

# **Violence against Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals**

-

## **Social Media Activism in the Obama Era in the Light of Johan Galtung's Violence Triangle**

Inauguraldissertation

zur Erlangung des Doktorgrades

der Philosophie an der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität

München

vorgelegt von

**Tanja Fuchs**

aus Lindenberg i. Allgäu

München 2017

*Erstgutachterin:* Prof. Dr. Ursula Prutsch

*Zweitgutachter:* PD Dr. Sascha Pöhlmann

*Datum der mündlichen Prüfung:* 20. November 2017

*Meiner Familie  
und dir, Christina*

## Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	
<b><i>I. Introduction.....</i></b>	<b><i>1</i></b>
1. Social Media Activism, Neoliberalism and the Violence Triangle – Thesis ....	8
2. Methodology and Scope of the Study .....	11
3. Theoretical Framework.....	18
3.1 Johan Galtung’s Violence Triangle, Collective Identity and Social Media .....	18
3.2 Neoliberalism and Neoclassical Economics.....	32
<b><i>II. Social Media Activism in the Obama Era .....</i></b>	<b><i>38</i></b>
1. Structural Violence .....	38
1.1 Fighting Heteronormativity – Cultural Violence: The Foundation of Structural and Direct Violence .....	41
1.2 Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell: Structural Violence in the U.S. Military .....	44
1.3 The Denial of Same-Sex Marriage and the Well-Being of Children: A Manifestation of Structural Violence?.....	57
1.3.1 Personal Stories of Homosexuals .....	62
1.3.2 Heterosexual Celebrities and their Contribution to Raising Awareness.....	72
1.4 “Maybe I can make a difference”: Structural Violence in Daily Life .....	79
1.5 “Bye, bye mother monster”: Anti-LGB Bullying and Suicides .....	92
1.6 Homelessness among LGBTQ* Youths.....	102
1.7 LGBTQ*s in the Workplace: Inequality and Neglect .....	117
2. Direct Violence .....	131
2.1 Bringing Attention to Direct Violence .....	131
2.2 “I Take Bullets”: Direct Violence and Social Media Activism.....	136

***III. The Violence Triangle, Socio-Political Influences and the Era of***

***Donald Trump.....181***

1. Past Influences on the LGBTQ\* Movement..... 181

2. The Future of the LGBTQ\* Movement ..... 190

***IV. Conclusion .....216***

Bibliography .....220

Illustration Credits .....246

## **I. Introduction**

Equality. History has taught that the striving for equality is a significant catalyst for change. It has stirred revolutions, reversal of political systems and the restructuring of socio-political concepts. It is the incentive that has galvanized billions of people over the course of human history. But it is also a pawn in the hands of the powerful. Suppression, the denial of equality, keeps systems alive and it secures the power of the ruler. Violence becomes an instrument in the trial of power. It has the force to preserve or strengthen hierarchies but it also possesses the force to subvert them. However, violence is not limited to its physical essence; it can also be exercised indirectly without causing physical harm; simply by preserving detrimental systems and applying elementary rhetoric serving this cause. The late nineteenth century has seen such a manifestation. The 1860s have introduced categories of sexuality that ultimately led to a hierarchy subordinating those people who were identified with the expression “homosexual”.

The terms “homosexual” and “heterosexual” were coined in 1868 and laid the foundation for the concept of heteronormativity, the rule of the expectation that people identify as heterosexual and live accordingly in opposite-sex relationships. All these centuries before, sexual and emotional relationships among same-sex couples were part of European, Asian and American societies. Even though same-sex intercourse was already condemned and in some cases persecuted during the Middle Ages it was still practiced in the subsequent centuries. On the American continent, the New England colonies introduced anti-sodomy laws during the sixteenth century. However, the essence behind the laws was not a feeling of superiority by people living in opposite-sex relationships but a pragmatic one. The settlers’ intention to populate the American colonies was tied to reproduction and therefore they opposed intercourse that could not result in

newborns.<sup>1</sup> It was not until the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century that same-sex intercourse and relationships were edged into a subordinate role and encountered massive rejection of major parts of societies. The invention of the terms of “homosexuality” and “heterosexuality” created categories that were pressured into a dichotomy and rivalry. They established an imbalance that resulted in a hierarchy and led to an unequal treatment of those constituting the minority. The early twentieth century saw the ultimate establishment of a system that inscribed discrimination against all those, desiring and loving women and men of the same sex. The system of heteronormativity led to ostracism of homosexuals. Acts of sodomy were punished with imprisonment; police raids at local gay bars saw the use of brutal police violence; homosexuals were laid off at work and faced exclusion from the U.S. military. Gays and lesbians were denied equal treatment and their aspiration to put an end to discrimination and violence and instead achieve the fundamental right of equality stirred their revolution.

The Stonewall Riots in June and July 1969 represent the moment in history when gays, lesbians and transsexuals collectively rebelled against the system of subordination. The gay rights movement was finally constituting itself and initiating a fight against harassment and violence. The riots starting in the night of June 28, 1969 were the response to a multitude of brutal police raids and they also represented a reaction to the bitter humiliation and degradation lesbians, gays and transsexuals had had to endure for decades. Stonewall sparked a movement that was growing in intensity and that was achieving victories – slowly but steadily. Soon, activists tried to create the foundation for an efficient movement. *Gay Pride* and *Gay Power* were embraced and served as resources for creating awareness. A year after the Stonewall Riots, activists in New York City as well as Chicago and Los Angeles celebrated their first gay pride parades – a practice that has spread around the world and repeats itself every year since. The community became political and that step was aligned with advancements.

---

<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Ned Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 37.

In 1973, the *American Psychiatric Association* removed homosexuality from its official list of mental disorders. In 1977, Harvey Milk, an icon of the gay rights movement, was elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and became the first openly gay man in public office in California. Activists tried to challenge sodomy laws on a variety of occasions in court; ultimately, 34 years after Stonewall, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Lawrence vs. Texas* that sodomy laws were unconstitutional – a milestone for the U.S. gay rights movement. It laid the basis for all advancements that were yet to come.

Stonewall sparked a movement. The experience of violence and ostracism united lesbians, gays and transsexuals in a way that is still sustaining this cohesion nowadays. However, the focus of the gay rights movement has shifted over the last two decades. It has advanced its strategy and taken the fight to the next level. The pursuit of equality in all spheres has become the core motivation for activists. After *Lawrence vs. Texas*, the efforts to achieve recognition of civil unions and same-sex marriages came to the forefront of the movement's ambitions. LGBTQ\*s' visibility and activists' determination have led to advancements in the legal sphere. A combination of strategic litigation and social education constitutes the foundation for the current successes activists achieve. Visibility, the creation of awareness, and the subtle subversion of society's heteronormativity play a major part in achieving the movement's goals.

The concept of neoliberalism initially appeared to possess vast potential to promote equality. Its objective to secure human rights by implementing an economic system that helps to protect equality, freedom and peace was noble in its intention but failed to succeed. Instead, neoliberalism created a social climate revolving around individualism, greed and egotism. It has become the foundation of the weaknesses the LGBTQ\*<sup>2</sup> community is characterized by in their struggle for equality. It has become the danger that threatens the revolution of LGBTQ\*s who are crusading for equal rights. Major parts of the LGBTQ\* community are currently neglected by the equality movement of major gay rights organizations.

---

<sup>2</sup> Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning. The star is supposed to represent everybody who is not conforming to cis-gender heterosexuality.



This thesis will illuminate the struggle of the modern gay rights movement over the course of the presidency of Barack Obama and the first 100 days of the Trump administration. It will concentrate on the questions which role social media plays in the movement for equal rights and which strategies are applied by major gay rights organizations. The main focus will be on an approach that might have the potential to transform the discourse of the LGBTQ\*'s current socio-political struggle and that could help unite neglected groups into the mainstream movement and shift the focus to the appliance of violence to keep the heteronormative system alive. This thesis will unite two major injustices that have almost exclusively been treated as separately from each other by major gay rights activists: inequality and violence. While the Stonewall Era and the decades after were characterized by a struggle against LGBT violence, the recent years have been dedicated to the achievement of equality in the legal sphere. Physical violence against LGBTQ\* people faded into the background while legal equality dominated the public as well as the academic realm. This development was well-represented and shared in the academic sphere.

In the 1990s, academics contributed a lot to the research on violence against gay, lesbian and bisexual people – particularly in the field of sociology. Additionally, the rise of the new research fields of gender and queer studies contributed to the discussion and laid the basis for new approaches. Several monographies as well as journal articles discussed the historical dimension of anti-gay violence in the context of the pre- as well as post-Stonewall era.

Gary David Comstock was among the first academics analyzing the problem of anti-LGB violence in his book *Violence Against Lesbians and Gay Men* published in 1991.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, the editors Gregory M. Herek and Kevin T. Berrill published a comprehensive overview of anti-gay violence with a detailed analysis of the social context between 1984 and 1990 and a psychological assessment.<sup>4</sup> The editors also included a case study for anti-lesbian assault and harassment in San Francisco. These works

---

<sup>3</sup> Gary David Comstock, *Violence Against Lesbians and Gay Men*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.

<sup>4</sup> Gregory M. Herek and Kevin T. Berrill, ed., *Hate Crimes: Confronting Violence Against Lesbians and Gay Men*, Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc, 1991.

were followed by further discussions of violence as well as social injustice against LGBs in the decade of the 1990s.

*Violence and Social Injustice Against Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual people*<sup>5</sup> (1999) provides an overview of hate crimes in the United States and has a strong focus on LGB youths and suicides as well as same-sex marriage and job discrimination. Same-sex rape committed by men has also been included into the debate in 1997 when Michael Scarce published his book on *Male on Male Rape: The Hidden Toll of Stigma and Shame*.<sup>6</sup> He thereby filled a void that existed to that day and illuminates male rape by men in a variety of settings including institutional environments like the military and prisons. A major focus is on the power dynamic male rape bears but also on the intersection of HIV and same-sex rape.

This assessment by sociologists is almost all-inclusive and represents a cohesive reappraisal of the violence LGBs had to endure in the 1990s and the decades before. What has been hardly covered was the intersectional nature of hate violence and hate crimes. The factor of race and gender was often neglected and it took some more years until academics shifted their focus on these aspects. However before this trend unfolded, the beginning of the 2000s initially showed an abandonment of discussions of anti-LGB violence within the academic realm. Instead, the examination of the struggle for same-sex marriage attracted more attention. The constitution of a movement for same-sex marriage was analyzed in a variety of books.

*Queering Marriage: Challenging Family Formation in the United States* by Katrina Kimport discusses the early beginnings of the movement for same-sex marriage.<sup>7</sup> Mary Bernstein and Verta Taylor contributed to the evaluation by publishing the book *The Marrying Kind?* in 2013.<sup>8</sup> They discuss political strategies and mobilization techniques of the early movement until the year 2009.

---

<sup>5</sup> Lacey Sloan and Nora Gustavsson, ed., *Violence and Social Injustice Against Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual People*, New York: The Haworth Press, 1999.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Scarce, *Male on Male Rape: The Hidden Toll of Stigma and Shame*, Cambridge: Perseus Publishing, 1997.

<sup>7</sup> Katrina Kimport, *Queering Marriage: Challenging Family Formation in the United States*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Mary Bernstein and Verta Taylor, ed., *The Marrying Kind?*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013.

Simultaneously, another research topic attracted much interest: the legal interpretation of sodomy laws shifted into focus which was predominantly the result of the Supreme Court ruling in *Lawrence vs. Texas* (2003). Most academic works contributed to the legal analysis of the court ruling.

David A. J. Richards interprets the constitutional right to privacy and the judicial meaning of the court decisions in *Bowers vs. Hardwick* and *Lawrence vs. Texas*.<sup>9</sup> *Bowers vs. Hardwick* represented the Supreme Court decision which declared sodomy illegal in 1986 and therefore constituted the legal foundation for the penalization of sexual relationships among same-sex partners – even in spheres of privacy. It took 17 years until the Supreme Court negated the ruling and laid the basis for future advancements for lesbians and gays in the United States.

An even broader approach to the gay rights organization's legal struggle for equality was provided by Scott Barclay, Mary Bernstein and Anna-Maria Marshall in *Queer Mobilizations: LGBT Activists Confront the Law*.<sup>10</sup> The editors provided deep insight into the legal strategies of the activists in the movement's struggle against sodomy laws and into the early lawsuits against the denial of same-sex marriage.

Another significant contribution to the field of academics is Charlotte Knight and Kath Wilson's work on lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people (LGBT) in the criminal justice system.<sup>11</sup> They delineate the experiences of LGBT people as offenders, victims and staff and analyze the role of homophobia in sentencing of alleged perpetrators. Furthermore, they examine same-sex domestic violence and abuse and the disproportionately high number of lesbians on the death row in the United States.

After a period of almost ten years, it was specifically the researcher for Women, Gender & Sexuality Doug Meyer who re-shifted the focus on anti-LGBTQ\* violence in his article "An Intersectional Analysis of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) People's Evaluations of Anti-

---

<sup>9</sup> David A. J. Richards, *The sodomy cases: Bowers v. Hardwick and Lawrence v. Texas*, Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Scott Barclay, Mary Bernstein and Anna-Maria Marshall, ed., *Queer Mobilizations: LGBT Activists Confront the Law*, New York: New York University Press, 2009.

<sup>11</sup> Charlotte Knight and Kath Wilson, *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans People (LGBT) and the Criminal Justice System*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Queer Violence” in 2012<sup>12</sup> and who published an even broader research in 2015.<sup>13</sup> Doug Meyer examines the contribution of intersectionality to the experience of violence by taking a closer look on specific case studies. He thereby fills the gap that most assessments of the 1990s have left and offers a more comprehensive and accurate research of LGBTQ\* violence.

