tell the difference between men and women so we can select one or the other as romantic or sexual partners in accordance with our homosexual or heterosexual desires. Relying heavily on Frye’s (1983) work, West and Zimmerman (1987) argue that appearing heterosexual requires “emphatic and unambiguous indicators of one’s sex” (143) but that the same ability to be recognized as one sex or the other is necessary to be identified as homosexual. Appearing heterosexual in this framework requires adhering – *emphatically and unambiguously so* – to norms of femininity for women and norms of masculinity for men.

Appearing homosexual in this framework is linked to transgressing those norms but not to the extent that others fail to accurately identify one’s sex category. Individuals are first held accountable for being recognizable as either male or female. West and Zimmerman (1987) argue that transgender people who complete the surgical and medical process of changing from one sex

to the other fail to disrupt the need for accountability or challenge this process; rather, the physical transformations are sure evidence of the rigidity of the sex category and gender binaries and their profound social significance (145). Gender and sexuality are bound together; this relationship has been discussed as heteronormativity.

Heteronormativity refers to the cultural, legal, and institutional practices that maintain normative assumptions that there are two and only two genders, that gender reflects biological sex, and that only sexual attraction between these ‘opposite’ genders is natural or acceptable. (Schilt and Westbrook 2009, 441; see also Johnson 2002; Kitzinger 2005; Lancaster 2003; Phelan 2001)

In essence, heteronormativity naturalizes heterosexuality and the rigid gender binary that affirms heterosexuality. Heterosexuality is critical to maintaining gender inequality. Ingraham (1994) argues that heterosexuality is the driving force in the structuring of gender inequality. Although there is some debate in the literature about whether gender or sexuality drives women’s oppression, there is no debate that both are complicit. Moreover, the theory of doing gender suggests that being held accountable for gender cannot be easily teased apart from being held accountable for meeting heterosexual norms. Indeed, in their study of transmen and transwomen in the workplace, Schilt and Westbrook (2009) find that the ways in which transgender individuals are held accountable for doing heteronormativity are themselves gendered, with the women in their study more likely to use gossip and the men more likely to use “aggressive verbal harassment” (459) to enforce norms around gender. The effects of being held accountable are gendered, as well as classed, racialized, and sexualized. West and Zimmerman (2009), writing more than 20 years after their original statement of the theory proclaim that the “key to

understanding gender's doing is (as we said in 1987, and above) *accountability to sex category membership* (emphasis theirs, 116).

Research that takes seriously West and Zimmerman's charge to understand this central feature of their theory – accountability to sex category membership – is quite limited. Whereas there have been hundreds of studies that examine “doing gender” there have been fewer than 30 that have focused explicitly on accountability. Many of those who have addressed the idea of accountability have, as Hollander (2013) argues, simplified the concept by focusing on the commonly understood definition of the word. Accountability is typically discussed in terms of “being held accountable” for doing something, or “being held accountable” by someone (or some force, such as workplace rules or the cultural practice of women wearing dresses, etc.). This understanding of accountability focuses on matters and/or individuals external to the person who is being held accountable, as if that person were not an active part of West and Zimmerman's conceptualization of accountability but rather only an objective component of accountability. Although how others react to someone's doing of gender is important, it helps us understand only a portion of what accountability means in the theory of doing gender. Accountability as used by West and Zimmerman (1987) includes internal understanding that our conduct and appearance are evaluated as well as how our awareness shapes our own actions (Hollander 2013).

Using a fuller conceptualization of accountability, one that includes “the constant and ubiquitous orientation of one's thoughts, perceptions, and behavior to the societal ideals and local expectations associated with sex category” as well as the “explicit and implicit consequences of others' assessments” permits researchers to more accurately and deeply study doing gender (Hollander 2013, 10). In this study, I adopt Hollander's (2013) framework for

understanding and researching accountability, focusing on the three components of accountability: orientation, assessment, and enforcement. Orientation is how one thinks about and adjusts to her sex category. Assessment is the “production of accounts that evaluate people’s behavior in relation to expectations for their presumed sex category;” in other words, assessment precedes consequence or its absence (Hollander 2013, 10). We must assess the doing of gender before we can hold someone accountable for how they do gender. Enforcement is “how people hold themselves and others responsible for doing gender (Hollander 2013, 10). Enforcement includes both positive and negative enforcement. Understanding accountability in this way renders it more visible.

The theory of doing gender reveals links between gender, sexuality, accountability and social control that merit more attention. Literally hundreds of scholars have used the theory of doing gender since its 1987 publication; the database Web of Science reports more than one thousand citations to the now classic article. Sociologists and other scholars have employed this theory to study many subjects, from foodie culture (e.g., Cairns et. al. 2010) to crime (e.g. Miller 2002), work (e.g., Connell 2010), and more. Overall, the literature indicates that West and Zimmerman’s theory withstands empirical testing. However, with too few exceptions, researchers have not been as successful in thinking though or investigating the doing gender theory in relation to what Collins (1991) calls the matrix of domination, often also referred to as intersectionality.

Intersectionality

Race, gender, sexuality and class are individual and group identities but they are also social structures; hence we need to discuss these things in terms of intersectionality rather than

merely in terms of difference. Collins (2004) argues that sociologists need to consider each axis of oppression individually for the purposes of providing “conceptual grounding” but that each axis connects and overlaps with the others; therefore researchers also need to take an intersectional approach to understanding sociological phenomena (79). Race, sexuality, class, and gender are inextricably interconnected and experienced simultaneously “in all three realms of society: the realm of ideas, interaction, and institutions” (Collins 2004, 79). Lugones (2007) points to the importance of understanding multiple overlapping systems of oppression in relation to colonialism and modernity, conceiving of the matrix of domination as if multiple social locations were dyes mixed together rather than intersections (public talk, 2010). Activists and scholars from a wide array of perspectives have described intersectionality in several ways (for more on this, see Choo and Ferree 2010) but the salient message has been focused most directly on the importance of using an intersectional lens in research and activism (e.g., Crenshaw 1989; Lugones 2007; Spelman 1998).

Sojourner Truth (1851) long ago implicitly argued for an intersectional understanding of women’s experiences when she asked, “Ain't I a woman?” However, the idea of intersectionality as a methodological approach and a way of deepening epistemological understandings did not begin to gain traction until the 1980s and 1990s (e.g., Collins 1991; Crenshaw 1989; Davis 1981; Spelman 1998). Critical race scholars and Black feminists took the lead in advancing intersectionality after finding that much of the feminist scholarship being produced universalized the concept of gender, thereby failing to examine or discuss how race differently shaped the manner in which gender ordered social and material realities for people of color, particularly women of color (e.g., Crenshaw 1989, 1991; Collins 1991; hooks 1984; Spelman 1998). The development of intersectional research has transformed gender studies and feminist sociology.

In fact, the intersectional approach continues to transform our knowledge. For example, Harvey Wingfield (2009) revisited the oft-cited concept of the glass escalator (Williams 1992), advancing our understanding of how race, gender, and class work together to shape men's experiences in professions dominated by women, specifically nursing. Although Williams (1992) finds that [white] men are advantaged in that setting, Harvey Wingfield's (2009) study complicates this finding by demonstrating that this is not the case for men of color in the same setting: for example, a white male nurse might be mistaken for a doctor while a Black male nurse might be mistaken for a janitor. Moreover, scholars are increasingly conceptualizing intersectionality in ways that best reflect the people and the phenomena under study. For instance, Hondagneu-Sotelo (2001) focuses not only on race and ethnicity, class, and gender but also on immigrant status (see also Madriz 1997c). Collins (1998) included nation in her intersectional exploration of the traditional U.S. family (1998), finding that family in this context is "a gendered system of social organization, racial ideas and practices, and constructions of U.S. national identity" (62). Garcia's (2009) study of sex education for Latina high school students finds that "heteronormativity, racism, and sexism operate together to structure the content and delivery of school-based sex education for Latina girls" (535). The result of that approach to teaching sex-education is the reinforcement of inequalities based on race, class, gender, and sexuality (Garcia 2009). There has been some debate among scholars about including sexuality when looking at interlocking social locations; however, more and more scholars are doing so and finding that sexuality significantly orders and shapes social life (Andersen 2008).

Choo and Ferree (2010) argue – and empirical studies bear out this claim – that intersectional analysis informs "understandings of core sociological issues, such as institutions, power relationships, culture, and interpersonal interaction" (130). Although several researchers

in sociology have used an intersectional approach and hundreds have use the doing gender theory, I could find no studies that analyzed race, class, gender, and sexuality within the doing gender frame. In addition, few scholars have used this approach to examine two of the most powerful mechanisms of accountability and social control: fear and street harassment. Scholars have studied and discussed the relationships between fear and social control, focusing often on women's fear and how fear and the threat of violence operate as mechanisms of social control. However, there have been no studies to date that explicitly explore processes of accountability, fear of violence, and social control through an intersectional lens. Nonetheless, many studies inform my work on this project. Two additional bodies of research are especially useful: fear of crime studies and street harassment studies.

Fear of Crime

There is a rich body of work in the area of fear of crime. Hale (1996) notes that scholarly studies and attention to policies that address fear of crime began growing significantly in the 1960s and continue to attract new research. A search for "fear of crime" in Google Scholar results in a list of 29,900 articles and books on the subject (May 2011). Dominant in much of the fear of crime literature are discussions about how to conceptualize and measure fear of crime (for a full treatment of this discussion, see Hale 1996). Stanko (1995) observes that "fear of crime is taken to represent individuals' diffuse sense of danger about being physically harmed by criminal violence....associated with concern about being outside the home, probably in an urban area, alone and potentially vulnerable to personal harm" (47-48). Indeed, the majority of studies use this or a similar conception of fear of crime and fear of violence.

It is common for researchers to use quantitative methods to measure fear of crime, very often survey data (e.g., Clemente and Kleiman 1977; Killias and Clerici 2000; Liska et al 1988; Liska et al 1982; Warr and Stafford 1983; Warr and Ellison, 2000; Warr 1985, 1987, 1990; for an exception, see Madriz 1997 a, 1997b, 1997c). Some studies explore causes of fear, such as isolation, darkness, strange locations, and real or perceived risk (e.g., Clemente and Kleiman 1977; Killias and Clerici 2000; Liska et al 1982; Warr 1990). Other studies focus on the consequences of fear (e.g., Liska et al 1988) and altruistic fear or fear for the safety of others (e.g., Madriz 1997b, Warr and Ellison, 2000). Numerous fear of crime studies look at who is afraid and why, often identifying the elderly, women, and people of color as the most fearful while largely neglecting to explore these and other multifaceted intersecting social locations (e.g., Killias and Clerici 2000; Warr and Stafford 1983; Warr 1987, 1990).

The manner in which gender, race, class and sexuality are handled in much of the fear of crime literature is for the most part quite consistent: as personal attributes or characteristics of the person's circumstances. Sexuality and intersectionality, in particular, are often not addressed – either at all or as complex social and structural forces. In general, studies of fear of crime indicate that one or more of the following influence fear: prior victimization; neighborhood crime rates; police presence or lack thereof; social environment particularly as relates to urban decay but also as relates to neighborhood development; economic indicators; vulnerability as relates to individual level characteristics, especially being a woman, being elderly, and being poor; the perception of the risk of death or other serious consequence; social integration; and psychological factors. There is a long list of predictors and correlates of fear but comparatively little theoretical grounding.

Gender and Fear of Crime

One of the most persistent - and paradoxical – patterns in the fear of crime literature is the relationship between gender and fear of crime. Stanko (1995) observes: “Beyond any doubt, the gender differential is the most consistent finding in the literature on fear of crime” (48). Researchers find that women fear violence more than men, yet their objective risk of victimization – at least as measured by crime statistics - is far lower. The most promising explanation for the fear-crime disparity is that women witness and endure a wide range of men’s dominance and violence against women and girls – much of it not identified as either violent or criminal by the victim, and little of it reported to the authorities. The impact of these experiences accumulates over the life course; hence the level of fear women express is related not to their officially measured victimization, but rather to their life course experiences as members of an oppressed and often victimized group (e.g. Stanko 1995). Although this explanation for women’s greater fear relative to men’s fear is more than plausible, researchers attempt to identify other or additional causes of women’s fears.

According to the literature, fear of crime for women is influenced by several factors, including race, income, age (e.g., Madriz 1997a, 1997b; Warr 1985) and living in urban settings (e.g., Koskela 1999; Madriz 1997a; Pain 2000; Scott 2003). In her discussion of fear of crime, Pain (2000) points out that the relation of fear of crime to certain environments in urban areas – dark alleyways, disorderly streets, subways, etc. – have greater implications for women’s fear of crime and translate into perceived greater vulnerability among women than men (see also Gordon et al.1980; and Jackson 2009). In another study, using survey data from a random sample of women in a British urban area, Pain (1997a) – a geographer – finds that women’s fears in an

urban environment are influenced by class, age, motherhood and disability, all of which are also connected to women's perceptions of vulnerability.

Warr (1985), also using survey data to examine women's fear in an urban area – Seattle – finds that young women fear rape more than any other form of violence, “including murder, assault, and robbery” and that fear of rape is high for women in all age groups (241). For women, the generic term “fear of crime” often means “fear of rape.” Indeed, several studies make the case that women's fear of crime is really a fear of men's violence, specifically fear of sexual assault (e.g., Ferraro 1996; Madriz 1997a, 1997b; Pain 1997a, 1997b; Stanko 1995).

Fear of rape is discussed by some researchers as thinly connected to women's experiences with unwanted attention from men, though rarely is the connection made explicit. Scott (2003) finds that a “highly significant” influence on women's fear of men's violence “across all situations was the power of having frightening experiences with unknown men” (212). Yet Scott (2003) does not discuss street harassment per se and does not theorize the connection between street harassment and women's fear of violence. Although Scott (2003) does not offer a detailed definition for “frightening experiences,” her findings – as well as Stanko's (1995) observation and other such conclusions (e.g., Madriz 1997a, 1997b) – suggest that women's experiences with street harassment may be strongly related to women's fears of violence, even if they have no direct personal history of violent victimization. Moreover, as with Warr's (1985) study, numerous studies on women's fear of crime find that women in all adult age groups and racial and ethnic categories fear being victims of rape (e.g., Ferraro 1996; Gordon et al. 1980; Madriz 1997a, 1997b; Pain 1997b; Scott 2003; Stanko 1990, 1995; Warr 1985).

Some studies on women and fear highlight the consequences of fear of crime, such as self-regulation (Calazza 2005; Campbell 2005; Gordon et al. 1980; Pain 1997a) and the emergence of fear related to the safety of others (e.g., Madriz 1997a, 1997b; Warr and Ellison, 2000). According to the literature, social control as a consequence of fear of violence takes many forms, including staying home, avoiding certain areas of the neighborhood or city, and other restrictions on occupying public space (e.g., Bowman 1993; Calazza 2005; Gordon et al. 1980; Madriz 1997a, 1997b; Pain 1997a). The idea that violence against women operates as a means of controlling women or limiting their independence has been discussed in feminist literature for years and continues to be so discussed (e.g., Brownmiller 1975; Calazza 2005); it has also been long discussed in the fear of crime literature (e.g., Gordon et al. 1980; Warr 1985). Warr (1985) remarks, “the social consequences of crime are not limited to those who are directly victimized” (238). The literature indicates that fearing rape affects virtually all women not only those who experience that form of violence. Furthermore, research findings suggest that an overwhelming majority of women – from all walks of life – fear and/or have experienced street harassment (e.g., Gardner 1990, 1995; Kears 2010).

A few of these studies analyze the role of gender, race, and/or class in the constructions of fear (Madriz 1997, 1997a; Pain 1997a, 1997b; Stanko 1995; Tulloch and Jennett 2001; Wesely and Gaarder 2004). Madriz’s data – from focus groups and interviews with African American, Latina, and white New York City area residents – points to the influence of racialized images of “dangerous” men and “vulnerable” victims. Madriz (1997a, 1997b) finds that all of her study participants imagined poor minority men when they imagined a criminal, and they imagined white middle-class women when they thought of victims, suggesting race and class – and indeed racism and classism – have a meaningful connection to women’s fear of crime. One

of the more significant findings in Madriz's study is that women of color respondents report fearing for the safety of the men in their lives, brothers, sons, fathers, husbands, etc. (1997b). Another important finding in Madriz's study is that fear of stranger violence is an effective social control (1997b). Madriz's (1997b) study is unusual in fear of crime research in three especially noticeable ways: it is qualitative; her respondents included Black, Latina, and white women; and she analyzed intersecting social locations of race, class, and gender. Another exception in the fear of crime literature comes from Kerns (2005) who finds that whiteness and being middle class privilege the women in her study, allowing them to feel safe and create distance from violence in their urban environment. Kerns (2005) suggests that fear of crime and social space cannot be understood without looking at intertwined systems of oppression and privilege. When studies feature race, class, and gender as more than mere variables, the picture of who is afraid, what they fear and why becomes more complicated and more clarified.

The literature that addresses women's strategies for safety focuses on women's behaviors and fails to consider more than "generic" risks, however. The risk management strategies, generally discussed as policy implications, vary from macro level strategies (better neighborhood lighting, more frequent policing, etc.) to individual level strategies (walking with a "buddy," staying alert, avoiding dangerous places, etc.). Little is noted about how women navigate safety in terms of their gendered, sexualized, or racialized positions. Although she does not analyze the relationship of sexuality to fear of crime, Madriz's (1997b) work is an exception. She finds that the strategies her study participants employ include, "altering personal appearance, looking for guardians, ignoring fears, guarding one's children, carrying protection, [and] fighting back" (Madriz 1997b, 118); for the most part these are gendered strategies. Gardner (1995), whose survey study focuses on gender and street harassment, observes that women use the following

risk management strategies: avoidance, appearance, ignoring or denying risk, and “invoking an absent protector” (206). Notably, some of these strategies – such as avoiding certain places – are also discussed in the literature as consequences of fear and evidence of the social control of women through fear (e.g., Brownmiller 1975; Madriz 1997b). However, fear of crime researchers do not address the subject of accountability as conceptualized by West and Zimmerman (1987). Studies about women’s fear of crime do not make clear if fear is related to accountability – either in anticipation of or reaction to being held accountable – or how fear, accountability and social control come together for groups of women. Overall, research on women’s fear of violence neglects to examine the links between accountability, social control, fear, harassment, and intersecting axes of oppression.

Race and Fear of Crime

One of the more common findings in the fear of crime research is that people of color, particularly Black people, fear crime more than white people (e.g., LaGrange and Ferraro 1989; Parker 2001;). Using an intersectional approach, Madriz (1997c) once again complicates the fear of crime discussion. In her study of Latina teenaged girls, identity and fear of crime, Madriz (1997c) finds that “people of color who are foreign born, those who do not speak English, and those who, although born in the United States, are considered ‘immigrants’” are more fearful (1997c). As with her other studies, Madriz’s (1997c) attention to interlocking systems of oppression – in this study, race, citizenship, urban living, language and gender – provides a more nuanced picture. She points to several factors that might influence fear differently among people of color – such as unregulated work environments for poor undocumented immigrants of color, particularly those who do not speak or read English (1997c). Madriz calls on researchers to avoid describing fear and its consequence for people of color as if non-white people were one

homogenous population (1997c). More often, though, fear of crime research treats race as a variable without delving deeply into the social and political meanings of race or racial oppression.

One of the more persistent findings in the research on fear of crime focuses on the connections between race, poverty, and fear of crime (e.g., Madriz 1997c; Parker et al, 1993). Poor people are more likely to have high levels of fear and to live in high crime racially diverse neighborhoods (e.g., Madriz 1997b, 1997c; Moeller 1989; Parker et al. 1993; Parker 2001). Study findings show a clear relationship between race, poverty, and fear, much as there is a clear relationship in many studies between race and poverty. However, the connection between race and poverty is more accurately described as a connection between racial oppression and poverty; the same can be said of the connections between race, poverty and fear in the literature.

Relatedly, another finding in the fear of crime literature is the link between neighborhood diversity and fear of crime. Higher percentages of racial and ethnic minorities results in higher levels of reported fear of crime from people of color and from white people (e.g., Moeller 1989; Ortega and Myles 1987). Moreover, “white people’s fears frequently focus on other ethnic groups” (Pain 2001; see also Merry, 1981; Taub et al., 1984). While it seems obvious that racial oppression is at play in many of these findings, researchers do not often theoretically explore findings about race. Pain (2001) describes how fear of crime researchers have approached race and intersectionality:

[T]here are powerful discourses which position people of colour as offenders or victims; and in much of the literature men are viewed as fearless but fear-provoking, and women as fearful and passive. Such dualisms reflect a wider criminological fallacy that certain groups commit crime and others are victims of

it (except for people in low-income areas who are widely viewed as involved in both). (899)

These dualisms also represent power relations rooted in racism, sexism, heterosexism, and classism. Often the end result of neglecting intersectionality in fear of crime studies is an absence of a nuanced understanding of fear. In addition, the literature about fear of crime and race does not include discussions of accountability. Even when the relationship of social control, fear, race, and gender is explored, matters of being held accountable are not (e.g., Madriz 1997a, 1997b, 1997c).

Sexuality and Fear of Crime

There is a very small literature on sexual orientation and fear of crime. Studies about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) fear of crime and risk management focus almost exclusively on hate crime or homophobic violence. Many of these studies consider gay men and lesbians as one group and fail to fully explore or explain how gender, race, or class affect fears for either group; and often they emphasize the perceptions and experiences of gay men over lesbians and/or ignore race altogether (e.g., D'Augelli 1992; Dworkin and Yi 2003; Edwards 1998; Moran et al., 2003; Stanko and Curry 1997; Tiby 2001; Tomsen and Mason 2001). Several studies indicate that men experience more homophobic violence than women (e.g., D'Augelli 1992; Tiby 2001), yet at least one study estimates more homophobic harassment directed at lesbians (D'Augelli 1992). D'Augelli (1992), who surveyed gay men and lesbian undergraduates, sampling 65 gay men, 32 lesbians, 16 bisexual men, and 8 bisexual women, finds that "lesbian respondents estimated discrimination to be more likely than gay men" (390) and that lesbians, more than gay men, are reluctant to report harassment and discrimination. She also finds that persons in all categories report high levels of fear (D'Augelli 1992). Although

most of these researchers frame queer fear as undoubtedly linked to sexuality, they do not often connect sexuality to other axes of oppression or other social locations nor do they theorize about processes of accountability.

A very few of those who investigate fear of crime focus on lesbians as a particular population (e.g., Corteen 2002; Mason 2001). Mason (2001) observes: “It is crucial to recognize that systems of gender and sexuality interact to produce differences between the violence that is committed against lesbians and the violence that is committed against gay men” (26). Mason (2001) argues that “the relation between homosexuality and visibility marks all forms of violence where homophobia comes into play. The specificities of how it does this are, of course, configured through innumerable interacting variables, not just of gender but also of race, ethnicity, class, age and the like” (26). Mason (2001) hints at processes of accountability but does not quite get there. She suggests that lesbians are managing visibility, taking care to hide the ways in which they deviate from gendered heterosexual norms as a risk management strategy; however, Mason does not sufficiently discuss what this means in terms accountability, social control, or interlocking social identities. For instance, if a lesbian is already a racialized “other,” how does she visibly present herself as meeting gendered heterosexual norms that reflect whiteness? Can she avoid being the “other” along one axis of her identity when she cannot avoid it along another axis? These are among the questions Mason leaves unasked and unanswered. In addition, although Mason discusses gender, she concentrates on homophobic violence alone, as opposed to violence motivated by sexism or racism or racist sexist homophobia. Complications are neglected. Meyer’s (2012) investigation of how lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people evaluate anti-queer violence offers a more detailed and intersectional examination of violence against queer people; however, his exclusive focus on anti-queer violence renders

invisible the sexist or racist violence his study participants might have experienced. Fear of crime studies that focus on queer people generally neglect to adequately distinguish between lesbian and gay male experiences, and neglect the complex ways that sexuality, gender, race, and class might shape fear and conversely be shaped by fear. Moreover, those studies focus almost exclusively on hate crime violence.

Street Harassment

Most studies of street harassment have focused at the individual level, for example, examining the direct psychological trauma of victims or their individual responses. However, street harassment is a social problem that has societal consequences that reinforce inequalities. Street harassment sends messages to women, girls and members of other groups who are often targets – gendered, racialized and sexualized messages about power, violence, equality, civic engagement, and freedom. Studies indicate that an overwhelming majority of women – from all walks of life – fear and/or have experienced street harassment. Many more studies report that fear of rape – particularly stranger rape – is common among women. In more recent years, scholars have examined street harassment that targets other groups, as well, but taken as a whole we know less about street harassment than we should. Only a handful of studies offer theoretical explanations for street harassment (e.g., Deegan 1987; Gardner 1995; Gimlin 2010; Quinn 2002), though most implicate sexism or patriarchal power structures.

Street Harassment: Terms and Definitions

At first glance, there is a dearth of literature about street harassment but the scarcity is a bit of a mirage, related in part to terminology. There are only a few empirical studies specifically focused on street harassment, but scholars, practitioners, and activists have certainly written

about street harassment, and studies on other topics have touched on street harassment as well. The term “street harassment” has not been universally deployed by scholars, journalist, or activists, though it has been more commonly used in recent years. Anti-street harassment social movements groups and some scholars are using the expression, which suggests “street harassment” is now the most common and visible term for this social phenomena (e.g., Heben 1994; Kears 2010). Although di Leonardo (1981) used the phrase in 1981 – apparently the first scholar to do so – others who have written about or studied street harassment over the years have used different terms: “everyday sexism,” “sexual terrorism,” “public harassment,” “stranger harassment,” “uncivil attention,” “sexual violence,” “offensive public speech,” “catcalls,” and more. Multiple ways of naming street harassment have hampered awareness of a cohesive body of literature about the subject.

A closer look finds that the phenomenon of street harassment is mentioned, discussed, or alluded to in scholarly work about other topics, often unmentioned in abstracts, indices or titles, thus easy to overlook. For instance, articles and books about fear of crime, sexual harassment in the workplace, sexual assault and rape, public transportation, hate crime, urban living and city planning, discrimination against members of LGBT communities, public space, street vendors, and women’s shopping have addressed street harassment. Street harassment occurs in many communities, particularly in industrialized countries (e.g., Barak 1996). Scholars from multiple disciplines, such as sociology, women’s studies, urban studies, communications, geography, criminology, political science, legal studies, ethnic studies, and history, have focused on street harassment in several countries, including the United States, Canada, Finland, the United Kingdom, and Italy.

Scholars, activists and lawmakers have used multiple definitions of street harassment, definitions that vary along dimensions of behavior, victims, and offenders. Most definitions explicitly mention that street harassment is delivered in public by men and directed at women (e.g., Bowman 1993; di Leonardo 1981; MacMillan et al 2000). Some early definitions are narrower, suggesting for instance that only some women are targeted, such as this definition: “Street harassment occurs when one or more strange men accost one or more women whom they perceive as heterosexual in a public place which is not the woman’s/women’s worksite” (di Leonardo 1981, 51-52). Bowman defines street harassment as the sexual harassment “of women in public places by men who are strangers” (1993, 519). But studies demonstrate that women who are not perceived to be heterosexual are in fact targeted as well, and that those who do not claim a gender identity are also vulnerable to harassment, as are men in some instances. Reflecting this diversity among victims, several others have defined street harassment broadly as “unwanted sexual attention from strangers in public” (Wesselmann and Kelly 2010, 451; see also Fairchild and Rudman 2008; Gardner 1995; Kearl 2010; Lenton et al. 1999). Although women are most often the targets and men the offenders, that definition is also too narrow. Research establishes that street harassment is gendered but not necessarily always sexual and not necessarily directed only at women.

The definition of street harassment needs to make room for harassment that targets all groups, placing the onus on scholars and activists to distinguish the targets of the harassment they reference and the related epistemological nuances and significance. Some street harassers are motivated to target victims because of their race, sexual orientation, age, size, ability, language, citizenship, religion, ethnicity, and often street harassment appears to be related to a combination of factors (e.g., Bowman 1993; Chen 1997; Davis 1994; Steinbugler 2005). A

definition of street harassment, therefore, should be expansive enough to include harassment directed at women as well as others who experience street harassment. Gardner's (1995) definition seems particularly well-suited to that task; she defines street harassment as that group of abuses, harrings, and annoyances characteristic of public places and uniquely facilitated by communication in public. [Street] harassment includes pinching, slapping, hitting, shouted remarks, vulgarity, insults, sly innuendo, ogling, and stalking. [It] is on a continuum of possible events, beginning when customary civility among strangers is abrogated and ending with the transition to violent crime: assault, rape, or murder. (4)

When the definition of street harassment makes room for scholars and activists to consider the experiences of all who are targeted, analysis can reveal the similarities across groups as well as the factors that appear to be limited only to some. In addition, using a definition that allows for a broad range of targets but that specifies – as Gardner's definition does – the characteristics of street harassment requires that researchers and activists do the work of explicating how gender (and race and class and sexuality, etc.), as a social and structural force, is implicated.