However, what most studies of the 1990s and 2000s have in common is that violence and the striving for equality have been predominantly examined separately. It was hardly perceived – neither by researchers nor by the movement itself – that the two topics are closely interrelated and should be treated respectively. The equality movement can be examined with the help of a theory of violence which provides intriguing approaches to a new assessment of the LGBTQ\* movement and new strategies for future aspirations. In addition, researchers’ studies have not yet considered the construction of a collective identity via social media by the LGBTQ\* movement – even though social media movements have become the most influential way to gain the support of the public. These voids will be filled by this thesis. I will illuminate how the major gay rights organizations as well as independent activists use social media to crusade for LGBTQ\* rights. There has not been a comprehensive study analyzing the social media activism of the LGBTQ\* community. This analysis of case studies of LGBTQ\* activists will be a major contribution to a so far neglected academic terrain. This thesis will additionally include a new approach to the academic field by integrating Johan Galtung’s violence triangle into the discourse – an approach that has been chosen only rarely and exclusively in the debate surrounding HIV-infected LGBTQ\* people and imprisoned LGBTQ\*s. Still, applying the violence triangle to manifestations of inequality like the denial of same-sex marriage, workplace discrimination, bullying or homelessness is unprecedented. However, it is exactly this approach that could transform the LGBTQ\* movement since it illuminates the movement’s shortcomings and provides innovative strategies

---

<sup>12</sup> Doug Meyer, “An Intersectional Analysis of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) People’s Evaluations of Anti-Queer Violence,” *Gender & Society* 26(6) (2012): 849-873.

<sup>13</sup> Doug Meyer, *Violence against Queer People: Race, Class, Gender, and the Persistence of Anti-LGBT Discrimination*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2015.

to change the discourse. Moreover, this thesis links the shortcomings of the LGBTQ\* movement to the concept of neoliberalism. While there have been studies on the positive effects of neoliberalism for the integration of LGBTQ\* people into the economic and simultaneously the socio-political sphere, no studies have considered the negative effects of this concept on the movement's spirit and inclusiveness. However, this thesis will be integrating these factors as well. It is supposed to be a comprehensive analysis of the LGBTQ\* movement's social media activism between 2008 and spring 2017 that analyzes the shortcomings in depth, relates them to socio-political and economic circumstances and suggests a different approach to counter these developments by applying a theory that has never been used in the debate before. It closes the voids in this research field that exist because the LGBTQ\* equality movement and the activism against violence have always been treated separately from each other.

## **1. Social Media Activism, Neoliberalism and the Violence Triangle – Thesis**

The following thesis will be divided into two major parts: an analysis of the LGBTQ\* movement's social media activism during the Obama presidency and a socio-economic as well as a socio-political analysis that shows in what way the movement has been influenced by social as well as neoliberal virtues and politics and vice versa.

Over the course of the first part, it will be illuminated which strategies the LGBTQ\* movement has applied to expose inequality and violence and how these methods have contributed to the construction of a collective identity. It will outline in what way the major social media networks – Facebook, Twitter and YouTube – serve the purpose of creating awareness and securing visibility. It will be shown how manifestations of inequality and violence are used to appeal to potential supporters and to construct a social media movement targeting inequality and violence. The chapters of the first part will delineate the strategic attempt to inscribe self-worth and to secure power by exposing the unequal structures affecting the

community. It concentrates on the appliance of social media tools by gay rights activists to expose inequality and violence and to transform these manifestations into a source of power for the LGBTQ\* movement. However, this analysis will also expose the shortcomings of the current movement especially in regards to physical violence and manifestations that affect only particular vulnerable individuals of the LGBTQ\* community.

Over the course of this thesis, I will analyze the movement's activism in the light of the construct of Johan Galtung's violence triangle. The sociologist's approach integrates a broader and more-inclusive definition of violence that is not exclusively restricted to physical acts. Instead, it acknowledges acts of violence that can be defined as "structural" implying that a society's system and structure disadvantages specific groups in a way that leads to mental as well as physical implications harmful for the group and any individual who is part of it. I will delineate in the second part that the application of the violence triangle bears a variety of opportunities that have not been recognized by LGBTQ\* activists so far. An accurately defined movement against direct and structural violence could be the manifestation of politics that would not exclusively work on deconstructing heteronormativity but would also have the far-reaching effect of diversifying the movement and counteracting certain virtues nurtured by a neoliberal society. Even though the era of neoliberalism has contributed to the visibility and tolerance of homosexuals and transsexuals, since the LGBTQ\* community has been attributed a huge potential as a major consumer group<sup>14</sup>, the virtues facilitated by the politics of neoliberalism are becoming a threat to gay rights in the United States. The era of neoliberalism has promoted individualism but also inequality and a climate of competition. Egotism and self-interest have become the core values of Western societies, including the United States. This has not only been promoted by individuals but also by the U.S. legislative, executive and judicial bodies themselves. Egotism and ignorance also penetrates the

---

<sup>14</sup> More on the construction of LGBTQ\*s as consumers by the neoliberal developments in: Michael Kimmel and Cheryl Llewellyn, "Homosexuality, Gender Nonconformity, and the Neoliberal State," *Journal of Homosexuality*, 59:1087–1094, 2012.

movement and is a major threat to the cohesion and success of the LGBTQ\* community which will be exposed over the course of this thesis.

However, I will also illuminate how the LGBTQ\* movement has the ability to counter the climate of egotism and non-intervention by adapting the language of structural and direct violence. Moreover, it will be exposed that the rhetoric of the violence triangle could be the necessary tool to counteract the peril of the emerging conservative movement and populist politics. It will also show that the violence triangle could contribute to raising awareness for the essential inclusion of direct violence into the LGBTQ\* movement's social media activism. The violence triangle is therefore a potential tool to challenge the shortcomings of the LGBTQ\* movement and this paper will clearly illuminate this capability.

In the second part, it will ultimately be shown that the theory of cultural, structural and direct violence can be efficiently applied to the LGBTQ\* movement and even strengthen its cohesion and diversity. Still, I will also state that an overemphasis and an incorrect application of the violence triangle can and must be prevented since this would otherwise come at the risk of the radicalization of the movement which would make it vulnerable and polarize society even further. Nevertheless, under the right circumstances, the adaptation of the violence triangle bears the chance to tighten the movement, to challenge its shortcomings and to create a strategy that can work efficiently against the imminent anti-LGBTQ\* legislations and conservative movement in the United States. This thesis is supposed to be a comprehensive analysis of the LGBTQ\* movement's struggle against the victimization of gays and lesbians and also of the attempt to counteract the movement's evolution towards egotism and radicalization.

The urgent need for the appliance of the violence triangle will be ascribed to the social and economic developments during the term of the Obama administration which will be also examined closely in the thesis' second part. The purpose for integrating an analysis of the socio-political and economic developments is twofold: It will expose the close relationship between the Obama administration and the LGBTQ\* movement as well as the community's dependence on the administration's support which has now been eliminated. Moreover, it will eventually serve the purpose of

explaining the political transformation that has led – among others – to the election of Donald Trump; an election that jeopardizes the rights of LGBTQ\* Americans. The coming years will see political and judicial challenges to LGBTQ\* rights and bear the risk that the community will face open revulsion by opponents and simultaneously ignorance by Donald Trump and his administration. These developments imperil the achievements of the LGBTQ\* community and must therefore be countered by applying efficient strategies. The violence triangle represents one potential tool.

## **2. Methodology and Scope of the Study**

Social media constitute the sources from which a majority of people extract latest information nowadays. The importance of social media and its relevance in political discourses has steadily increased over the last decade.<sup>15</sup> Politicians as well as interest groups have harnessed social media to influence the public. Barack Obama was the first presidential candidate to implement Twitter in his election campaign in 2007 and many politicians up to Donald Trump followed. Social media provides a synopsis of reactions to social, political, economic and cultural circumstances and developments. Thus, the analysis of social media content distributed by gay rights activists is a reaction to the rising importance of these tools and its reflection of internal and external conditions that affect the United States.

This dissertation will approach the topic of violence against LGB\*s interdisciplinary since I feel that focusing on only one branch of academia leads to the misrecognition of the interconnectedness of social and political developments in a globalized world and would not adequately serve the analysis of the LGBTQ\* movement's struggle against violence. Nevertheless, the main focus will be on the construction of a collective identity, the raising of awareness in social media and the potential

---

<sup>15</sup> Maeve Duggan and Aaron Smith, "The Political Environment on Social Media," *Pew Research Center*, October 25, 2016, accessed February 25, 2017, <http://www.pewinternet.org/2016/10/25/the-political-environment-on-social-media/>.



containment of neoliberal virtues by acts of political activism and an integration of Galtung's violence triangle. I will exclusively explore the strategy of LGBTQ\* activists but thereby also analyze the evolution of violence initiated by LGB opponents. I will solely concentrate on the three most influential social media networks nowadays: Twitter, YouTube and Facebook. All three of them have been founded between 2004 and 2006 and kicked off the era of the participatory internet, Web 2.0. Instagram, that currently has even more users than Twitter, is not part of the analysis since the service only started in 2010 and did not provide any profile pages until it has been absorbed by Facebook in 2012. Since this thesis focuses on the years between 2009 and 2017 the inclusion of Instagram would entail a gap of three years (2009 to 2012) during which an analysis would not be applicable. In addition, Facebook and Twitter have established themselves as the most important social media forums in the political context; a development that Instagram has not experienced so far.<sup>16</sup>

Statistics about social platform users are difficult to extract since companies keep information vague and hardly offer any detailed demographic data.<sup>17</sup> However, according to a Pew Research from November 2016, 79 percent of online U.S. Americans<sup>18</sup> use Facebook. The Research Center states that in November 2016 86 percent of Americans used the internet. This means that 255,939,959 of the United States' resident population were using Facebook at that moment in time.<sup>19</sup> The percentage of those U.S. Americans who are online and use Facebook saw an increase of 13 percent from 2010.

At the same time, the Pew Research Center found that 24 percent of online U.S. Americans were using Twitter which constitutes about 77,753,912 of the United States' resident population. The increase of

---

<sup>16</sup> Duggan and Smith, "The Political Environment on Social Media."

<sup>17</sup> Katrin Weller, "Trying to Understand Social Media Users and Usage: The Forgotten Features of Social Media Platforms," *Online Information Review*, Vol. 40 No. 2 (2016): 256. 256 - 264

<sup>18</sup> The study defines U.S. Americans as people living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia and does not exclusively refer to U.S. citizens.

<sup>19</sup> According to the U.S. Census Bureau an estimated number of 323,974,632 people composed the resident population of the United States in November 2016. More: U.S. Census Bureau, "National Population Totals Tables: 2010-2016 – Monthly Population Estimates for the United States: April 1, 2010 to December 1, 2017," accessed February 24, 2017, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2016/demo/popest/nation-total.html>.

Twitter users comes to 16 percent within six years (2010 to 2016). We do not know how many LGB people use Twitter or Facebook but if we assumed that the number is proportional to its share of the overall LGB population in society, we can presume that 8,957,898 LGB people use Facebook and 2,721,387 use Twitter.<sup>20</sup> However, these are only vague estimates that do neither include LGB's online consumption habits nor factors like age, gender, place of residence, standard of education et cetera that influence the use of social media and one's behavior online.

Still, surveys have shown that the percentage of Facebook and Twitter users is higher among younger generations. While only 62 percent of those people online actively use Facebook, this share already reaches 72 percent among 50 to 64 year old Internet users. Furthermore, the number increases to 84 percent of those between the ages of 30 and 49 years and culminates to 88 percent among those between 18 and 29 years of age. The latest figures for adolescents using Facebook were stated as 73 percent for those between 12 and 17 years in 2014.<sup>21</sup> Numbers for adolescent Twitter users are not known.

While it is already challenging to find statistics on Facebook and Twitter users, it is almost impossible to determine how many people actively use YouTube. This platform has always defined itself as an open-access platform one does not have to register with for watching video clips (only for uploading those). According to YouTube, the platform has over a billion users worldwide. However, narrowing down this figure to YouTube users in the United States is unfeasible and any attempt to do so as part of this thesis would only result in inaccuracy.

The approach to the primary sources included in this thesis is strongly tied to the accessibility of the material. The principal focus was laid on the detection of social media content that had a high relevance within the realm of social media. Social media content is only valuable if it shows a high distribution among users and can be easily accessed, shared and commented on. This condition can only be guaranteed if Twitter or

---

<sup>20</sup> Taken that 3.5 percent of the U.S. population identifies as LGB.

<sup>21</sup> Aaron Smith, "6 New Facts About Facebook," *Pew Research Center*, February 3, 2014, accessed February 25, 2017, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/02/03/6-new-facts-about-facebook/>.

YouTube searches list tweets and videos among the first results. Moreover, the relevance of tweets, videos and Facebook posts were additionally considered as factors determining the potential of sources to be included in this thesis. The number of clicks, likes, favorites, re-tweets and comments helped to define the significance of these primary sources. Furthermore, coverage of online news magazines on specific cases of direct violence in combination with a Twitter search for hashtags helped to determine the relevance of these acts of violence. It is important to note that this thesis does not lay claim to statistical representativeness. In fact, aspirations to gain statistics on the prominence of hashtags and its development failed due to a shortage of Twitter analytics tools that provide information that go back further than a year ago. The primary sources included must be understood as case studies that are supposed to integrate a broad cross-section of methods and strategies of activism. The analysis will expose the diversity and spectrum of strategies to reach social media users. It will be argued that each post, tweet or video fulfills a specific role in activating LGBTQ\*s and their allies. The sources value is not restricted to its wide outreach but to the diversity of emotions stimulated. They are exemplary for different ways to reach social media users. Those primary sources used are representative for a certain strategy but they are not all-inclusive. The analysis of primary sources will always include an interpretation of its specific significance and representative character. In addition, I will provide a contextual analysis of social and political circumstances which contribute to the value of these exemplary sources.

This thesis understands itself as not limited to a specific geographic area. Demographic characteristics are often hardly discernible on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube and in fact lose their relevance due to the conscious decision to connect people all over the United States and worldwide irrespective of their origin. However, all primary sources subtracted exclusively concentrate on social media discourses in the United States. What can be said is that Twitter users are slightly (by a margin of 2 percentage points) more likely to be from urban centers than the rural area;

Facebook users, however, are as likely to be from urban centers as from a rural region.<sup>22</sup>

This thesis also tries to integrate the diversity the LGBTQ\* communities embody and to address categories of race, ethnicity, gender and class. The expression “communities” is used intentionally since one can not assume that LGBTQ\*s are part of a homogenous group.

Nevertheless, social media does not always disclose these categories and the analysis has additionally indicated that gay white men are likely to be disproportionately overrepresented in social media activism. Therefore, the concept of intersectionality always has to be factored in while closely examining primary sources. The theory of intersectionality was first introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw in the beginning of the 1990s. It states that diverse identity categories are correlating and that not only one form of oppression but many different kinds thereof act on a person and its body.<sup>23</sup>

I am fully aware that one can not be reduced to a single identity category. LGBTQ\*s can and must not be understood as a homogenous group. Movements and its participants are diverse and goals as well as strategies to reach them differ. It is undeniable that apart from the mainstream activism, radical movements are still to be found and contribute their share to the deconstruction of heteronormativity. The usage of the expressions “*community*” and “*movement*”, however, will in the context of this thesis primarily refer to the mainstream activism coordinated by the major gay rights organizations in the United States, the *Human Rights Campaign* (HRC), the *Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation* (GLAAD) and *Freedom to Marry*. These organizations are those with the highest total numbers of members and social media supporters<sup>24</sup> and have shaped the course of action over the last years and decades. The organizations’ activism is the foundation for the analysis of social media

---

<sup>22</sup> Shannon Greenwood, Andrew Perrin and Maeve Duggan, “Social Media Update 2016,” *Pew Research Center*, November 11, 2016, <http://www.pewinternet.org/2016/11/11/social-media-update-2016/>.

<sup>23</sup> Sabine Hess, Nikola Langreiter, Elisabeth Timm, *Intersektionalität Revisited*, (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2011), 30.

<sup>24</sup> The Human Rights Campaign states on its website that it has more than 1.5 million members and supporters while GLAAD and Freedom to Marry have never published any figures. However, both organizations have several hundred thousand followers on Twitter and Facebook.

content. Any reference to “*the community*” refers to LGBTQ\* online activists on social media platforms.

As stated before, strategies of individuals to counter direct violence are selected on basis of their representativeness for social media activism and combined with factors as number of clicks, likes, favorites, re-tweets and comments as well as their significance in LGBTQ\* specific as well as non-LGBTQ\* specific online news magazines. Therefore, this thesis will not achieve a full representation of all LGBTQ\* people and it is also not its intention. Its intention is the depiction of the mainstream movement and its activists’ strategies that determine LGBTQ\*s social media activism by using representative primary sources.

This thesis will almost exclusively focus on cultural, direct and structural violence against gay, lesbians and bisexuals. The latter category unfortunately still remains underrepresented within the mainstream movement. Moreover, even though transsexual people<sup>25</sup> belong to the group which is targeted most commonly by violence it will not be part of the following study. I am well aware of the debate of the “othering” of transsexual people within the LGBTQ\* community and I am very sensitive about it. However, transsexuals face violence in a different way than gay, lesbian and bisexual people do. They are more often subject to physical violence which usually exceeds the intensity, brutality and mortality of violence LGBs are confronted with.<sup>26</sup> While homosexuals often pass as heterosexuals to strangers, transsexuals – especially MTFs<sup>27</sup> – are frequently not able to hide the sex they were born with and are more easily targeted. The reason why I will nevertheless exclusively focus on violence against homosexuals is that the dissertation thesis analyzes violence against people who are not corresponding to the heterosexual sexual orientation. Transsexuals, however, often identify as heterosexual and comply with the heterosexual maxim after they have undertaken reassignment surgery.

---

<sup>25</sup> I do use the expression “transsexual” intentionally instead of “transgender” as the later is an umbrella term and can also refers to gay and lesbian people whose physical appearance and overall behavior do not comply with society’s expectations of someone of a certain sex. For example, a lesbian’s appearance might be masculine and her behavior might not be easy to distinguish from a male but still she does identify as a lesbian cis-gender woman.

<sup>26</sup> Doug Meyer, *Violence against Queer People*, 83.

<sup>27</sup> Male-to-Female

Therefore, they are not necessarily affected by manifestations of structural violence like the long-term denial of same-sex marriage and *Don't Ask, Don't Tell*. Instead, they face different acts of structural violence like the transgender military ban which was in place since the 1970s and was only repealed in 2016; or bathroom bills that have stirred debates in many U.S. states for years and intend to exclude transgender people from public or private restrooms which conform to their gender identity. Analyzing structural and direct violence against transsexual people adequately, requires a comprehensive research exclusively dedicated to the discriminatory and offending treatment of transsexual people. This topic has to be approached urgently; nonetheless this thesis will not be part of the challenging project to analyze violence against transsexuals satisfactorily. However, I will use the inclusive umbrella term LGBTQ\* over the course of this thesis where it applies; specifically in reference to the movement fighting violence. Even though I will almost exclusively use the abbreviation LGB and the categories *lesbian*, *gay* and *bisexual* in connection with the violence experienced, the mainstream movement dominated by the major gay rights organizations predominantly has to be understood as broad, diverse but also to some extent unifying; a movement in which LGBs struggle for transgender rights and vice-versa. It is the LGBTQ\* movement that leads the fight against violence and I will be referring to it accordingly. The abbreviation LGB is supposed to include cis-gender people as well as transgender that identify as non-heterosexual after reassignment surgery.

The following dissertation thesis is structured into four major chapters. The first one will introduce the theoretical framework that is the foundation for the analysis of primary sources and the socio-political context discussed in the following chapters. This chapter will discuss not only concepts of collective identities but also of power, violence and ultimately neoliberalism. The basis will be laid with the theory of the violence triangle introduced by Johan Galtung.

Based on this theory, the following chapter addresses different manifestations of structural and direct violence and relates it to the concept of cultural violence. The essence of this part will be detailed discussions of case studies that illuminate the strategies or the lack thereof of major gay

rights organizations. The analysis of case studies will be divided into activism surrounding manifestations of inequality that can be determined as structural violence and those that can be seen as part of the category of direct violence.

The third part will provide a detailed analysis of the strengths and shortcomings of the organized activism against LGB inequality. Additionally, it will offer a detailed discussion of the applicability of Galtung's violence triangle. Furthermore, this part will provide a synopsis of the socio-political climate of the years coinciding with the presidency of Barack Obama, which will culminate in an examination of the changes that have contributed to the rise of populist politics and the election of Donald Trump. Simultaneously, I will elaborate on the implications these developments had on the LGBTQ\* community. The third part concludes with an analysis of the first 100 days of the Donald Trump presidency and how the political climate requires a change of strategies in pursuing the struggle for equality, the deconstruction of heteronormativity and the containment of violence against LGBTQ\* people.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

#### ***3.1 Johan Galtung's Violence Triangle, Collective Identity and Social Media***

Discussing the LGBTQ\* movement's politics requires a profound knowledge of the basic concepts of violence as this is the most extreme tool individuals and the state can apply to demonstrate their power and exercise it. Therefore, diverse approaches towards violence are essential. It can not be enough to define violence exclusively by a standard of physical damage that can be inflicted. An important contribution to a broader and more inclusive differentiation represents Johan Galtung's theories on violence in which he distinguishes violence in three different major types: Cultural, structural and direct violence. Implementing the concept of "cultural

violence” in the year 1969, Galtung created a crucial theory which is still valid and fundamental for the discussion of violence nowadays. Even though Galtung provides his theories of violence in the context of peace studies and therefore predominantly relates them to war and martial situations it is reasonable to approach his theories from a perspective that focuses on questions that are not directly related to armed conflicts. Galtung’s definition depicts violence as something that “is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations”<sup>28</sup>, meaning that a human being’s present situation does not correspond to her or his possible physical or psychological state if certain circumstances matched common expectations of feasible conditions of a human being’s existence in society. Furthermore, this overall definition is amplified by his differentiation of violence and creation of a violence triangle. Galtung starts by pointing out the well-known type of physical violence on the one hand. To define the nature of violence as physical presupposes that a human being is hurt by a particular person which results in discernible bodily impacts. An object is being harmed by a specific action conducted by a certain subject as Galtung concretizes – direct violence is connected to an actual event that is taking place at a particular moment.

On the other hand, Galtung indicates that it is also possible to exercise violence in ways that do not imply physical consequences per se. Instead of constituting an actual event this kind of violence is considered a process. The expression he uses for this construct is structural violence. This concept of violence is “built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances.”<sup>29</sup> Structural violence is not related to an immediate action but can be linked to the definition of “social injustice” as Galtung says.<sup>30</sup> In his later discussion on cultural violence Galtung also includes “exploitation” as part of structural violence saying that exploitation either means that there exists an “unequal exchange” leading to a disadvantage resulting in death or a “permanent,

---

<sup>28</sup> Johan Galtung, “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research”, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1969), 168.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*



unwanted state of misery”<sup>31</sup>. The means of implementing and sustaining violence in its structural form are the penetration of society’s structure and the subsequent segmentation. Furthermore, the targeted group is marginalized and kept from other groups; a condition which results in a permanent role of being a victim of structural violence sometimes even without any knowledge of the overall situation. This strategy of structural violence leads to severe somatic as well as psychological impacts. In addition, as this type of violence is part of society’s structure it presents itself as a stable constant which is not easily overturned or replaced by altering conditions that re-define society or its present concept. Structural violence is usually inflicted by certain actors that are organized within a system and interact with each other. An example for an actor could be a state’s government or different institutions within a state. Eventually, this will become important with regards to structural violence against LGBs.

Besides direct and structural violence, Galtung depicts cultural violence as the third component of his concept’s definition. Cultural violence “can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence [...] and can make direct or structural violence look, even feel, right – or at least not wrong.”<sup>32</sup> Consequently, cultural violence is all about the legitimization of direct and structural violence. The foundation for justifying both forms of violence in our culture is diverse: religion as well as ideology, empirical science and formal science are potentially used as a basis. Exploitation and repression are considered natural or normal due to these cultural manifestations. As a result, direct and structural violence lead to a deficit of essential needs and eventually to the experience of a trauma which is a collective experience since it does not only affect an individual but a group of people sharing a common identity.

Johan Galtung’s violence triangle theory is not beyond dispute. Criticism is often directed against the difficulty of defining structural violence. When does discrimination become structural violence? What

---

<sup>31</sup> Johan Galtung, “Cultural Violence,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (1990), 293.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 291.

preconditions must be fulfilled? Can every outgrowth of inequality be considered structural violence? Or to re-phrase it: Can inequality be considered structural violence at all? If so, does the definition of inequality as structural violence not lead to a radicalization of the discourse? All these remarks are valid to some extent and have to be integrated into the discourse of the violence triangle.

The German historian Jörg Baberowski, who dedicated his work to the study of phenomena of violence, is among the critics of structural violence. In his book “Räume der Gewalt/Spaces of violence” Barberowski states: “Macht, Hierarchie und soziale Differenz sind keine Synonyme für Gewalt [...] Die ungleiche Verteilung von Machtressourcen ist ein Modus der sozialen Organisation, nicht der Repression.”<sup>33</sup> Additionally, he says: “Gewalt braucht Täter, um Gewalt zu sein, und Opfer, die wissen wer ihnen Schmerzen zugefügt hat. Niemand kann eine Struktur als Täter identifizieren, und eine Struktur kann nicht handeln.”<sup>34,35</sup> Barberowski’s discussion of the violence triangle does almost exclusively focus on inequality resulting from class distinction and the emergence of dominant classes that rule over others. This might derive from the fact that Johan Galtung himself concentrated on unequal structures through the persistence of the category of class in his essays on violence. However, this approach is too narrow and will ultimately lead to a misapprehension of the violence triangle.

Power and violence penetrate all structures of society and the case study of violence against LGBTQ\* illuminates clearly in which way structural violence has to be perceived: As an unequal treatment manifested in a society’s institutional body and its individuals’ thoughts. It will appear in multiple forms but will always have an impact on a person’s well-being. Even though a single aggressor is not visible, contrary to Baberowski’s argument of the invisibility of actors, those who do not reverse the unequal

---

<sup>33</sup> Translation of the author: Power, hierarchy and social differences are not synonymous with violence [...] The unequal distribution of power resources is representative for the organization of society, not for the repression [of parts of it].

<sup>34</sup> Translation of the author: Violence necessitates an actor (a perpetrator) to be considered violence and it requires victims who know who has hurt them. Nobody can define a structure as an actor; a structure can not act.

<sup>35</sup> Jörg Baberowski, *Räume der Gewalt*, (Frankfurt a. Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 2015), 123.

structures, those that contribute to the preservation and enforcement of disadvantages of certain groups, indirectly constitute themselves as agents of structural violence. Subordinating LGBTQ\* people can not be a tool for organizing society. What reason could sufficiently justify this subordination? The violence triangle has to be contemplated in a broader social context. Baberowski explains that the unequal distribution of power is due to different abilities and competences. Those who have received an excellent education will ultimately be in a superior position than the ones who did not receive an equivalent education or who do not have the same capabilities.<sup>36</sup> However, the legitimacy of this distribution of power is not questioned as long as the preconditions were similar. Instead, if the subordinate offers a similar performance and comparable abilities but came from a different racial background the reasons for subordination might be – in specific cases – disputable. If the subordinate also faces consequences which have a direct impact on his or her physical or mental well-being due to the subordination, one might take the concept of the violence triangle into consideration.

Not each subordination or power imbalance must be seen as structural violence. There are power imbalances that are the result of “organization”, that are related to one’s abilities and performance and that are not resulting in mental or physical impairments. To pick up on Baberowski’s comparison of the power imbalance between students and professors: Since the latter has worked for years on his or her professional career and has acquired knowledge a student will hardly possess at the early beginning of his or her academic life, the subordination of the student is a natural consequence and the only reasonable one. However, the student does have the chance to strive after a similar position in the academia, though, and definitely has to go through the same or at least a similar process of subordination as the professor once had to do.