Prevalence, Victims, and Harassers

Studies suggests that men have been sexually harassing women on public streets and in public places for several decades, and perhaps far longer. Heben reports that records from at least as long ago as the 1800s “document sexual comments which men have made to unfamiliar women in public places” (1994, 2). Walkowitz describes street harassment in late Victorian England, noting that the West End of London was at the time a “notorious site for street harassment of respectable women by so-called gentlemen” (1998, 1). Bowman (1993) details an account that took place in 1875; in that instance, the victim was a school teacher accosted while

traveling by railroad. One scholar describes street harassment as “a widespread and vexatious problem for American urban women in the pre-suffrage era” (Johnson, 2011). In the 1830s and 1840s, the American Female Moral Reform Society – which had members in more than 500 U.S. cities and towns – “constantly warned” women about the dangers of travel and expressed “alarm over a contagion of male licentiousness, spreading rapidly and endangering women everywhere” (Cohen 1992, 111). The Women’s Municipal League in New York City advocated for women-only subway cars as a means of preventing harassment as early as 1909 (Kearl 2011; Schultz and Gilbert 1996). Japan has had women-only transit cars since 1912 (Krieger 2012); currently 15 countries offer women-only options on public transportation (Jones, 2011). In the 1920s there was a brief movement to outlaw flirting or the practice of “auto invitation” (Coe, 2013). It is clear from these and other accounts that street harassment is not a problem unique to the modern era.

Prevalence

The majority of studies find that an overwhelming percentage of women experience street harassment, many well before legal adulthood. Prevalence estimates depend on the kind of harassment being considered, and range from 30% to 100%. A Chicago neighborhood study of 168 mostly African American and Latina girls and women ages 10-19 found that 86% had been verbally harassed on the street (Neilsen 2004). Gardner’s groundbreaking work indicates that 100% of the women in her racially diverse sample (n=293) in the US had been harassed (1995). Two studies from Canada used data from the 1993 Violence Against Women Survey (n = 12,300) and found that 85% of the women respondents reported experiencing some form of street harassment (MacMillan et al. 2000), with more than 30% reporting being followed in a way that frightened them (Scott 2003) and 53% reporting at least one incident of violence (Scott

2003). An earlier study conducted in Canada found that more than 80% (n = 1,990) of women reported experiencing street harassment, with more than 65% reporting unwanted sexual comments, more than 50% reporting being followed (on foot or in a vehicle), almost 35% reporting sexual touch or attempted sexual touch, and slightly less than 30% reporting experiences related to indecent exposure (Lenton et al., 1999). A study in the San Francisco Bay area (n = 100) finds that 61% of women experience street harassment daily or often and 100% experience it at least occasionally (Neilsen 2004). In a 2008 informal survey administered by activist Kearl (2010), more than 99% of the women and girls who responded, ages 13 to more than 80 years, (n = 811) reported being subjected to various forms of street harassment, prompting Kearl to describe street harassment as “omnipresent” (11). It seems not only fair but important to identify street harassment as a substantial problem and the data about its prevalence supports that.

Victims

Studies indicate that the most frequent victims of street harassment are women and girls. Even so, women and girls are not one homogeneous group, nor are they the only victims. In general, scholars have been “disturbingly silent” about street harassment and race or women of color (Buchanan and Ormerod 2002) but the research that does exist offers compelling evidence that women of color are particularly vulnerable, and that their experiences of street harassment are very often both racist and sexist (Chen 1997; Fogg-Davis 2006; Kearl 2010; Madriz 1997a, 1997b, 1997c). Studies find that women of color experience more street harassment and sexual violence than white women (e.g., Kearl 2010; Neilsen 2004; Pain 2001). Neilsen (2004) found that 68% of women of color reported harassment daily or often compared to 55% of the white women. Fogg-Davis (2006) discusses the street harassment murder of Sakia Gunn to illuminate

some of the ways that race complicates Black women's experiences of street harassment, suggesting greater attention to and theorizing about the "connections and differences between lesbian and straight black women" (73). Taken as a whole, studies that are attentive to race find that street harassment victims, offenders and the incident itself are shaped by race and racism (Fogg-Davis 2006; Kearl 2010; Madriz 1997a, 1997b, 1997c).

Class also intersects with race to shape victimization. Research on the street harassment of runners suggests that class is central, noting that runners who described their harassers regularly viewed them as "working-class" (Gimlin 2010, 276). Miller's (2007) study of inner city and mostly poor African American girls poignantly depicts their routine harassment and suggests that they are at particularly high risk of being harassed in neighborhoods that are plagued with extreme social and economic disadvantage – in part because public spaces in those neighborhoods are often dominated by unemployed or criminally employed men who have easy access to women and girls on the street. Miller (2007) points to the intertwined relationship of gender, race and class to the sexualized harassment of the African American girls and young women in her study. Despite these studies, the topic of class is rarely addressed in the street harassment literature.

Sexual identity also intersects with gender in ways that shape experiences of harassment. Much of the research literature has been inattentive to this, however, failing to mention sexual identity at all, and/or assuming or implying that street harassment is a problem for heterosexual women exclusively. Recently, however, some research has begun to focus on non-heterosexual populations. McNeil (2012) is completing research that examines gay and bisexual men's experiences of street harassment (n = 331); approximately 90% of his sample report being "harassed or made to feel unwelcome in public spaces because of their perceived sexual

orientation” (2012). In her qualitative research, Steinbugler’s (2005) analysis of data from same-sex and heterosexual interracial couples (n = 8 couples) indicates that public visibility places both heterosexual and queer interracial couples at risk of being harassed or physically assaulted. Steinbugler (2005) highlights the importance of examining the significance of not only race and relationship norms but also intersecting factors that influence street harassment.

Steinbugler’s work (2005) calls our attention to street harassment of couples, which brings to light the dearth of information about street harassment directed at more than one victim at a time. This is important because the circumstances for harassment may in fact be highly related to whether one is alone, with a partner, or with others – particularly for lesbians and other queer women. Research finds that while gay men are commonly at risk of violence when alone, lesbians are most at risk in pairs and groups (e.g., Comstock 1991). Incidents of hate motivated physical and sexual violence against members of queer communities very often begin with street harassment (e.g., Meyer, 2012), but research suggests that gay men are often targeted when they are in gay spaces, such as gay-neighborhoods, near gay bars, etc. (Comstock 1991; D’Augelli 1992). Those who attack gay men are typically white, heterosexual middle or working class men and boys ages 13-24 (e.g. Comstock 1991; Strom 2001), and they often premeditate the attack and operate in groups to attack a lone gay man or a gay male couple; often the attackers outnumber the attacked. In those cases, street harassment is part of the planned attack.

However, research suggests that when lesbians are victims of anti-gay harassment and violence, they are attacked in everyday spaces such as parking lots, college campuses, etc. (Comstock 1991; D’Augelli 1992). When lesbians are victims of anti-gay harassment and violence from strangers, often the attacker is male and alone and most often the lesbian is not alone but is with another woman or more than one other woman. Typically the attacker is a man

but he has not gone to a gay area to find his victim/s and he has not premeditated the attack. It appears instead as if the harasser has chosen to act in that moment as he interprets visual cues that for him identify the women as lesbians, and central to that interpretation may well be the presence of more than one woman (e.g., Comstock 1991; D’Emilio 1983; Mason 2001; Stanko and Curry 1997).

Feminist and queer scholars and activists have long argued that harassment and violence against gay men and lesbians is about policing gender and sexuality, and that the “police” are almost always heterosexual men. But the pattern here, the difference in the circumstances of anti-gay violence against gay men and lesbians, suggests that harassment and violence against lesbians (and other women with women who are viewed as lesbians by their attacker) is linked to rape culture where women are sexual objects and where the male gaze conveys and embodies a sense of domination and ownership. One can argue that the lesbians in these cases are being disciplined for defying feminine and heterosexual norms and for having the temerity to place themselves out of the harasser’s sexual reach. Thus it may be very important for those researching street harassment to consider the differences in how a woman alone is targeted versus how two or more women are targeted, such as in the case of Sakia Gunn who was with other lesbians when she was murdered during an incident of street harassment. Researchers also need to consider how race influences this pattern. At the least, we can imagine that lesbians of color have even less permission than white lesbians to violate norms and to decline men’s sexual overtures.

Harassers

Irrespective of the sex of their victims, research shows that those who harass others in public space are male (e.g., Benard and Schlaffer 1984; Gardner 1995; Kears 2010; McNeil

2012; Wesselmann and Kelly 2010). There is considerably less research on harassers than on victims, but the little there is suggests that there are two broad, overlapping, categories of rationalizations for harassment, both shaped by masculine entitlement. Some men frame their harassment as human nature, harmless demonstrations of sexual attraction, and sometimes a way to bond with other men. Others explicitly intend to intimidate shame, terrorize, control, or assault their targets. Quinn (2002) notes that men often view street harassment as “harmless fun or normal gendered interactions” (386). Benard and Schlaffer found that the majority of men in their study believed street harassment was fun, harmless, a cure for boredom and it gave them a “feeling of youthful camaraderie” when they engaged in street harassment with other men (1984, 71). Likewise, Wesselmann and Kelly (2010) and Quinn (2002) found that social bonding among men was a primary factor in street harassment. However, approximately 15% of Benard and Schlaffer’s sample (n=60) “explicitly set out to anger or humiliate their victims” often using “graphic commentary and threats” (1984, 71). Harassers, then, might fall into these two overlapping categories: men who use harassment as a form of amusement and men who use harassment as a means of terrorizing women.

Consequences and Responses

Negative consequences for victims of street harassment are well documented in the literature. Several studies report negative psychological and emotional consequences, such as fear, anger, distrust, depression, stress, sleep disorders, self-objectification, shame; increased bodily surveillance; and anxiety about being in public (e.g., Benard and Schlaffer 1984; Fairchild and Rudman 2008; Stanko 1990; Gardner 1995; Kears 2010; Wise and Stanley 1987; MacMillan et al. 2000). Riger and Gordon (1981) surveyed women in three cities, finding that fear of violence severely restricted many women’s movements in public. Even women who reported no

fear or low levels of fear took precautions to avoid sexual violence in public space (Riger and Gordon 1981).

Studies of fear of crime routinely report that women are more afraid in public spaces than men, despite women's relatively lower reported risk, at least according to official crime statistics, of stranger victimization in public places. Stanko (1990, 1995) and others argue that this is a consequence of women's fear of sexual violence, and argue that it is a rational fear related to experiencing and witnessing a range of sexual violence during their lives (see also Ferraro 1996; Madriz 1997a; Warr 1985; Harris and Miller 2000; Scott 2003). There is little doubt that street harassment contributes to women's fear of violence (e.g., Fairchild and Rudman 2008; Harris and Miller 2000; Ferraro 1996). For instance, Benard and Schlaffer point to processes of socializing women to fear rape when they argue that street harassment during adolescence reinforces "awareness that hostility and sexuality seem to go together" (1984, 71). More than one scholar has discussed the relationship between fear of rape and street harassment (e.g., Fairchild and Rudman 2008; Gardner 1989, 1995; Harris and Miller 2000; Kearl 2010; Lenton et al. 1999; MacMillan et al. 2000). Gardner (1995) reminds us that although women can enjoy being in public space, "even these routine pleasures will be experienced with the knowledge of what can occur" (emphasis Gardner's, 1995, 2). Street harassment can be the beginning of an interaction that results in even more serious harm, including rape and murder, and that shapes not only women's fears during the incident of harassment but in countless moments to follow.

Responses to street harassment are often framed as either assertive or passive (e.g., Benard and Schlaffer 1984; Fairchild and Rudman 2008). Fairchild and Rudman (2008) noted that coping with street harassment fell into four categories: passive, self-blame, benign, and active, and the majority of their racially diverse sample of 228 women used passive strategies to

cope with street harassment (see also Hyers 2007). Passive strategies include ignoring the harassment, pretending the harassment is not taking place, walking in another direction or walking faster, laughing and pretending the harassment is not offensive, and feigning disinterest (e.g., Fairchild and Rudman 2008; Gardner 1995; Hyers 2007). Some women use active strategies, such as confronting the harasser, explaining why harassment is offensive, non-verbal gestures, or contacting law enforcement or another authority (e.g., Fairchild and Rudman 2008; Hyers 2007). Fairchild and Rudman (2008) find that women who report more frequent street harassment are more likely to use active strategies. In one of the few studies to look at different forms of harassment and public experiences with prejudice, including racist and sexist harassment, participants who used active responses reported “better consequences on a range of measures,” including “feeling agentic in the face of an undesirable situation” (Hyers 2007, 9). Benard and Schlaffer write that “women who are often in public places learn to get used to harassment and develop their own strategies for avoiding or responding to it” (2008, 71). The research indicates that most often women respond passively and that perhaps those who respond more actively experience less negative consequences. Research also suggests that the consequences of street harassment shape women’s lives in several ways, from how they get to and from work, to where and when they spend time in public space, to how they feel about their bodies and even how well they sleep.

Rationale for the Study

The literature provides an incomplete understanding of how accountability to being recognized as belonging to a sex category is linked to street harassment and fear of crime, how it is linked to and interacts with intersecting social locations, and how that results in social control

or resistance. Scholars have studied and discussed the relationship between women's fear of violence and social control. Some have studied factors that influence women's fear, from identity to neighborhood conditions and more. In addition, sociologists and others have studied doing gender and the link to notions of accountability. However, there have been no studies to date that explicitly explore processes of accountability, fear of violence, street harassment and social control through an intersectional lens. It is my aim to bring these literatures together, to explore how street harassment and fear of crime operate as mechanisms of accountability and social control in relation to gender, race, and sexuality.

I am interested in focusing on lesbian and queer women's experiences for multiple reasons. Queer women have been largely excluded from fear of crime studies, as has the influence of sexuality. West and Zimmerman (1987) observe that no one is exempt from being held accountable to their sex category but how does that work for Black lesbians, white lesbians, or Latina lesbians, for poor or affluent lesbians of color, or for butch lesbians, for example? What are their fears and how do those fears reflect processes of accountability? In what ways do lesbians resist being held accountable, and in what ways do they succumb – and what does that look like in relation to their social identities? How do different circumstances and social contexts influence fear, accountability, and resistance? I hope this study helps make visible some of the ways that social control operates through fear of violence and street harassment. I believe that studying fear of crime and street harassment from the standpoint of queer women will help illuminate processes of accountability that operate through fear and that vary by social location.

Chapter 3 - Methods

In this chapter, I discuss my methodological approach, including study locations, sampling techniques, the interview schedule, details about the interviews, my position as researcher, and my approach to the analysis. My primary aim in this research is to look at the relationships between gender, race, sexuality and class, fear of crime, and street harassment. I am interested also in how these things are related to the notion of accountability in the theoretical framework of “doing gender” (West and Zimmerman 1987), therefore one of my central objectives is to investigate processes of accountability as they are related to fear of crime and street harassment. Qualitative methods are particularly well suited to this project because I am seeking detailed insight about complex relationships, experiences, and practices to understand how gender, race, sexuality and class intersect to shape and to be shaped by street harassment and fear of violence.

Study Location: Rural and Urban Communities in the U.S. Midwest

I conducted this research in rural and urban communities in the U.S. Midwest. Studies that focus on lesbians and queer women are often located on the East or West Coasts yet lesbians and queer women live all over the United States, including the heartland. Although the US Census does not inquire about sexual identity or count the number of single lesbians, it began gathering data on same-sex couples in 2010. Those data indicate that 53,608 female couples live in the 12 states that comprise the Midwest region: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin (2010 US

Census). I focus on rural and urban communities in four Midwest states: Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, and Illinois.

Many fear of crime studies take place in urban environments, indicating that fear of crime for women in those settings is more common and more pronounced (e.g., Baumer 1978; Warr 1985). However, many of those studies focus on an exclusively heterosexual population or they assume as much. Although street harassment and violence are more commonly reported by urban women than by rural women (e.g., Pain 2001; Kearl 2010; Nielsen 2002; Warr 1985), and lesbian and queer women are found in greater numbers in cities (Aldrich, 2004; Binnie 1995; Binnie and Valentine, 1999; Casey, 2004; Castells, 1983; Harry, 1974; LaVay and Nonas, 1995; Oswald, 2002; Weston, 1995), the increased visibility associated with living in small communities may be particularly relevant to safety and fear for lesbians and queer women.

Location is strongly linked to the prevalence of street harassment (e.g., Clemente and Kleiman 1977; Covington and Taylor 1991; Lewis and Maxfield 1980; Miller 2007). For example, Miller (2007) describes how one economically depressed urban neighborhood is organized in a way that facilitates harassment of women and girls, pointing in particular to how lack of legitimate job opportunities and illicit employment on the streets contributes to the concentration of men loitering in public space. In her study, women and girls reported high levels of routine harassment and fear of harassment and assault (Miller 2007). There is no parallel research that has explored fear and harassment for women in rural environments. Studies of fear of crime and street harassment are generally attentive to setting, often including questions about neighborhood characteristics for instance. I follow suit, making sure to examine rural and urban women's experiences.

I interviewed participants in 13 communities in Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska. U.S. Census data about these communities indicates differences and similarities in terms of class, population, and diversity. Three communities have fewer than 2,500 residents. Six study locations have a total population of more than 20,000 but less than 150,000. Three cities have between 250,000-500,000 residents, and the largest has more than 2 million. One city has a sophisticated mass transit system; five other cities have limited mass transit; seven communities have no public transportation. Four of the thirteen communities could be described as more or less racially diverse, with between 25-55% of their populations identified as non-white. Eight communities are fairly racially homogenous and largely white, with fewer than 20% of their populations identified as non-white. In fact, the populations in four of the five smallest communities are more than 92% white. The picture of socioeconomic status in these communities varies considerably. In the largest urban area, more than 20% live below the poverty line. In one small city, less than 5% of the population lives in poverty. In two small cities, more than 25% of the population lives in poverty – considerably higher than the 2011 national poverty rate.

Sampling

I used purposive sampling to access participants for this research. Lesbians and queer women are a hidden population, difficult to reach primarily because of their invisibility, smaller numbers relative to heterosexual women and to some degree the stigma attached to being identifiably queer in a heterosexist society. Crisp (2002) observes:

Although it is not known how many lesbians there are in the United States, prevalence estimates suggest that between 2% and 10% of women in the United

States are lesbians....This relatively small number suggests that probability sampling in lesbian research might simply not be cost-efficient or practical for many researchers, given the large number of subjects who would have to be contacted to obtain a decent sample size. (141)

Crisp (2002) examined research conducted on gay men and lesbians during a two year period and found that purposive sampling was “the most frequently used method of obtaining [lesbian] respondents” (Crisp 2002, 139). I used existing contacts and communicated with new contacts to recruit study participants. I was also in contact with LGBTQ organizations whose leaders circulated my call for participants. My only criteria for selection were that participants be adult women who identified as lesbian, bisexual, or queer women. My aim was to acquire a sample of participants from a variety of different backgrounds and social locations.

Participants range in age from 19 – 57 years and are in a myriad of occupational fields, including retail, social work, entertainment, public health, and education. Three participants are students and twenty-five of the thirty participants have earned a college degree. Of those, eleven also have earned a graduate or professional degree. Ten participants are women of color; twenty are white. (See Table 3.1).

Table 3.1

Pseudonym	Race	Age	Sexual Identity
Althea	African American	36	Lesbian
Betty	White	30	Lesbian
Bree	Multiracial	30	Lesbian
Brick	White	26	Lesbian
Chris	White	57	Lesbian
Daisy	White	23	Lesbian
Darcy	Multiracial	31	Bisexual

Deb	White	51	Lesbian
Delta	White	26	Lesbian
Elizabeth	White	27	Lesbian
Elsa	Asian American	28	Bisexual
Grace	White	39	Lesbian
Gwendolyn	African American	50	Lesbian
Hannah	White	24	Lesbian
Jacqueline	African American	32	Lesbian
Jaime	Hispanic	36	Lesbian
Jane	White	50	Lesbian
Janet	African American	49	Lesbian
Joan	White	34	Lesbian
Jordan	White	23	Lesbian
Julie	White	49	Lesbian
Linda	White	56	Lesbian
Norma	White	57	Lesbian
Rachael	White	23	Lesbian
Ramona	White	55	Lesbian
Rosalinda	Biracial	27	Lesbian
Sally	White	34	Lesbian
Sam	White	38	Lesbian
Trinity	White	32	Lesbian
Yvonne	African American	25	Lesbian

*Each participant selected the terms used to describe her racial and sexual identities.

Interview Schedule

I constructed the interview schedule after a thorough reading of the literature, including fear of crime and street harassment survey tools (e.g., Gardner 1995; Kearsley 2010; Madriz 1997b; Warr 1990; Warr 1995). The major concepts I explore in my study are fear, risk, risk management, and safety as related to public space and as experienced by study participants. I operationalized these concepts in the interview schedule after reading literature about fear of crime and street harassment to learn how other researchers approached this task, as well as how street harassment and fear of crime have been theorized. For example, Wilson and Kelling (1982) connect their theory of neighborhood disorder (famously, broken windows) to feelings of

vulnerability and fear of crime. I asked each participant for descriptions of her neighborhood and the public spaces she visits. Others have argued that the theoretical explanation most fitting women's fears of violence is one where fear operates to control women's use of public space, a patriarchal social control model (e.g., Day 1999; Kearsley 2010). I asked about women's sense of risk and safety in public space, what their routines are with regard to navigating public spaces. The interview schedule makes space for multiple theoretical explanations to surface from the data without pointing to one specific theory. This serves the goals of privileging participants' subjective experiences and perceptions and using inductive analysis to develop a theoretical understanding of the relationships between gender, race, sexuality and class, and street and stranger violence or its threat.

The interview schedule is divided into three sections: (1) background information, (2) fear of violence and street harassment, and (3) management and responses to fear and harassment. In the first section, I asked questions to get demographic information and a sense of the participant's neighborhood, leisure and work activities, and activities in their community. For instance, I asked, "Can you describe your neighborhood for me? If you spend time in other neighborhoods, what are they like? Where do you go in your community, and how do you get there? Do you use public transportation? Walk?" and "What do you do for fun?" Questions in the second section focused on perceptions of safety and fear and the context around those things, including what participants considered safe or not and why. In this portion of the interview, I asked questions such as "Do you think about street harassment or being harassed by strangers when you're in public? If so, when, under what circumstances?" and "Where and when do you feel most safe? What makes you feel safe? Most at risk? Can you describe that for me?" In the third section, I focused on how participants respond to what they view as unsafe or risky,

including the strategies they employ to secure feelings of safety or to respond to risk. Here I asked questions such as, “When you feel worried about or afraid of violence, how do you handle that?” and “If there’s a place you think of as particularly unsafe or dangerous, can you describe it and tell me (1) is that place dangerous for everyone? and (2) what would make that place less dangerous?” (See the interview schedule in Appendix A for more details.)

Interviews and Consent

I conducted semi-structured interviews, consisting of mostly open-ended questions. Interviews were conducted at locations of each participant’s choosing. Sometimes we met at the participant’s home but more often we met at a local coffee house, restaurant, or public park. The interviews lasted 30 to 120 minutes, and most lasted more than 60 minutes. I followed the interview schedule during all of the interviews but pursued conversational threads that drifted from the interview schedule when appropriate. Prior to beginning each interview, I asked participants to read the consent agreement (Appendix B) and to pose questions if they had them before consenting to the interview. I also secured permission from each participant before audio recording the interviews. Although my sample is not a vulnerable population, I am keenly aware that topics related to sexuality, risk, and fear can be sensitive. To maintain confidentiality, I use pseudonyms and I have changed specific personal details in the text.

Positionality

Does it matter that I am a white, feminist, anti-racist lesbian in my 40s; a mother and grandmother; a graduate student; a survivor of domestic violence, and a former activist in the Battered Women’s Movement? Does it matter that I have experienced street harassment? Yes. Stacey (1988) suggests that:

Most feminist researchers, committed, at a minimum, to redressing the sexist imbalances of masculinist scholarship, appear to select their research projects on substantive grounds. Personal interests and skills meld, often mysteriously, with collective feminist concerns to determine a particular topic of research, which, in turn, appears to guide the research methods employed in its service. (21)

Indeed, this describes the spirit of my approach to this project. I selected the topic and methods with an eye to my interest in the quality of life for women on the margins and women's lives more broadly. I am influenced by my concern about violence against racial minorities, queer people, and women, as well as by my support for equality. I am influenced by my awareness of the relative dearth of research about queer women's experiences and my preference for methods and scholarship that fall within a somewhat indistinct but nonetheless established tradition of feminist methods. Archer (2002) observes that, "feminist theorizing has long engaged with critiquing mainstream, positivistic research for its assumptions that the researcher is objective and value free in relation to the study of his/her (subjective) subjects" (108). From the start, my social location and life experiences influence the focus of this study. Being aware of my position permits me to see my role as both researcher and advocate for social justice. I am first interested in conducting meaningful research but secondly I want to find ways for my research to improve conditions for women who are afraid of violence and who experience street harassment. Informed by the work of Hill Collins (1991), Harding (1986) and others, I begin my investigation from the perspective of queer women and with an eye to seeing the range of their experiences with street harassment and fear of violence.

My position as a student privileged my access to some of the women I interviewed. One respondent, also a student, mentioned that she might ask me to participate in her own research in

the future. Another respondent, a professor, discussed themes that might surface in this research and inquired about the IRB approval process. Her background in academia influenced both our rapport and her responses. The data gathering process was also influenced by my identity as a lesbian. Respondents often used terms relative to our shared identities as lesbians or queer women, such as femme, butch, queer, dyke and other insider terms. Often, in turn, I too used insider terms. Neither they nor I seemed concerned that we would be misunderstood or offended by using such words; whereas, a heterosexual researcher might have refrained from using terms such as “butch” or “dyke” for fear of receiving a negative reaction. Participants’ word choices reflected their identities as queer women but it seems likely that our shared identities as non-heterosexual women made this a comfortable choice for them.

When respondents and I shared the same racial identity, we did not have to navigate racial difference. This was not the case when I conducted interviews with lesbians and bisexual women of color. The risk of social distance between a white interviewer and participants of color is likely greater when the subject is racism (Archer 2002), and the subject of racism certainly surfaced in several of my interviews. Some of the strategies that researchers can use to mitigate or avoid negative effects related to difference are the same techniques that make for a good interview: listening attentively; asking questions for clarification when the participant discusses something unfamiliar; adjusting the interview schedule as indicated in response to participant insights; following conversational threads; and not posturing as the expert but rather recognizing the participant as the expert. Archer (2002) suggests that in cases where the researcher is white and interviewing persons of color, “the establishment of trust or good relationships...with respondents does not mark the ‘end’ of ‘race’; white researchers should engage with ‘race’, and not conflate it with racism or treat it as a barrier to be ‘overcome’” – particularly when topics of

the interview concern matters of race (126). White researchers can also benefit from their outsider position, particularly if they are also simultaneously insiders in another respect, as I was. Participants might raise matters with an outsider/insider that they would not have voiced with someone whom they thought of only as an insider (Archer 2002).

I did, of course, encounter multiple differences between myself and participants, such as differences in education and class, age, gendered identity, race, and body size. All of these differences seemed mitigated to some degree by our shared identity as queer women as well as by their interest in the topic of the research and my welcoming approach. Some participants appeared to test my sensitivity around race and diversity before agreeing to be interviewed by asking me to meet in areas that are known to have a minority white population or known to be high-crime neighborhoods with a majority of non-white residents. One participant told me where she wanted to meet then paused and asked, “You down with coming to the hood?” Another said, “Don’t be early else you’ll be the only white face in the house.” I did not hesitate to meet participants at the location of their choosing and felt comfortable in all of the neighborhoods, cities, and towns to which I traveled for this research.

After my interviews, I practiced a particular kind of note-taking, informed by my reading of Richardson and Pierre (2005) and Marshall and Rossman (1999). I took two sets of notes. One set detailed my observations about the interview: where and when the interview was held, with whom, the length of the interview, etc. The other was more in the vein of guided free-writing about the interview, capturing things such as my thoughts about the participant’s responses, reflections on the effectiveness of the interview schedule, contemplations about the interview in relation to the study as a whole, and more. This kind of note-taking can facilitate careful and rigorous analysis (Marshall and Rossman 1999; Richardson and Pierre 2005).

Analysis

I used inductive analysis to analyze the verbatim transcripts of my interviews. Using NVIVO, software that facilitates the analysis of qualitative data, I analyzed the transcripts of the interviews, beginning first with open coding to identify and label data that might be significant to understanding respondents' experiences, perceptions, and observations. After free coding all of the interviews – during which codes were refined, combined, and ordered hierarchically – I examined the codes and the transcripts again, looking for emerging themes and patterns and organizing the data accordingly. I also consulted with colleagues and solicited feedback to check my work.