Yet, the validity of defining the denial of same-sex marriage as structural violence is in fact given. It will be illuminated in Chapter II that the denial of same-sex marriage resulted in a variety of negative impacts for

---

<sup>36</sup> Baberowski, *Räume der Gewalt*, 123.

homosexual couples and their children. Not only a feeling of inferiority and mental problems that could result from the unequal treatment, but also the legal implications, became threats to the affected LGBs' well-being. The U.S. Supreme Court acknowledged an immense burden and crushing insecurity that was imposed upon LGB families – often resulting in a climate that was unacceptable for a loving LGB couple and their children. Additionally, the loss of health-insurance coverage like in the case of the McLaughlins (Chapter II, 3.2) could become life-threatening. The denial of same-sex marriage contributed to a climate of heteronormativity that was implemented in the legislative and judicial structures of the United States. The implications of a heteronormative society for homosexuals will be delineated; the assumption that heteronormativity imposes minority stress or gay-related stress is hardly contested among academia anymore. A diversity of studies came to the result that mental disorders and substance use are disproportionately high among LGBTQ\*s and that minority stress is most certainly the cause. The existence of structural violence becomes even more obvious in terms of bullying of homosexuals and bisexuals as well as in the prevalence of disproportionately high rates of homeless LGBTQ\* youths. There is no “organizational reason” for subordinating same-sex couples to heterosexual ones as well as there is none that justifies the bullying and suppression of LGBTQ\* youths. Except from their sexual desire one will not be able to find any significant differences – the prerequisites are identical to the ones of heterosexuals. In addition, homosexuals do perceive an agent of the unequal treatment – the political and judicial representatives denying equality and those individuals that do contribute to the preservation of a concept of heteronormativity.

The question remains: Where is the limit in defining structural violence? The key parameters have already been given by Galtung's theory. Only if the foundation for unequal treatment was laid in a society's structure, in its legislative and judicial body, can the existence of structural violence be considered. Additionally, there must be a negative mental or physical effect detrimental to a person's well-being. No minority status can justify the structural and systematic disadvantage and the denial of equal rights of said minorities. Are African-Americans victims of structural

violence because they constitute a disproportional high number of prisoners? If, for example, their imprisonment can be traced back to unequal life-chances because they have never seen a different life than the one in the ghettos, in which delinquency is among the only ways to make a living, then it appears to be reasonable to define this as a manifestation of structural violence – at least if the affected African-Americans or their family suffer mentally or physically from the condition. Does the fact that women still earn less than 30 percent of the wage their male counterparts earn mean that they suffer from structural violence? Well, as long as there is no clear indication that women's mental or physical well-being is influenced to an extent that constitutes a dramatic limitation in the fulfillment of their life-chances, the answer is no. Here lays also the difference between structural violence and structural discrimination. I would consider the fact that women still earn 30 percent less than their male counterparts a manifestation of structural discrimination. Structural discrimination does not necessarily discuss the consequences of its persistence. It assesses that there is an unequal structure that implies unequal treatment. Structural violence, however, does focus on the effects of unequal structures; it always discusses how unequal treatment affects the psychological and physical well-being of the ones affected; it recognizes the long-lasting impacts and the mortal force that inequality might have and it lays the foundation for change.

Discrimination is manifold and all the manifestations of unequal treatment of LGBTQ\*s that will be discussed in this thesis have to be considered as acts of discrimination. However, discrimination of LGBTQ\*s might be individual, institutional or structural to name only some categories of distinctions. Fred L. Pincus, Professor Emeritus of Sociology, who published a variety of books and articles on discrimination, including reverse discrimination, defines *individual discrimination* as a behavior of an individual human being of one specific identity group that intends to have a differential and/or harmful effect on the members of another identity group.<sup>37</sup> Individual discrimination, the intentional act of one human being that imposes an unequal treatment on someone else, can be found in the

---

<sup>37</sup> Fred L. Pincus, "Discrimination Comes in Many Forms: Individual, Institutional, and Structural," *The American Behavioral Scientist* 40, 2 (1996), 186.

cases of Jamey Rodemeyer and Tyler Clementi (Chapter II, 1.5) who both committed suicide after recurring bullying. *Institutional discrimination* which Pincus defines as intentional policies of a dominant identity group or institutions targeting minority identity groups and imposing differential and/or harmful effects on this group can be detected in the denial of same-sex marriage or the implementation of *Don't Ask, Don't Tell* (Chapter II, 1.3 and 1.2). Both policies served the ambition to treat gays and lesbians different from heterosexuals. The preservation of the legislations denying LGBs equal treatment was an active maintenance of policies that were in its essence discriminatory. The ignorance to acknowledge and to counter homelessness among LGBTQ\* youth (Chapter II, 1.6) or the heteronormative system can be considered as manifestations of *structural discrimination*. Structural discrimination refers to the preservation or implementation of policies of a dominant identity group or its members in institutions that are neutral in intent but entail a differential or harmful effect on minority groups. Thus, each of the manifestations of unequal treatment of LGBTQ\*s represent some form of discrimination – it might be individual, institutional or structural. What all manifestations have in common is its harmful effects on LGBTQ\* people. The foundation of the discrimination LGBTQ\*s have to face is in the individuals belonging to an identity group that is distinctive for its sexual orientation or gender identity. Their affiliation to this identity group is the source of the policies and acts that inflict harmful effects. As Galtung states, structural violence is “built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances.”<sup>38</sup> LGBTQ\*s often do not have the same life chances and equal power as heterosexual individuals and are subject to discrimination and its harmful consequences. Heteronormativity constitutes them as human beings that are vulnerable to policies that entail higher rates of mental illnesses or HIV infections, increased risks of suicides, lower chances to finish school which forces homeless LGBTQ\* youths into poverty. The advantage of Galtung’s violence triangle is that it is compulsory to speak about the detrimental effects discrimination and

---

<sup>38</sup> Galtung, “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research,” 171.

inequality have on specific identity groups. The discourse automatically turns to the negative implications and stirs debates surrounding solutions. The violence triangle acknowledges that the responsibility lies with everybody who preserves or helps to implement unequal structures.

These factors possess the power to construct a broad movement that has the ability to confront all forms of violence against LGBTQ\* people. Violence is always related to power and therefore, studies about power and its connection to violence have to be considered while analyzing violence against LGB people. Theories of the most influential philosophers in this sphere, like Hannah Arendt and Michel Foucault are part of the theoretical foundation of this thesis.<sup>39</sup>

The conclusion that can always be extracted from any of these theories is that power can be most effectively reached and maintained if a broader movement or construct – and not an individual – is trying to implement its ambition and is trying to influence and shape society's structure. Consequently, an essential step to be successful in influencing people and changing structures is to organize activists in a dominant movement which has the resources to promote its agenda. There are different factors why people become part of a social movement. Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper, who are both sociologists, define the construct of a collective identity as the most important reason for individuals to join a movement. A collective identity is “an individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution”<sup>40</sup>, as they state in their academic article “Collective Identity and Social Movements”. The French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs has already delineated the concept of a collective memory which is the essential basis for the construction of a collective identity in the 1920s. The German academics Jan and Aleida Assmann have further contributed to the elaboration of this concept and to the direct connection to the theory of collective identities. A collective memory of a shared history, cultural

---

<sup>39</sup> For more information on these theories I recommend to read: Arendt, Hannah. *On Violence*. New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1970 and Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge*. Edited by Colin Gordon. New York: Vintage, 1980.

<sup>40</sup> Francesca Polletta und James M. Jasper, “Collective Identity and Social Movements,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 (2001): 285.

background or a mutual fate constructs a bonding that has the potential to create a collective identity.

Even though the collective identity differs from a person's individual identity, there are nevertheless major intersections and correlations. Still, it is important to remember that neither social groups nor social movements are homogenous. There are diverse identity categories a person combines. Referring to this assumption, Doug Meyer outlines in his analysis of Anti-Queer Violence and Intersectionality that "anti-queer violence, [...], can typically be explained not only by sexuality but also by gender"<sup>41</sup>, as many of its forms occur when LGBTQ\* people "do gender" inappropriately."<sup>42</sup> This goes back to the theory of intersectionality that was introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw. Power structures penetrate a variety of identity categories and the culmination of specific categories influenced by these structures determines the probability and strength of acts of violence. Sexual identity alone is usually not the exclusive trigger which makes perpetrators attack LGBTQ\* people. The combination of diverse categories can increase the level of violence and as a consequence also the resulting damage. Every individual combines several identities and their sexual one is only part of it – even though it is still a major one. Therefore, every individual experiences oppression and violence to some extent differently. Nevertheless, the challenge for activists is to construct a common ground for a collective identity so that LGBTQ\*s can react as a coherent group against oppression. Still, it can and will never be a homogenous group but instead is supposed to be one that is embracing its diversity. This fact requires a sensible inclusion of intersectionality, the consideration of categories intensifying oppression, the different outgrowths of violence and the unequal level of intensity of violence. Additionally, it forces activists to integrate all kinds of LGBTQ\* people irrespectively of gender, class, race, age and nationality. It is important to integrate as many individual stories of LGBTQ\*s as possible to create a tight collective identity. A specific part of the core values the movement's activists are intending to promote and spread within society has

---

<sup>41</sup> And many other categories as race, class, age, nationality etc.

<sup>42</sup> Meyer, "An Intersectional Analysis of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) People's Evaluations of Anti-Queer Violence," 851.



to appeal to the targeted person and create a feeling of solidarity and belonging. Even though members of social movements are not alike and come from different backgrounds and have definitely different attitudes to a range of subjects they are still connected by the same ethics regarding a particular issue; and these moral principles and beliefs create the collective identity of a group. People want to contribute to the ultimate goal the movement has and are thus highly motivated. Additionally, the activists' intention is also to profit from the results their actions will have eventually: "Participation is a rational bid to gain the benefits that accrue to those who share a collective identity".<sup>43</sup> Oppression, discrimination and violent acts are especially fertile grounds for organizing people and creating a collective identity. Andrew J. Pierce says: "[T]he claim that a fundamental right possessed by groups is the right not to be oppressed or [...] the right to self-ascription"<sup>44</sup>. In addition, groups' members always distinguish themselves from the opposition by referencing to opponents' acts or values negatively. For that reason, the concept of oppression is also a "relational concept", as Pierce explains.<sup>45</sup> In Foucault's terms, the concept of oppression is a manifestation of power relations which can be influenced by activists. If applied to the topic of violence against LGBs it is conclusive to say that gay rights activists as well as their opponents try to implement their values and beliefs in society's structure. Opponents of gay rights endeavor to protect their moral ethics by maintaining the domination and superiority – and violence in its diverse forms constitutes a tool contributing to that effort. On the other hand, gay rights activists organize themselves around social injustices like discrimination and violence against LGB people, taking these realities as a means of constructing a collective identity that is inclusive and values the community. The struggle to end oppression, the promise to profit from the positive outcome attracts people to join the battle against violence and discrimination. Judith Butler clarifies the influence of violence and its political meaning in „Undoing Gender“:

---

<sup>43</sup> Polletta and Jasper, "Collective Identity", 19.

<sup>44</sup> Andrew J. Pierce, *Collective Identity, Oppression, and the Right to Self-Ascription*, (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012), 39.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

We [gays and lesbians] are, as a community, subjected to violence, even if some of us individually have not been. And this means that we are constituted politically in part by virtue of the social vulnerability of our bodies; we are constituted as fields of desire and physical vulnerability, at once publicly assertive and vulnerable.<sup>46</sup>

To get organized and to create awareness involves another concept – the concept of visibility which is directly related to power. Visibility is a tool to control the balance of power and to adjust discrepancies. “There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorising to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over and against himself”.<sup>47</sup> However not everybody is applying “the gaze” described by Foucault correctly or even at all and instead, people are frequently using other means to influence power relations: violence. Homosexuals’ bodies are constantly subject to society’s evaluation and are therefore marked by the resulting scars: „The body implies mortality, vulnerability, agency: the skin and the flesh expose us to the gaze of others but also to touch and to violence. [...] Constituted as a social phenomenon in the public sphere, my body is and is not mine.“<sup>48</sup> At the same time, bodies are instruments assigned with political meaning. Gay rights activists’ intentions are to liberate themselves, cease discrimination, suppression and act against their vulnerability. Gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people are trying to realize their right of self-ascription by gaining self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem. The philosopher Andrew Pierce and the distinguished academic Axel Honneth, whom Pierce is referring to in his book *Collective Identity, Oppression, and the Right to Self-Ascription*, have discussed the right of self-ascription extensively. For individuals who are constantly subject to violence and rejection it is important to find self-confidence – meaning that an individual has to accept and appreciate his or her needs and wishes – and implement these as a

---

<sup>46</sup> Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*, (New York: Routledge, 2004), 18.

<sup>47</sup> Michel Foucault, “Power/Knowledge,” in *Power/Knowledge*, ed. Colin Gordon, (New York: Vintage, 1980), 155.

<sup>48</sup> Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 21.

political, independent person that ascribes self-respect to themselves. At the same time, self-esteem is also essential as this is the feeling that makes people realize their own value, their uniqueness and turn these perceptions to their advantage.<sup>49</sup> Homosexuals, bisexuals and transgender people have to acknowledge their own identities and undergo the process of self-ascription – only then will they be able to become part of a movement and a collective identity. Activists have to integrate individuals in a broader movement and the easiest way how to do this is by exposing every individual's political implication. Violence against LGBTQ\* people transforms every individual homosexual, bisexual or transgender person into a political being that has a politicized body. After accepting this fact it is easy to integrate an individual into the gay rights movement. However, activists have to sort out how to increase the awareness of LGBTQ\*s to persuade them to realize that they are political and that they have a massive potential to influence society. The easiest way to raise this particular kind of awareness is by creating visibility and persuading individuals that they share a collective identity that is tying them together. As soon as these goals are reached, it will be possible to act on power relations and to try to shift the power balance to the activists' own advantage. The instrument to master this challenge is by using the most influential tool that guarantees a wide range of people reached: Social media.

So how do activists use social media to promote their cause and recruit new activists? To reach people via social media demands a certain repetition of the discussion of the respective issues at heart. The repeat of the same pattern – in this case the high-lighting of acts of oppression – in its manifold manifestations will create sensitivity for the topic over a long period of time. A recursive displaying of the matter and the elaboration of possible solutions will ultimately resonate in a certain action by the consumer of these Facebook, Twitter or YouTube posts. In the spirit of Anthony Giddens, sociologist and structuration theorist, intentional actions like the discussion of certain topics in social networks are acts of

---

<sup>49</sup> Pierce, *Collective Identity, Oppression, and the Right to Self-Ascription*, 60.

performances which can influence a specific process and consequently transform circumstances and conditions.<sup>50</sup> Resources like social media contain the power to influence structures by performing specific actions on a regular basis. The power of media has an enormous potential to change opinions, influence people's worldview, mobilize activists and achieve social change. Media are tools to spread information, and the incredible fast developments of the last decades have assured the potential to cross boundaries. Information is no longer limited to a particular space or time. Digital media provides information almost regardless when and where people are trying to access its content – at least in democratic, developed countries. According to Giddens' theory, media are resources and therefore structures that distribute information and established opinions. Agents, "people who use digital media, thus conferring or withholding their attention"<sup>51</sup>, are restricted in their attention that they can offer for media consumption. This leads to a selectivity of social media content which is consumed by users and also intentionally driven by social media platforms. Ultimately this will become important for the last part of this thesis.

Social media platforms have changed the settings in which LGBTQ\* activists have to struggle for equal rights and an end of oppression. The distribution of information has become easier and also the approach of potential activists. Individual beings are able to contribute to the cause and simultaneously movements are able to integrate every individual into their structure without them ever having met personally. At the same time, the high volume of social media content makes it difficult to stick out among the masses. Gay rights organizations have to compete for the attention of social media users. An appealing collective identity that promises advantages or attractive prospects for the one who joins a movement has the potential to reach various people. The elimination of direct and structural violence can be an influential goal by which activists can be recruited via social media. Exercising violence is a demonstration of power but fighting violence is as well. Social media networks are the battleground of the

---

<sup>50</sup> See more: Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984.

<sup>51</sup> James G. Webster, "The Duality of Media: A Structural Theory of Public Attention," *Communication Theory* 21 (2011), 46.

ascription of worth and the emancipation for the LGBTQ\* community. However, they also possess the risk of spreading egotism within society and seducing users into a pattern of egoistic behavior surrounding self-staging in social media.

### ***3.2 Neoliberalism and Neoclassical Economics***

One of the major challenges the LGBTQ\* movement faces nowadays is the side-effect of the deep-rooted neoliberalism in the U.S. society: egotism. This virtue and the transformation of society into an egoistic and ignorant construct will be a significant factor of this thesis and will therefore be extensively discussed. The egotism of our time threatens the mobilization of activists and the coherence of the movement. Moreover, it has successfully stimulated a climate that creates individuals whose concern is exclusively focused on their own well-being and personal development and aspirations. A precondition to comprehending the socio-economic occurrences of the last years is the understanding of the neoliberal system dominating Western societies. Neoliberalism is the philosophy that has impacted our current economic system most severely.

The theory of neoliberalism first arose at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the U.S.' political leaders and its citizens were agonized by the Great Depression. However, neoliberalism as a fluid economic concept did not exist until the easing of the next major economic crisis affecting the Western industrial world. The 70s and 80s witnessed the rise of a neoliberal philosophy which was destined to dominate the political and economic system for the next decades – not only in the United States but also in Europe and Australia and in some parts of Asia. From the 70s onwards, the *Chicago School of Economics* influenced the philosophical theory of neoliberalism and aligned it with economic empiricism. The expression *neoliberalism* consists of the Greek word “*neo*” which means “new” and “*liberalism*” – a political and moral philosophy that has reigned the U.S. since Franklin D. Roosevelt’s presidency. The policy of liberalism was meant to implement distinctive liberal values like freedom of expression,

human rights, rule of law and the freedom of choice. However, liberal thinkers, especially the Austrian Friedrich von Hayek and the philosophers of the Chicago School, realized that liberal values can only be maintained if specific instruments and mechanisms serve as protections:

[T]echnical instruments can defend political ideas and values, but the reverse is not true. [...] [M]arket competition could be a guarantor of democracy, but not vice versa; consumer rights could be a guarantor of human rights, but not vice versa; economic choice could guarantee political freedom, but not vice versa.<sup>52</sup>

Therefore, neoliberalism stands for a fluid project to protect liberal values by imposing an economic system that highlights the values it is supposed to protect. It correlates with economic concepts that contain the approaches of the free society and the free market. Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century, the dominant economic concepts were the theory of neoclassical economics and the Keynesian economics. The neoclassical economics' basic principle is the rule of supply and demand. Individuals choose specific products and thereby ascribe a certain worth to it. The total of the demands contributes to the determination of the product's value. The correlation of supply and demand was thought of as the manifestation of liberal values. Individuals practice their freedom of choice in the open market-economy and become a formative factor in assessing products' prices. In addition, deregulation and the liberalization of entry were consequences of the neoclassical concept. Restrictions on financial transactions were almost completely removed.<sup>53</sup> Privatization was promoted and implemented; the U.S. education system was one of the spheres where privatization was most massively spread. According to the neoclassical economics, the government is only supposed to pursue an active role if exceptional cases accrue such as an economic depression.

---

<sup>52</sup> William Davies, "The Emerging Neocommunitarianism," *The Political Quarterly*, 2012, Vol. 83, No. 4, 770.

<sup>53</sup> Heikki Patomäki, "What Next? An Explanation of the 2008–2009 Slump and Two Scenarios of the Shape of Things to Come," *Globalizations*, 2010, Vol. 7, Nos. 1–2, 70.

The approaches of the Keynesian economics integrated the likelihood of economic fluctuations due to the trend towards economic speculations anticipated by John Maynard Keynes. The economist has always been a proponent of governmental intervention to counteract depressions – especially by following the strategies of deficit spending. However, the neoclassical and neoliberal system which dominates our current economy determined economic crises as the only exceptions – apart from that, the market should balance itself. In theory, neoliberalism, in combination with neoclassical economics, would therefore be dominated by individuals who efficiently use the economic conditions and try to achieve the greatest possible satisfaction for themselves as individual beings. The concepts presume that individuals will not exceed the level of basic needs to live a fulfilling and happy life. Nevertheless, the assumption that “self-interest and markets are mutually supportive”<sup>54</sup> to realize this concept has been inaccurate. “Selfishness can spiral out of control, to the point where the price system is unviable.”<sup>55</sup> The trust system, which is a precondition of the functionality of neoliberalism, was proven to be frail. Greed and hedonism have destabilized the system and contributed to the failure of the initial aspiration inherent in the concept of a symbiosis of neoliberalism and neoclassical economics. The economic depression of recent times, which ultimately emerged in late 2007 and early 2008, was a reflection of the selfish and ravenous economic conduct of billions of citizens worldwide. The catalysts of the economic crisis were manifold. However, the housing price bubble was the one which eventually sparked the global financial crisis to its fullest. Speculations and subsequent increases of housing prices as well as high interest rates created a bubble that burst when the debtors were unable to repay mortgages. The ensuing effect was a chain reaction that destabilized real estate companies as well as the financial sector – first in the United States and soon afterwards worldwide. Major investment funds as well as major stock indexes were shaken and the indexes sharply declined. In addition, the market value of commodities and housing suffered

---

<sup>54</sup> Davies, “The Emerging Neocommunitarianism,” 771.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

large reductions worldwide.<sup>56</sup> Among many other consequences, the ensuing financial crisis entailed a soaring unemployment rate in the United States which reached almost ten percent in 2010<sup>57</sup>, a drop in consumer spending and the loss of housings since debtors were unable to pay back their loans. In addition, the overall socio-political situation became unstable and feelings of insecurity started to dominate. Feelings of panic, anxiety and fear were evoked more intensely by the economic situation and might have been related to the fear of job loss.<sup>58</sup> Frustration due to unemployment not related to one's own job performance led to a more aggressive behavior.<sup>59</sup> The socio-political climate became rougher in the aftermath of the financial crisis; a polarization among different groups within the United States became visible. The economic crisis, but also the system that has been prevailing over the last decades, contributed to a climate of inequality and inner conflict within the U.S. society. Economics explained that markets are pareto-optimal which means: "no arrangement can improve the position of anyone without making worse the position of somebody else. The implicit background assumption of pareto-optimality is that markets distribute wealth in a just way: those who contribute the most are equally rewarded the most."<sup>60</sup> Hence, the practical implementation of neoclassical economics implicates the development of unequal structures. The gap between the poor and the rich population has increased over the course of the last years. The fact that the bottom half of the world's population own less than one percent of the global wealth while the richest one percent possess more than 40 percent of the total assets has gained dominance.<sup>61</sup> *The Occupy Wallstreet Movement* embraced this as its slogan emphasizing the unequal structures. Furthermore, this division is additionally aggravated by "changing patterns

---

<sup>56</sup> Patomäki, "What Next? An Explanation of the 2008–2009 Slump and Two Scenarios of the Shape of Things to Come," 69.

<sup>57</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "The Recession of 2007–2009," *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*, February 2012, accessed October 31, 2016, [http://www.bls.gov/spotlight/2012/recession/pdf/recession\\_bls\\_spotlight.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/spotlight/2012/recession/pdf/recession_bls_spotlight.pdf).

<sup>58</sup> Veronica Momjian and Kaleefa Munroe, "Economic Insecurity, Mental Health, and the Economic Crisis in New York City," *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 3, 2011, 197.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Patomäki, "What Next?," 71.

<sup>61</sup> "Richest 1% will own more than all the rest by 2016," Oxfam International, accessed June 5, 2017, <https://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressreleases/2015-01-19/richest-1-will-own-more-all-rest-2016>.



of trust and altruism in America.”<sup>62</sup> The sociologist Robert Putnam explains that there has been “a decline in civic engagement and social capital – people are socially isolated.”<sup>63</sup> Putman makes the technological advancements responsible for the isolation and the loss of social trust. Competitiveness, self-reliance, ostracism, and sustainment of unequal structures are determinative within the neoliberal order dominating the United States as well as Europe; even though the effect has been the opposite of the one intended when the rise of the neoliberal order began. However, in combination with the neoclassical economics, the pursuit of liberal values like human rights and the freedom of choice became corrupted. Selfishness became socially acceptable; the concept of hate crept into politics and social interactions. The division of the U.S. citizens has amplified and manifested itself in a multitude of social and political developments. The era of neoliberalism is the era of individualism but also of egotism. While the freedoms that came with the concept of individualism have been contributing to one’s individual fulfillment, the related egotism has corrupted these positive effects. The cohesion of society and the aspired achievements for minority interest groups are at hazard. We were raised in a society that accepts and even promotes egotism. The rise of social media even magnified this development. One’s participation in social interaction on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are often simply autotelic. Self-staging is the core of participation. Selectivity of consumers also confines the range of information incorporated into one’s stock of knowledge. While the neoliberal era also led to the advancement of gay rights as it constituted LGBTQ\*s as consumers on the market and therefore challenged inequality<sup>64</sup>, it has constructed a climate that simultaneously threatens the perseverance of the achievements and the advancement of more rights. As the social media analysis of direct violence will show, victims of direct violence can not expect much support of the LGBTQ\* movement. Even though social media were embraced by the organizations, those affected by

---

<sup>62</sup> Božo Stojanović, “Homo Economicus: The (Lost) Prophet of Modern Times,” *Panoeconomicus*, 2015, Vol. 62, Issue 3, 403.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> More on the construction of LGBTQ\*s as consumers by the neoliberal developments in: Michael Kimmel and Cheryl Llewellyn, “Homosexuality, Gender Nonconformity, and the Neoliberal State,” *Journal of Homosexuality*, 59 (2012): 1087–1094.

direct violence have to fight their struggles by themselves. Moreover, also those individuals suffering from structural violence are often left alone – particularly if the manifestation of structural violence is affecting only a minority of LGBTQ\* people. The following analysis of social media activism will delineate the current strategies of LGBTQ\* activists. It will expose that the movement faces a variety of challenges including the egotism of the neoliberal era that endangers the cohesion, diversity and success of the LGBTQ\* social media movement.

## **II. Social Media Activism in the Obama Era**

### **1. Structural Violence**

Social injustice and unequal treatment that leads to a permanent unwanted state of misery and often to a higher risk of premature death, is recurrently denounced as detrimental by some fractions of the LGBTQ\* movement. Even though Galtung's theory is contested, structural violence is, as well as direct violence against LGBs, a scenario that can be applied to the discourse of oppression which could serve the LGBTQ\* movement as a resource for the construction of a collective identity and a diversified movement. Structural violence is interrelated to persisting discriminatory and exploiting policies within the bureaucratic, institutional and political structures. The long-time sustainment of the *Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT)* policy and the denial of same-sex marriage constituted social injustices and spheres of inequality that fulfilled the conditions necessary to define these manifestations as acts of structural violence. Being closeted and forced to lead a life of dishonesty and denial eventually culminated in a state of misery for everybody affected by the *DADT* policy. The negligence of implementing laws against the common practice of dismissing employees due to their sexual orientation is as much part of the overall structural violence against LGB people as the implementation of Religious Freedom Acts in many different U.S. states that create a feeling of inferiority – similar to the denial of same-sex marriage. Additionally, the enormous and disproportionately high rate of homeless LGBTQ\*s is also an expression of structural violence and so is the criminalization of LGBTQ\* people that is still happening in the United States. On the next pages I will present the different realms in which the theory of structural violence against LGBs can be applied. Furthermore, I will analyze the activists' methods of integrating manifestations of structural violence in these realms in their movement's strategy – even though they do not use the term “structural violence” themselves when discussing these manifestations. In the following analysis, I will recursively apply the expression “structural violence” and also

distinguish the movement's strategies in respect to direct and structural violence. This analysis will show that the LGBTQ\* movement already successfully utilizes an indirect distinction between structural and direct violence which's effect could be even intensified by integrating the terms into the discourse. I will distinguish between various measures activists have been taking from 2009 to 2017.