I took some additional measures to ensure rigor. I analyzed the data more than once (e.g., Archer 2002; Marshall and Rossman 1999; Padgett 1999). I examined the data to see whether themes and patterns reflected findings in other studies. For instance, a consistent finding in the literature on fear of crime is that women are afraid of rape (e.g., Ferraro 1996; Madriz 1997a; Pain 1997b; Riger and Gordon 1981; Stanko 1995, Warr 1985); I examined the data to see if that finding surfaced from my analysis. I searched for negative cases (Marshall and Rossman 1999); carefully reviewed my notes; and critically questioned my analyses (Marshall and Rossman 1999). The objective was to learn what themes emerged from the empirical evidence, to unearth and recognize from the data explanations about how intersections of gender, race, and sexuality shape and are shaped by street and stranger violence or its threat, to see if processes of accountability were visible in the data, and to develop a data-informed and data driven theoretical understanding of my participants' experiences of fear and street harassment.

I analyzed the data in a four-step process. First, I practiced “prolonged engagement” (Padgett 1999) by reading and re-reading the transcripts and by coding lines, sentences, and/or

paragraphs in each interview transcript. Second, I made logical connections between the data and my interview questions and the relevant literature and refined my codes. Third, I reviewed, combined, and ordered the codes that emerged during analysis to identify overarching themes rooted in the data. Fourth, I used the writing process to develop deeper understanding of the data as related to my research questions. There are several major findings, all of which fall into one of the four main themes: Fear, Street Harassment, Responses to Fear and Street Harassment, and Doing Gender (see detailed coding tree in Appendix C). For example, a finding related to fear is that fear of rape for the women in my sample includes fear of punitive and corrective rape; and a finding related to street harassment is that several women of color participants experienced racist street harassment.

Conclusion

The final stage of the analysis is the writing. I write about the salient themes that emerged from the data, using the writing as an integral part of my analysis process. During the writing I discuss my findings and explicate my understanding of the relationships between gender, race, sexuality, and fear and street harassment. In the following chapter, I present and discuss the findings.

Chapter 4 - Findings

My findings provide insight into what queer women fear, what happens when they are harassed on the street and in other public spaces, and how their experiences are tied to gender, race, sexuality, and power. The data reveal some consistent patterns around fear, street harassment, and responses to both fear and harassment. All 30 participants have experienced street harassment. Nine of the women in my sample described experiencing street harassment daily or often. Although six participants reported that they currently rarely or never encounter street harassment, during the interviews four of those six described one or more troubling incidents that easily qualify as street harassment. Being unaware of street harassment may indicate that the term “street harassment” is not widely deployed. It may also be that street harassment is so common for some participants that they were not immediately conscious of having experienced it, casting their harassment instead as an unremarkable element of being in public space. In addition, the women who reported rarely or never experiencing street harassment but who then later in the interview described street harassment often corrected themselves. For example, Linda claimed that she did not experience street harassment but then immediately contradicted herself: “No, no. Very infrequently, but I would say twice maybe.” The majority, nineteen participants, experienced street harassment sometimes. Most participants responded to street harassment passively, ignoring it, smiling but not engaging, giving disapproving glances, fleeing, etc.

The most commonly cited fear was a fear of rape, expressed by 25 of the 30 respondents. Women in urban spaces described experiencing street harassment more often than did women in

smaller communities. However, community size did not predict participants' fear: urban, suburban, and rural women all reported being afraid of stranger violence. Reflecting common findings in the literature, several participants connected their fear to nighttime and darkness, isolation, unfamiliar and/or rowdy men and unfamiliar places, as well as perceptions of neighborhood decay. Women in all community locations in this study described being more afraid in certain public spaces, particularly neighborhoods that they perceive to be isolated or high-crime areas and neighborhoods or areas oriented around men, sports, and alcohol. Women who self-disclosed histories of personal experience with violence described being more fearful and guarded than they thought might be typical, though all participants reported being guarded and practicing vigilance as a way to prevent victimization.

The data indicates that women in my sample experience certain types of harassment and fear certain types of rape. As such, it is important to clearly define several terms before I discuss them at length, though I will revisit these definitions when I discuss related findings. I discuss four types of harassment: homophobic harassment, heterosexual harassment, racist harassment, and racialized harassment. Homophobic harassment occurs when the targets are presumed to be homosexual and the harasser is expressing hostility or intolerance for homosexuality or homosexual people; this type of harassment may include sexual comment and threats. Heterosexual harassment occurs when the targets are treated as if they are heterosexual; this type of harassment is often characterized by sexual aggression, sexual comments, and/or threats of rape. Racist harassment is characterized by white privilege and occurs when the white male harasser expresses hate, intolerance, or cultural contempt for his target; racist harassment can also overlap with heterosexual and homophobic harassment. Racialized harassment, on the other hand, is within-group harassment from one racial minority to another; racialized harassment uses

racial language and images. Racialized harassment is shaped by white privilege but both the harasser and his victim are racially oppressed. I also discuss three types of rape. Heterosexual rape is rape by one or more heterosexual men who assume the victim is heterosexual. In the case of punitive rape, the woman is targeted for violating heterosexual and/or gender norms, such as publicly displaying affection for a same-sex partner, doing masculinity, or violating norms of women's insubordination. Corrective rape targets lesbians and other queer women with the idea of transforming them into heterosexuals via forced heterosexual sex. In this chapter, I will discuss these types of harassment and rape as I explain my findings. Results are organized into three major components: fear, street harassment, and responses to fear and street harassment. The data from this study indicates that race and sexuality shape fear and street harassment, as well as how participants responded to both.

Fear

This study yielded several interesting findings related to fear, I will briefly mention some of the findings before discussing in detail the three main results related to fear. Places and spaces deemed potentially dangerous most often fell into one of two main categories: everyday space or space dominated by men and alcohol. I categorized locations such as public transportation, sidewalks, stores, restaurants, and public restrooms as everyday space. Space dominated by men and alcohol includes not only bars but also sporting events. Four of the five women who are parents expressed altruistic fear, specifically for the safety and well-being of their children; often the mothers in my sample worried that their children would suffer homophobic discrimination. All four mothers with these concerns lived in small cities or rural or suburban communities. Some of the women in relationships also reported altruistic fear for their partners; often this was

connected to when and where they engaged in public displays of affection or other visible markers of their sexual identity. Altruistic fear surfaced also for the women of color in my sample, and was echoed by a few of the white women, all of whom reported fearing for the safety of people of color in general, as well as queer people of color (including lesbians, bisexuals, gay men, transgender individuals, and young queer people). All of the women of color who were interviewed for this study reside in large urban areas; their altruistic fear is likely influenced in part by the oft-reported and widely acknowledged disproportionate number of murders in poor Black neighborhoods in those areas.

Overwhelmingly, participants in this study imagine a male perpetrator; often he is white although men of color were also mentioned. Consistently, participants in this study imagine that the typical victim is female, though participants also discussed victims who are racial minorities (men, women, and genderqueer or transgender individuals) and victims who are queer (often with specific attention to queer youth of color). The most robust findings about fear in this study are those related to fear of rape. The data reveal consistent patterns and responses over multiple interviews, and offer some important insights into queer women's fears of rape. Findings related to fear in this study suggest that queer women fear more than one type of rape, and that fear of rape for queer women of color cannot be divorced from racism and their fears of institutional violence.

Fear of Rape

Although one participant said she did not fear being raped, and four described having greater fear about other forms of violence, 25 participants in this study identified sexual violence as the type of violence they most fear. In response to a question about what crime she most

feared, Chris expressed fear of rape in a way similar to other women in this study. Initially, she said she was afraid of crime and that she avoids going out in public to prevent her victimization:

When you say crime, what specifically are you talking about?

Well, being raped.

Chris, 57 years, white lesbian

Research indicates that spatial avoidance, that is avoiding certain spaces and avoiding being in public alone at night, are two strategies women employ in an effort to be safe in public space (e.g., Warr 1985; Coakley 2003). And, as Chris's comments indicate, it is rape that women fear will occur in those dark places. This fear was articulated over and over during the interviews.

If I heard that a woman was a victim without knowing what kind [of crime] had been perpetrated, I would probably assume that, like, she had been sexually assaulted.

Elsa, 28 years, Asian American bisexual woman

Oh my god, it all scares me. I think physical violence scares me the most personally, being physically raped or beaten up or killed or strangled or tortured. Being tortured is the other thing that really scares me a lot.

Julie, 49 years, white lesbian

The most traumatizing thought is rape.

Jaime, 36 years, Hispanic lesbian

I'm on the bus alone at night. That's mostly when I worry about [rape]. I don't worry about it at home really, in my building. It's more at night alone on public transportation. That's when I really worry about it.

Gwendolyn, 50 years, African American lesbian

You know what? I'm honestly, I'm terrified of walking home late at night and then some random van just like rolling up on me and me getting thrown in and like raped and who knows, killed, you know. Like you never know.

Yvonne, 25 years, African American lesbian

I probably would have to say that, on an instinctual fear level, I'm most afraid of sexual assault. Because I don't have many men in my life, that's mostly fear of stranger sexual assault.

Sally, 34 years, white lesbian

(What crime worries you the most?) ...being raped. Being like stalked and kidnapped or something creepy.

Hannah, 24 years, white lesbian

Being abducted by some wack-job who's a sexual sadist and he tortures you. Ya, that's the scariest crime and it's always women who get that. Women and children.

Betty, 30 years, white lesbian

Although some of the queer women in my sample described also being afraid of torture, abduction, and non-sexual physical assault, fear of rape was mentioned more than any other fear. For instance, participants rarely mentioned fear in relation to murder and some made the comparison between rape and murder explicitly:

I don't feel like rape is with the same severity as murder but it carries almost a worse sentence. It's stealing life.

Jaime, 36 years, Hispanic lesbian

Jaime offers a point of view held by others in this study and in other research (e.g. Warr 1985; Ferraro 1996). Several offered explanations about who might commit rape, who might be most at risk, and how they view the connection between their sexual identity and gender presentation and their risk of rape. Jaime, a 36 year-old Hispanic lesbian living in an urban area, offers this insight:

Yeah, like the guy at the Quickie Mart is going to get robbed, but if he keeps his cool he won't get shot. If it's a girl working behind that counter, I would wonder if she wouldn't get assaulted no matter what she did.

By assaulted you mean?

Raped.

Jaime, 36 years, Hispanic lesbian

It is noteworthy that Jaime draws a comparison between a man getting shot and a woman getting raped. As noted, for Jaime and several women in this sample, and also in other studies (e.g. Warr 1985; Ferraro 1996), fear of rape is likened to or supplants fear of murder. Significant also is Jaime's perspective that women are at risk of rape even when the perpetrator is not originally intent on raping a woman. In this exchange with Jaime she was contending that men and women's risks of violence are different – that men and women are at risk when they work in a job where robberies and weapons occasionally surface but in that environment women are at increased risk because they may be raped. Furthermore, Jaime is arguing that male victims can manage their risk in that situation by “keeping their cool” but women cannot manage the risk of rape “no matter what.” The scenario Jaime discusses suggests she views rape as a crime of opportunity, almost inevitable if opportunity allows, as well as a crime that women cannot easily prevent.

Jaime illustrates a central quandary women face when they consider rape prevention and when they encounter street harassment: I call this the incite/invite dilemma. Some of the women in this study describe fears related to – and/or street harassment that escalates as a result of – not cooperating with or being nice to men they fear; yet, some women also fear that cooperating or being nice in response to unwanted attention from men will be perceived as sexual invitation. Women's fear of rape is shaped by this dilemma, a dilemma that appears to leave them no space to negotiate their own safety. As Jaime reveals, some women are left with the impression that in some cases they will be at risk of rape “no matter what.”

Queer Fear of Rape

Being a lesbian or queer woman does not eliminate fear of rape. If anything, the fear becomes more complicated and the triggers or perceived risks more plentiful. Rosalinda, a 27 year-old biracial lesbian in my sample made an observation about the risks of inciting men's anger when she remarked that straight women and lesbians are at risk of rape:

I don't know. It doesn't even have to be that she's queer. She could just be a person who turned him down.

Rosalinda, 27 years, biracial lesbian

Here Rosalinda notes the risk she and others attach to directly rejecting men's sexual overtures as well as to indirectly rejecting all men as sexual partners because one is a lesbian. The incite/invite dilemma may be even more salient for queer women and women whose gendered performance violates dominant norms.

Other participants reported fearing rape specifically in relation to anti-gay violence. Linda, a 56 year-old white lesbian living in a Midwest suburb described feeling "vulnerable to sexual assault as a tool of homophobia" – particularly in relation to being in public with her partner. Linda did not, interestingly, otherwise express much fear about being a victim of rape. She said she actually thought about her safety only occasionally:

Occasionally. I'm not obsessed with it and I don't worry very much.

Linda, 56 years, white lesbian

But Linda was not alone in fearing rape motivated by homophobia, or fearing rapists who specifically target lesbians or queer women. Sam, a 38 year-old white lesbian living in a rural community believes lesbians are at particular risk for rape. After telling me that rape was the

most violent crime Sam could imagine, and the crime she most feared, she offered this observation:

Guys like to teach you that they're – how to be a real woman by doing that.
Sam, 38 years, white lesbian

Gwendolyn, a 50 year-old African American lesbian, asserted that hatred of women is the motive for rape and argued that men who hate women inevitably hate lesbians even more:

Because to those people, if you want to control and humiliate and denigrate and demoralize a woman, you *really* want to demoralize a lesbian because I'm way in your face as a woman.

Gwendolyn, 50 years, African American lesbian

Sam's and Gwendolyn's fear of rape as a violent reaction to their sexual identity appears connected to the idea that to police their gender requires also the policing of their sexuality – a sentiment expressed by others in this sample. Sam's reference to being taught how to be a “real woman” suggests that gender and sexuality are intertwined and policed simultaneously, and that rape or the threat of rape can be both policing and punishing. Sam is expressing fear of corrective rape, rape meant to “teach you how to be a real woman” which is defined as a heterosexual woman. Gwendolyn's observation reveals that she sees rape as a method of dominating women, punishing them for having the audacity to be “way in your face as a woman.” I call this type of rape punitive rape; it is rape as punishment for eschewing prescribed heterosexual and gender norms. For Gwendolyn, being a lesbian means, to some degree, violating not only norms of sexuality but also gendered norms of subordination. In this sense, she views rape as a tool of punishment for rejecting men, as well as a means of policing women's use or display of power.

Jordan, a 23 year-old white woman, put her fear of corrective rape quite bluntly:

Are lesbians at risk of rape? Oh yeah. Absolutely.

As much as every other woman?

I think if the predator person knows that you're a lesbian, more. You're more. I think you're in more danger.

Why is there more danger for lesbians?

The idea that men have, that they're going to fuck you straight or something.

Jordan, 23 years, white lesbian

Jordan is referencing the myth that lesbian sexual identity is related to a lack of suitable heterosexual experience, i.e., the idea that lesbians simply need to have sex with a man to bring them into the rightful fold of heterosexuality. Fear of this kind of rape, rape as a means of correcting a lesbian's sexual identity, was expressed by others in this sample. Elsa, a 28 year old bisexual woman of Korean descent who identifies as Asian American, argued that women are at risk no matter how they perform gender, which prompted me to ask her: "Is there a safe spot on the continuum for women?" Elsa replied:

This is going to sound really awful but I don't think so. Like I think that women are constantly navigating. Not even like in the societal level but just constantly navigating being victimized from somebody. So whether that's being cat called on the street, being sexually victimized, actually being raped....I think women are constantly seen, and this is in a societal way, as being subordinate to men. So even women who identify as queer or lesbian, I think are still seen in terms of their attractiveness to men or not, their usefulness to men or not. There is this idea of, like, well, "I'm going to fuck you straight."

Elsa, 28 years, Asian American bisexual woman

Elsa's comments illustrate her sense that women are under almost constant threat, "navigating" risk from multiple directions. This echoes Jaime's observations about women's risk, and rape as a crime of opportunity; only here we see Elsa, like Gwendolyn, making direct links between women's subordinate position in society at large to women's risk of victimization. Elsa's observation also illustrates again the idea of corrective rape. Several of the women in my sample described corrective rape and identified it as a threat they have heard during street harassment

incidents or elsewhere. Fear of corrective rape is also, as Jordan, Elsa and other women in this sample demonstrate, a fear they carry.

Elsa's comments also illustrate the fear that how one presents herself as a gendered body, i.e., masculine or feminine or points between, does not protect a woman from rape. While many of the women in this sample identified feminine women as more likely than masculine women to be targeted for rape, violating norms of femininity and performing masculinities as a queer woman was also viewed as a risk. Jaime, a 36 year old Hispanic lesbian who often identifies as masculine, noted that women who are "butch" are more likely to be victims of hate crime. After making that claim, Jaime said:

Yeah. I still haven't seen *Boys Don't Cry*. I can't do it.

Jaime, 36 years, Hispanic lesbian

Jaime's reference to the 1999 film *Boys Don't Cry* is meaningful. *Boys Don't Cry* is the Hollywood movie about the short life of Brandon Teena, a transgender teenager who was born female and later identified and lived as a male until he was beaten, raped and murdered in the very small town of Humboldt, Nebraska in 1993. Importantly, Brandon Teena reported the rape and assault to law enforcement and identified the perpetrators. He was murdered by his rapists less than a week later. Although Jaime does not identify as a transgender male, she does present as masculine and openly discussed risks (and benefits) associated with her masculine appearance – including multiple occasions where she is called "sir" and mistaken for male. Jaime's reference to this film suggests that she connects being "butch" or presenting herself as masculine to the risk of being raped and killed like Brandon Teena was raped and killed. Here, the kind of rape that Jaime fears is not corrective as much as it is punitive. Fear of rape for the queer women in my sample is shaped by an awareness of the risks of appearing feminine and heterosexual,

feminine and queer, as well as masculine and queer. The kinds of rape they fear include punitive and corrective rape motivated by homophobia and sexism.

Fear, Racism and Institutional Violence

Fear of rape is shaped by racism and institutional power. This finding surfaced most commonly from my interviews with women of color in the sample, but also from interviews with some of the white women who expressed altruistic fear for women of color. Often the relationship between fear, racism, and institutional power became most visible when participants discussed the aftermath of rape and when they discussed specific cases of institutional violence. Jaime's mention of the film *Boys Don't Cry* reveals her fear of punitive rape but it may also be an allusion to her fear of what happens after rape. Law enforcement officials notoriously mishandled the investigation of the rape of Brandon Teena, which was not only widely reported but also presented in both a Hollywood film and a documentary about the rape and murder. Queer activists and others protested law enforcement's inadequate response, the case was discussed in mainstream and gay media outlets including blogs, and much of the coverage focused on allegations that the law enforcement response was homophobic and transphobic, and that it led to Teena's murder. It is likely that Jaime, like many others in queer communities, is aware of the details of that case, including the successful civil lawsuit against the county and the sheriff for Brandon Teena's wrongful death. If so, Jaime's comments about *Boys Don't Cry* also illuminate her fear of institutional violence, a fear that in this study is particularly influenced by race.

Commonly, the queer women of color in my sample expressed fear of law enforcement and fear of the aftermath of rape or other violence. For example, more than one woman of color in my sample talked about how women and men of color are treated unfairly by law enforcement

and courts and media, using specific cases to illustrate their point. These examples of racial injustice included the 1997 murder of Lenard Clark; the convictions of the New Jersey 7; and the arrest and jailing of Tiawanda Moore. Lenard Clark was a thirteen year-old African American boy beaten to death by three white teenage boys in a Chicago neighborhood; the participant who mentioned this case was alluding to the lack of justice for victims of color (communities of color and social justice advocates condemned the court and media for favorable treatment of the accused, among other things). The New Jersey 7, also referenced during an interview to illustrate what can happen to victims of color, was the name given to seven African American lesbians whose alleged self-defense against violent street harassment resulted in convictions and stiff sentences. Althea mentioned Lenard Clark and the New Jersey 7, remarking:

That to me, that's where, that's the kind of violence I'm afraid of. It's the institutional violence.

Althea, 36 years, Black lesbian

Althea clearly articulates her fear of institutional violence, emphasizing the veracity of that fear by referencing specific examples. Yvonne, also a woman of color in my sample, referenced the case of Karina Obrycka, a white heterosexual woman bartender who was beaten while she was at work by an off-duty Chicago police officer who was a customer at the bar. In the case of Obrycka, a federal jury found the police department guilty of covering up the crime. Although the victim in Yvonne's example was a white heterosexual woman, she uses the story of Obrycka to articulate her fear of law enforcement violence as well as corruption within the criminal justice system. Yvonne is pointing to her fear of institutional violence. Other participants of color did this as well. For some of my participants, particularly women of color, high profile cases and victims were reference points that organize and justify their fears of institutional violence.

Among the cases mentioned was the case of Tiawanda Moore, a young African American woman who alleged that a Chicago police officer sexually molested her during a domestic violence call at her home. Mention of the Tiawanda Moore case is important not only because the perpetrator of the sexual violence was alleged to be a police officer but also because Moore's pursuit of justice after her alleged assault resulted in additional victimization. Moore reported the crime to law enforcement. When she tried to file charges, she claimed officers bullied her, and audio recorded her conversations with the officials who were refusing to help her file charges. The result for Moore was an arrest for illegal eavesdropping on the police, with a possible sentence of fifteen years in prison. During the weeks I conducted interviews in Illinois, in 2011, the trial of Tiawanda Moore was pending and the case was widely reported by news media. Her eventual acquittal did not take place until I had finished my Illinois interviews. Elsa is one of the women in my sample who spoke of Moore's case. She briefly discussed differences in how victims are treated, noting "I think that depends on the victim" then said:

So Tiawanda Moore was someone who was allegedly sexually assaulted by somebody at the Chicago Police Department. She went to report the crime to internal affairs and they encouraged her to not press charges. She recorded that conversation and now she's being charged with felony eavesdropping by the State's Attorney.

Elsa, 28 years, Asian American bisexual woman

Elsa is making the point that women of color who are victims are subject to additional victimization via institutional violence. More than one woman of color in my sample mentioned cases of women and men of color who were victims of institutional violence. Participants pointed to these cases as evidence when they talked about their fear of what might happen following a sexual assault or other acts of violence. For Althea, an Black lesbian living in an

urban area, this fear was evident when I asked her, “When you imagine a dangerous person, what comes to mind, or a dangerous group?”

I think anyone who is physically stronger than me, of course, can hurt me. But when I think of someone who is more dangerous, I think of white men because they also have institutional powers behind them. So even if we were to get into a tussle and we both came out maybe with scratches or whatever, and we both made complaints about what happened, I don't feel like my word, like I don't feel like there would be justice in whose voices get heard. So in terms of my fear of violence, it's not so much my fear of violence but the recourse that can potentially happen.

Althea, 36 years, Black lesbian

Althea is not only pointing to the risks women of color may face when they report a crime but also the risks women of color may face when they engage in self-defense, particularly African American and Black women. Althea's thoughtful response suggests that the criminalization of women of color, particularly Black women, has on the ground consequences for women who are afraid of or subject to victimization.

Althea was not alone; several of the women of color expressed fear of the aftermath of being victimized. For instance, Jacqueline noted:

There are very few consequences for people who assault Black women.

Jacqueline, 32 years, African American lesbian

Women of color participants expressed not only fear of overt institutional violence but also fear of the kind of covert institutional violence that Jacqueline's comment references. Although some women – women of color and white women – mentioned or discussed fear in relation to the psychological aftermath of rape, overwhelmingly it was women of color who expressed fear of being further victimized by either the criminal justice system or, more specifically, law enforcement officers. Althea very directly described her fear of police officers:

I never feel safe when I see cops. I feel more afraid. The last time I got pulled over, I dropped my friend off at her house and it was late and I got pulled over by the cop and before the cop came I started to text, "Oh, shit, I'm being pulled over by a cop." Like, "I'm on 22nd and this Avenue. Don't let them disappear me." You know? Like that's how I feel. I hate the cops and I'm afraid of them. I think they're really violent.

Althea, 36 years, Black lesbian

Experiences such as Althea's emphasize the profound fear many women of color feel when they come in contact with law enforcement. Fear of violent assault cannot be considered without considering fear of institutional violence. Furthermore, fear of institutional violence is likely exacerbated not only by secondhand knowledge of racially motivated or racially influenced injustice but also by firsthand experience. During our interview, Yvonne recalled being harassed by a white woman at a lesbian bar in a gay-friendly neighborhood, on the same day that the gay pride parade took place. It was a happy day for Yvonne, a day of celebration with her close friend Tanya.

And a random drunk white girl walks up to us and she's like, "Have you guys seen a wallet over here? It's red," Blah, blah, blah. We're like "No." We honestly just walked up and lit a cigarette....So we were like, "No. We haven't seen anything. Like, genuinely. Like we haven't seen anything." And then she points at Tanya. Tanya is more butch, a black chick, mod. She points to her. She was like, "You have my wallet." And Tanya was looking like, "No, I don't have your wallet. Like what are you talking about? Like we literally just walked up. Like why would I take your wallet? I'm not like that. I have money." She was like, "Somebody took my wallet." And I'm like, "Hey, like we literally just walked up. Believe me, I know Tanya. Tanya doesn't steal." Trisha's [who was a bartender there, smoking outside with Tanya and Yvonne], said "Yeah, if somebody turns it in we'll make sure you get it. We really hope you get your wallet." So we walk away, throw our cigarettes, go inside thinking everything's cool. We were having our beer. We go back outside for another smoke and we see a cop car. We're like, all right. Maybe they're just still tripping off during gay pride like, because apparently people got crazy in [that neighborhood] during gay pride....Maybe they're just out there assuming that it's going to get as crazy as gay pride because it just got over. So we're sitting there and smoking, blah, blah, blah, and we see a couple of our friends who sit down at the table. And then a cop comes over....and he points at me and he's like, "You, you come here." I'm like, "Why?" He was

like, “Don’t ask any questions. Just come here.” I’m like, “Okay.” So I walk up. He was like, “Have you seen a red wallet?” I’m like, “No. Why?” He was like, “Well somebody said that you stole their wallet.” I was like, “Why would I steal their wallet?” He was like, “Can I check your belongings?” I’m like “Sure. Here.” So I gave him my purse and he checked it and couldn’t find anything. So he was like, “Let me see your ID.” So I was like, “All right.” So he takes my ID, goes to his car, looks it up, and can’t find anything on me. I have a clean background. He comes back....As he’s coming back another cop that was with him is talking to my friend, Tanya, giving her crap like, “Let me see your ID. Let me check your book bag.” Blah, blah, blah. “This girl says you guys stole her wallet.” Blah, blah, blah. This and that. And we were like, we were like, “Are you serious? We just got there. We told her that we didn’t have her wallet.” So he takes her ID, looks her up, nothing on her and they’re like, “All right. Sorry about this.” Blah, blah, blah. “But she thinks you stole her wallet.” Blah, blah, blah and this and that. So they walk off. The bartenders come up to us [and says], “Oh my God, I’m so sorry. I’m so sorry this has happened to you. You are like our favorite customers. Please come back. Like I’m sorry this is happening.” Blah, blah, blah. This girl is so drunk, all right, she’s wasted. We go in to find out that she had her wallet the whole entire time. So Trisha, the mixed black and white bartender, was so livid and pissed off because she knew we were the only two black people in that bar.

Yvonne, 25 years, African American lesbian

Yvonne’s experience served to heighten her awareness of the risks of being in contact with the criminal justice system, and the risks of being one of the few women of color in a lesbian bar. Before this incident, she was feeling a sense of belonging with other queer people who were, like Yvonne, celebrating their identities and collective pride at the pride parade and at festivities following the parade. Two white police officers searched Yvonne’s and Tanya’s belongings and checked their identification, in public, in full view of the white customers at the bar, prompted only by the accusations of an intoxicated white woman surrounded by other white women. When Yvonne told this story during the interview, she cried, and quietly said she felt instantly, “Like a Black thief.” This is institutional violence.

Institutional violence “may be expressed directly against particular victims by individuals and groups or indirectly against entire groups of people by capricious policies and procedures

carried out by people ‘doing their jobs’” (Barak 2003, 77). For Althea, Yvonne, Elsa and other women of color in my sample, fear of rape and other acts of violence is compounded by fear of institutional violence, and can include profound anxiety about being criminalized as well as terror that law enforcement officers will be perpetrators of the very violence these women fear from men on the streets.