The most important tactic LGBTQ\* activists have been adapting to communicate oppression is by ensuring the support of influential celebrities. While the representation of direct violence has been strongly focusing on the homosexual "common man" who has been experiencing direct violence him- or herself, the strategy of spreading knowledge about all topics, to which one can refer as structural violence, additionally concentrates on the distribution of information by heterosexuals. The representation of structural violence relies massively on celebrities but not exclusively. Celebrities constitute attractive agents since they have more power in reaching and informing people about issues not directly related to the heterosexual individual; and history has shown that LGBTQ\* activists essentially need the support of heterosexuals. A minority will always be as successful as it will be able to gain the committed support of the majority. Celebrities have the power to influence billions of people. They are constantly in the public eye and therefore subject to evaluation. They are destined to become role models or deterrent examples. How they perform, what they say and how they act can influence generations. The U.S. sociologist C. Wright Mills states in his book *The Power Elite* which has already been published in 1956 that celebrities have the power to raise awareness, to bring topics to public attention, establish them in the public discourse and additionally influence said discourse. The preconditions to achieve all the delineated perspectives have never been better than nowadays. Social media – Twitter, YouTube and Facebook – are the resources which provide the basis to enact celebrities' "soft power". The political scientist Bastian Timm explains: "Celebrities füllen die von [Joseph S.] Nye treffend beschriebene Akteursrolle in Zeiten der Informationsrevolution gut aus. Akteure nämlich, die Informationen nutzen können, um ihre *soft power*-Ressourcen zu verstärken und Regierungen so direkt als auch indirekt beeinflussen können,

indem sie die Öffentlichkeit mobilisieren.”<sup>65</sup> Timm as well as the political scientist Joseph S. Nye who has first introduced the theory of *soft power* considers the application of the concept as the ability to reach certain goals by using attraction, not coercion.<sup>66</sup> The attraction people feel towards celebrities and gossip can be harnessed to start a public discourse and subtly raise awareness. On these grounds, I will analyze the representation of structural violence by the movement. I will show that celebrities – homosexual and heterosexual alike – have a major role in the movement’s activism but also that the “common man” is of immense value. The discourse of these analyses will be embedded in the examination of the diverse manifestations of structural violence.

I will start by looking closely at the manifestations of structural violence that were among the first challenged by the LGBTQ\* movement during the years of the Obama administration: The military ban on homosexuals – *Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell*. After that I will focus on the contested debate of same-sex marriage in the United States which was one of the strongest revelations of oppression until the Supreme Court decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges* was reached in the year 2015; the ruling that has ultimately legalized same-sex marriage in every single state of the United States. Subsequently, I will delineate structural violence affecting the daily life of homosexuals before I will illustrate manifestations of structural violence on the basis of suicides of gay and lesbian Americans. Eventually, this thesis will also discuss structural violence that can be found in the perseverance of a high number of homeless LGBTQ\* youths and also in the persisting discrimination of LGB people in the workplace.

---

<sup>65</sup> Bastian Timm, *Die Macht der Stars: Celebrities in der Weltpolitik*, (Opladen & Farmington Hills: Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2009), 23.

Translation of the author: *During the era of information revolution, celebrities fulfill their role expounded by [Joseph S.] Nye namely the role of important players very efficiently. They are players with the capabilities to use information to increase their soft-power resources, influence governments directly or indirectly by mobilizing the public.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

## ***1.1 Fighting Heteronormativity – Cultural Violence: The Foundation of Structural and Direct Violence***

The term “heteronormativity” was first introduced by Michael Warner in his publication *Fear of a Queer Planet* in 1991. The term is describing Judith Butler’s idea of the “*heterosexual matrix*” which Butler has defined a year earlier, in 1990. The basic concept is the general perception of a binary which only acknowledges a direct connection between *sex* and *gender*. The concept of *sex* ascribes people a female or male attribute when they are born. *Gender*, however, defines how people eventually behave and present themselves in their daily interactions. The “*heterosexual matrix*” determines that if a person is born male, the general expectation is that the person will have a masculine appearance and also desire accordingly, meaning that he will desire women. The scenario is equally adaptable for people born with a female sex who are accordingly expected to desire the opposite sex as well. The desire for the same sex is not valid within the “*heterosexual matrix*”. Butler explains: “Certain kinds of ‘identities’ cannot ‘exist’ – that is, those in which gender does not follow from sex and those in which the practices of desire do not ‘follow’ from either sex or gender.”<sup>67</sup>

The “*heterosexualization of desire*” has become the rule.<sup>68</sup> The rejection of homosexuality has been practiced for several decades and long before Judith Butler created the term of the “heterosexual matrix”. The rejection of homosexuality and the privileging of heterosexual people have also been described as *sexual othering* by Brian L. Ott and Robert L. Mack: “Here homosexual couples represent the abnormal, the other, and the non-ideal.”<sup>69</sup> Heteronormativity has thus been established in society’s culture, has become the manifestation of cultural violence par excellence and is therefore the most distinctive breeding ground of structural violence.

---

<sup>67</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), 24.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Brian L. Ott and Robert L. Mack, *Critical Media Studies – An Introduction*, (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2010), 199.

Fighting the stigmatization as homosexual and abnormal requires the deconstruction of the concept of heteronormativity.

The possibility of subverting and displacing those naturalized and reified notions of gender that support masculine hegemony and heterosexist power, to make gender trouble, not through the strategies that figure a utopian beyond, but through the mobilization, subversive confusion, and proliferation of precisely those constitutive categories that seek to keep gender in its place by posturing as the foundational illusions of identity.<sup>70</sup>

Judith Butler's intention is the performance of *gender trouble* according to the concept that someone is born with a specific body, and therefore able to create an identity and develop desires that are not predefined. Neither the *sex* someone is born with nor *gender* should be compulsory. Instead, gender is generated by repeatedly acting in a specific way and should not be depended on a common expectation, an alleged natural precondition or social norm. The aspiration is that homosexuality should never again be dominated by a superior heterosexuality.

Consequently, structural violence against LGBTQ\*s can only be eliminated if heteronormativity is contested and subverted. The concept of heteronormativity or the heterosexual matrix is being used to justify and legitimize direct and structural violence against LGBTQ\*s. Cultural violence is the foundation so that direct or structural violence looks and even feels right. The concept of heterosexuality complies with these criteria. Destroying the concept would result in the subversion of the justification of direct and structural violence.

Gay rights activists apply multiple forms of subverting heteronormativity. Gay Prides worldwide serve the purpose of deconstructing this concept. The political demonstrations create visibility and represent the implementation and application of Judith Butler's *gender*

---

<sup>70</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 46.

*trouble*. Gay men and women in drag subvert the common expectations of a person's gendered behavior and appearance:

I would suggest [...] that drag fully subverts the distinction between inner and outer psychic space and effectively mocks both the expressive model of gender and the notion of a true gender identity. [...] In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency. [...] In the place of the law of heterosexual coherence, we see sex and gender denaturalized by means of a performance which avows their distinctness and dramatizes the cultural mechanism of their fabricated unity.<sup>71</sup>

*Drag*, gay pride celebrations and political demonstrations are conducive to the deconstruction of the *heterosexual matrix*, the heteronormativity. However, gay prides and political demonstrations' outreach – even though organized on regular basis – usually remains restricted to an isolated group that already internalizes political activism. Therefore, the LGBTQ\*'s movement via social media has a higher potential to reach out to people less political who represent a group of new political activists; an activist that can act from home; that does not have to demonstrate on the streets. This new generation of activism is not tied to a specific location – it can be exercised from anywhere and at any time. It can be easily organized and its content is distributed faster than ever before. It reaches more people and is hardly limited to a geographical realm. It also has the potential to reach all those diverse groups of LGBTQ\*s and include the community's diversity – even though this capability has not been utilized adequately so far. This new activism can stir visibility and a public debate on a daily basis. It can target the heterosexual matrix but also socio-political developments of our times.

---

<sup>71</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 186-188.



## ***1.2 Don't Ask, Don't Tell: Structural Violence in the U.S. Military***

The movement for gay rights and the fight against oppression has been subject to an immense evolution over the course of the Obama presidency. Activists struggling for the suspension of sodomy laws and the implementation of civil unions as well as hate crime laws in the United States still had to work on a grassroots basis, using the conventional media like newspapers, magazines and later on online magazines. Technology was limited and reaching people was by far slower and not as immediate as it is nowadays when someone is using social media to raise awareness. The rise of social media for LGBTQ\* activists started with the debate about the highly discriminatory *Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue, Don't Harass* policy that had affected gay and lesbian service members for almost two decades.

The U.S. military has had a high standing among Americans since the United States were founded. Especially during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the importance of the military has been boosted even further. Two world wars, the conflicts during the Cold War, the arms race with the Soviet Union, the interventions in Korea and Vietnam<sup>72</sup> and the Gulf War contributed to the prominence and inviolability of U.S. service members within society. Veterans are not only paid tribute to on November 11<sup>th</sup>, the Veterans Day, but they also receive special appreciation almost every time they reveal their profession. Support for the ones who serve is expected from every loyal and patriotic citizen. Nevertheless, for almost 90 years one group within the military was deprived from equal treatment and forced into denying their identity or not serving at all.

Gay soldiers have served the military as long as the United States exists – openly and closeted. Until World War I, gays were not necessarily

---

<sup>72</sup> It is undeniable that particularly the Vietnam War has stirred a debate about the relationship of the American society to its military. The Anti-War as well as the Counterculture Movement have created a critical environment and contested the standing of the U.S. military. Nonetheless, the U.S. military and its members are still greatly respected by a major part of U.S. society to this day.

discharged from the military: “Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the military neither officially excluded nor discharged homosexuals from its ranks, and, until the late nineteenth century, neither homosexuality nor the homosexual person existed as a concept.”<sup>73</sup>

Nevertheless, the military discharged many soldiers who were caught while performing oral and/or anal sex with a person of the same sex. However, in 1920 the U.S. Congress laid the basis for the enshrinement of the unequal and discriminatory treatment into law by modifying Article 93 of the Articles of War of 1916.<sup>74</sup> From the passing of the bill in 1921 onwards, sodomy was considered a criminal offense according to Article 93 of the Articles of War. A further step to eliminate homosexuals from military ranks was the implementation of Article 125 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Part (a) which covered all military branches found “any person ... who engages in unnatural carnal copulation with another person of the same or opposite sex or with an animal” guilty of sodomy.<sup>75</sup> Consensual sodomy acts were not eliminated from the definition above of “unnatural carnal copulation” until December 2013 when President Barack Obama signed a legislation that abolished this particular part from Article 125.

It was also Barack Obama who eventually signed the law that repealed *Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT)*. The law, which was instituted in February 1994, was the result of an inevitable compromise of President Bill Clinton. The presidential candidate promised to revoke any discriminatory policies and codes banning homosexuals from service. This was a direct response to an order from the Department of Defense. *Directive 1332.14* declared homosexuality as incompatible with military service in 1982.<sup>76</sup> For homosexuals, serving their country became aligned with the requirement to remain closeted, to conceal their identity and also with the fear of being outed and expelled from the military. Bill Clinton had the intention to ease

---

<sup>73</sup> Gary L. Lehring, *Officially Gay: The Political Construction of Sexuality by the U.S. Military*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 75.

<sup>74</sup> David F. Burrelli, “An Overview of the Debate on Homosexuals in the U.S. Military,” *Gays and Lesbians in the Military: Issues, Concerns, and Contrasts*, ed. Wilbur J. Scott and Sandra Carson Stanley, (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1994), 17.

<sup>75</sup> Lehring, *Officially Gay*, 75.

<sup>76</sup> Melissa Sheridan Embser-Herbert, *The U.S. Military's 'Don't Ask Don't Tell' Policy* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007), 7.

the situation for homosexuals, to enable gay and lesbian soldiers to serve without fearing to be expelled. However, Clinton's ambitions were not compliant with the intentions of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the majority of the U.S. Congress. The debate and the failure to challenge the ban completely resulted in a compromise, the "*U.S. Code, Title 10, Section 654. Policy Concerning Homosexuality in the Armed Forces*" or as it is commonly known: *Don't Ask, Don't Tell*. The Department of Defense Directive 1304.26 stated that:

Applicants for enlistment, appointment, or induction shall not be asked or required to reveal their sexual orientation. Applicants also will not be asked or required to reveal whether they have engaged in homosexual conduct, unless independent evidence is received indicating that an applicant engaged in such conduct or unless the applicant volunteers a statement that he or she is a homosexual or bisexual, or words to that effect.<sup>77</sup>

However, the Directive also clarified that homosexual conduct would be grounds for discharging a soldier. Therefore, the Department of Defense made it clear that if a service member engaged in homosexual conduct, solicited someone else to engage in homosexual acts, made comments that indicate that he or she will engage in homosexual acts or intends to marry someone of the same sex, the service member would be discharged from the military. The Directive defined homosexual acts as any behavior serving the purpose of satisfying sexual pleasure. Hand-holding, kissing, or any other physical contact of a sexual nature were considered as such.<sup>78</sup>

Even though President Clinton's intentions were well-intentioned the realization of his idea was disastrous for the gay and lesbian service members. Albeit the fact that homosexuals had to hide within the ranks of the U.S. military since the 1920s, *DADT* was the manifestation of anti-

---

<sup>77</sup> Department of Defense, Enclosure 2 of DODD1304.26: Qualification Standards for Enlistment, Appointment, and Induction, accessed June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016, <http://dont.law.stanford.edu/statutes-regulations/>.

<sup>78</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Attachment to DODD1304.26: "Applicant Briefing Item on Separation Policy, 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016," <http://dont.law.stanford.edu/statutes-regulations/>.

LGBTQ\* oppression that was discriminatory in all its aspects. Homosexuals were accepted to serve their country as long as they did not come out. Risking their lives, fighting for the freedom of the United States, serving the political ambitions of the powerful elite was welcomed but only if gays and lesbians served closeted and nobody would ever realize that a homosexual was supporting and even protecting them. Homosexual service members decided to selflessly give their lives and serve with distinction but they did only receive dignified treatment as long as they were not out. Instead they were forced into hiding their identity and it was not even possible for them to act on their natural desires in private. Although, there was criticism and attempts to challenge the law, the movement against *DADT* was not efficiently organized. During the 90s and early 2000s the focus shifted mainly on hate crime legislations and the challenge of the sodomy law which was ultimately successfully repealed in the Supreme Court's *Lawrence vs. Texas* decision in 2003. The major attempts to revoke *DADT* were legal challenges initiated by the *ServeOut-Service Members Legal Defense Network* which were mostly unsuccessful. The Supreme Court never admitted a challenge to *DADT* and rejected to review the military's policy on multiple occasions.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, only one federal court has ruled that *DADT* is unconstitutional (*Log Cabin Republicans v. United States, 2010*). The decision was stayed afterwards by the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals after the Obama administration entered an emergency motion to temporarily stay the decision.<sup>80</sup> *ServeOut* was founded as a direct response to the implementation of *DADT* in 1993 and became the most important organization facing the injustices of the legislation. Since 1993 the organization has responded to more than 12,000 requests for assistance of service members facing unequal treatment and oppression within the military forces.<sup>81</sup>

In the 2000s the importance of the Internet increased quickly. Between 2004 and 2006 YouTube, Twitter and Facebook were founded.