Street Harassment

All 30 participants experienced street harassment. Nine of the women in my sample described experiencing street harassment daily or often. More than half, nineteen participants experienced street harassment sometimes. Six participants reported that they currently rarely or never encounter street harassment; however, most of those participants described one or more incidents of street harassment, all described fear of harassment and violence, and some women realized during the interview that they had in fact experienced street harassment more often or more recently than they realized. Harassment took place during the day and night, when participants were alone and with their partner or others, often though not always in urban settings (small cities as well as large metropolitan areas), and in all but one harassment incident the harassers were men – a lone man or a group of men. Participants were most concerned about and most likely to encounter street harassment when they were in everyday spaces and in spaces dominated by men and alcohol. Everyday spaces include neighborhood sidewalks, stores, public transportation, and restaurants. The spaces participants characterized as dominated by men and alcohol include primarily bars and sporting events. However, women in this study reported that everyday space and spaces dominated by men and alcohol overlap in some instances, such as when men dominate space in a restaurant or on public transportation or on the sidewalks where

women are walking, or when men dominate space at or after attending a sporting event, or when men congregate on sidewalks in an area populated by bars.

Among the things that street harassers did, according to my participants, were: following them on foot or in a vehicle; blocking their passage or crowding their personal space; honking a car horn at them; feigning a legitimate reason for approaching the woman (such as asking for directions) then harassing her; and in one instance, spitting on the woman. Among the things participants reported hearing from harassers were explicit sexual invitations or comments; racist statements; compliments; scolding; insults and name-calling; and threats. Men and, less commonly, boys, were identified as the harassers. Harassers fell into one of three racial categories: White, Black, and Latino or Hispanic. White men were more commonly identified as the culprits; Black men were a close second. The data about street harassment in this study includes not only what participants told me about actual experiences of harassment but also their perceptions of street harassment and risk. There are two major findings connected to street harassment that are particularly relevant for this study. First, women in my sample experienced street harassment when they did not conform to heterosexual and/or feminine norms, as well as when they did conform to those norms. Second, street harassment for women of color was often shaped by racism.

Street Harassment and Conformity

Some queer women are harassed in much the same way that heterosexual women are harassed; that is, they are heterosexually harassed on the street and in other public spaces. I refer to this type of harassment as heterosexual street harassment. In this study, heterosexual street harassment happened to queer women who conformed to gender norms, who were likely

assumed to be heterosexual by the harasser, and often to women who were alone at the time of the incident.

Adhering to Feminine Norms

Participants described harassment that took place when they believed their harasser was unaware of their sexual identity and had assumed they were heterosexual. In these instances, the women were often alone and their appearance fell within feminine norms. Jordan, who wears her dark blonde hair in a short asymmetrical style and loves to wear feminine clothes, said this kind of harassment was a common and distressing occurrence:

It's really, it's really traumatizing for me to be walking on the street and have someone yell at me, or like be getting off the bus. Like recently, it was late at night, I was getting off the bus looking fierce, like my short shorts and my heels, that's what I love. And I stand up, I'm the only one on the bus except for a group of dudes in the back and they're like, "Damn, girl! Hey, girl!" And then I get off right over here and then they get off right at this corner and start walking toward me. So, like I was already feeling scared when they were just yelling that and feeling unsafe, and then they get off the bus and start walking toward me and I'm like, what the fuck is this going to turn into?

Jordan, 23 years, white lesbian

When the incident continued after Jordan exited the bus, her anxiety and fear grew until she was afraid that the aggressive (hetero)sexualized street harassment would "turn into" something more ominous; this demonstrates the link between street harassment and fear of rape as well as the link between conforming to norms and street harassment.

Linda, also a white lesbian, but in her 50s and sporting long hair, described herself as easily and often passing for straight. She experienced street harassment at an elevated train station. Linda described her harasser as a "middle aged business-looking white man... who scared the shit out of me on an L at 10:00 at night," adding detail when prompted:

You said he gave you a hard time. What did that look like?

Harassing me. He started trying to chat with me and I didn't, it was late at night. It was 10:00 at night and I was in the L waiting for an L. So I was a little on high alert anyway. And he started chatting with me and I was polite but I didn't really engage with him, and so he immediately kind of skyrocketed into being verbally abusive and nasty, calling me a bitch.

Because you were distant but polite?

Yes. I didn't want to engage with him.

Linda, 56 years, white lesbian

This street harassment incident transitioned from civil but unwanted attention from her harasser to name calling as punishment for failing to give her harasser the attention he attempted to get from her. Linda said the incident only ended when she boarded her train and was safely away from the harassing businessman. Linda's experience illustrates the incite/invite dilemma: Her attempt to be polite but not inviting was met with hostility and verbal abuse. Women's fears of inciting or escalating violence can only be bolstered when their resistance to street harassment results in extended or more aggressive harassment.

Linda described a second incident when she was on her way to a business meeting. She had dressed in a skirt and jacket, making a concentrated effort to look as professional as possible in part because she was going to a notoriously high-crime neighborhood and wanted to look unapproachable:

I had put on the most businesslike clothes that I could so that I hopefully look like an attorney or somebody of authority. And as I was walking down the street, this man started whistling and, like, you know, [saying] "Are you a state's attorney because I'd like to fuck you." I looked at him and I kind of gave him a smile and then I looked away and he followed me and was continuing to make comments and I was very nervous.

Linda, 56 years, white lesbian

Linda's harasser stopped after a few minutes when he was redirected by a police officer. On this occasion, many of the residents in that area were aware that lawyers and other high profile

people were meeting in their neighborhood. It is possible that this incident was shaped by the clear power differentials between local mostly Black poor and working-class residents and the mostly white politicians and professionals who were there to address pressing issues related to public housing. The harasser may have been as motivated by anger or outrage about the housing issue and outsiders who were there to fix it as he was motivated by a desire to harass a woman on the street. That the harasser – who Linda described as a clean-cut, young, working-class African American man - thought he might be harassing a state’s attorney suggests that being a professional woman in a position of power in this instance was not a deterrent; in fact, it may have been part of the lure. We do not know what prompted the harassment but this incident, regardless of the racialized and classed meanings, is one of the incidents of heterosexual harassment that women in this sample experienced. If the harasser was not motivated by discontent about the public housing issue and the interlopers there to resolve it, his harassment of a woman he thought might be a state’s attorney suggests that he was propelled by some measure of masculine and heterosexual entitlement that served to mitigate the apparent differences in his and Linda’s race and class positions.

Several women in this study, despite identifying as lesbian or bisexual, were harassed by men whose harassment was heterosexual; i.e., the harasser approached the woman as if he were in pursuit of a heterosexual conquest or heterosexual domination. Gwendolyn, an African American woman with long hair described several incidents of this type of harassment, all when she was alone in public:

This guy was walking towards me and I was reading a book, kind of reading something. And he walks towards me. He’s walking this way and I’m walking that way. He gets up to me and he says, “It’s a good thing you found me, big girl, because if you hadn’t I would have had to show you who was boss.” And I was thinking, I don’t think so little man; I’ll sit on you. I didn’t say anything to him

actually. I just laughed. [In my mind] I was, like, seriously? And then one time I was walking down the street and these guys were walking behind me and they were [making kissing noises and saying], “Big girl.” And this is the feminist in me. You know, all of that shit goes through my head. I’m just like oh, just ooh, I just get so mad! And so I turn around because they yelled at me and it was sunset so it was getting to be night and it was just, it just went through my head rapid-fire. I was like you’re trying to intimidate me and I don’t like it. So I turned around to them and I said, loud, I said, “Yeah!” [Gwendolyn demonstrated this for me, saying the word “Yeah” loudly and aggressively]. Like that. And they kind of went like that [she demonstrated that they men looked startled and leaned away from her]. And I was like, yeah. You fuckers trying to intimidate women. I don’t like that.

Gwendolyn, 50 years, African American lesbian

Gwendolyn, who mentioned thinking her age and voluptuous size should protect her from harassment, found instead that harassers sexualized her size during their harassment. These harassers did not utter homophobic remarks but rather sexualized her as a woman of size. In both of the above cases, the men who harassed Gwendolyn were African American men. During our interview, Gwendolyn mused that her size might not be a deterrent to harassment, after all. Gwendolyn suggested African American culture was more accepting of curvaceous women and that was, perhaps, why men sexually harassed her in public. Significantly, Gwendolyn observes feminine norms in appearance, wearing women’s clothing, her hair a medium long length, and carrying a large purse. The harassment Gwendolyn experienced was heterosexual harassment.

Rosalinda described heterosexual harassment with a twist. Rosalinda explained that although she and her partner frequently pass for heterosexual, men who harass them often sexualize them as lesbians –apparently *without* actually believing that Rosalinda and her partner are lesbians:

Never before has a man invited himself to join me and my partner in bed as frequently as it happens with my current partner because they’re like oh, those are two straight girls hanging out. Whereas my other girlfriends just read a lot more as butch.

Rosalinda, 27 years, biracial lesbian

Rosalinda did not experience heterosexual harassment when she was with her previous partners because, as she notes, her partners were more butch in appearance so the couple was marked as queer. Currently, because she and her partner conform to feminine gender norms, they are harassed by heterosexual men who frame the women as heterosexual friends that the men then sexualize as lesbians, all within the confines of heterosexual harassment. Later in the interview, Rosalinda elaborated:

I think my girlfriend and I reading as two fem people, whether we identify as that way or not, definitely does not end the unsolicited attention that we received. I have probably the most fem identified person that I've ever coupled with, and me saying that that's my girlfriend does not end the conversation; it starts a whole new myriad of things to be said to us and no one stops street harassing us because we're together. And if we hold hands, it's even worse.

Rosalinda, 27 years, biracial lesbian

Unlike many of the participants who experience heterosexual harassment, Rosalinda and her partner are not alone when they are harassed. Rosalinda described being approached by heterosexual men who want Rosalinda and her partner to perform sex with each other and with the harasser. Even when Rosalinda informs the harasser that they are actually lesbians and they do not have sex with men, the harassment continues in the same vein or the harasser becomes more aggressive in his pursuit of heterosexual conquest of his lesbian targets. Both Rosalinda and her partner are women of color, and both are beautiful women who meet gender norms of appearance. Rosalinda noted that many of the men who harass her in this way are white men. It may be that men who harass Rosalinda and her partner in this way are emboldened by their own white privilege and are eroticizing Rosalinda and her partner as exotic women. According to Rosalinda, the men are certainly not deterred when they are told that she and her partner are

lesbians. This kind of harassment is about commodifying lesbian sexual pleasure for heterosexual men, and in this case it appears to be a highly racialized process. However, it falls within the category of heterosexual street harassment as its central aim is to sexually harass women for the purposes of heterosexual conquest and/or domination.

Delta also experienced heterosexual harassment. Delta, who wears her light red hair long and straight and sometimes wears skirts and other feminine clothes, is often mistaken for heterosexual. She described harassment by men in groups:

Groups of men. Like I don't know if they're just like egging each other on and not meaning to scare you, but yeah. Walking back from [a college bar area in her city], I've been yelled out by men in a group.

What kind of yelling?

Just stuff like asking me where I'm going. "Can I have your number?" And several of them asking and saying, "Why won't you talk to us?" Just saying things like that. Nothing blatantly offensive.

Delta, 26 years, white lesbian

Delta, who has also experienced homophobic harassment when with others, was frequently alone for the types of harassment incidents described above. Delta's appearance conforms to gendered expectations for women. She was seemingly not read as a queer woman. Her harassers used tactics common in heterosexual street harassment: asking for personal information and demanding attention from a seemingly heterosexual woman they do now know.

Jacqueline also described harassment when alone. Jacqueline is an African American lesbian, quite feminine in appearance. When we met, she was wearing a long flowing summer dress with thin straps over shoulder that her braids were just long enough to brush. When I asked Jacqueline about street harassment, she said she experienced it often:

Unfortunately it happens often and in different kinds of ways. So one of them is when they approach me waiting at the bus stop. There's guys who pull up in cars and want to talk to me, get personal with it and cat call and that type of thing and

basically proposition me. I mean, I've had different guys pull up, get out of the car, and walk right up to me and ask if I could go with them, and I say, "No!" It's just so incredibly rude. I've been followed before by a car where I say, "No. I'm not interested."

Jacqueline, 32 years, African American lesbian

Jacqueline is describing the relentlessness of some of her street harassment experiences, incidents where she's followed, where even firmly verbalizing her disinterest does not sway the harasser, incidents where the harasser is leaping from a car to approach her on foot when she refuses to approach his car or stop walking away from him. On these occasions, she is not being called out for being a lesbian. Like the other women who are harassed when alone and conforming to gender norms, the harassment is heterosexual harassment. Other participants also suggested that this type of street harassment was sometimes relentless, usually in one of two ways: some incidents seemed to go on and on, and the women felt their efforts to end the harassment were utterly ignored, and for some participants the frequent, sometimes daily, occurrence of street harassment appeared to feel like a relentless barrage. The latter is the case for Yvonne.

Yvonne is a petite African American lesbian who rides a skateboard and likes hip-hop music and practicing her D.J. skills. She lives in a racially-mixed working-class neighborhood in a big city. When I asked Yvonne about street harassment, she often sounded fatigued. When I asked who was doing the harassing, she wearily described daily harassment and imitated the men when she told me some of the things they say to her:

Yeah, men. Definitely a lot of men, yeah. I get that every day. Like I said, me and my roommate. It's like, they're just like, "Ah, man. Come back over here. Look at that sweet piece of..." you know, whatever. "Why you keep walking? Why you keep walking?"

Yvonne, 25 years, African American lesbian

Yvonne has been frightened by some incidents of street harassment. For instance, she described feeling panic and terror when a harasser was quickly walking toward her while grabbing the zipper of his pants. Yet at points during the interview, Yvonne spoke of street harassment with little expression or change in her tone of voice, almost as if the subject of harassment was exhausting. In conversation following the interview, Yvonne remarked, “I get tired of men’s shit, ya know? I’m worn out.” Yvonne’s relentless experiences with heterosexual street harassment result in her feeling “worn out” and she’s only 25 years old.

Some of the queer women in my sample experienced street harassment while conforming to gender norms and apparently passing for straight. Although I did not interview harassers to determine their perceptions of the women they harassed, the participants who reported experiencing heterosexual harassment described incidents where men made no mention whatsoever of their lesbian or bisexual identity and, in fact, seemed to assume participants were heterosexual. In some respects, this finding confirms the most common finding in the literature on street harassment, which is that women commonly experience this particular type of harassment, heterosexual street harassment. However, many researchers who examine queer women’s experiences with violence or fear focus so exclusively on their queer identities that they fail to investigate gendered violence that is unrelated to a queer sexual identity. Some of the women in this study pass for heterosexual and observe feminine norms of appearance; doing so shapes the kind of harassment they experience – particularly when they are alone. Being alone during these incidents is significant in that one of the ways to identify a queer woman, especially if she follows gender norms, is for her sexual identity to be made visible by the presence of a woman who is in some way marked as her same-sex partner (or the presence of other visibly queer individuals). However, as Rosalinda’s experience demonstrates, even the presence of a

lesbian partner does not always deter heterosexual harassment if both women conform to gender norms, perhaps particularly when the women are racialized others.

Street Harassment and Non-Conformity

Often when media, activists and scholars discuss harassment of queer women or lesbians, the focus is on homophobic harassment, where the victims are harassed for being lesbians or queer women. This study confirms that queer women do indeed experience homophobic street harassment. Findings suggest homophobic harassment is linked to violating feminine gender norms and/or violating heterosexual norms, and that for women of color it is a racialized phenomenon.

Violating Heterosexual Norms

Study participants repeatedly discussed the dangers of violating heterosexual norms in relation to public displays of affection, even very minor displays of intimacy. One participant warned:

I think lesbians who pass and don't kiss their girlfriends in front of the bar probably have the same level of risk as straight women. But I think those who can't pass have it ten times worse.

Julie, 49 years, white lesbian

During our interview, Julie connected being identified as a lesbian to physical appearance but also to intimate or affectionate conduct that makes the invisible lesbian relationship visible, such as kissing a girlfriend. Moreover, Julie's comment suggests that she is at risk of harassment even when she is not identified as lesbian, though she finds that the risk is "ten times worse" for women who "can't pass." Julie observes feminine norms of appearance, wearing make-up, women's clothes, etc., so to some degree she is expressing altruistic fear for lesbians who cannot

pass. However, her observations also suggest that she tries to appear to conform to heterosexual norms when in public. Later in the interview, Julie said:

I can say as a midlife woman, coming out probably hasn't changed my fear much. I can pass pretty well and that the only time I'm really fearful is if it's two women sharing a tent out camping somewhere kind of thing, without other people around.
Isolated?

Yeah. And, you know, the public displays of affection kind of thing sometimes will make me nervous, depending on where I am.

Julie, 49 years, white lesbian

Julie linked being able to pass for straight with her feminine appearance and her age, and connected passing for heterosexual to her safety. She then noted that sharing a tent with a woman in an isolated setting makes her fearful. Furthermore, displaying affection makes her feel nervous about her risks of being harassed or victimized. Fear of crime studies have reported the link between women's fear and isolated spaces but typically that has meant being completely alone. That Julie's fear of harassment is associated with sharing a tent with a woman suggests her fear is ultimately linked not to isolation in this instance but to being visible as a lesbian. Julie's fear is likely also influenced by the still unsolved 1996 murder of two lesbians who were tied up before their throats cut while camping on the Appalachian Trail. The murders of Julianne Williams and Lollie Winans were widely discussed in lesbian communities and the gay press, perhaps most especially among lesbians who camp. Ultimately, Julie's observations point to the risks she and others in this study associate with not conforming to heterosexual norms.

The subject of public displays of affection surfaced multiple times, from multiple participants. Daisy adheres to gender norms, as evidenced by her feminine clothing and long dark hair, and she is aware of the risks of not conforming to those norms. She is also aware of the risks of not appearing to conform to heterosexual norms in the public square. Daisy mentioned

that someone who looks like a “lesbian stereotype” might be targeted for homophobic street harassment or violence but then quickly focused on another way of identifying lesbians:

I think anyone who, who stereotypically would look like a lesbian, you know, would look more masculine than feminine would [be in danger]. The things that I worry about are not so much what I look like, but what I do, and who sees me do that. Um, like if I were to hold her hand in public, or she were to touch me, and someone who was uncomfortable with that were to see it. I, because of my anxiety, I attempt to connect dots really quickly, so if we were out, and she, you know, touched the small of my back to just guide me through a crowd, and I saw someone look twice at that, I would immediately think they're gonna wait for me at my car.

Daisy, 23 years, white lesbian

Because Daisy is far from the “stereotypical lesbian” in appearance, her concern rests more with how she and her partner act when they are in public. Moreover, the kind of public display of affection that Daisy describes is far from blatantly and obviously flaunting non-conformity to heterosexuality. Yet, in her eyes, if her partner briefly touches Daisy’s back, she and her partner risk being visible as lesbians – which Daisy ties to the risk of being stalked and harassed. Like Julie, Daisy’s concern about publicly visible affection and her reference to lesbians who look like the stereotype of a lesbian, reveals the risks attached to gender and sexual non-conformity.

Ramona discussed public displays of affection and risk of harassment at some length:

Lesbian women are at more risk if they are showing displays of public affection, but that may put them more at risk because, I think the thing that gets them, well it depends on the setting, that's the thing that's probably more likely to trigger violence. You got the heterosexual men, I'm not even sure who it is that would be triggered by that, but I think it's because it's got that, that kind of in your face kind of thing that, you know, people have trouble with tolerance.

So lesbians who display some kind of affection, you think that puts them at risk?
Yeah, yeah. Say you're walking downtown...and you're holding hands with your girlfriend, and you kiss, you know, in public. You know, I just think that, that is something that's going to trigger some sort of violence or harassment. That's the sort of thing.

Ramona, 55 years, white lesbian

Ramona's perspective is slightly different from Julie's, and a little like Daisy's. Although Ramona is discussing the relationship between visibly violating heterosexual norms by displaying affection for a same-sex partner, Ramona believes this is about more than merely being visible as lesbians; it is about *flaunting* the violation of heterosexual norms because a public display of affection is an "in your face kind of thing" – the kind of thing that triggers harassment and violence according to Ramona and others in this study. Moreover, Ramona appears to suggest that being harassed by someone who is intolerant of homosexuals might be linked as much to the perception of being *willfully visible* as a lesbian as it is to being visible, and that displaying affection in public is viewed as willfully and visibility violating heterosexual norms. This connects also to Gwendolyn's earlier observation that as a lesbian she is at greater risk than a straight woman "because I'm way in your face as a woman." These comments from Ramona and Gwendolyn imply that visible heterosexual nonconformity is optional and that women who choose to display this nonconformity are at risk not only for being incompliant with heterosexual norms but for being assertive enough to display their noncompliance.

Participants in this study who talked about meeting gender norms, regularly passing for heterosexual, and being a target for heterosexual harassment also talked about being harassed as lesbians when they were with their partners. Rachael described she and her partner as often passing for heterosexual because of their gendered presentation and remarked that they looked like platonic friends: "...as an outsider looking in, it would seem like we were just two girls who were friends walking down the street." Despite conforming to gender norms that permit them to pass for heterosexual most of the time, they have been harassed for violating heterosexual norms:

One time we were sitting on the bus and I think she had her hand on my leg or something; something that I wasn't even noticing. At this point it's like, if she has hand on my leg, sometimes I don't even notice. This guy got on the bus and he

was clearly, you know, I wouldn't want to label anyone mentally ill without knowing but I think he was mentally ill and he was kind of walking up and down the bus and talking to himself and then he stopped at us and started saying Bible passages that had to do with homosexuality. And I was like, okay, well, and I don't, the thing is, I felt slightly uncomfortable but because I was on a full bus heading to the city, I didn't really feel unsafe. I felt uncomfortable but I didn't feel like my safety was threatened.

Rachael, 23 years, white lesbian

Participants sometimes discussed harassment in this vein, as a nuisance rather than a potential risk to their safety, and often the presence of others seemed to add to their sense of safety. But what is striking about this incident is that the harasser focused specifically on a publicly visible albeit fairly small sign of intimacy between Rachael and her partner, despite their conforming to feminine norms of appearance. Rachael described a similar instance when she and her partner were harassed while adhering to gender norms, only in this instance, she was unable to identify why the harasser thought they were lesbians:

A couple weeks ago we had just gotten out of a movie and we were walking down the street and actually we weren't showing any sort of physical affection at all, which was part of what was curious about this whole situation. So we were walking ...in a place where I normally feel incredible safe, almost like too safe....So, it's, I mean, but I previously did not question my safety at all when I was in this neighborhood. And we were walking and talking about the movie that we had just seen and there was a guy in front of us who was walking and he kind of started slowing down and looking over his shoulder at us, but we, you know, continued and then eventually he really started slowing down to the point where it was like his feet were kind of right in front of our feet and we were like, this is weird. And so he turned around and he said, "Are you scared of me?" And we said, "No, sir. We're just talking about the movie that we just saw." I can't remember exactly what we said but something that sort of brushed it off. And he said, "Well, you know, I have a story to tell you." And we were like, okay. And at this point I was, like, let's turn around and go. I mean I was already thinking this is a weird situation even if we're on a street that's safe. It was pretty late at night and he says, you know, "I went to jail 17 years ago and, when I was released, I came back to my neighborhood and I saw all these men kissing men and women kissing women and it was disgusting to me. Like, what do you guys think about that?" And what was weird about this was I don't know if like maybe, when we got out of the movie, we had shown [some kind of affection or something]. I don't know how long he was in front of us. I don't know if he had seen us before, but to

me, like as an outsider looking in, it would seem like we were just two girls who were friends walking down the street because we weren't even holding hands or anything like that. And so I said, "Okay, we have no interest in hearing what you have to say about this and I tried to turn to go and I grab [my partner's] hand and he basically walks back. And at this point I realize that there is no one really around. That like even though we're out in this place that's like normally very busy, there's not really anyone around. And so I like kind of go in the street and try and hail a cab, the cab doesn't see me and then there are these bicyclists in the bike lane that are sort of in our way, and so then he kind of looks at us and has this, I don't know if it's like a moment of recognition or what. I think like retrospectively I'm trying to like analyze it and all that, but he said something along the lines of like, "So what? Are you guys gay?" And then he's like, "You are! Like I can tell you are. You are!" And he starts saying that and then like, and at this point I like grab her hand and we basically run around this car and then we start just like briskly walking the other way, kind of looking over our shoulders to see if he's following us. And he was screaming like, you know, "Fucking faggots!" and all these things after us. And so that was a very alarming experience.

You weren't wearing one of your like, you know, gay pride shirts or a rainbow scarf?

No, nothing at all. In fact she was, I think we were *both* in dresses, strangely enough. And so I think like the mistake that we made, after that we decided.... We were, I mean, you know, part of this street wasn't well lit. There weren't people around. We're like I'm glad we just got out of there.

Rachael, 23 years, white lesbian

Rachael and her girlfriend were not visibly violating feminine or heterosexual norms when this incident occurred, or if they were they were unaware of it. We can imagine that had only one of them been on the street that night, the man might not have harassed her at all or he might have resorted to heterosexual harassment. But they were together and it appeared to Rachael and her girlfriend that he somehow suspected them of being lesbians then assumed his suspicions were confirmed when they made efforts to get away from him in a hurry, yelling homophobic pejoratives at them as they fled. Although neither Rachael nor her partner could identify how the man came to suspect they were lesbians, Rachael observed that she does not worry about being visible as a lesbian when she is alone. Rachael also reported that afterwards they made a conscious decision to avoid public displays of affections as a strategy to prevent street

harassment. This incident hints at the link between being with one's partner in everyday space and being visible as a lesbian, even when both partners conform to gender norms.

Yvonne also had an experience of being harassed when she was with her girlfriend. The incident took place a year or two after she graduated from high school. Yvonne, who told me that she dates "more feminine women," is a petite African American lesbian who dresses in a sort of feminine hipster style.

We were on a way to a party downtown and we had stopped at this diner, which is a known like, it's like a redneck type of diner, but I like their food. It's cheap and it's reasonable. So her and I, I remember we went there one night before we had went to that party and we were sitting down and I remember this guy in like those trucker jackets, you know, how they have their name on it and then...

Like the label on the jacket?

Yeah, like one of those. And he had like a buzz cut and she had on her rainbow bracelet. You know, when you come out you're like so excited by the rainbow flag?

Yeah.

Like, everybody, I'm gay! Yeah. So I remember honestly going in there and we had sat down and the guy that was leaving, he like noticed her bracelet and he of course is mumbling, "Oh you fucking dyke" Blah, blah, blah. "Get out of here. What are you doing here?" Blah, blah, blah. So me and her sit down and the waitress, she's like, "Don't pay attention to him." Blah, blah, blah, "You guys are beautiful." Blah, blah, blah. And the guy just like stood there in front of the door and like just watched us, shaking his head like he was disgusted.

Yvonne, 25 years, African American lesbian

Yvonne's experience is similar to that of some other women in my sample, lesbians and bisexual women who met gender norms but were harassed while with another woman, often a girlfriend or partner, for violating heterosexual norms.

In addition to being visible as a lesbian when with one's partner, some participants reported being visible as lesbians when with others who were not queer. Delta is a young white lesbian with long red hair who said men almost always mistakenly assume that she is

heterosexual. She discussed harassment that took place when she picked up a friend who had been drinking one night:

I was helping a friend home....She was drunk after going to [the college bar area] and I was just holding her arm. Some drunk frat boys came up behind us. I was just taking her to her car to take us home.

Is she straight?

She is straight, yes. Uh, she has short hair.

Okay.

So she could be interpreted either way. Either way, yes.

Okay.

Whereas I have really long hair. And I'm holding her arm and we're walking across the street and away from the bar and some guys come up behind us and they are also drunk and I am not at all. And they're like, "Whoa! Lesbians! Oh, my God!" I'm like, "Actually I am." Like, I don't know. I just, I felt like, you know, that's ridiculous that you would assume that just because two women are holding each other's arm that they're lesbians. Why are you even talking to us? Like, you don't fuckin' know us. I don't know. It just made me angry and I felt like, and then I almost, you know, what's the word? I wish I hadn't said that because...

Almost regretted it?

Yeah. I regretted it because I felt like identifying myself might have put me in danger because I've heard stories of friends who, if they are walking with their girlfriend, they don't want to hold hand around men because homophobia, the fear of being attacked. And so I regretted that and that shut them up. They didn't say anything else, but then there was, or I said, "Actually she's my neighbor and I'm fucking taking her home." Like, "Leave us alone." And that's why I felt like I needed to say something else to let them know that it wasn't my girlfriend or something. I don't know.

Maybe that would minimize the risk? Reverse the risk that you felt when you told them you were a lesbian?

Right, right. So I felt like I had to clarify....I felt like I had to, I don't know, maybe protect us and say that we weren't together. It was ridiculous and it happened like really quickly.

How did they respond?

I think they weren't expecting me to respond at all and so I think it kind of surprised them and for me saying you need to leave us alone, I think that worked....Yeah, but I still kind of felt afraid and I got us quickly to my car and I drove away and I don't know. But it wasn't, you know, I had never experienced something outright, like after I told someone that I was gay or, you know, I was afraid in that moment.