---

<sup>79</sup> Jody Feder, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell: A Legal Analysis," *Congressional Research Service*, August 6, 2013, accessed June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R40795.pdf>. (p. 13)

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>81</sup> OutServe-Service Members Legal Defense Network, "About OutServe SLDN," accessed June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016, [https://www.outserve-sldn.org/?page=about\\_us](https://www.outserve-sldn.org/?page=about_us).

Gay rights organizations, like the *Human Rights Campaign*, *Freedom to Marry* and *GLAAD* joined YouTube in 2006. In 2008 and 2009 all three organizations, which have established themselves as the major gay rights organizations, joined Twitter. Nevertheless, it took a few more years until the organizations could use the value of social media professionally. *ServeOut* also joined Facebook in 2009 and Twitter in 2010. Yet, the organization's engagement in recruiting new activists via these social media platforms was almost non-existent at that time. The few tweets bearing the hashtag #DADT were hardly retweeted and "liked". In addition, there were no responses by other users.<sup>82</sup> The organization lacked substantial support from society due to its ineffective use of social media. On the one hand, the struggle to speak out against the legislation was also negatively influenced by the sheer impossibility for serving soldiers to raise their voice since they would have risked their career if they had openly criticized the policy. On the other hand, more than 13,000 service members have been discharged while *DADT* was in effect composing a group that would have qualified to raise awareness. Nevertheless, neither *ServeOut* nor any other gay rights organization did acquire the strategies to profit from these fates.<sup>83</sup> Instead, their focus remained on legal challenges and protests.

The power of social media was primarily attained on May 27, 2017 after the House of Representatives had voted with a majority of 234 to 194 for the adoption of an amendment to the *National Defense Authorization Act* (NDAA) that would lead to the repeal of *DADT* in early 2011. The bill was sent to the Senate in September 2010 as well as in December 2010. However, Senator John McCain (R-AZ) filibustered the entire NDAA and made it impossible for the Senate to vote on the bill on both days (September 10, 2010 and December 9, 2010). Instead, the House of Representatives and the Senate passed the *Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act of 2010* in December 2010. On December 22, 2010 President Barack Obama, who had been supporting the repeal of *DADT* since his campaign

---

<sup>82</sup> Twitter Search, "DADT from OutServe SLDN since 2010-01-01 until: 2011-01-01," accessed June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016, <https://twitter.com/search?q=%23DADT%20from%3AOutServeSLDN%20since%3A2010-01-01%20until%3A2011-01-01&src=typd&lang=de>.

<sup>83</sup> OutServe-Service Members Legal Defense Network, "About OutServe SLDN."

for presidency, signed the bill into law. The law was certified on July 22, 2011 by the administration's new Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen. The struggle for the repeal of *DADT* in 2010 was the beginning of the movement's adaptation of social media as a tool to raise awareness and recruit new supporters. Interestingly, no gay rights organization initiated the symbiosis between the movement's ambitions and targets and the multiplicity of opportunities that social media provides. The person who laid the foundation for the future effort to profit from social media outreach and its incredible potential to gain new supporters was the U.S. vocalist and artist Lady Gaga.

Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta, or Lady Gaga as she is professionally known as, has been a supporter of gay and queer<sup>84</sup> rights for years. Shortly after Senator John McCain's filibuster speech Lady Gaga responded to the strenuous resistance towards the repeal of *DADT*. On September 16, 2010 she decided to upload a video statement on YouTube in which she asked everybody supporting the repeal to call their senators and leave a message soliciting them to vote with Senators Harry Reid and Carl Levin to repeal *DADT* and oppose John McCain's filibuster. In her initial speech she referred to the injustice and the structural violence implicit in *DADT*.

According to *SLDN* more than 13,000 Americans have been discharged from the armed forces between 1993 and 2009 due to *DADT*.<sup>85</sup> People who were marginalized and had to rebuilt a professional existence. The discharge was paralleled by the outing of the soldiers.<sup>86</sup> It represented an intrusion in one's sphere of privacy and could ruin one's reputation or life. Even though the legislation stated that the military will not "ask" soldiers if they were gay, soldiers' sexual orientation was investigated as

---

<sup>84</sup> An expression which is nowadays used for emphasizing the deviance from the heterosexual and/or cis-gender norm. It is used in a broader context than categories like gay, lesbian, bisexual or transsexual and understands itself as independent from stereotypical thinking.

<sup>85</sup> The Williams Institute, "Discharges under the Don't Ask/Don't Tell Policy: Women and racial/ethnic minorities," accessed June 18, 2016, <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Gates-Discharges2009-Military-Sept-2010.pdf>.

<sup>86</sup> While the term *coming-out* refers to a voluntary exposure of one's sexual identity, *outing* is always involuntary and forced onto the outed individual.

soon as any implications gave reason to believe that someone was gay or lesbian. This also represented a leverage point for potential emotional blackmailing and harassment as in the case of Barry Winchell, a U.S. soldier who was killed for being gay by one of his comrades in 1999. In the aftermaths the Secretary of Defense William Cohen was required to review *DADT*, clarifying if it created a homophobic and detrimental climate.<sup>87</sup> The results of the survey indicated that anti-gay harassment was a substantial problem. “80% of service members reported having heard derogatory anti-gay remarks in the preceding year. 37% indicated that they witnessed or experienced targeted incidents of anti-gay harassment – of those, 14% reported antigay threats or anti-gay physical assaults.”<sup>88</sup> *DADT* created a climate of fear and harassment. Many gay and lesbian soldiers opted for handing in a coming-out letter with the intention of being discharged. Lady Gaga referred to all these facts in her first public outreach to LGBTQ\* supporters and activists: “SLDN’s advocacy proves that these soldiers are being searched. Superior’s are going through their emails and private belongings; calling family members and operating based on assumptions. Ultimately, the law is being enforced using gay profiling. And gay soldiers have become targets. In short, not only is the law unconstitutional, but it’s not even being properly or fairly enforced by the government.”<sup>89</sup> The U.S. military violated their service members’ right to privacy and created an atmosphere of fear by conveying that the military would prosecute anybody who might be homosexual. *DADT* criminalized gay soldiers irrespective of one’s performance, their contribution to the successfulness and efficiency of the troops or their outstanding behavior; none of these aspects could influence investigations positively. If someone was convicted for homosexual conduct there was no pardon. Soldiers faced a dishonorable discharge and no compensation.

---

<sup>87</sup> Nathaniel Frank, *Unfriendly Fire: How the Gay Ban Undermines the Military and Weakens America*, (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2009), 196.

<sup>88</sup> Sharon E. Debbage Alexander, “A Ban by Any Other Name: Ten Years of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” *Hofstra Labor & Employment Law Journal*, Volume 21, No. 2, Spring 2004, 430.

<sup>89</sup> Lady Gaga, “A message from Lady Gaga to the Senate Sept 16, 2010,” YouTube video, 07:29. Posted by Lady Gaga, September 17, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GG5VK2lquEc>.

Homosexual service members were forced into isolation and the denial of their own identity. Distinguished soldiers were unable to reveal who they really were and if the truth was detected they had to cope with the consequences. Lady Gaga illuminates how long-serving or promising soldiers lost their job due to the *DADT* policy and were ostracized:

Sergeant First Class Stacy Vasquez, after twelve years of service was outed by the wife of a cadet to whom she gave a negative report based on his bad performance in the unit. West Point Cadet Katie Miller opted to leave West Point Academy because she felt pressured to mask her identity in school. The most shocking discovery for me was to hear them all say, how much they missed serving and protecting our nation; how they joined the Armed Forces because they believed in America.<sup>90</sup>

Processing *DADT* equaled violence that was exercised from within structures of the U.S. Defense Department. Homophobia and heteronormativity justified the unequal treatment of gay and lesbian soldiers and even granted the U.S. government the right to destroy people's vocational – and oftentimes private – lives. The legislation provided politicians and military personnel with the power to interfere with LGBs happiness and their mental well-being. It provided them with the power to affect people's minds. *DADT* fed lesbian and gay soldiers with society's conviction that loving people of the same sex and spending your life with a same-sex partner was abnormal and a legitimation for treating one differently from heterosexual people – and even a legitimation for exercising violence. Gay and lesbian service members experienced a treatment that stimulated a feeling of inferiority and therefore constituted structural violence. Lady Gaga's video clip represented her contribution to lay the foundation for a better and more accepting world for homosexual soldiers as well as homosexual civilians. Her call to increase the pressure on senators was the first effective use of social media for gay right issues. More

---

<sup>90</sup> Lady Gaga, "A message from Lady Gaga to the Senate Sept 16, 2010."



than three million views were documented and according to the YouTube statistic for this video, the peak was reached right after the clip was uploaded (current clicks: 3.030.326; date: June 3, 2017). People who have not spent a thought on the situation of homosexual soldiers were suddenly stimulated to empathize with gay and lesbian service members. Lady Gaga set off a chain reaction. On September 18, 2010 she uploaded a playlist showing eighteen videos of people that use the method the vocalist delineated to influence the senators. Mostly young women and men were filmed while calling their senators asking them to vote for the repeal of *DADT*. Lady Gaga initiated a movement via social media that influenced politics, people's opinion and that raised awareness. A single person used her *soft power* as a celebrity and influenced millions. She voiced the service member's emotions and pains and thereby counteracted the spirit of egotism. Lady Gaga decided to take a stand for all homosexual soldiers living closeted. She deciphered that having a liberal government behind that was willing to eliminate *DADT* presented a major chance and that using social media would impose pressure on it. The gay rights organizations had not sensed the potential of social media yet or were not able to use it efficiently. Therefore, the Italo-American singer decided to take even further actions.

On September 20, 2010, Lady Gaga held a speech at a convention of the *SLDN* in Portland, Maine and called her address "The Prime Rib of America". In her speech Lady Gaga criticized *DADT* in a very emotional and remarkable way. She started by pointing out the double standard implied in the military's policy: Serving the country, supporting and defending the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, fulfilling the oath taken when joining the military; every single aspect that was a soldier's duty and free will. However, according to *DADT* the high standards of morale, good order and discipline as well as unit cohesion would be endangered if homosexual soldiers were serving openly.<sup>91</sup> Lady Gaga concludes from this argumentation: "So what this means is, that

---

<sup>91</sup> Stanford University, "Section 571 of the National Defense Authorization Act," Stanford Law School, accessed June 20, 2016, <http://dont.stanford.edu/regulations/pl1103-60.pdf>.

they're saying that straight soldiers feel uncomfortable around gay soldiers, and sometimes it causes tension, hostility and possible performance inadequacies for straight soldiers who are homophobic."<sup>92</sup> Therefore, *DADT* can be interpreted as a law that is based on the assumption that openly serving LGB soldiers would have been a burden for heterosexual service members. It implies that heterosexual soldiers are only willing to take the oath as long as no gay soldiers are part of the unit. If so, many heterosexual soldiers would claim that they were not able to serve their country due to the tension resulting from that. Homophobia was the foundation of *DADT*. Homophobia that resulted from heteronormativity was used to justify the discharge of gay soldiers – because heterosexual service members allegedly were not able to concentrate on their duty while gay or lesbian soldiers were in their unit. Lady Gaga delineated how heterosexual service members were victimized while homosexuals were seen as the perpetrator. The vocalist tried to expose the contradictoriness of *DADT* and the Constitution of the United States:

Doesn't it seem to be that, based on the Constitution of the United States, that we are penalizing the wrong soldier? Doesn't it seem to you that we should send home the prejudiced, the straight soldier who hates the gay soldier, the straight soldier whose performance in the military is affected because he is homophobic, the straight soldier who has prejudice in his heart, in the space where the military asks him to hold our core American values, he instead holds and harbors hate – and he gets to stay and fight for our country? He gets the honor, but we gay soldiers, who harbor no hatred, no prejudice, no phobia, we are sent home?<sup>93</sup>

Lady Gaga applies a very emotional rhetoric, one that emphasizes the injustice and that appeals to the empathy inherent in all human beings. She shouts and gestures and accentuates her allegiance with the gay and lesbian

---

<sup>92</sup> Lady Gaga, "Lady Gaga's Portland Speech," YouTube video, 16:38. Posted by WMTW-TV, September 20, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MoqOvFJ5-0c>.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

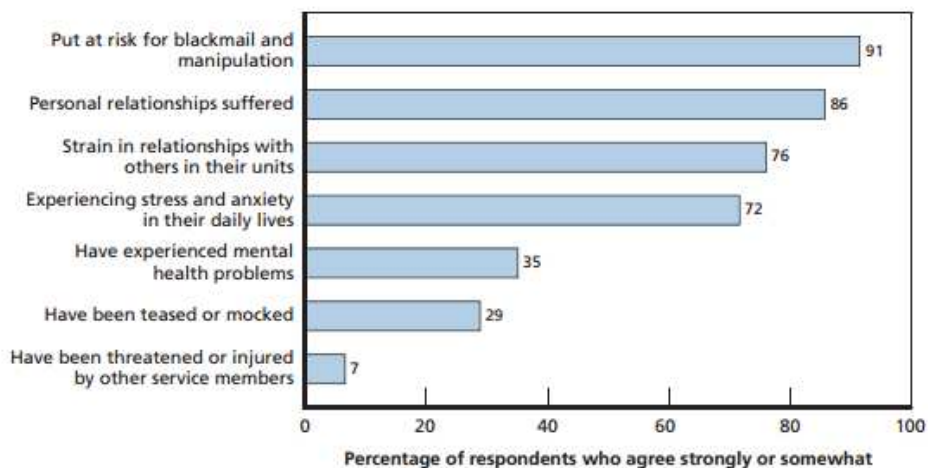
soldiers when she is using the personal pronoun “*we gay soldiers*”. She identifies herself with the LGB soldiers that suffered from the legislation and her account of the harmful effects sound honest and are inspiring and thought-provoking. Her speech illuminates clearly – although she does not say it – that *DADT* can not only be seen as the manifestation of injustice but also of violence within one of the most important institutions of the United States; *DADT* can actually be perceived as the manifestation of structural violence. In addition to the implausibility of the law and the heteronormativity within the U.S. military, *DADT* was highly violent towards the soldiers’ mental and emotional condition. Lady Gaga points out: “We are going to war for you and you and you and you – but not you, because you’re gay. You can risk your life for this country, but in the end, you are not fighting for yourself; you are fighting for straight people. ... You are not included. You are not included when we say ‘equal.’ You are not even fully included when we say ‘freedom.’” Gay and lesbian soldiers were denied equal treatment. They could serve their country, fight for their principles but the principle of equality did not include their own rights. Their service for the United States military was constrained to the condition that they decided to cover and deny their true identity. They were reduced to second-class human beings and had to face injustice every single day while they served, or coped with the fact that they were discharged or decided to leave the military due to their own homosexuality. Serving openly was not an option and therefore the U.S. leadership accepted the fact that thousands of potential soldiers did not receive the chance to protect their country. The military leadership risked their soldier’s well-being as they were willingly not accepting gay and lesbian soldiers’ manpower and sent them into hiding. The stigma of being different and inferior became part of homosexual soldiers’ identity – and it also influenced their daily life. A RAND<sup>94</sup> study conducted in 2010 showed that LGB “respondents attributed a range of