Delta, 26 years, white lesbian

Delta's experience points again to heterosexual harassment. Like Rosalinda's experiences, the men who approached Delta may have been intent on commodifying lesbian sexual pleasure by approaching Delta and her friend; however, Delta's quick confirmation that only she was a lesbian, and Delta's hurried departure, prevented further harassment so it is impossible to know how the incident would have proceeded. What is clear is that the men accused them of being lesbian after witnessing Delta holding her intoxicated friend's arm and caring for her as she walked her to the car. Homosocial behavior was read as lesbian behavior, or it was used as an excuse to heterosexually harass Delta and her friend, but the presence of another woman and the display of public affection are central to this incident.

For these women, street harassment was connected to violating heterosexual norms as opposed to violating gender norms. Violating heterosexual norms was typically visible via displays of affection or even just being with another woman in public space. Street harassment under these circumstances was either heterosexual street harassment or homophobic street harassment. Delta, Rosalinda, and others reported heterosexual harassment, where the harassers were in pursuit of heterosexual conquest or heterosexual dominance. Rachael, Julie, Yvonne, and Ramona discussed homophobic street harassment, where violations of heterosexual norms are punished or disparaged.

Violating Gender Norms

Even though gender nonconformity is linked to being visibly queer, the distinction between street harassment related to violating heterosexual norms and street harassment related to violating gender norms is important. The women who were targeted for violating heterosexual norms were *adhering* to gender norms. Another way to think of this is that the women who were

targeted for violating heterosexual norms were often targeted for *acting queer*; on the other hand, the women who were targeted for violating gender norms were targeted for *looking queer*.

For the women in my sample, street harassment was more commonly linked to violating heterosexual norms than to violating gender norms. Moreover, violations of heterosexual norms are linked to public displays of affection or being with another woman in public *then* being framed as lesbians. Participants reported fewer incidents of street harassment linked to *gender* nonconformity. The fear participants connected to violating gender norms led me to expect several reports of harassment linked to gender nonconformity, but there were only a few. In other words, many women in this sample appear to be afraid of violating gender norms while also not often actually violating those norms.

Jaime provides one such example. Jaime is a Hispanic lesbian. When we met, she described herself as masculine and butch. She wears men's clothes or clothing that men wear, such men's t-shirts and jeans. Often she wears a baseball hat emblazoned with her favorite team's logo. She prides herself on opening doors for women and described herself as "chivalrous" and protective of women, especially her partner. Jaime has very short dark hair and a sturdy body. She freely confessed that she is regularly mistaken for a man. This street harassment incident took place in a fast food chain restaurant when she lived in a Southern state:

[It was] the day before Christmas and things are getting ready to close. I wanted to pick up my [food] for the next morning. We were having a barbeque because in [the South] in the middle of winter it's still hot. And I wanted to get it fresh, so I wanted to get it right at the end of the day. And I went in the door and the manager locked the door behind me so no one else could come in. And that, in and of itself, it enough to make me slightly worried. And then one of his friends was in the store and his friend, when I finished ordering and was waiting patiently for my food, was like, "You a dude? Naw. You a dyke."...and he made a couple comments about what you really need and I was very happy to leave, very happy to leave.

Jaime, 36 years, Hispanic lesbian

In this situation, Jaime was called out for violating gender norms, which her harasser apparently associated with being a lesbian. Although she escaped without being harmed, when her harasser “made a couple comments about what you really need,” Jaime understood that he was referencing rape as a means to correct lesbian identity. Jaime described the situation as frightening but also claimed to use her masculinity to manage her feelings and feel safe until she left with her food a few minutes after entering the restaurant. According to Jaime, however, being identified or harassed as a lesbian because of her masculine appearance is not particularly common for her. Jaime said that being as masculine in appearance as she is permits her to pass for male more often than not, and that when she is mistakenly identified as male she experiences little if any harassment.

I actually am at the point where my demeanor, my clothing choices are so masculine it is really rare that I don't get called sir. Like I would say if somebody identifies me with a sir or a ma'am, nine out of ten, or nineteen out of twenty, it's sir.

Jaime, 36 years, Hispanic lesbian

For Jaime, street harassment is not a consequence of violating gender norms unless her violation is detected. Although she is not usually identified as a woman by strangers and therefore does not experience harassment very often, Jaime described being terrified that harassment such as what occurred at the restaurant will escalate and result in serious violence. She is the participant who referenced the film *Boys Don't Cry* and physically shuddered in fear when she did so. During our interview, Jaime identified her masculinity as a source of safety *and* a risk factor. Her incident is an example of harassment connected to gender nonconformity.

Sam, also felt afraid of harassment and violence in connection with her violation of gender norms. Sam is a tall, stocky woman who told me she “walks like a man.” When Sam

expressed why she thought she was unsafe in public space, she gestured to her appearance, sweeping her hand down her body from her baseball cap to her sports jersey to her men's jeans and boots and said:

Because I'm butch, you know?

Sam, 38 years, white lesbian

Delta also described harassment connected to gender nonconformity. Delta's partner and she were traveling on a train when they were harassed by a group of older teenage boys:

[My partner] was wearing the little bowtie and we...spent a lot of time in the viewing car, like with the big windows, and there were some teenage boys who were kind of talking about us and said that she, like I could hear them like, you know, talking in elevated voices. Like they wanted to be heard.

They wanted to be heard but they didn't confront you directly?

Right, right. And they said that she looked gross.

Delta, 26 years, white lesbian

Delta connected this passive-aggressive incident of street harassment to her partner's gender nonconformity, describing her partner as androgynous in appearance. Although she reported feeling little concern for their safety, she said it led to a conversation in which her partner reported being frequently harassed in a similar fashion.

Jacqueline, an African America lesbian who reported experiencing frequent and aggressive heterosexual harassment, also reported an instance of what she described as "vicious" harassment that was connected to gender nonconformity:

I wore my hair very differently at the time. I did not have longer hair. I wore a buzz cut. Very short. I loved it. And it's really interesting the kind of responses I would get from men because my hair was short. "Where's your hair at?" Or there's one evening that I got off work....And I had on my coat, my winter coat and I was just walking down the street and then there was young boys...And there were about three boys and they were like "Damn, why your hair so fucking short?" You know, "You a dyke? Are you a dyke?" And they kept following me as I was walking down the street...."You don't like dick?" You know, "Bitch where you going?" And I actually went into a restaurant to get away and the

hostess said, “Can I seat you?” And I said, “No.” I said, “I’m here because there were young men following me and they were harassing me and I’m just staying here.” They actually stopped in front of the window and one of them like called out “Dyke” actually.

Oh, my...

Which is so bad. And they kept walking. And so when I felt it was safe, a little time past, and she’s like, “Can I get you anything?” Or whatever, and she was really sweet. And then I eventually, I did call my girlfriend and she was on her way to pick me up and I just told her that I changed the place you need to pick me up. This is what happened. She was furious and she picked me up and we went on our way. But it was interesting how, although it wasn’t about my hair, I know that it really wasn’t about my hair. It was about looking like a dyke.

But your hair was the trigger?

But my hair was the trigger and so like almost, how dare you not be attractive for me in the way I want you to be attractive. Because somehow I did not fit their standard.

Jacqueline, 32 years, African American lesbian

Jacqueline’s experience of street harassment occurred in the late afternoon, after work, when she was walking in a populated urban area where there is typically other pedestrian traffic. Her harassers were African American, like Jacqueline, and they were boys that she thought might be as young as twelve or thirteen years. She was wearing a coat that covered her body and her clothing but her “buzz cut” was visible, and was – in her estimation – the characteristic upon which her harassers fixated. Although when I met Jacqueline she was wearing her hair long and appeared to be conforming quite adeptly to feminine gender norms, at the time of the above incident she was harassed for gender nonconformity. In this case, she was not harassed for acting queer but rather for looking queer.

Trinity has encountered similar harassment. Trinity is a white lesbian who wears her short hair in a style reminiscent of John Travolta in the film, *Grease*. She also wears men’s sweater vests and sometimes bow ties. Dapper might be a word used to describe Trinity’s appearance. She explained to me that she likes to dress in a more masculine style but that she

strongly identifies as being a woman. One incident she described took place at what she labeled a gay-friendly straight bar:

And so we get up to this other bar and I go up to get a drink and I have a guy next to me that's obviously lit. He's just totally drunk. And he kind of gets, he kind of cops an attitude with me and I don't even know how that started, but then he was like "What's your name?" And I was like, "Trinity." And he was like, "That's a funny name for a boy." This packed bar pretty much stops. All of the guards turn around and like, because he's getting kind of like [Trinity makes a growling noise] with me, you know? And everyone turns around and is just looking at this guy and the guards are ready to pounce on him, you know?

Trinity, 32 years, white lesbian

Trinity's gender nonconformity was targeted and this instance, the harasser did not accuse her of being a lesbian or use other homophobic terms. In fact, he called her a boy, disparaged her gender presentation, and focused solely on her gender nonconformity. Officials at the bar ejected Trinity's harasser so perhaps this harasser would have engaged in homophobic harassment had he been permitted to continue. Regardless of whether her harasser got the chance to explicitly make remarks that referenced her sexual identity, Trinity was targeted for looking queer. It wasn't the first or last time that Trinity was harassed for not conforming to gender norms. She described walking with another woman, a bisexual woman, and being called "faggots" by a group of white college-age men who were walking past the women. On another occasion, Trinity was harassed when she interrupted a street harasser. The harasser made unwanted sexual advances to one of Trinity's friends. Trinity described the friend as feminine and made a point of telling me that the woman was not Trinity's date.

I said, "Hey, she doesn't look like she's really comfortable with that. You should probably get out of her personal space." Right? And he turned to me and very quietly he got close to me and he said, "Who the fuck are you?" [I said], "What the fuck did you just say?" I got loud. Because I was like, uh-uh. You're not going to try to intimidate me and like have nobody see what's going on. You're not, I mean, like I said, "I'm not intimidated."...So he did that and I got like loud.

I was like uh-uh, no. We're not going to do this. I'm going to, no, it doesn't work like that. You got something to say, say it loud....So then he, you know, went off and he's like something about "Oh, because I can't be a lesbian." Blah, blah, blah. And that's when everybody just finally was like okay, we're out.

Trinity, 32 years, white lesbian

In this instance, it seems likely that Trinity was harassed for more than her gender-nonconforming appearance. She protected a woman, which can be perceived as a man's job, and she did so while violating norms of feminine appearance. Moreover, the harasser then attributed his inability to successfully connect with the first woman he targeted to "not being a lesbian." This harasser labeled the unresponsive woman a lesbian to explain why his sexual advances were unsuccessful and to imply that the woman was Trinity's partner or date, thus explaining not only his thwarted heterosexual harassment but also Trinity's failure to conform to gender norms. Trinity's experience was unique in this sample. Most of the women targeted because of gender nonconformity were targeted for violating feminine norms of appearance, i.e., they were targeting for looking queer.

Although many of the women in this sample who are feminine in appearance discussed how commonplace heterosexual harassment is, they and others in this sample also seemed to link violating gender norms with the greatest risks for harassment and violence. Rosalinda's perspective on the risks to butch lesbians versus feminine lesbians was common:

Maybe they get half as much shit, but then the people who do harass them are really gunning for the gays. It's not because they're women at that point. It's like those are specifically and uniquely homophobic individuals. That is terrifying.

Rosalinda, 27 years, biracial lesbian

Although few of the women in this sample violate gender norms, all of those who did reported experiencing homophobic harassment.

Street Harassment, Racialization, and Racism

The data from this project indicates that street harassment is a racialized phenomenon and that white women are spared some elements of street harassment that may be fairly common for women of color. Although women of color and white women in my sample were subjected to heterosexual and homophobic harassment, white women were not subjected to racist harassment.

Darcy is a multiracial bisexual woman, feminine in appearance but unconventionally so in that she has an asymmetrical hairstyle that stands out as much for its cut as for the streak of bold bright blue that falls across her forehead and along the side of her face. Darcy identifies as multiracial but spoke of the importance of connecting to her African American heritage as part of her racial identity. Darcy's experiences of street harassment began during her childhood, when male peers as well as older boys would use racialized language to harass her:

And it looked like, and this was primarily done by black boys, but a lot of cat calling that would use race. So calling me things like Oreos and calling me things like, to describe my skin color they would call me honey or brown sugar or things like that. So yeah, the cat calls for me were definitely raced as a younger person.

Darcy, 31 years, multiracial bisexual woman

Darcy is describing street harassment that is racialized, harassment that communicates belonging or more commonly the lack thereof and that frames someone as inferior because of her perceived racial identity. Darcy's childhood was characterized by feelings that she did not fully belong within the African American community or within the white community. These taunts, by mostly African American boys her age and older, served to emphasize Darcy's outsider status.

Furthermore, terms such as "brown sugar" are sexualized terms, so this is also heterosexual street harassment. I conceptualize *racist street harassment* as relying on the cultural belief that there are distinctive characteristics attached to racial identities and that non-white racial identities are

inferior. I conceptualize *racialized street harassment* as relying on those same cultural beliefs but racialized harassment uses racial language and imagery to other the target and includes within-group harassment or harassment from one racial minority to another. Racialized harassment is shaped by white privilege but the manner in which I conceptualize racialized harassment recognizes the racially oppressed status of the harasser.

Racialized street harassment in this study frequently occurred in combination with heterosexist or homophobic street harassment. Like Darcy, Gwendolyn has experienced harassment meant to both call attention to her racial difference and to mark it as inferior. Gwendolyn described being harassed by African American men who question her racial identity, often challenging her identification as an African American woman:

They'll say, "Is one of your parents white?" They just ask me. I'm like, "No." And then sometimes they'll be like, "Yeah, one of her parents was white." And I'm like, "No." I'm like "Well, I'll be sure and go tell my [parents] that they got it wrong. You guys aren't black!" You know? I mean that's a whole thing, being fair skinned, you know, and that whole, and sometimes I don't want to, I'm not going to get into that whole explanation about, you know, both my parents are African American but in our family there's African American, Native American and Irish American. My great-grandfather was white. So I can't get into a whole discussion with them about my family genetics and how, and the theory of independent assortment and how black people come out looking like how they look. You know, and then there's a whole other thing. I mean it's not the case in my case but, and I was like stymied. I'm like slavery did happen so black people come in different colors. Slavery happened. So I'm normally shocked [by this kind of harassment].

Gwendolyn, 50 years, African American lesbian

This is another example of harassment that emphasizes the victim's outsider status. The harassers seem intent on delegitimizing Gwendolyn's racial identity as an African American. Although Gwendolyn's and Darcy's incidents are examples of racialized rather than racist street harassment, their harassers did in fact rely on cultural beliefs that there are distinctive characteristics attached to racial identities and that some racial identities are inferior. In this case,

Gwendolyn's claim to her identity as an African American woman is questioned, challenged, and resisted.

Women of color were targeted for both racialized and racist street harassment. Elsa is an Asian American bisexual woman of Korean descent. Elsa explained that she prefers identifying as Asian American because although she was born in Korea she was adopted into a white family in the United States as an infant and was not raised with a sense of her Korean heritage or culture. Elsa reported experiencing racist heterosexual street harassment with some regularity:

So if you don't know already, men tend to think that Asian women are really exotic and special.

Right.

And while I tend to agree that we're very special in our own way, being eroticized, is that a word?

Yes it is.

Is just another level of marginalization. So, I'll be called like a China doll. People will just come up to me and this is like less of a sexualized element, but just will come up to me and say really random things in either Chinese or Japanese.

White people?

Yeah. So they'll be like "Oh, konnichiwa!" which is like more racist than sexist but I'm sure they wouldn't go up a man and do that. So even though it's not sexualized, it's still sexist. If that makes sense.

Yes, it did make great sense.

Like sometimes, you know, I've been galled a Geisha before, although just like in passing, not like expecting to get sex. So yeah, things like that happen all the time....Which is interesting, because I am neither Chinese nor Japanese but I've learned that white people just can't tell the difference. Sometimes I can't tell the difference. The difference is though, like, I wouldn't ever say anything whereas white people feel entitled to always.

Elsa, 28 years, Asian American bisexual woman

Elsa astutely observes that although this kind of racist harassment is not as overtly sexual as some heterosexual street harassment, it is sexist and it eroticizes Elsa as an exotic sexual object, a Geisha, a China doll. In this kind of harassment, harassers rely on racism and sexism to cast Elsa as nothing more than a sexual object. This is racist heterosexual harassment; harassment that is rooted in white heterosexual male privilege aimed to exercise, at the least, white

heterosexual domination if not also intent on heterosexual conquest. Harassment such as this emphasizes Elsa's otherness and asserts the harasser's superior social status in a racially stratified society.

Gwendolyn reported experiencing two different types of racist street harassment. In both cases, Gwendolyn was in a racially diverse large city. In the first case, the harassment did not gender or sexualize her:

I was standing on a corner waiting for a bus and these three white guys drove by in a pickup and they called me a dumb, fat nigger. Two o'clock in the afternoon!...I was just shocked. I was standing by the bus. I mean it was two o'clock in the afternoon and they drove by. I was terrified because I was like...I was like if you feel okay about doing this and basically [being that racist] with black people all around you, what else do you feel comfortable doing? And I literally was like waiting for the shotgun to come out of the window. Because I was like what? And this was 1995. So I'm more afraid of racial stuff.

Gwendolyn, 50 years, African American lesbian

This is clearly racist harassment, perpetrated by white men, meant to communicate their superiority, and meant to threaten and terrorize the target. Of particular importance in this comment is Gwendolyn's expressed fear of racist harassment and racially motivated violence. Studies about women's fear of crime and about their experiences with harassment all too often fail to consider fears and experiences unless they are specifically related to gender. Similarly, studies about queer women's fears of and experiences with homophobic harassment and violence frequently fail to capture information unrelated to their queer identities. If I only asked participants in this study about their experiences with homophobic harassment or heterosexual harassment, Gwendolyn's far greater fear of being harassed because she is African American would have been invisible.

The second incident of racist street harassment that Gwendolyn recounted is both racist and heterosexual harassment, each facet more powerful because of their combined effect:

This guy, I was coming out of the bar and, this guy was just, had just finished masturbating and I walked by him and he was like, “I don’t need you now. I’m finished.” That scared me because I was like I’m down here by myself.

Gwendolyn, 50 years, African American lesbian

When questioned for more details, Gwendolyn recalled that the harasser was a white man. When she spoke of how the incident scared her, she shuddered and wrapped her arms around herself in a protective and frightened gesture. The harasser’s words call to mind imagery often used to disparage and degrade Black women, such as the image of Black women as jezebels, prostitutes, and sexual objects that white men in particular have license to rape with impunity. In this case, the harasser’s efforts at heterosexual dominance are made all the more powerful by racism.

Althea’s observation highlights the difference between the harassment she experiences from Black men and the harassment she experiences from white men:

And when people have said things to you when you’re walking down the street, are those people usually men or women?

Mostly men.

And what kinds of things?

It would be a comment on, it might be a comment on my body. It might be like an invitation to talk, that kind of stuff. You know?

Is it, are the men black or white? Do you recall?

It can be a variety of races. The stuff I get from, hmmm. So maybe the invitations to communicate and the comments on my body are not necessarily white men. I think sometimes what I get from white men is more aggressive, physically aggressive behavior like taking up a lot of space, like shoving with the shoulders, like not moving to their side.

Althea, 36 years, Black lesbian

This was a fairly common experience among women of color in my sample, particular Black, biracial, and multiracial women. They reported aggressive and frightening experiences from

white male harassers and fewer incidents of that kind from African American male harassers.

And they reported greater fear of harassment from white men. For instance, Darcy noted:

I have always felt like white men were more dangerous to me as a boogiemer than black folks.

Darcy, 31 years, multiracial bisexual woman

Gwendolyn remarked:

So, I never, as a woman, I've gotten that kind of [heterosexual] harassment, which there has been some that scared me. I've got more harassment for being black that scared me than for being a woman.

From white men or white men and women?

From white men, yes.

Gwendolyn, 50 years, African American lesbian

Similarly, Janet's experience illuminates the role of racism in street harassment for some Black women. This incident took place on a college campus in the Midwest, along the sidewalk of a university that Janet described as having only a few racial minorities. She described the harasser as a white man who did not look like he belonged there, a man older and "rougher" looking than her college student peers. Janet's harasser said not one word but communicated his contempt through more powerful means:

This guy was just rolling through on a motorcycle and we looked at each other. We made eye contact. I'm like, this is not, this does not feel well. And this was broad daylight, a crowded street. He sent a hawk my way from his motorcycle.

Janet, 49 years, African American lesbian

The spit landed on Janet's jacket. She recounted being shocked, almost horrified, and called this a particularly "vile" form of harassment. Although no words were exchanged, there is little doubt to Janet that this was racially motivated harassment, likely from a local resident not affiliated with the university Janet was attending. White women in my sample did not report the type of hostile aggressive harassment that Janet, Althea, and Gwendolyn reported. Only women of color

– specifically women who are African American, biracial, or multiracial – reported aggressive harassment such as physically bumping into the victim, spitting on her, or angrily calling her a racial pejorative. Some of the harassment women of color experienced was racialized, shaped by racial language and imagery but delivered by another racial minority without the weight or institutional power of white privilege. Other street harassment was racist, delivered by white men and characterized by aggression, hostility, racism, and sometimes sexism.

Responses to Fear and Street Harassment

Responses to fear and harassment in the literature are typically framed as indirect/direct, or as passive/assertive (e.g., Dansky and Kilpatrick 1997; Fairchild and Rudman 2008). I place participant responses to fear of violence and street harassment into the categories of passive or assertive. Passive responses to fear generally involve self-control and avoidance. Passive responses to street harassment typically include ignoring the harasser but also include preventative steps, general precautions that are meant to prevent harassment. Assertive responses are aimed at managing risk when it surfaces through direct action, such as fleeing, asking for help, or verbally confronting the harasser. For example, although it might on the surface appear that carrying a weapon is an assertive response to fear; it would be categorized as passive. *Carrying* a weapon is a passive strategy intended to prevent victimization, i.e., a passive response to fear. *Using* a weapon in an interaction with a potential offender or with a man who harasses – even if only as a prop – would be categorized as an assertive response.

All 30 women in my sample reported passive responses to fear; sixteen participants also responded passively to street harassment. Eleven participants responded assertively to fear and thirteen responded assertively to street harassment. There is considerable overlap in that several

women responded both passively and assertively to fear, street harassment or both. Findings indicate that passive responses from the women in my sample include: wearing headphones or sunglasses to discourage harassers; spatial avoidance; going to public places with a group or a protector; owning a dog or a weapon; avoiding being in public at night; parking in well-lit areas; and more. Assertive responses include: seeking help, fleeing the harasser, and verbal confrontation or negotiation. One of the key findings related to responses to fear and harassment is that a greater proportion of the white women in this sample than the women of color discussed weapons and the possibilities of using self-defense. Although both are passive responses to fear unless deployed, white women's talk of using weapons and self-defense convey a sense of power and privilege that did not surface in the same way for women of color. Another finding is that how participants respond to their fear and to street harassment is shaped by the incite/invite dilemma.

Incite/Invite Dilemma

The incite/invite dilemma describes the predicament women face when confronted with street harassment and fear of violence. Results suggest that women dealing with fear of rape or street harassment are weighing their options, intent on ending the harassment and preventing rape while simultaneously trying to avoid two things: (1) inciting further harassment or violence, and (2) inviting continued or more determined harassment. Although certainly no woman is responsible for a perpetrator's increased aggression or his undeterred and often sexual attention, the data indicates that women feel pressure to craft responses to harassment within the framework of this dilemma. Jaime illuminates the incite/invite dilemma when she argues that that men can manage their risk when faced with a violent man by "keeping their cool" but women cannot manage the risk of rape "no matter what." Linda's attempt to be courteous yet

uninviting resulted in escalating aggression from her harasser, highlighting the unpredictability of street harassment that informs women's sense of options.

Some participants feared that if they acted assertively or with anger they would incite violence from men, or that boldly or emphatically rejecting a man might result in their being assaulted. Some feared that a passive response would not only fail to prevent rape or end harassment but would be viewed by the harasser as an invitation for him to continue his harassment. Jacqueline illustrates the incite/invite dilemma when she talked about carefully responding to street harassment:

I try not to get too testy so that I don't get a violent reaction, [and I say clearly] that I'm not interested. Then they will just traipse along in their car, just following me, continuing to talk to me.

Okay. So your aim in those moments is to reject them with a clear message of "no" without triggering a reaction that seems more dangerous than the behavior that you are already getting.

Yes. That's right. So I find myself a lot of times, and it makes me angry feeling that I have to be nicer than I'd like to be. I really want to say ha, ha asshole. But if that could make someone pull out a gun or get out and grab me, then I don't want to do that. So I find that I'm constantly having to, in some ways, self-sensor or temper myself even though I'm the one that is doing nothing wrong.

Jacqueline, 32 years, African American lesbian

Jacqueline, like Jaime, Linda, and others, regulates her response, withholding her anger and responding passively as opposed to assertively in an effort to avoid "a violent reaction" from her harassers. Moreover, she describes regulating her behavior and appearance - wearing sunglasses to avoid eye-contact, for example - in response to her fear and in an effort to avoid street harassment.

Rape is never the fault of the woman who is raped; however, women are often charged with rape prevention in lieu of other alternatives. The reality is that women in my sample and elsewhere live in cultures shaped by sexual violence against women, cultural environments that

place the onus for preventing rape and managing street harassment squarely on women's shoulders. In this study, rape prevention strategies, including responses to street harassment which is linked to women's fear of rape, are often shaped by the incite/invite dilemma.

Passive Responses

Guided by the literature and my findings, I categorize passive responses to fear and street harassment in one of two ways: behavioral self-regulation or appearance self-regulation. Self-regulation is the heart of passive responses to fear and street harassment, in part because women have little if any control over what a prospective offender or harasser might do. However, women's use of passive responses is related to more than their inability to control men who might be violent with them. As Stanko (1996) and others have noted, women are socialized by formal and informal agents to take personal responsibility for the very public problem of violence against women. Primarily, that socialization focuses on preventing victimization which is necessarily a passive response to fear in that it generally occurs before a specific risk is presented. Responses to street harassment are also often passive and involve regulating one's behavior or appearance.

Behavioral Self-Regulation

Behavioral self-regulation for the women in my sample includes: spatial avoidance, getting a dog or a weapon; avoiding public displays of affection; going places with a group or another person rather than alone; carrying their keys like a weapon in their hands; avoiding dark spaces; being alert while in public; and walking with confidence. All 30 participants reported regulating their behavior to avoid being harassed or victimized or in response to harassment or fear.

General Precautions

Most participants listed some variation of a list of general precautions they take in response to their fear of violence or harassment. Chris provides a glimpse into some of the ways she and others in my sample typically regulated their behavior:

You know, for myself, I just don't go places.

What are you afraid would happen if you did?

Well, like, I mean, as a woman, just as a woman, not, I don't really worry about being the subject of a hate crime myself; I never have. But just as a woman, it's just stupid to go certain places and do certain things at night.

Like what?

Well, parking in the dark. Walking in dark places by yourself. I mean, you, you pick up as you live in this country, you know, the tips for women at night, the things you should avoid, so that you are avoiding any kind of possibility of crime.

When you say crime, what specifically are you talking about?

Well, being raped . . .

Rape. Okay.

Or attacked or mugged, so I tend to just not, I mean, I just, those situations are just not part of my life. I don't know how else to say that.

Chris, 57 years, white lesbian

Chris is describing spatial avoidance, not parking in dark places, and not going places alone at night. As with several participants, and as reported in the literature on fear of violence, women constrain their personal movement as a means of preventing their victimization. Chris mentions common precautions women in this sample took to prevent their victimization, and in particular to prevent or avoid rape. Elsa offers another example of behavioral self-regulation:

And so like I tend to travel in a pack of people. If I'm traveling to and from [an event] by myself, which will happen a lot when I'm meeting up with other people, I just remain really aware of my surroundings. So if it's after dark I will never go on the train or walk by myself while I'm listening to my iPod.

Okay.

I won't ever have my phone out if I'm walking by myself at night. Or sometimes during the day too if it's like later in the evening just because, number one, I don't want it to get taken and, number two, I want to be constantly aware of what's happening around me. I haven't had to do this in a long time, but when I was [in college] I used to walk with my keys between my knuckles so that I could easily pretend to punch someone.

Where did you learn that?

I don't remember.

Okay.

I don't remember where I learned that. But I mean I'm not very big, so I don't know if it would have much of an impact. Someone could probably reach out their hand and stop it and I would be oh, shit, what do I do now? And I can't run very fast either.

Elsa, 28 years, Asian American bisexual woman

Several of the women used some of the strategies Elsa mentioned, including holding their keys in a way that would allow them to use the keys as a weapon. Few participants could identify where they had learned about this strategy; it appeared to be common knowledge. Grace describes holding her keys that way, in addition to taking other steps in response to her fear of violence:

And so I'm hyper-aware. I will, if I see somebody that really freaks me out, I will actually go to the effort of crossing the street and walking on the other side. If it's really dark out, I actually happen to be afraid of the dark really.

Okay.

And if it's really dark out, I'll walk in the middle of the street because there's much less chance of me being pulled from the side. On occasion, I'll walk with my keys in my hand like this so that I'm ready to poke anybody that I need to and I actually go through scenarios of what I could possibly do.

So you'll have the keys like between your fingers in your hands?

Between my fingers, yeah.

Ready to use it as a weapon.

Yeah.

Grace, 29 years, white lesbian

Grace is reciting a list of passive responses to fear, ways to regulate one's behaviors in an effort to prevent victimization.

Being aware of one's surroundings and exuding confidence were oft cited passive responses. Most participants mentioned some of the same strategies as Grace, including Jacqueline, Trinity, Gwendolyn, Sally, and Jordan:

What makes me feel safe is to be aware and conscious and to walk with confidence. And that's what I do.

Jacqueline, 32 years, African American lesbian

Well, I pay attention. I don't walk anywhere blindly.

Trinity, 32 years, white lesbian

And I'm just aware when I'm out walking around, you know... Don't go down that street. Don't go down that alley. Those kinds of things. Especially on public transportation, I kind of try and size up who's around me at night, you know, especially. And then when I'm just like out walking or whatever, I just am aware of, just try to be aware of who's around me and stuff like that.

Gwendolyn, 50 years, African American lesbian

Sometimes I'll wait around a little bit after my shift ends to walk out with someone, if it's late.

Sally, 34 years, white lesbian

I wouldn't dare walk around the park by myself at night.

Jordan, 23 years, white lesbian

It is striking how often the same passive responses surfaced. Rosalinda described how to respond to risk when alone on public transportation:

Be around as many witnesses as possible... move to wherever there's (A) more women, or (B) just more people.

Rosalinda, 27 years, biracial lesbian

Like Rosalinda, several participants identified being alone as a risk. Being with others or near witnesses was identified as a way to mitigate risk. Rosalinda's notion of finding safety first with women passengers suggests that she views a group of male passengers as possibly an additional risk rather than suitable witnesses or bystanders who might intervene on her behalf.

For some participants, passive responses to street harassment involved some variety of ignoring the harassment. Rachael provides an example:

My reaction is to just kind of like get tense and be like it's okay, I'll make it back and nothing bad is going to happen. I just kind of like think that to myself and ignore it. I always ignore it. I never say anything.

Rachael, 23 years, white lesbian

Yvonne ignores her harassers but reported that a common response from harassers was to repeatedly ask, "Why you keep walking? Why you keep walking?" Linda reported ignoring harassment but also nervously smiling while walking past a harasser whose explicit comment felt threatening to her. Hannah reported alternatively laughing at, thanking, or ignoring harassers:

I usually just ignore them or I'll say thank you.

Hannah, 24 years, white lesbian

I have laughed at them and kept walking. I'm pretty non-confrontational though.

Hannah, 24 years, white lesbian

Elizabeth ignored harassment, even when with someone else in public:

We were just like, we'll just keep walking. Then we're like okay.

Elizabeth, 27 years, white lesbian

Althea likewise ignores street harassment, while remaining alert:

I don't really respond. I just keep walking while being aware of how close someone is to my physical space, my personal space.

Althea, 36 years, Black lesbian

Ignoring street harassment was common among participants, though some also smiled or "thanked" their harasser. These passive responses require self-control and are forms of behavioral self-regulation.

Passive responses to street harassment sometimes contradicted passive responses to fear.

For instance, several participants reported that being on the phone or listening to music interfered

with their ability to be aware of their surroundings, that either might distract them from noticing danger. A common passive response to fear is to be alert to danger, undistracted by music or phone calls. Yet several reported wearing headphones or getting on cell phones to ward off potential harassers. Janet wears her headphones regularly, though she does not always listen to music while doing so:

I always wear my headphones, whether they're on or not. People don't know. [It communicates]: Don't look at me. I'm not looking at you. I'm not listening.

Janet, 49 years, African American lesbian

Yvonne explained that when she sees a man who looks like he might harass her or hurt her, she calls a friend:

Get on my phone, call my best friend and just stay on the phone with them until I get home.

Okay.

Yeah. I have to make sure I'm like, I'm calling somebody. Like I don't even care who is it. I'm like, "All right, it's really late and I'm walking home and I'm starting to feel uncomfortable. Somebody in front of me." Like I would say it really low so the person can hear. I've been in those situations where, you know, I just get on the phone and they are just like, because I'm not so vulnerable.

Yvonne, 25 years, African American lesbian

Jane described making sure her phone was charged when she was alone in public at night then described how she uses her phone if she fears a specific man or group of men:

I will put in a number.

Okay, put in a number so you're ready to dial?

And I don't put it up to my ear, but yeah, yeah.

Jane, 50 years, white lesbian

Jacqueline described responding to fear by making "sure that I have all of my senses engaged when I am in public, that I'm paying attention to what's going on around me and [that I do] not have really any barriers," but she also uses barriers to ward off harassers:

When it's sunny out during the day, I wear sunglasses because I don't want to have to look a lot of men in the eye because they take it as an invitation. Even though I'm just walking down the street, they, if I feel like they can look at my

eyes, they're more likely to say something. And so I wear shades. Or I will, I used to put on earphones so I wouldn't have to hear anyone...

Jacqueline, 32 years, African American lesbian

Data indicates that women commonly avoid being out alone at night, walk with confidence, avoid strangers, and monitor their surroundings in response to their fear. Some of the techniques that participants used in response to fear of rape and violence were counter to avoiding street harassment. For some participants, it appeared impossible to regulate their behavior in ways that permitted them to respond to their fear of rape and violence while also responding to their fear of street harassment.

Weapons and Self-Defense

When women own or carry a weapon or imagine using self-defense as a response to fear, they are regulating their behaviors. Some of the women in my sample discussed these types of passive responses to fear and harassment. My findings suggest both owning a weapon and considering self-defense as a viable option are racialized responses to fear and harassment. Deb discussed some common passive responses and introduces the subject of weapons:

Of course, growing up we're always taught, don't talk to strangers, don't engage in actions with strangers, be careful about the person in the bushes about to jump out at you, so I think that there's, that the perceptions are there, the dangers are there. But I think that women take more precautions. I certainly know that I do. I own a weapon. I have large animals. I have locks on my doors, an alarm, all of these things that I take as an understanding that I must protect myself against crime.

Deb, 51 years, white lesbian

Deb mentioned her weapon a second time during the interview, in addition to self-defense:

If I must go [to a dangerous area or somewhere unfamiliar at night] on my own...I would have my cell phone on and with me, I would have my mace in the car. I would not bring my weapon [gun] because I do know the risk is higher that it will be used against me, um, but I will certainly take other precautions. I have taken self-defense courses so I would certainly be wary of everywhere I am.

Deb, 51 years, white lesbian

Sally, who lives in medium-sized city, likewise owns a weapon and regulates her behavior in response to her fear of violence:

Well, I move quickly, like if I'm doing some of those stereotypically dangerous things like walking to my car at night, which is unavoidable when you work [night shifts], I just move quickly.

You dash?

Right. And, I'm not on my phone. I don't carry a bunch of stuff in my hands. I always let someone know where I'm going, when I'm expected. What else? I think I'm just hyper-aware most of the time.

Lock your car doors?

Always, yes.

Lock your house?

Always.

Even when you're home?

Absolutely. And I check them.

DO you have any animals?

I do have a Labrador. She is a good guard dog, if the house is being broken into by squirrels or children but if it was a person I don't think it would matter.

You by any chance have any weapons?

I do because unlike my political leanings, which might dictate certain things, I am born and raised in [a rugged area of the country], so yes, I do have a 38 caliber hand gun.

Is it loaded?

No but I keep the ammunition nearby so I can load it quickly if I need to.

Sally, 34 years, white lesbian

Six of the 20 white women reported owning weapons, including three who own guns, one who owns a knife, and two who own mace or pepper spray. Some of them kept weapons in their homes; others had carried weapons into public space. Hannah, Linda and Trinity are among the latter. Hannah reported that she only carries it with her occasionally:

If I know I'm going somewhere particularly sketchy I'll take some mace.

Hannah, 24 years, white lesbian

Linda used to carry mace and remarked that she needed to get a new supply:

I will find the safe parking place. I will take the safest route. If I'm by myself, I haven't in a long time, but I used to have the mace pointed and ready.

Do you still carry the mace?

I don't and I need to get some because that gave me just this much sense of, like I have one thing to prevent, or at least to assist me in a situation.

Linda, 56 years, white lesbian

Trinity sold the gun that she used to carry with her; she keeps her current weapon in her vehicle:

Well, I used to have a nine mm [gun] that I carried...but I do have mace in my car – the real deal, police grade. You know, 20 feet away mace.

Trinity, 32 years, white lesbian

Deb, Sally, Hannah, Trinity and :Linda , all white women, express a willingness to own or carry a weapon.

Although one woman of color owned pepper spray in the past, at the time of the interviews only one of the women of color owned any type of weapon. Rosalinda, a 27 year old African American lesbian, owns a knife that she carries with her. She described it as a tool for her work but noted that she sometimes felt safer with her knife in her pocket when she was walking at night. Rosalinda was the lone weapon owner among the women of color in my sample. Elsa and Jacqueline commented on why they did not own weapons:

No, definitely no gun because in so many instances I feel like, I mean I feel like I would be hyperaware of a gun....But I'm more terrified of a gun being used against me.

Okay.

And so I don't want to carry a gun. And to be honest, I don't think that would make me feel safer necessarily.

Jacqueline, 32 years, African American lesbian

I don't carry mace. I don't have pepper spray.

No knife, no gun?

No, no. I'm very opposed to guns in general, so there's no way I would ever own one. I would mostly be afraid that it would like go off on accident and then, it's the same reason I don't carry a knife either, just because I don't like to have that sort of stuff on me.

Elsa, 28 years, Asian American bisexual woman

Although the data does not provide irrefutable evidence that race privilege is related to whether or not participants own a weapon, combined with the data about self-defense and fear of institutional violence among the women of color in my sample, it is quite suggestive.

Women of color participants in this sample appear to feel less free to even consider active or assertive responses to fear of crime. Although carrying a weapon is a passive response, it is a passive response waiting to become an assertive response – much like acquiring self-defense skills or planning to engage in self-defense. These things fall within the parameters of regulating one's behavior to prevent victimization, and especially sexual assault. The women who spoke of carrying weapons, with one exception, were white women. The women who spoke about using physical self-defense were also white. For example, Grace mentioned somewhat elaborate plans for using self-defense techniques:

Yeah. I'll remind myself that anything is a weapon and on occasion I will look to my sides to see what's available. Like if I see somebody approaching me, there could be nothing about them that would make me think that they're [someone to fear], but especially if it's one or two men, I will be ready to do whatever it takes to get away from that person and I'll be remembering things. Like if they grab you from behind, you step on their feet and you poke them in the eye. And if two of them, you know, I remember things like go for, if you go for the groin you don't want to kick them, you want to grab them. If you want to take them down, you take them at the knee. There's a fencepost I could bang his head into. There's a stick over there I could grab. Do you know what I mean? All that kind of stuff.

Grace, 39 years, white lesbian

Linda, a white lesbian in her fifties discussed reading about rape prevention in college, “making a vow” that she would never be sexually assaulted, and preparing herself to do “whatever I could to prevent that from happening.” Linda's acquired her self-defense plans from a book she read in college. Her ideas about self-defense were less physically aggressive than others' but she spoke confidently about her ability to protect herself from sexual assault through self-defense:

I was probably 24. I don't know, I got a little fixated and I remember reading books about women who had been sexually assaulted and I read a couple books. One was written by a man on how, what steps to take to prevent yourself from being sexually assaulted.

Okay.

And he wrote this, he wrote a book about it and it wasn't about dressing. It wasn't, that wasn't the focus. It wasn't victim-centered. And there were things to do if you were [at risk of being] assaulted and he, you know, he recommended like throwing up on yourself or shitting in your pants. Different things like that.

Okay.

So I don't know why but I remember thinking I just, I didn't want to have to do all of the work it would take to get over a sexual assault, so I was going to be acutely aware of not [getting raped], of doing whatever I could to prevent that from happening.

Linda, 56 years, white lesbian

Linda's determination to avoid victimization is connected to her sense of knowing how to prevent rape through self-defense. She said she was not very concerned about being raped and attributed that to her sense that she could defend herself.

The notion that one can successfully prevent victimization through self-defense was unique to the white women in my sample. Hannah, a 24 year old white lesbian, said women would be safer if they took self-defense classes and carried mace. Rachael, a 23 year old white lesbian, also suggested self-defense classes for women. Brick, a 26 year old white lesbian who is also a fitness trainer said that looking strong and capable of self-defense might help prevent assault:

I might be a little bit safer just because I look stronger and that's, I don't know, they know by looking that I can handle myself.

Brick, 26 years, white lesbian

Most of the women of color I interviewed appeared as strong as Brick yet none suggested their strength would protect them. Trinity also felt self-defense would protect her. In fact, when she spoke of self-defense it sounded epic, as if she were describing a super-heroine:

I think, I just can't lose. You know? If it came to that, like I don't feel like, I feel like I would, you know, just see red and just go. Like if I was protecting myself or the ones that I love, like I mean, I feel that I just wouldn't be able to stop, you know.

Like those people who can lift cars?

Yeah, totally, yeah.

You would be so, your adrenaline would be pumping, and you would be like unstoppable?

Yeah.

Trinity, 32 years, white lesbian

Trinity added:

I just feel like I'm bigger than most of the people, you know. I mean sure, there could be somebody that's bigger than me, but you know, I'm going to be more of a challenge and I think like I walk with my head up and I look like I know what's going on. Don't even try it, you know? Like I'm ready so if you want to tangle, let's go.

Trinity, 32 years, white lesbian

Though Trinity told me about feelings of fear during the interview, she also presented herself as almost invincible in the face of violence.

Women in all racial categories in this sample certainly talked about protecting themselves, however the common thread regardless of race were things such as walking with confidence, being aware of one's surroundings, avoiding being alone in public at night, and sometimes carrying keys in such a way as to make them into a weapon if needed. Behavioral self-regulation for women of color did not include discussions of weapons, self-defense, and visions of heroic hand-to-hand combat as it did for Grace and Trinity. The data do not provide conclusive evidence that race privilege is related to these things but in light of the data about fears of institutional violence from women of color, the results about weapons and self-defense suggest that an element of privilege is at play for the white women who imagine successfully deploying self-defense or using weapons to avoid victimization.

Public Displays of Affection

One of the ways that participants responded to fear, as well as street harassment or its threat, was through the regulation of their public displays of affection. For some queer women in my sample, this meant not touching her girlfriend's knee when they were seated next to each other, not kissing her partner, or not holding her hand as they walked on the sidewalk.

In response to being harassed by a man who quoted anti-gay Bible verses when he witnessed her partner's hand on Rachael's knee, Rachael's partner removed her hand immediately. Later the two of them spoke about when and where to be affectionate in public. Others mentioned similar restrictions on public displays of affection. Julie, a white lesbian in her late 40s, cautions against public displays of affection, noting that "lesbians who don't kiss their girlfriends in front of the bar" are safer than those who do. Yvonne was single when we met for our interview but she too mentioned the importance of regulating public displays of affection:

Thank God I don't have a girlfriend and if I had a girlfriend and I'm holding hands walking down the street, who knows what situations we would've been in or could've been in.

Yvonne, 25 years, African American lesbian

Daisy's aversion to public displays of affection is directly tied to her fear of being stalked by someone who might harm her and her partner for being lesbians. Her fear of being stalked by someone who sees what might be viewed as an intimate touch, even something as innocuous as a hand to the small of her back, prompts Daisy to control herself by avoiding public displays of affection. Like others who mentioned avoiding public displays of affection, Daisy is afraid of homophobic violence. Others expressed similar fears.

Norma, a white lesbian in her late 50s, began her interview by describing how happy she is that she is out of the closet. After some years of working in a position where that seemed risky,

she had changed jobs, recently celebrated her relationship with a commitment ceremony to which she had invited friends, family and co-workers. We spoke in her office, where she had a romantic photograph of herself with her partner on her desk. Norma emphasized the freedom she felt to be in her relationship, the safety she felt in her community, and talked about some of her volunteer work for local gay rights. However, when the subject of public displays of affection was addressed, Norma quickly articulated her fears. She began by telling me that she and her partner hold hands frequently, which prompted me to ask about where they hold hands:

Like at the movies, or?

Um, yeah, a little bit going down the street, but that's where safety starts. The fear starts building more in public. And public meaning people I've never met, around people I've never met.

Okay, so, in your neighborhood, walking around your neighborhood, would you be comfortable holding hands there?

Um, not for a long period of time.

Okay. Where do you hold hands?

More in an environment where I know the people.

Can you give me an example?

Um, a party, at someone's house.

Okay. And not necessarily a gay person's house.

No, no.

Just people you know.

Right.

Okay. So not necessarily in public per se but in a residence. Okay. Okay.

Yep, I'm trying to think, in public, like, like a restaurant, um, I can't think.

Maybe at your workplace? If you were with her there?

Yeah, probably not.

Okay.

So probably not, not in public.

Norma, 57 years, white lesbian

Norma's comments illustrate the fear that can be attached to public displays of affection, even for lesbians who are out of the closet, have a photograph of their partner on their desk, and are active advocates for gay rights. Regulating public displays of affection is a passive response to fear, one that is associated with managing the risk of homophobic harassment or violence.

Delta, a young white feminine lesbian who moved to the Midwest from the Deep South, discussed public displays of affection at some length. Delta's partner is a woman of color who Delta described as sometimes appearing androgynous, sometimes not, but frequently harassed for looking queer or unusually different from those around her; harassers, according to Delta, called her partner "boy" and "ugly" and other things. Delta uses the word, "adorkable" to describe her, and suggested racism and homophobia were at the heart of much of the harassment her partner received. Delta's relationship was fairly new and shaped by her partner's frequent travel for work. During the interview, I asked Delta how she keeps safe, which prompted her to run through a list of general safety precautions before she said, "This is why I think I'm safer: I look heterosexual." Because Delta had mentioned that her partner did not experience the same assumption of heterosexuality in public, I asked Delta how she stays safe when they are in public together:

Well, I, depending on where we are, like in most places in [our town] I won't hold her hand. I think I am more aware of surroundings and like paying attention to what people are doing. Like, what their expressions are, what they're saying, what they're looking at, yeah. So, yeah. I mean we were even in a grocery store and it was when she first got here [after a long business trip], when I went and picked her up from the airport and I was so excited to be around her again and I really like wanted to hold her hand. I just wanted to like touch her, and yeah. We were in a grocery store at like 10 p.m. and there was really no one there, just a few customers. Would something really happen in the grocery store? I don't know but she was really, she really wanted to hold my hand too and she, we were like let's stop ourselves and be, like let's wait. Wait until we get out of here. We won't be here very long. You know?

Do you take her to the airport when she leaves town?

Yes, yes. And last time I wanted, oh, I wanted to kiss her so bad and there were like some security guards around and there were like, it makes me really, thinking about that. [Tears up.] There were like 30 people like in line for security and we had just had like such great [intimacy] together.

I'm sorry.

But like in the parking lot we made sure no one was around and in the car I like gave her lots of kisses because I knew that we couldn't kiss in the airport.

Okay.

So yeah. Just not showing affection because, you know, I don't think anything bad would happen but just what people would say to you. Or what people would look like I guess. And I just wanted to be like, fuck, I don't care. But she was going to be on an airplane with these people and I was just going to get to go home.

Delta, 26 years, white lesbian

Delta clearly felt sad about not being able to show her partner affection before they were once again separated by miles; however, her comments suggest she felt compelled to avoid public displays of affection as a response to her fear – fear of how others in the everyday spaces of the airport and the grocery store might react. Delta attributed her heightened awareness to having a partner who is a visibly queer woman of color and to witnessing how she is sometimes treated in public. Delta's case hints at differences in the significance of regulating public displays of affection for queer women of color and their partners.

Another finding related to regulating behavior in relation to public affection surfaced during interviews with some of the women of color in my sample. Rosalinda, a biracial lesbian, lives in a poor African American urban neighborhood, a neighborhood known to have high rates of homicide and other crime, but she often stays with her partner (also a woman of color) who lives in a different area of the city, an area bordered by a neighborhood that Rosalinda described as a white, consumer-oriented, middle class neighborhood peopled with “self-involved yuppies”. She discussed her thoughts about showing her partner affection in her neighborhood versus showing affection in the middle-class white neighborhood by her partner's home:

[In my neighborhood], I feel safe because it's my home, but I do not feel like being explicitly homosexual in any way either, in like a PDA sense or even sometimes my attire is not going to go over as well.

Rosalinda, 27 years, biracial lesbian

Rosalinda feels safe holding hands with her partner in the white middle class neighborhood but not in her poor African American neighborhood, despite an overall feeling of safety in her neighborhood. In fact, Rosalinda went on to observe:

So [in the white middle class neighborhood] I'm not afraid to reveal the thing that I feel like is vulnerable about myself, which is my sexuality, because I just don't think that anyone here can do anything to me that I would find frightening. Like, I think that I just would be able to bulldoze over them at both ends. They're just not in a fighting stance. They're all just yuppies milling about.

Not paying attention to you or what you're doing?

Right. Where they're so self-involved. Whereas [in my neighborhood], everyone is just watching you all the time. But I feel safe there because that's the part of the city I'm from.

But you hide your sexual orientation, your sexual identity, in your neighborhood?

Well, I just would never do like yeah, any sort of PDA thing, but people still see my haircut and they still see like the way I operate and they don't usually have any problems with it, particularly in that part of town.

Rosalinda, 27 years, biracial lesbian

Rosalinda's approach to publicly displaying affection is clearly shaped by her surroundings. Given what we know about how the women in this sample regulate affectionate expressions in public, one might think Rosalinda more rigidly regulates her public displays of affection in her own neighborhood as a passive response to fear. Yet Rosalinda claims to feel *safe* in her neighborhood. What are we to make of this apparent incongruence? The data from this study suggests that for some women of color, particularly those with loyal or deep ties to an African American community, there may be cultural rather than fearful reasons for regulating public displays of affection while in African American neighborhoods. Rosalinda's remarks indicate that she does not display her sexual identity via public displays of affection or even attire; however, her comments also suggest that she is not exactly hiding her sexual identity.

Althea, an African American lesbian who lives in a large city, addressed this topic as well. Although this quote is lengthy, I include it here because she so well articulates some of the

cultural reasons for avoiding public displays of affection and other obvious markers of queerness:

When you and your girlfriend are out together, are there places you go where you consciously don't hold hands?

Uh-huh. Sure. Yeah. I think sometimes we don't, we're not as close if we're in certain neighborhoods that we're not aware of or in certain neighborhoods that we don't completely feel comfortable in. And we have a lot of conversations around those also. If those neighborhoods are mostly black, then that brings up a tension for me. It makes me feel uncomfortable. So, you know, we push back on that and talk about that. Because we always, we know that there has always been black queer people in our communities. They are everywhere, but I think, she lives uptown closer to [a certain neighborhood] that is sold as the lesbian neighborhood, all of this stuff. And so yeah, and [that neighborhood] is pretty white also. And so we struggle with that, right, because I think we want to be who we are. We believe in blackness and our black communities and so we want to support our folks and be supported by our folks in all of ourselves, right

So what determines where you feel comfortable?

It's how much we know of the neighborhood and how I've been there less than two years. So based on all that I've spoken about the history of violence in [my neighborhood], neither of us feels completely, completely comfortable. But we walk around as queer people. I think there are things about us that are very queer. So we're not hiding from that but I think our sense of, our inclination is to be physically closer. We chose differently and sometimes we speak consciously about the choices and sometimes we just kind of vibe off of each other.

It sounds like when you're walking around in [your neighborhood] you're not trying to walk around like a straight women. You're not trying to hide that necessarily but you're also maybe making conscious choices about how visible you make it.

I don't know if it's about visibility. I think this idea of visibility, I mean part of the conversations we have and I have with people in my community is that we always have queer people in our community and in our Latino community and our Caribbean community, in our black community, right. So this idea that we have to like be *out* in a certain way, that's a particular way the discourse in being out has unfolded. We've always had queer women in our communities They've never said "I'm a lesbian." You just always knew. This person has always lived with a woman. When her partner died, it was really sad. We mourned. We called her an endearing term for an aunt. She came to stay with us for awhile. Like you always knew it. People were always, queer people are always in our community. *Do you think then that visibility and the idea of being "out" are pretty racialized concepts?*

[The idea of visibility is] racialized but it's also, I mean it's also very particular. It's very 1980s America ... I'm not really going to have a coming out party

because that doesn't make sense to me. But I'm out but I just, I don't use the same language.So the conversation around visibility makes the people who have always lived their queer lives in communities invisible....because they didn't have a coming out party.... they didn't have a [pride] flag. They didn't, you know, "come out".

Althea, 36 years, Black lesbian

Althea's roots in the Caribbean, as well as her strong ties within communities of color and especially Black communities, has shaped her understanding of being visibly queer in her communities. Her comments suggest she feels visible as a member of her community, accepted as queer, but that it is not part of her cultural experience to *make* her queerness visible via public displays of affection or a pride flag. Althea's observations suggest that her resistance to displaying public affection with her partner in some communities is less related to fear than it is to embracing cultural norms that fall outside mainstream gay culture.

Janet, an African American lesbian in her late 40s who resides in the same urban neighborhood as Rosalinda, offered a similar viewpoint, noting that queer people in her Black community do not need to wear a "rainbow on your chest" or "have your own queer ghetto or your own gay space" to be a visible and valued member of the community. The data suggests that Rosalinda and Althea's regulation of public displays of affection should be understood as cultural practices rather than simply in response to fear of violence, particularly in light of Janet's observations and especially as neither Rosalinda nor Althea appear to fear violence for being queer in their respective Black communities.

One of the ways that participants responded to fear, as well as street harassment or its threat, was through the regulation of their public displays of affection. However, the reasons for regulating public displays of affection were different for some of the women of color participants who have ties within Black communities. It appears that women in this sample who regulate

public displays of affection as a passive response to fear do so as queer outsiders in public space, as women who fear being visible as queers in everyday spaces dominated by heterosexual norms. However, some of the women of color who regulate public displays of affection may actually be doing so not as queer outsiders in their Black communities but as insiders observing cultural practices that do not other Black queer people. The data about regulating public displays of affection, then, suggests that this is a passive response to fear for some, not all, of the women in my sample.

Appearance Self-Regulation

To understand why women in my sample passively respond to fear by regulating their appearance, it is helpful to consider several factors. First, fear of violence or crime is often a proxy for fear of rape (e.g., Riger and Gordon 1981) and this was the case for many women in this study. Second, the data suggests that three kinds of rape provoke fear: heterosexual rape, which is rape by one or more heterosexual men who assume the victim is heterosexual; punitive rape, which is rape meant to punish the victim for her non-heterosexual appearance or conduct; and corrective rape, which is meant to “fix” the victim’s queer sexual identity and transform her into a heterosexual. Third, the culture of rape includes myths about the links between rape and physical appearance (Garland 2005; Maier 2012; Snedker 2012). Women as well as men accept myths about rape as truth (Cowan 2000) so notions about victims attracting rapists because they dressed provocatively, for instance, are part of rape culture. Culture shapes our understanding of rape. Arguably, even when we reject rape mythology, we are influenced by culture to some degree. This matters when we consider that participants in this sample identified femininity as a risk for heterosexual rape and masculinity as a risk for corrective or punitive rape – and that they

described *appearance* as a main factor in the process of being placed into categories of feminine or masculine, heterosexual or queer.

In other words, women in my sample are afraid of rape; believe both heterosexual and queer women are targeted; and believe appearance is central to their being perceived as feminine or masculine, queer or heterosexual. Given that there seems to be no safe ground, i.e., they cannot occupy a category that is not at risk of rape, it does not seem particularly logical that they regulate their appearance in response to their fear. However, the data suggests that there *is* a safer category than heterosexual or queer, feminine or masculine, and that is the category of invisible. Participants discussed regulating their appearance in two ways: (1) by adjusting their gender performance to appear more or less feminine or masculine, and/or (2) by attempting to appear invisible.

Appearance and Gender

All of the participants in this study identified as women – some as masculine women, some as feminine women, and some as fluidly moving between and within these categories. However, several also spoke of regulating their gendered appearance in response to fear of harassment or violence. Delta, who works with men that she described as typically traditional and sometimes homophobic, described selecting apparel that was both less feminine and less masculine than is typical for her:

[When I'm with them], I really don't wear usually what I'm most comfortable in, but I don't wear dresses really. I wear Toms or just slacks or corduroys or button up shirts.

Delta, 26 years, white lesbian

Delta's clothing choices seem geared to warding off sexual harassment as well as queer visibility by emphasizing neither her femininity nor her masculinity.

At first during our interview, Grace observed that lesbians who are most likely to be attacked are those who violate feminine gender norms then she speculated that two feminine lesbians would perhaps be at equal or greater risk, emphasizing the lesbians' femininity:

Did I talk to you at all about queer women being, in my perception, possibly more prone to, what did you call it, street calling or whatever?

Street harassment?

Street harassment.

So you think queer women are more likely to be victims of street harassment?

Yeah.

Can you elaborate?

Masculine looking queer women.

Masculine looking. And who is going to harass them?

Actually, you know what? The reason why I say masculine is because it's more visible to be a masculine woman who somebody could construe as being gay whether you're gay or not.

Okay.

Okay. So if you got two feminine women walking down the street obviously holding hands in a way that's a little bit more than "we're just sisters and we like to play Barbie dolls together," I think that that would also get a response but a different one.

Grace, 39 years, white lesbian

Although Grace is addressing public displays of affection as well, she is pointing here to the risks she attaches to appearing too feminine or too masculine. Significantly, Grace frames the risk to the feminine lesbians in her scenario as linked to their being visibly queer by holding hands; whereas, the masculine lesbian is marked as queer without the presence of a same-sex partner. This suggests that Grace believes feminine lesbians need not necessarily regulate their gendered appearance in response to fear of homophobic harassment but that regulating masculinity is in order. Although Grace points to masculinity as a risk for lesbians, she also discussed it as a way to manage her fear:

So the next thing that comes to mind is a scenario where maybe I'm walking home from the train at night. I'll just walk you through what kind of goes through my head and we can go from there.

Okay. All right.

So the first thing I do is I take advantage of every bit of masculinity that I might have. I walk up straighter, I walk with as broad of shoulders as I can, and I walk with a long gait....

You sort of tap into your inner masculinity by walking tall, taking big strides? Are you trying to, when you tap into your inner masculinity, is it so that you can look masculine to outsiders or so you can feel the power of that masculinity?

A little of both.

A little of both?

It's a little of both. It's more, if I've been working out lately it might be really a lot more about the power but if I'm way out of shape, which I am right now, it would be like, I want you to think I'm a guy because changes are you'll leave me alone.

Oh, okay. Okay. Okay.

You know, if I can be mistaken for a guy in the ladies room on occasion there is no reason why in the middle of winter with a skull cap on I can't make you think I'm a man.

Okay. Okay. So there is an actual, you are actually trying to pass?

Yup.

Okay. And you see that as a potential deterrent to somebody who...

To male sexual assault.

So this is about avoiding rape?

Yeah.

Okay. Or other sexual assault.

Yeah. I'm trying to avoid sexual assault.

Grace, 39 years, white lesbian

Grace, who has an athletic tomboyish appearance in her everyday life, described regulating her gendered appearance to accentuate masculinity as a way to prevent rape; she does this through behavior but also clothing.

Brick discussed regulating her appearance to appear feminine and strong, suggesting that looking "straight" was a risk but also making a point to say that she looked feminine. Brick referred to her own appearance as "kind of butch" and at the time was wearing a sleeveless t-shirt, a bandana over her hair and low on her forehead, and jeans because she had ridden a motorcycle to the interview:

Looking straight though can make [the risk of harassment] worse.

From your experience, what does that mean?

Hmm. If someone saw me right now, I'm kind of butch today. Plus I'm strong. Like I really work out and I'm super strong but I'm also feminine enough....I think if you look more straight, more appealing maybe to a man, or just feminine and weak, then they might commit a crime against you. I might be a little bit safer just because I look more strong and like that's, I don't know, they know by looking that I can handle myself.

Brick, 26 years, white lesbian

In this sense, we imagine “feminine enough” means feminine enough to avoid being visibly queer, which Brick balances with a “kind of butch” appearance to also convey her physical strength. It appears that Brick is regulating her gendered appearance to avoid both homophobic harassment and sexual harassment from heterosexual men.

Some of the women who identified as more masculine also accentuated the masculine as a means of managing their fear. That was the case for Jane. Jane is an athletic white lesbian who described herself as having “masculine energy” and said that she is frequently mistaken for male. Like Grace, Jane reported emphasizing her masculine qualities when she felt fearful:

Try to make myself bigger. I have, I have a noticeable kind of walking walk which has been mistaken more male.

A bit of a swagger?

I think that's right....I've been told I have all this male energy. I actually try to project that more. It's like you're not messing with me.

So you try to amp up the masculine qualities about your walk or your appearance?

Yeah.

Jane, 50 years, white lesbian

Jamie likewise reported playing up her masculinity when she felt fearful, with the aim in her case of convincing would-be attackers that she is male. Jaime observed that she feels especially likely to do this in everyday spaces where she does not know the people around her; she used the example of a gas station. I asked why, to which she replied:

Because I'm brown, because I'm gay, because my gender is ambiguous. Once I get identified as a male by someone, I make sure my voice stays deep. I make sure my chest becomes more concave and I get to where I got to get quickly, because the last thing I want is someone to figure out they've made a mistake.

Jaime, 36 years, Hispanic lesbian

Jaime, Grace, Jane and others regulate their gendered appearance in response to their fear of harassment and violence. For Jaime, this appears to be all the more important because of her status as a person of color. While appearance self-regulation is a common response to fear, often the focus in studies is on women choosing clothing that is moderate but feminine, such as longer skirts, higher necklines, and lower heels, in an effort to prevent street harassment or rape. In this study, women also regulate their appearance in response to fear but the aim is as often to emphasize masculinity as it is to moderate femininity.

Appearance and Invisibility

Regulating one's appearance so as to be literally invisible is, of course, not possible. However, a repeating pattern in the data is the idea of being unnoticed, blending into one's surroundings and in effect being invisible to a would-be attacker. Delta captured this idea when she spoke of traveling with her partner, who she said has been harassed for being a visibly queer woman of color. As an interracial lesbian couple in a largely white medium-sized city in the Midwest, Delta characterized her partner and her as visibly different. Furthermore she noted that they, and especially her partner, have been harassed as a consequence. When they traveled to a large diverse city in California, Delta described the feeling of invisibility:

When we got to [the city], getting from the airport to the rental car place, I didn't feel any kind of fear or anything. I wasn't worried because there were all kinds of different people. Like it was really different from [our city]. So, everybody is different. Like there's a whole mix of people. So, I didn't think about [being harassed or in danger] at all really.

Delta, 26 years, white lesbian

Although Delta did not describe regulating her appearance to achieve this invisibility, she is describing the absence of fear that surfaced when the characteristics that she tied to vulnerability were suddenly unremarkable, like a cup of water dropped into a lake. Some participants were eager to be invisible in this way and some linked being invisible to being safe.

Rosalinda, a biracial lesbian with an asymmetrical haircut that is curly and tousled on one side and buzzed close to her head on the other, told me that people who are at risk in her neighborhood are “people who stand out.” She then described how her hair style, race, and her skin color help her go unnoticed in her African American neighborhood while also serving to make her noticed in another neighborhood:

So you don't stand out [in your neighborhood] because you look like you belong?
Right.

Okay.

So then I worry about everything less because that's first for me. Racial perception is always probably first, and then homosexuality is like a secondary issue.

Do you think you're marked as queer [in your African American neighborhood]?
No. Because I think the way that people interpret outward signifiers is different across race.

Rosalinda, 27 years, biracial lesbian

Rosalinda's observation reveals the challenges some women of color in my sample experience when they attempt to regulate their appearance to go unnoticed in response to their fears. Fears of violence for women of color include and, as Rosalinda's words make clear, often center first on the risk of racist violence. Rosalinda finds ways to avoid standing out in her own African American neighborhood but cannot use the same appearance to do so in a trendy white middle class neighborhood, where she is a

racialized other. Rosalinda described feeling solace in her neighborhood, where her appearance helps her go unnoticed.

Althea regulates her appearance in combination with her behavior in response to her fear of harassment. She credits her physical size, the social signals she transmits, and the absence of emphasized femininity with risk avoidance:

Do you ever think about how feminine or masculine or how you're performing gender when you're out in public space? In connection with your safety?

Oh, absolutely. I think because I'm not a particularly feminine woman, that staves off some of the attention. It staves off some of the need for people to approach me. And because also I'm serious. I'm not, I don't look like I am willing to engage. I don't look like I would take shit easily so I think that keeps certain elements away from me.

Okay.

And I think the size of my body, you know, being [tall] helps. Yeah.

Althea, 36 years, Black lesbian

Althea's appearance regulation is aimed at repelling harassers, communicating her strength and her desire to traverse public space unimpeded. Her appearance is designed to render her invisible as a victim.

Although some women of color in my sample broached the subject of invisibility, the idea more often surfaced in interviews with white participants. Betty, a tomboyish young-looking 30 year old blonde lesbian, illuminated the concept of invisibility when she described why she felt safer in her small Midwest city than she did when she traveled to San Francisco:

I feel less safe in San Francisco actually than here because, you know, gay couples holding hands is kind of a, uh, goddamn, what's the word? Kind of like a rare bird here, you know?

A novelty?

Ya, that's it. A novelty. I think that the people who would have the proclivity to do a hate crime would be a lot more inflamed in San Francisco because it's everywhere, you know?

So someone homophobic and violent might be more likely to commit a hate crime in a more liberal environment like San Francisco than in [your smaller city]?

Right and also the fact that in bigger cities, I, you know I hate to make a blanket statement but in bigger cities the gay community is very much...the kind of crowd that usually stands out. A lot. Like the bar scene is kind a scary there. *So, let me make sure I'm getting this, you perceive that one of the reasons that you might feel safer here in [your town] than in San Francisco is because your community of gay and lesbian people here seem more like everyone else here, more "normal?"*

We aren't a subculture here; we all blend in. You know, we're in every profession you can think of and you know, with the exception of a few, all of my friends are straight passing, could pass for straight. And it's not because, I don't think they did it for their safety but they prefer to dress the way they dress and they like to, you know, they like their femininity and their perception of femininity. You know, like my girlfriend, she's such a fuckin' girl. She thinks that no one thinks she's a lesbian but she sometimes complains about it, too, and I'll say, "well look at you!" *So here, one of the things that seems to create safety is that there is less of a deviation from the norm in the way that lesbians present themselves?*

Ya. I think that's why there's safety here.

And in big cities, deviant gay and lesbians are either more plentiful or more visible?

There you have to deviate from the norm to even stand out. You have to be way out there to be deviant at all. You know what I mean?

Sort of.

Just that, gay or straight, cities have more, they have more people who don't look like everyone, more kids with piercings and blue hair. So if you want to be gay and stand out, you have to do more.

Betty, 30 years, white lesbian

This exchange demonstrates the value of appearance self-regulation that allows women in my sample to become invisible as lesbians. Betty is describing how her friends and girlfriend conform to feminine norms, how no one wears blue hair or peculiar piercings, how they look not only like each other but like other women in their community who are heterosexual, and how these things permit them to be invisible.

Joan touches on the subject of invisibility as well. When discussing lesbians' risk of being victims of hate crime, Joan succinctly said that lesbians who are visible are at risk: "I think people who are out and open are [at risk] because they're unwilling to be less than." In this

sense, Joan equates visibility with resistance to queer inequality, and invisibility with safety. She described what visibility as a lesbian meant to her:

Being really butch. So, and it's just what it is. I rarely get harassed by people who don't really know who I am because I'm a lipstick lesbian. The most butch thing I do is carry a bag of dog food. The mechanics can change my car and I don't do any of that kind of stuff...In the Midwest it's interesting and some of this couldn't happen in the South [where I used to live]. You get two kinds of women here mothers who have very feminine hair, wearing feminine clothes, wearing makeup; or you have farm country women and sometimes they're more masculine dressed or looking. Women can fit into that mold or hide. It's very, it's a lot harder to hide in the South because of the stereotypical ways women dress and live in the world there. Here I can't tell butch lesbians from women working on farms. Before I thought my gaydar was pretty good. Now, I'm like hey, I've moved into a different culture.

Joan, 34 years, white lesbian

Joan's comments reveal the importance of context in the pursuit of invisibility, much like Rosalinda's comments. Her discussion of visibility suggests first that being invisible, blending into the sea of other women in the community, is how lesbians can stay safe from homophobic harassment and violence. Although Joan herself is a lipstick lesbian, she notes that norms for women in her Midwest community are within a range of femininity and masculinity, the latter shaped by rural norms. Her observation is that the lesbians who she thinks are typically at risk because they are "really butch" are safer in her community because the norms for women allow them to be invisible.

Julie discussed the idea of invisibility after first telling me that lesbians and straight women were at risk of being targeted for violence:

So being a woman is a risk factor but being noticeably lesbian is an added risk?

Absolutely. Whether you're straight or gay. Because I know women who stand out in a crowd for whatever reason, I think they tend to be harassed more.

What other kinds of reasons make them noticeable?

Oh, the way they wear their hair, or they have short skirts, or they have big boobs or any number of things that makes them different from the average.

So, anything that, you mean that women who don't blend in are at greater risk?
Right. Exactly. I think blending is really important for safety. Kind of like the zebra mentality, you know if we all blend together, if we're not on the edge of the crowd in any way, we're less vulnerable.

Julie, 49 years, white lesbian

Julie's shift from discussing how lesbians pass to discussing how all women are safer when they pass is striking. At the start of this exchange, Julie latched onto the word "noticeable," not the word "lesbian." Julie tells us that women who are visible, who stand out for any reason – for being a lesbian, for having large breasts, for wearing short skirts, for having noticeable hair, etc. – are at greatest risk for violence. Being invisible is the key to women's safety. But being invisible is a racialized prospect. Although Rosalinda describes fitting into her working class and poor African American community with her edgy hairstyle, she notes how quickly her race and hairstyle mark her as an outsider in a white middle-class neighborhood. Also notable in this exchange is Julie's remark that women who do not blend, "tend to be harassed *more*" (my emphasis); this suggests that even women who do not stand out are subject to harassment.

Julie's use of the words, "zebra mentality" calls forth a vivid image, an image that suggests that women should conform to norms or else the harassment could be deadly, and image that likens women to prey. Julie may have the option to regulate her appearance so as to be invisible but as Rosalinda's experience indicates this seems quite a bit more complicated for women of color. Nonetheless, one approach to appearance regulation is aimed at being invisible in public space.

Assertive Responses

Assertive responses to fear include asking for help from a bystander, authority figure, other individual or institution; actively fleeing the situation or running from the harasser; or

verbal confrontation or negotiation. Eleven participants responded assertively to fear; thirteen responded assertively to street harassment. The most common assertive response was fleeing from the harasser. However, women reported fewer assertive than passive responses to both fear and street harassment. Six participants reported fleeing; five reported asking for help; eight discussed negotiating or verbally confronting their harasser. Some women engaged in more than one assertive response during a single incident of street harassment.

When speculating on how to respond to their fear or to a harasser, most women discussed the assertive response of fleeing or using a passive strategy such as ignoring the harassment.

When asked what to do if harassed on the street, several women replied similarly to Betty:

Leave. Depends. If it's a guy acting like an asshole, I might just blow him off but if he's, well if he's drunk or in a bar or with a group, then leaving is better.

Betty, 30 years, white lesbian

Betty suggests fleeing if men who harass are in groups or intoxicated, both factors that she perceives as increasing the risk of violence. When participants identified spaces where harassment occurs, spaces dominated by men and alcohol was one of the most frequently mentioned. Jordan ignored her harassers until they started to follow her then she grabbed her phone in case she needed to call for help and fled. Brick, who prides herself on being very physically fit, was confident that she could outrun someone who threatened her:

What are your strategies if you feel unsafe around someone in public?

I'd run and I'd beat them.

Brick, 26 years, white lesbian

Linda fled from a harasser by getting on a train, leaving him behind in the station after he called her a "bitch" for refusing to respond to his overtures. Jacqueline escaped a group of boys who were harassing her by dashing into a restaurant. She was able to use the restaurant as a safe

haven until her partner came to get her. Jacqueline was one of the few women who described asking for help, though her request to stay in the restaurant for a few minutes to avoid her harassers was minor and did not involve contacting any authorities.

Delta confronted her harassers in one incident of street harassment. In another, while she was an undergraduate student, she felt compelled to run for safety:

I was walking. I had finally gotten close to campus...and I was walking across the street and this guy drove by in a car and he said, "Hey girl, look at that ass!" And he's like, "You just wait right there. I'm going to drive around the block and I'm going to come talk to you." I'm like, I don't know, it just really freaked me out. So he like peels around the corner and he's going to come around and I don't know where he would've parked, but I took off running and I like leaped over the wall, a stone wall. And I just like ran to [a building on campus]. It just like really freaked me out because there were like all these parking lots where he could've pulled in and I'm just like on foot.

Delta, 26 years, white lesbian

Delta's decision to run from her harasser indicates her fear. Her mention of how easily he could have gained access to her suggests she was perhaps afraid of abduction and sexual assault.

Trinity reported being terrified and fleeing in her vehicle when a man appeared to be aggressively attempting to attack her:

And so like I went out there to pick whatever it was up and I was heading back to the truck and I felt, just something seemed off and the neighborhood is not very well lit. It's not a good neighborhood, and I heard something and I turned around and there was a guy running at me. Like, just full force, just running at me. And I was like ah! And so like I unlocked the truck real fast, hopped in and just, you know, squealed out, you know. It's just like oh, god.

Trinity, 32 years, white lesbian

In Trinity's case, fleeing was in response not only to fear but to immediate risk.

Rachael and her partner reluctantly attempted to have a short-lived cursory but courteous verbal exchange with a man who approached them until it became clear he had targeted the two

women for homophobic harassment. As soon as they realized what he was doing, they made a hurried departure:

...At this point I like grab her hand and I, we basically like run around this car and then we start just like briskly walking the other way kind of looking over our shoulders to see if he's following us and he was screaming like, you know, "Fucking faggots" and all these things after us.

Rachael, 23 years, white lesbian

Rachael verbally confronted her harasser when she told him, "Okay, we have no interest in hearing what you have to say about this" but also responded assertively when she made a hasty retreat. Verbal confrontation is one of the assertive responses used by women in this study, though it was far less common than fleeing.

Often, as in the situation with Rachael and her partner, verbal confrontation took the form of making a statement while walking away or making a comment then retreating. For example, when Rosalinda and her partner were harassed by at least two men in a car while they were walking on a sidewalk, Rosalinda yelled and gestured but she and her partner kept walking and did not further engage with their harassers. When Delta was approached by a group of apparently intoxicated men as she helped her intoxicated friend home from the bar one night, she confronted her harassers as she continued to walk away and get her friend into her car – not pausing but communicating her unwillingness to be harassed while making an effort to leave the area as soon as possible.

Two participants spoke about negotiating with harassers. Negotiating with a harasser is different than verbally confronting the harasser; typically, it is more engaged and requires a longer investment of time. Jaime spoke about a specific situation of negotiation. Althea spoke about negotiation more generally. Jaime, a Hispanic lesbian who characterizes herself as

masculine in appearance, engaged in a type of verbal negotiation with an African American man who commented on her gender and her sexuality within second of seeing her. Jaime had entered a chain restaurant seconds before it closed to get some dishes for a barbeque the following day:

So I changed my diction really quick and I tried to, you know, strike up some fun conversation. I made a couple jokes about chicks, which was deplorable to me, but [I did] everything I could to feel like he looked at me like one of him and not something to be disliked.

Jaime, 36 years, Hispanic lesbian

Jaime did not confront her harasser, per se. Nor did she even acknowledge the harassment. Rather, she negotiated her safety in part by engaging in friendly dialogue meant to help him see her as a “one of him and not something to be disliked.” This type of verbal negotiation may or may not be common beyond my sample but Jaime was the only participant in this study to report using this assertive strategy in this way. It seems quite significant that she was alone in the restaurant with two men when this occurred, locked inside until the manager let her out after giving her the order she had placed. Jaime felt trapped, with few options aside from getting on friendly terms with him. It may also be significant that both Jaime and her harasser are racial minorities. Race is a strong point of connection between people; although Jaime is Hispanic and her harasser is African American, their shared status as racialized others might have helped facilitate Jaime’s assertive negotiation.

Though Althea did not report having confronted a specific harasser, she did discuss the circumstances under which she is willing to negotiate. After talking about how groups of men can be dangerous and expressing concern specifically about groups of men, “hyping each other up,” Althea said:

I think men tend to take up more space and if they’re in my space I’ll ask them to get out of my space and sometimes people don’t like that.

They don't like that?

Yeah.

Are these men white typically?

Yeah. Oftentimes. I think partly because it feels like who am I to ask them to get out of their space. I think also it's my, I am willing to engage in more of a dialogue with brown men and if they push back on my asking them to get out of my space, I'm willing to enter into more of a dialogue because I'm more committed to them, committed to my community. White men I'm not really committed to engaging in a long back and forth on why you should get out of my space.

Althea, 36 years, Black lesbian

Although Althea is describing assertive responses to white men as well as men of color, they are different responses. Althea would verbally direct white men whereas she would negotiate with men of color. Althea's loyalty to men of color, men she sees as members of her community, lays the foundation for her to negotiate with them when they encroach on her personal space. However, Althea's statements bring to light a predicament for women of color who are similarly invested in their communities of color – particularly Black women. Racial solidarity characterizes Black feminist politics and often characterizes the politics of anti-oppression work within communities of color (e.g., Hill Collins 1986) but a politics of racial solidarity does not adequately address violence against women of color or prevent their victimization. In fact, it may be an impediment to preventing victimization of women and girls within their communities (Fogg-Davis 2006; Hill Collins 1986; King 1988). Black, biracial, and multiracial women have higher rates of violent victimization, including rape and sexual assault, than white women (Truman 2010). In a discussion about street harassment, Hill Collins charges that all “African American girls and women, *regardless of sexual orientation,*” are seen as approachable (emphasis hers, 2004, 115). Fogg-Davis (2006) reminds readers that street harassment is a “likely precursor to violent assault” (63). Althea's assertive response to street harassment from

men of color reveals a commitment to racial solidarity that may not protect her should her harasser become violent. This points to some of the factors that place women of color at increased risk for victimization.

Participants often used both passive and assertive responses during a single incident of street harassment. The most common assertive response was fleeing from the harasser. Althea's and Jaime's experiences suggest that choosing the assertive response of verbal confrontation or negotiation is shaped by racial identity of both the harassed woman and the harasser, particularly for women of color.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion

In this chapter, I discuss my major findings, and the theoretical relevance of my findings to West and Zimmerman's (1987) theory of doing gender, including a detailed explanation of how this study illuminates the concept of accountability as conceptualized by Hollander (2013). I then make suggestions for future research and discuss study limitations. I close with my thoughts about practical implications.

Major Findings

This research examines street harassment, fear of violence (especially rape), and processes of doing gender. I used an intersectional lens and was guided by two overarching questions: (1) What are the relationships between gender, race, and sexuality, street harassment, fear, and social control?, and (2) How is accountability to being recognizably female linked to street harassment and fear of crime for lesbians and other queer women? To answer these questions, I interviewed a racially diverse sample of queer women and focused on the ways in which they viewed and responded to fear and street harassment, as well as their lived and gendered street harassment experiences. The major findings are: the incite/invite dilemma women face; the links between doing gender and types of harassment, as well as the links between doing gender and the types of rape women in my sample fear; the role of institutional violence in shaping the fears and responses of queer women of color; and the ways in which privilege appears to shape women's willingness to consider self-defense or weapons.

The incite/invite dilemma shapes women's responses to street harassment and fear. Several of the women in this study described fears of inadvertently triggering a more severe or

violent reaction from a man who harassed them. Some described street harassment experiences that did, in fact, escalate when they responded. Several participants feared that a negative, visibly angry, or assertive response to harassment would incite violence or additional harassment, while simultaneously fearing that failing to respond assertively would be viewed as an invitation for continued or more aggressive harassment. Responding to fear and street harassment is shaped by this untenable quandary that I call the incite/invite dilemma. The incite/invite dilemma appears to offer women few real options to negotiate their safety.

Major findings demonstrate clear links between how women in my sample “do gender” and the types of harassment they experience as well as the types of rape they fear.

- Women who successfully “do femininity” and pass for heterosexual generally experience heterosexual street harassment and they fear heterosexual rape. Encounters with heterosexual harassment are characterized by sexual aggression, sexual comments, and/or threats of rape and the harasser appears to assume that his target is heterosexual. I define heterosexual rape as rape perpetrated by one or more heterosexual men who assume the victim is heterosexual.
- Women who successfully “do femininity” but are identified as queer experience heterosexual and homophobic street harassment and commonly fear both heterosexual rape and corrective rape. Homophobic harassment occurs when the targets are presumed to be homosexual and the harasser is expressing hatred or contempt for homosexuality or queer people; this type of harassment typically includes insults, sexual comment and perhaps threats. Corrective rape operates on the myth that lesbians are lesbians only because they have not experienced heterosexual sex (or heterosexual sex with the “right man”); this type of rape is about transforming lesbians into heterosexuals.

- Women who “do femininity” but who fail to also “do deference” appear to experience heterosexual street harassment and to fear punitive rape as a consequence of disregarding the norm of women’s subordination. Punitive rape disciplines women for violating heterosexual and/or gender norms and seems linked to publicly displaying affection for a same-sex partner, doing masculinity, or violating norms of women’s insubordination.
- Women who “do masculinity” experience homophobic harassment and commonly fear punitive rape, with some also reporting fear of corrective rape.

These findings suggest that the women in my sample cannot do gender in such a way as to secure their certain or even almost certain safety in public. Furthermore, the findings about the links between doing gender and types of street harassment indicate that doing gender is, as West and Zimmerman (1987) argue, integral to gender inequality.

An additional major finding is that women of color in my sample fear institutional violence, which magnifies their fears in some instances and influences the ways in which they respond to street harassment and fear. This is connected to the fact that white women discuss self-defense and the possible use of weapons whereas women of color did not frame their options in terms of self-defense and weapons. Women of color in my sample discussed institutional violence in terms of the risks they may face when they report a crime – such as not being believed, being criminalized, or being directly victimized by the law enforcement officer who responds. They also discussed risks related to using self-defense, in particular the risk of criminalization. This seemed especially true for African American and Black women. Thus a major finding is that racial inequality arouses fear of institutional violence and that women of color did not consider self-defense or the use of weapons in response to street harassment or other incidents that cause them to be fearful.

In general, the findings suggest that street harassment is a significant problem for the queer women in my sample, causing many of them to feel traumatized and terrorized. This is consistent with other studies of street harassment (e.g., Gardner 1995; Kears 2011), however few of those studies examine queer women's experiences and too few use an intersectional approach to analyze how overlapping social locations influence street harassment and the fear of rape that often surfaces for women who are being harassed. For some women I interviewed, street harassment makes palpable their fear of rape. All but one of the women in my sample fear rape, and 25 fear rape more than any other crime, which is consistent with the literature (e.g., Ferraro 1996; Gordon et al. 1980; Madriz 1997a, 1997b; Pain 1997b; Scott 2003; Stanko 1990, 1995; Warr 1985). However, I find that queer women fear more than one kind of rape, which is a contribution to our understanding of fear of rape. A nuanced understanding of fear of rape clarifies important links to queer and gendered identities that could have implications for both policy and practice.

Other researchers have found differences across racial groups in terms of fear of rape (i.e., Madriz 1997b) and street harassment (e.g., Kears 2010; Neilsen 2004; Pain 2001). My finding about the relationship between race and fear of institutional violence confirms Madriz's (1997b) results, though she discusses institutional violence in relation to altruistic fear. However, results from this study extend our knowledge by showing a likely link between fear of institutional violence and the willingness of women of color to use self-defense. These findings certainly have social and political implications.

Another connection to the literature concerns the gender differential in fear of crime studies. The most common findings in the fear of crime literature is that women fear violence more than men despite having far lower objective risks of violence, as measured by crime

statistics (e.g., Stank 1995; Warr 1985). This study contributes to the literature that examines gender differences in fear of crime and offers some possible explanations for the magnitude of women's fears. Street harassment was identified as a source of fear, and for several a common occurrence. Moreover, for several of the women in this sample, fear of rape is amplified by street harassment. In effect, street harassment serves to regularly police women while they are in public space. Moreover, women are regularly *disciplined* through multiple types of street harassment and the specter of different types of rape. Street harassment demonstrates that conforming to heterosexual and gender norms places women at risk *and* failing to conform places them at risk. The incite/invite dilemma demonstrates that how they respond to their harassment may up the ante and place them at even greater risk. These findings have implications beyond my queer sample. Findings from this research suggest that women's fear of crime, which is commonly identified as fear of rape, may be proportional to the relentless discipline they experience and threat they face when they walk into the public square.

Theoretical Relevance: Doing Gender

The theoretical starting point for this project is West and Zimmerman's "doing gender" theory (1987). "Doing gender" theory detaches gender from the individual and from individual characteristics; instead West and Zimmerman (1987) argue that gender is contextualized action. In other words, gender is not in who we are; it is in *what we do*. Particularly relevant for this study are West and Zimmerman's (1987) concepts of accountability and interpersonal, social, and institutional consequences for adhering to or violating gender norms, as well as the links between gender, sexuality and race.

The findings suggest that doing gender for the women in this study is linked to certain types of harassment and to fearing certain types of rape. Women who successfully “do femininity” and pass for heterosexual generally experience heterosexual street harassment and they fear heterosexual rape. Women who successfully “do femininity” but get marked as queer (often through the presence of a same-sex partner or a public display of affection) experience heterosexual and homophobic street harassment and commonly fear both heterosexual rape and corrective rape. Women who “do femininity” in some ways, namely in appearance, but who fail to also “do deference” appear to experience heterosexual street harassment and to fear punitive rape as a consequence for disregarding the norm of women’s subordination. Participants who “do masculinity” typically experience homophobic harassment and commonly fear punitive rape, with some also expressing fear of corrective rape. For women of color, there are additional types of harassment. Racist and racialized street harassment, as well as fear of rape, occur regardless of how women of color do gender and regardless of whether they pass for heterosexual or not. Perhaps the most significant theoretical contribution from this study is that “doing gender” in accordance with social norms is tied to street harassment and fear of rape *and* failing to “do gender” in accordance with social norms is likewise linked to street harassment and fear of rape. For the queer women in my sample, all ways of “doing gender” are connected to street harassment and fear of rape. In other words, there is no sure safe passage in public space.

Doing Gender and Accountability

West and Zimmerman argue that scholars studying doing gender need to be attentive to situational factors, as well as the relationship between doing gender and sex category (2009). They further argue that accountability sits at the core of their theory (2009). One of my goals in this research is to understand the role of accountability in the production of gender for the

women in my sample, and how that process is shaped by interactions connected to the situational conditions of street harassment and fear. I adopt Hollander's (2013) framework of accountability, focusing on the three mechanisms of accountability: orientation, assessment, and enforcement.

Orientation to Sex Category

Hollander describes orientation to sex category as “the constant and ubiquitous orientation of one’s thoughts, perceptions, and behavior to the societal ideals and local expectations associated with sex category” as well as the “explicit and implicit consequences of others’ assessments” (Hollander 2013, 10). In other words, orientation to sex category is how an individual adjusts herself to the rules of belonging in her sex category and to the possible and imagined consequences of adhering to or violating the rules of belonging in her sex category. Hollander (2013) finds that women taking self-defense classes were reluctant to yell as part of their training because yelling was viewed as unladylike; Hollander then explains that her study participants were reluctant to yell because their orientation to sex category is located in the thoughts, perceptions and behaviors that associate *not* yelling with being female. Furthermore, the women’s thoughts and perceptions of how others will assess them *and* respond to them for yelling is part of their orientation to sex category. The location of orientation to sex category is within the individual but informed by external realities. This is one component of accountability as conceptualized by West and Zimmerman (1987) and made visible by Hollander (2013).

The findings in this study suggest that some queer women’s orientation to sex category is complicated by their layered gender identity. Jane, who described herself in terms both feminine and masculine, offers an example of orientation to sex category that is unlike those in Hollander’s study. Jane identifies as a woman but describes herself as having an undeniable masculine energy. She explained that for as long as she could recall, she has been mistaken for

male during her adult years. One on occasion, while walking down the street holding hands with her husband during an early heterosexual marriage, a man in a car yelled “faggots” as he passed Jane and her husband, mistaking them for a gay male couple. Jane’s orientation to sex category is to the feminine in that “the constant and ubiquitous orientation” of her “thoughts, perceptions, and behavior” is to the “societal ideal and local expectations” most associated with the female sex category (Hollander 2013, 10). However, her perceptions of the “explicit and implicit consequences of others’ assessments” (Hollander 2013, 10) are as often linked to being held accountable for conforming to the societal ideal associated with the male sex category as the female sex category.

Jaime offers additional insight into orientation to sex category. Hollander’s study participants apparently all identified as female-bodied women who had adopted feminine identities. Two participants in my study, both of whom identify as belonging to the sex category of female, have adopted masculine identities as women. That is, they claim womanhood within female bodies while simultaneously adopting a masculine identity. Jaime is one example. She so effectively passes for male, which is part of her perception of self, that she rarely fears being harassed as a lesbian:

So as a male, I have no worries. My fear is that they will go, oh wait a minute. Then I get worried. But otherwise, I have no perception that somebody will be like, “Dyke!” You know, like they just don’t go there.

Jaime, 36 years, Hispanic lesbian

Jaime is describing “doing masculinity.” It was clear during our interview that her concerns about being held accountable to the sex category of female are tied to her fear of homophobic violence as well as misogynist violence; however, she is largely *not* concerned because she is so routinely assumed to be a man. This is in contrast to Jaime’s partner, who she described as:

Feminine enough to be identified as female, but also slightly masculine.

Jaime, 36 years, Hispanic lesbian

When I asked if her partner had, like Jaime, been mistaken for male, Jaime's reply gives a glimpse of how her partner does femininity, albeit a moderate masculinized femininity:

Rarely. It's happened to her a few times and it's been really uncomfortable for her, but for the most part she looks like a girl. She's got a girl's figure. She wears her shirts a little bit closer to the body than I do even though they're boy shirts.

Jaime, 36 years, Hispanic lesbian

Jaime's orientation to sex category is shaped by her adoption of both maleness and femaleness, not merely her adoption of masculinities and femininities. Although she claims a masculine identity she also claims a feminine one: "I perceive of myself more masculine than feminine *at times*" (emphasis mine). Sometimes, Jaime also refers to herself as male: "So as a male, I have no worries;" and describes many of her actions, behaviors, and thoughts within this male framework. This was evident in an exchange with Jaime about the importance of there being a protector in a lesbian couple.

You know, like my brother will do everything he can to defend his wife. I perceive of myself more masculine than feminine at times. I will slaughter someone if they come near [my partner]. So I think that there is something to be said for that companion person. I believe in some of that old school chivalry being legitimate still.... that's what I meant when I said masculine chivalry. Like I make it clear and obvious. I am with this person. I open the door for her. I shelter her in. I observe the person behind me and then I follow. Like, that demeanor that men have stays with me. And I feel like in these feminine young couples there's lacking that shelter of protection. When I see them, I don't see the one who is going to step in front. I don't see her. She might exist, but if I'm looking really hard and I don't see her, and I know us, you can see a fellow doesn't see her either.

So are you saying the feminine lesbian couple might actually be more at risk [of harassment] because one of them is not the protector, the masculine protector?
Yeah. Just my thought.

Jaime, 36 years, Hispanic lesbian

For Jaime, the “constant and ubiquitous orientation” of her “thoughts, perceptions, and behavior to the societal ideals... associated with sex category” is not exclusively attached to the sex category of female (Hollander 2013, 10). In fact, it seems clear that at least some of the time Jaime’s thoughts, perceptions, and behaviors seem geared to meeting the societal ideals of being male rather than female.

Orientation to sex category, moreover, has a second feature: the “explicit and implicit consequences of others’ assessments” (Hollander 2013, 10). In essence, this is about *Jaime’s awareness* that she will be held to account for presenting a self that is in accordance with her presumed sex category. But Jaime’s orientation to sex category is complicated by her identification within both femininities and masculinities, her understanding of herself as male and female, and the effectiveness with which she presents herself as male. She described changing her voice, her posture, and making “jokes about chicks” when her identification as male was challenged. Jaime’s identification as a masculine woman, a woman who occupies both male and female territory, is confronted by the societal ideal of heteronormativity. In one incident, when Jaime was called to account for doing gender in a way that was not in sync with her presumed sex category, it was in part about violating the societal ideal of heteronormativity.

Heteronormativity is the idea that there are two sexes, i.e., two sex categories, and that each is distinct and opposite, as well as attracted to its opposite. Part of Jaime’s orientation to sex category is her understanding that she will be held to account for presenting a self that matches her presumed sex category and imaging the consequences when she does not. Informed by the duality of her orientation to sex category and that she most often explicitly favors masculinity, Jaime did not attempt to be feminine or pass as a woman when she was cornered by a harasser. Instead, Jaime used her orientation to sex category to present her maleness. For Jaime, given her

gendered appearance and her understanding of both herself and societal expectations, amplifying her performance of the masculine in that situation was the more logical choice. In the course of “doing masculinity” in response to her harassment, Jaime made disparaging remarks about women to the male harasser in an effort to both humanize herself as masculine and to demonstrate her belonging to the male pack. This suggests that for Jaime, “doing masculinity” required her to do sexism.

Jaime’s case suggests that orientation to sex category is more complicated when the individual is committed to both sex categories simultaneously. Hollander reminds sociologists and gender scholars that orientation to sex category is the “heart” of the doing gender theory, the foundation of accountability within the processes of doing gender. This is so in part because to be held accountable in a way that undergirds structural inequality between the sexes requires, to some degree, that those being held accountable be committed to one or the other sex category. If one is committed to both sex categories, as Jaime appears to be, the resulting gender fluidity may make processes of accountability less stable or at least less predictable. When someone attempted to hold Jaime accountable for being a woman in violation of feminine and heterosexual norms, she did not try to do femininity in line with her presumed sex category. Instead she presented a masculine self that conformed to her orientation to sex category.

Responses to accountability threats are typically framed as placing the violator in the position of emphasizing presumed sex category through the proper doing of gender in order to avoid or end the accountability action. Jaime, instead, does what West and Zimmerman claim cannot be done: she attempts to be a woman who is unfemale rather than merely a woman who is unfeminine (1987, 2009). Although the cases are too few in number for meaningful conclusions, Jaime’s case suggests that orientation to sex category may well complicate doing gender for

some queer women. She assessed how she was doing gender consciously and found it unsuitable so she changed how she was speaking and “made a couple jokes about chicks.” Jaime also spoke of amplifying her masculinity in other situations to prevent being identified as a female-bodied person, making sure her voice “stays deep” and her “chest becomes more concave.”

The risk of being detected is clear, as are Jaime’s assessments of her own doing of gender. Self-management requires self-assessment. Through Jaime’s management of how she does gender, and her articulation of how she does gender, her assessment becomes visible. But, again, it does not accord with her assigned sex category of female; rather, her assessment is of how well she does masculinity in accord with her presumed sex category.

Assessment

Assessment is the “production of accounts that evaluate people’s behavior in relation to expectations for their presumed sex category” (Hollander 2013, 10). Individuals must assess the doing of gender before they can hold themselves or others accountable for how they do gender. Conscious assessment is uncommon, related typically to “accountability threats” and other such troubling interactions (Hollander 2013, 10). Data from this study makes assessment visible in some instances. Jaime’s performance of masculinity and maleness while being harassed in a restaurant is one instance.

Other women in my sample commonly assessed their own performance of gender in relation to appearing feminine and, in many cases in relation to appearing heterosexual. For instance, Joan’s assessment of herself as a “lipstick lesbian” who is thus safe from homophobic harassment is connected to her understanding of the links between appearing feminine and appearing straight. Joan’s assessment is also connected to avoiding homophobic violence.

Rosalinda’s assessment points out the situational and racialized conditions of doing gender, and

like Joan's assessment it points to how some performances of gender are linked to sexual identity:

So, from [my African American neighborhood] people think I have a haircut like Rihanna. If I'm [in the white yuppie neighborhood], people think I look like a fucking dyke.

Rosalinda, 27 years, biracial lesbian

Rihanna is a popular singer from Barbados, a Black woman who often wears her hair in edgy funky styles. In her own community, Rosalinda's Avant-garde hairstyle is read as trendy and cool. In a nearby white middle class neighborhood, it is read as queer. Rosalinda's assessment suggests she is highly aware of how situation and location influences others' assessments.

Assessment is also apparent when Julie tells me who is at risk of victimization:

Butch. Dyke. Can't pass

Julie, 49 years, white lesbian

Julie did not hesitate when she responded in this way, suggesting that she both unconsciously and consciously assesses "doing masculinity" as a violation of norms. When Sam, who is identifiably female but who wears men's clothes and discussed walking like a man, expressed her fear of being targeted for homophobic harassment and violence, she also revealed how she assesses the manner in which she does gender. I asked her what crimes concerned her:

Really, probably gay-bashing. Like if somebody finds out that I'm gay I'm really freaked out at first because I don't know how they're going to perceive it.

How do people generally find out that you're gay?

I don't know, they look at me? [She laughs and makes a gesture toward herself, as if to say, "I look like a dyke."]

Sam, 38 years, white lesbian

Julie and Sam reveal the double assessment that takes place, the assessment of doing gender and the assessment of how other's will respond to that gender performance. While both Julie and

Sam assessed the risks attached to doing masculinity, a few others in my sample mentioned some of the ways masculinities minimize risk. For example, Jordan commented::

I feel safer when I'm giving butch. I do.

Okay.

But it's not like, like it would be very soft butch like when I'm giving it. It's really just a difference of shoes for the most part, maybe not wearing a skirt. So there is that like I do feel safer when I'm not giving like my total femness I guess.

Jordan, 23 years, white lesbian

Jordan's assessment demonstrates her awareness of how she does gender as well as how violating the norms of femininity slightly minimizes her feelings of fear.

For the women in my sample, assessing gender was primarily about assessing safety, illuminating the balance between adhering enough to feminine norms to avoid homophobic violence and violating feminine norms enough to feel less vulnerable to street harassment and random violence against women.

Enforcement

Enforcement is "how people hold themselves and others responsible for doing gender (Hollander 2013, 10). Enforcement includes both positive and negative enforcement for doing gender as socially and situationally prescribed, and in accordance with presumed sex category. The findings in this study indicate that street harassment is not only an avenue of enforcement in relation to how the women in my sample do gender but also a means of enforcing gender inequality.

Queer women's fears of heterosexual, corrective and punitive rape are means of enforcement. As the data from this study indicates, both women who observe gender norms and women who do not are targeted for street harassment. For the participants who deviate from the norms, street harassment was often viewed as a negative sanction for violating gender and

sexuality norms. Yet street harassment was an equally common experience for women who adhered to gender norms. What are we to make of that? Althea's describes how rape and its threat – including street harassment as a possible precursor to rape – should be understood in terms of enforcement:

[Rape] is a way to demean that gender aspect, whether we can associate it to a woman or to men, queer men who we find more effeminate. Rape becomes this kind of weapon against, I don't like to use the word femininity but rape becomes the weapon against things we deem as woman....People we code as women, yeah. *Okay. Okay. So then would a woman who is more androgynous or let's say even more butch, or whatever other term might be good there, more masculine, has some more masculine qualities, would she be as likely to be a victim of rape as a fem-looking woman?*

I don't know. I think it's very likely because I think...that is one way of maybe putting a woman back in her place or making certain that she understands that she can never assert the kind of maleness, that masculinity and that, in fact, that she is still, will always be a woman and will be in that position to maleness. Right.

Althea, 36 years, Black lesbian

Althea's remark highlights the significance of fear of rape in policing women's gender performance. Rape communicates that a woman who does masculinity "is still, will always be a woman, and will be in *that* position to maleness" (emphasis mine). *That* position is subordinate. Moreover, women who adhere to gender norms are also at risk of rape: Rape is a weapon against femininity, against "people we code as women." Althea's observations echo many of the comments from women in this study, queer women who expressed fear of rape, fear of following gender norms, and fear of deviating from gender norms.

This aspect of accountability, enforcement, as experienced through street harassment and fear, is as much about compulsory gender norms as it is about enforcing women's subordination, as well as racial and sexual inequalities. In this sense, we see how doing gender does indeed

provide the “interactional scaffolding of social structure” that reinforces gender inequality (West and Zimmerman 1987, 147).

Limitations and Future Research

My findings demonstrate that research on street harassment and fear of crime should not universalize women’s experiences. The data from this study suggest that race and sexuality shape street harassment and its meanings for women whose gendered expressions, sexual identities, and racial identities are other than those of the heterosexual, white, middle class women who are frequently the subject of research on both street harassment and fear of crime. In addition, my examination of processes of accountability to sex category complicates Hollander’s (2013) understanding of accountability and points to the need for additional and intersectional research on gender and accountability, with particular attention to race, multiple overlapping gender identities, and presumed sex categories in public space. Future research should also be attentive to street harassment as a significant factor when seeking explanations for the gender differential in reported fear of crime.

Future research that examines queer women’s experiences with street harassment should be attentive to the experiences of queer women of color in ways I was not. Although I have a racially diverse sample, the number of women of color is limited and the diversity of races within my women of color sample is limited. For instance, I have one participant who identifies as Asian American; her experiences with racist street harassment are quite different from the experiences of the Black women I interviewed. Moreover, Yvonne’s experiences with racist harassment from a white lesbian suggest that future studies should examine harassment *within* queer communities. My work is also limited to the perspectives of those who are harassed.

Knowledge about street harassment would benefit from in-depth investigations into the motives and actions of those who harass, as well as ethnographic research that examines incidents of street harassment as they occur.

Implications

As the data in this study indicates, queer women of color may be distinctly disadvantaged as victims of street harassment, especially Black women. Although both white women and women of color face the incite/invite dilemma, women of color have a narrower range of possible responses to street harassment as a consequence of institutional violence and the fear it inspires. Their options appear to be hampered by a reluctance to engage in self-defense, as well as a desire to maintain ties with and support men in their communities of color. Organizations and government institutions that address street harassment need to be attentive to these conditions.

Moreover, these findings suggest that feminist work to end street harassment, in particular, needs to broaden its focus to include not merely street harassment but a host of other pressing issues that shape street harassment experiences and that may well contribute to more dangerous street harassment for some women. For instance, making self-defense classes available to women may not at all address the needs of women of color, and in particular Black women who fear that using self-defense will result in their criminalization. The findings in this study suggest that feminist projects to end street harassment need to be attentive to multiple overlapping risks faced by Black women and other women of color. It may well be that anti-street harassment work that also focuses on ending racial discrimination within the criminal justice system would be more likely to help women of color than self-defense classes. It may be

that helping increase the number of women of color professionals within the criminal justice system would be useful. It may be that activist work that focuses on increasing social acceptance of a range of gendered bodies and gendered behaviors is essential to ending street harassment of queer women and other queer people who do not adhere to heterogendered norms. What is clear is that universal strategies aimed at resisting or surviving street harassment are highly unlikely to meet the needs of all women. The findings from this study indicate that viewing street harassment and fear of violence as misogynist social problems obscures the ways in which racism and heterosexism are implicated. For instance, working to end rape culture without acknowledging queer women's fear of corrective and punitive rape ignores real consequences that queer women face and that heterosexual women are far less likely to encounter.

Policies and practices aimed at protecting women from street harassment, responding to women who have been harassed, or ending street harassment ultimately need to be attentive to the range of inequalities that structure public life for women and men, queer and heterosexual, from communities of color, poor communities, and from communities characterized by white privilege. The structures of inequality that street harassment undergirds are racist, classist, sexist, and heterosexist; they are the structures of everyday life.

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Appendix A - Interview Schedule

NOTE: I anticipate that interviews will be relatively open-ended, as dictated by the exploratory nature of this project. I have provided questions below to indicate the nature of the topics to be covered.

I. Background Information

1. I'd like a little background information. Can you tell me your age?
2. What is your educational background?
3. How have you earned a living? Can you describe your work?
4. Can you describe your neighborhood for me? If you spend time in other neighborhoods, what are they like? Where do you go in the city, and how do you get there? Do you use CTA? Walk?
5. What do you do for fun?
6. Can you tell me a little bit about your relationship history?
7. Are you currently in a relationship? If not, how long have you been single? If so, how long have you been in a relationship? Do you live with anyone?
8. Are you a parent? If so, how many children do you have, what are their sexes and ages? Where do they live?

II. Perceptions of Fear and Safety

1. How often do you think about your safety?
2. What types of crimes or violence worry or scare you most? Do any specific incidents come to mind, things or situations that make you feel afraid?
3. Do you think about street harassment or being harassed by strangers when you're in public? If so, when, under what circumstances?
4. When you imagine a dangerous person, what comes to mind?
5. Who are the victims of violence? When you imagine a lesbian or straight woman who is a victim of men's violence, what comes to mind?

6. What do the news and newspapers in your community reveal about crime and violence? What about national media? How does that influence your feelings of safety?
7. Where and when do you feel most safe? What makes you feel safe? Most at risk? Can you describe that for me?
8. How would you compare the risk of violence among men and women? Who's more at risk? If women are at more risk, can you tell me which women you think might be most at risk? From whom? Can you tell me why you think that? If men are more at risk, which men? From whom and why?
9. Are lesbians at risk of men's violence? If so, under what circumstances? How would you compare the risk of violence among lesbians and straight women? Who's more at risk? If straight women are at more risk, can you tell me which straight women you think might be most at risk? From whom? Can you tell me why you think that? If lesbians are more at risk, which lesbians? From whom, and why?
10. Some straight women report being harassed on the street sometimes, like when a man or more than one man whistles or makes unwanted comments. Do lesbians experience that? Do they get harassed on the street in other ways? If so, what does that look like? Which lesbians? Who's harassing them? When and where? Do you think the men harassing lesbians are doing that because they want to harass any woman or a lesbian specifically?
11. Do you think lesbians and straight women have the same concerns about crime and violence? If not, how are they different? Do you think lesbians and straight women handle their fears of violence or crime in the same way? If not, how are they different? What about single and partnered lesbians; do they handle things differently?

III. Management of Fear and Strategies for Safety

1. How do you keep yourself safe?
2. What advice would you give to another lesbian about staying safe?
3. What safety precautions do you routinely practice? Examples might be locking car doors or parking in lighted areas when out at night, not holding hands with a woman while in public, etc.
4. When you feel worried about or afraid of violence, how do you handle that?
5. How safe do you feel after dark when outside in your community? How about in other areas of the city? Do you take any precautions when you go out alone? Do you take any additional precautions when you go out at night? If so, what precautions do you take?
6. Do you take any precautions when you go out with another lesbian or a group of lesbians? Do you take the same precautions when you're with another woman who's not a lesbian, or with a group of straight women?

7. If there's a place you think of as particularly unsafe or dangerous, can you describe it and tell me (1) is that place dangerous for everyone? and (2) what would make that place less dangerous?
8. Do you ever make arrangements to go someplace with someone in order to feel more safe? Please describe this. Is the companion most likely to be a woman or a man? Is she or he most likely to be straight or gay? If you have a person in mind, can you describe her or him?
9. If you've ever been scared of being victimized, of whom were you scared? Can you describe the person or persons, where you were, what was happening?
10. Some straight women might feel safer from street harassment or men's violence when they are with their male partners. Do you think lesbians are at a disadvantage because they don't have a male partner to deter unwanted attention from men or to protect them from men's violence?
11. Do you think about how you look or act, with regard to how feminine you appear to others or how straight you appear to others? If so, when do you think about this? Where are you and what's happening when you think about this?
12. In general, what do you think would help women like you be safe? How about women in general? What about lesbians? How does race play into that? How does age play into this?
13. This is my last question. As I mentioned earlier, this study is about how lesbians perceive and manage fear of men's violence. Do you think I've left anything important out of the interview? (Are there any questions I haven't asked that you think I should have asked?) Is there anything else you'd like to share with me before we end the interview?

Appendix B - Informed Consent Statement

A. General Information

1. Name of Researchers: Dana M. Britton, Ph.D., Department of Sociology, Kansas State University; Laura Logan, student Department of Sociology, Kansas State University

2. Title of Study: Perception and Management of Fear Among Lesbians

3. Objectives of Study: To investigate perceptions of safety, fear of crime, and strategies for safety.

4. Description and purpose of procedures: This part of the research consists of interviews with lesbians. This interview will last approximately 30 to 60 minutes and will include questions about fear of crime. These interviews will be tape recorded and later transcribed. The tapes will be destroyed after transcription. This information will be used to better understand the factors that shape perceptions and management of fear among lesbians.

5. Use of results: Data collected in this project will be used to complete a class assignment and will later be incorporated into a larger IRB approved study to be used then in published reports of the research in professional journals.

6. The risks and discomforts are minimal. They may include: Strictly the use of your time is required. No physical risk is involved, and your behavior or responses will not be manipulated in any way.

7. Possible benefits to you or to others from participating in this study: Interview subjects in this type of research typically report some subjective benefit from being able to express their opinions on matters of concern to them.

Your participation is completely voluntary and you may refuse participation at any time without penalty or prejudice. All research information will be handled in the strictest confidence and your participation will not be individually identifiable in any reports. I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the above items. If you have questions about the research that arise after this interview, please feel free to contact me at (785) 532-4968. Questions about the role of the university or your rights as a participant in this research should be directed to Rick Scheidt, Chair, Institutional Review Board, Kansas State University, (785) 532-6195.

(Signature)

(Date)

B. Signed Consent Portion

I understand the study entitled: “Perception and Management of Fear Among Lesbians” as explained to me on page 1 and I consent to participate in the study. My participation is completely voluntary. I understand that all research information will be handled in the strictest confidence and that my participation will not be individually identifiable in any reports. I understand that there is no penalty or prejudice of any kind for withdrawing or not participating in the study.

(Signature)

(Date)

Appendix C - Coding Tree

1. FEAR

1.1. Most afraid of

1.2. Imagined Perps

1.2.1. Men

1.2.2. Women

1.2.3. Other

1.3. Imagined Victims

1.3.1. Women

1.3.2. Men

1.3.3. Men of color

1.3.4. Women of color

1.3.5. Queer folks

1.4. Dangerous places

1.4.1. Straight space

1.4.2. Queer space

1.4.3. White minority space

1.4.4. Jock Space

1.4.5. Poor neighborhood

1.4.6. Everyday space

1.5. Media influence

1.6. Rape

1.7. Visibly queer

1.8. Professional consequence

1.9. Custody consequence

1.10. Violent Crime NOT rape

1.11. Altruistic Fear

2. RESPONSES TO FEAR

2.1. Passive

2.1.1. Spatial avoidance

2.1.2. Appearance self-regulation

2.1.2.1. Look straight

2.1.2.2. Look fem

2.1.2.3. Look butch

2.1.2.4. Look strong

2.1.2.5. Look like a man

2.1.2.6. Look like a woman

2.1.2.7. Look white

2.1.2.8. Do NOT look sexy

2.1.3. Behavior self-regulation

2.1.3.1. General Precautions

2.1.3.2. Weapon

2.1.3.3. Dogs

2.1.3.4. Avoid being out at night

2.1.3.5. Avoid bars or drinking

2.1.3.6. No PDA

2.1.3.7. Social signals to ward off strangers

2.1.3.8. Take a protector

2.1.3.9. Go with group

2.2. Assertive

2.2.1. Self-defense

2.2.2. Verbal confrontation

2.2.3. Fleeing-Running

2.2.4. Seek help

3. STREET HARASSMENT

3.1. Frequency

3.1.1. Daily or almost

3.1.2. Sometimes

3.1.3. Often

3.1.4. Never

3.2. Location

3.2.1. Urban

3.2.2. Rural

3.2.3. Isolated

3.2.4. Crowded

3.2.5. Queer Space

3.2.6. Jock Space

3.2.7. Everyday Space

3.3. Time of day

3.3.1. Night

3.3.2. Day

3.4. Perps

3.4.1. Men of color

3.4.2. White men

3.4.3. Homeless Crazy Drunk Men

3.4.4. Jock men

3.4.5. Group of men

3.4.6. Teen boys

3.5. How often think about SH

3.5.1. Daily or almost

3.5.2. Sometimes

3.5.3. Often

3.5.4. Never

3.6. Appearance at time

3.6.1. Business

3.6.2. Casual

3.6.3. Night Out

3.6.4. Covered or In car

3.6.5. Butch

3.6.6. Fem

3.7. Behavior at time

3.7.1. With people

3.7.2. Alone

3.8. What SHers say

3.8.1. Sexual invitation or compliment

3.8.2. Threat sexual or physical

3.8.3. Insult

3.8.4. Racialized

3.8.5. Biblical or Moral Scolding

3.9. What SHers do

3.9.1. Touch

3.9.2. Block or crowd

3.9.3. Spit

3.9.4. Follow foot or car

3.9.5. Sneaky or Hidden SH

3.10. Responses to SH

3.10.1. Passive

3.10.2. Assertive

3.10.2.1. Self-defense

3.10.2.2. Verbal confrontation

3.10.2.3. Flee-Run

3.10.2.4. Seek help

3.10.2.4.1. From any sex bystanders

3.10.2.4.2. From nearby business

3.10.2.4.3. From other men

3.10.2.4.4. From other queers

3.10.2.4.5. From other women

3.10.2.4.6. From Official Authority