---

<sup>94</sup> The RAND Corporation is a research organization that develops solutions to public policy challenges. More: “About the RAND Corporation,” *RAND Corporation*, accessed January 19, 2017, <http://www.rand.org/about.html>.

personal problems to DADT, including risk of blackmail, damage to personal relationships, stress and anxiety, and mental health problems.”<sup>95</sup>

**Figure 9.5**  
**Personal Problems Attributed by Gay Service Members to DADT**



RAND MG1056-9.5

Although the researchers highlight that the 351 participants who completed the survey might “be affiliated to some degree with networks of gay or lesbian military personnel or activist organizations and thus may overrepresent the views of such individuals” the study provides a strong indication which effects DADT has had on a variety of gay or lesbian service members. However, studies like this one were predominantly read by politicians. They did not reach the general public. Instead, Lady Gaga was the first person who pointed to this unjust treatment and the detrimental effects in social media and who openly challenged the status quo. She reached millions of people with her YouTube videos and speeches, she stipulated the course of the social movement for the repeal of *DADT*, she inspired masses and she mobilized new activists. Lady Gaga heralded the age of social media for LGBTQ\* activists. Not a LGBTQ\* organization but a single celebrity exposed the value of social media for the future course of the LGBTQ\* rights movement. Lady Gaga gathered individuals and

<sup>95</sup> RAND National Defense Research Institute, “Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy: An Update of RAND’s 1993 Study,” *RAND Corporation*, accessed January 19, 2017, [http://dont.law.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/RAND\\_sexual-orientation-updated1993study-2010.pdf](http://dont.law.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/RAND_sexual-orientation-updated1993study-2010.pdf).

integrated them into a campaign promoting the repeal of *DADT*. In the following years more and more LGBTQ\* organizations efficiently utilized social media to reach and influence people all around the world. The *Human Rights Campaign* as well as *Freedom to Marry* became the most active organizations on social media platforms. Eventually, the struggle to repeal *DADT* was successful and as of July 2011 gay and lesbian soldiers have been able to serve openly in the U.S. military. However, the fight for equal rights was far from over. The full implementation of the new policy needed some time and additionally, oppression and injustices remained on behalf of *Article 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA)*. Article 3 of the Act defined the institution “marriage” as a relationship that could be exclusively entered into by two people of opposite sexes. As long as *DOMA* was part of the federal laws it remained impossible for homosexual soldiers serving federal government to receive same benefits for their spouses. This aspect of structural violence U.S. military members had to face is closely aligned with the topic of same-sex marriage which will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

### ***1.3 The Denial of Same-Sex Marriage and the Well-Being of Children: A Manifestation of Structural Violence?***

While the fight for the elimination of *DADT* represented the first steps towards a more active incorporation of social media into the movement, the struggle for the legalization of same-sex marriage and joined adoption rights on a federal level became the defining topic in this process. The prohibition of same-sex marriage in many U.S. states until July 2015 as well as the resistance of the opponents of the legalization was probably the most obvious manifestation of unequal structures in the United States. Until the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, that codified the implementation of same-sex marriage in all U.S. states, the contested debate affected the life of thousands of lesbian and gay couples and their well-being. In the majority opinion delivered by Justice Anthony McLeod Kennedy on June 26, 2015 the justices emphasized:

Here the marriage laws enforced by the respondents are in essence unequal: same-sex couples are denied all the benefits afforded to opposite-sex couples and are barred from exercising a fundamental right. Especially against a long history of disapproval of their relationships, this denial to same-sex couples of the right to marry works a grave and continuing harm. The imposition of this disability on gays and lesbians serves to disrespect and subordinate them.<sup>96</sup>

The U.S. Supreme Court acknowledged that the denial of same-sex marriage was harmful to every individual homosexual who did not have the possibility to marry his or her loved one or who had to suffer from legal divergences between the different states. *Obergefell v. Hodges* was based on several lawsuits; among others, James Obergefell sued the state of Ohio for

---

<sup>96</sup> U.S. Supreme Court, "Obergefelle et al. v. Hodges, Director, Ohio Department of Health et al." No. 14-556, argued April 28, 2015 - Decided June 26, 2015, 22.

recognition of his marriage with John Arthur in Maryland in 2013 when Arthur was already suffering from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), a disease that eventually led to his death three months later. Since Ohio did not grant homosexuals the right to marry at that time, the state's officials did not list Obergefell as the surviving spouse on Arthur's death certificate. The experience of this unequal treatment, the "othering" and the non-recognition as a couple that stood together until the final end, was excruciating for James Obergefell. Anthony Kennedy also referred to the immense pain Obergefell must have felt: "By statute, they must remain strangers even in death, a state-imposed separation Obergefell deems 'hurtful for the rest of time.'"<sup>97</sup> These feelings related to the non-recognition as the spouse of his partner of 21 years by state and federal officials were the detrimental effects of an unequal treatment that left emotional scars. The same was experienced by the co-plaintiffs in this case.

April DeBoer and Jayne Rowse were two of the co-plaintiffs in *Obergefell v. Hodges*. DeBoer and Rowse were not allowed to get married in Michigan so they decided to celebrate a commitment ceremony to honor their permanent relation in 2007. Over the years, the couple became the family of three adopted children. However, Michigan does only grant full adoption rights to opposite-sex families or single parents. Consequently, only one of the two women could become the legal parent of the children. If anything ever happened to the legal parent her spouse would not have any legal rights when it came to their children. Additionally, the parent without legal rights could not officially receive any information from schools, hospitals or any bureaucratic institution. The judges state in their majority opinion:

Excluding same-sex couples from marriage thus conflicts with a central premise of the right to marry. Without the recognition, stability, and predictability marriage offers, their children suffer the stigma of knowing their families are somehow lesser. They also suffer the significant material costs of being raised by unmarried parents,

---

<sup>97</sup> U.S. Supreme Court, "Obergefelle et al. v. Hodges, Director, Ohio Department of Health et al.," 5.

relegated through no fault of their own to a more difficult and uncertain family life. The marriage laws at issue here thus harm and humiliate the children of same-sex couples.<sup>98</sup>

In addition to the effects on homosexual couples, the denial of same-sex marriage resulted in severe emotional burdens forced on children of same-sex families. Instability and the feeling of inferiority as well as unequal life chances had negative impacts on children living in same-sex families. These results recognized by the Supreme Court can be closely analyzed in the context of structural violence and might fall under the definition if certain mental impacts are given. Humiliation and instability can lead to an unstable mental condition and influence the family members' lives negatively.

Ultimately, the U.S. Supreme Court decided that the denial of same-sex marriage did not fulfill the rights promised by the *Equal Protection Clause* and the *Due Process Clause* of the Fourteenth Amendment, which states that it is illegal to “deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.” Life and liberty – both were impaired by structural violence enforced by the rejection of homosexuals' desire to marry and to construct a stable bondage that secures the family's stability. In addition, facing constant rejection and obstacles eventually leaves imprints on one's mental state. Structural violence can result in psychological traumas, depressions, anxiety problems, substance abuse and suicides. Studies suggest that homosexuals have a higher prevalence of mental disorders than heterosexuals. Explanations are often based on the concept of social stress and minority stress. The assumption is that minority stress is *unique, chronic* and *socially based*.<sup>99</sup> *Unique* implies that “minority stress is additive to general stressors that are experienced by all people, and therefore, stigmatized people are required an adaptation effort above that required of similar others who are not stigmatized.”<sup>100</sup> Moreover, minority stress is defined as *chronic* in respect to the understanding that social and

---

<sup>98</sup> U.S. Supreme Court, “*Obergefell et al. v. Hodges, Director, Ohio Department of Health et al.*,” 15.

<sup>99</sup> Ilan H. Meyer, “Prejudice, Social Stress, and Mental Health in Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Populations: Conceptual Issues and Research Evidence,” *Psychol Bull.* 2003 September; 129(5): 674–697.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 678.



cultural structures are relatively stable and enduring; and it is also defined as *socially based* because minority stress is constituted by “social processes, institutions, and structures beyond the individual” which are difficult to be overturned.<sup>101</sup>

Due to the diversity of studies conducted over the years the fact that mental disorders are disproportionately high among homosexuals and bisexuals is no longer contested. King et al. revealed that the risk for depression and anxiety disorders as well as alcohol and other substance dependence over a period of 12 months or a lifetime on meta-analyses were at least 1.5 times higher in lesbian, gay and bisexual people. While lesbian and bisexual women were particularly at risk of substance dependence gay and bisexual men showed a prevalence of an especially high rate of suicide attempts.<sup>102</sup> Mental disorders like depressions, anxiety problems, panic attacks and psychological distress affect the quality of life negatively. In 2010, Bostwick et al. conducted a study that showed that a lesbian, gay or bisexual identity was associated with a higher probability of any mood or anxiety disorder. Especially gay men had a higher prevalence than heterosexual men of any lifetime mood disorder (42.3% vs 19.8%) and of any lifetime anxiety disorder (41.2% vs 18.6%). Bisexual men and women suffer particularly from a “double stigma”: “Those who identify as bisexual face a unique stigma, which is qualitatively different than the stigma experienced by lesbian and gay persons. Pervasive stereotypes and negative attitudes about bisexuality are present not only among the “dominant” heterosexual population but among lesbian and gay populations as well, resulting in a “double stigma” for bisexuals.”<sup>103</sup> Lesbian women reporting exclusively same-sex sexual partners in their lifetime had the lowest rates of most disorders among sexual minorities.<sup>104</sup> This result might be directly linked to Wendy Bostwick study in 2014 which provided further evidence

---

<sup>101</sup> Meyer, “Prejudice, Social Stress, and Mental Health in Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Populations,” 678.

<sup>102</sup> Michael King et al. “A systematic review of mental disorder, suicide, and deliberate self harm in lesbian, gay, and bisexual people,” *BMC Psychiatry*. 2008, August 18; 8 (70), accessed January 19, 2017, doi:10.1186/1471-244X-8-70.

<sup>103</sup> Wendy B. Bostwick et al., “Dimensions of Sexual Orientation and the Prevalence of Mood and Anxiety Disorders in the United States,” *Am J Public Health*, 2010 March; 100(3): 473, accessed January 19, 2017, doi:10.1037/h0098851.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 468–475.

that the correlation of one's sexual orientation and additional factors of discrimination like race/ethnicity or gender even increased the risk of mental disorders in the last twelve months before the study was conducted.<sup>105</sup> All these studies show that the assumption that social rejection and the stigma of homosexuality are directly tied to mental disorders is accepted as valid among psychologists and has been proven right in numerous studies.

The denial of same-sex marriage were a manifestation of social rejection and even though the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that every U.S. state has to implement and recognize the right to same-sex marriage, the issue of same-sex marriage is still contested and emotionally charged. This fact became most obvious two months after the U.S. Supreme Court decision. The county clerk Kimberly (Kim) Jean Bailey Davis decided to refuse the issuance of marriage licenses for homosexual as well as heterosexual couples in Rowan County, Kentucky. Additionally, she did not allow her deputies to issue licenses either. Four couples, homosexual as well as heterosexual, sued Kim Davis for her refusal of issuing licenses and the responsible district judge David L. Bunning ordered her to comply with the law based on the court decision *Miller v. Davis*. Since Davis decided not to obey the ruling afterwards, she was jailed in contempt of the court for five days. After her release she stated that she would not interfere with her deputy chief's issuance of marriage licenses to same-sex couples. Nevertheless, Davis has not issued a marriage license to homosexual couples since. Her behavior undermines the jurisdiction of the United States and subordinates judicial and administrative regulations to her religious beliefs. The case has covered the news all around the world and shows that even though same-sex marriage has been implemented in the United States it is still controversial and thus affects gays and lesbians alike.

In the following chapter I will analyze the contested debate surrounding same-sex marriage and focus on social media activism of the major gay rights organization promoting the cause of marriage equality.

---

<sup>105</sup> Wendy B. Bostwick et al. "Discrimination and Mental Health Among Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Adults in the United States," *Am J Orthopsychiatry*, 2014; 84(1): 35–45, accessed January 19, 2017, doi:10.1037/h0098851.

These strategies will particularly revolve around the unequal treatment that adhered to the denial of same-sex marriage and illuminate the intensity of the debate even prior to the Supreme Court ruling in 2015 and Kimberly Davis' refusal to issue marriage licenses.

### ***1.3.1 Personal Stories of Homosexuals***

The major gay rights organizations have adapted a variety of methods to challenge the denial of same-sex marriage. While the NGOs were not yet prepared for a social media struggle at times of the subversion of *Don't Ask, Don't Tell* they organized themselves rapidly and efficiently over the subsequent years. Social media became the battleground for the implementation of marriage equality. Gay rights organizations like the *Human Rights Campaign*, *GLAAD* and especially *Freedom to Marry* adapted strategies that integrated all resources that could potentially contribute to raising awareness. Celebrities but also the "common man" became part of the movement's social media activism. Facebook and Twitter posts covered the topic of same-sex marriage, photos and collages circulated all over the organization's social media sites. The *Human Rights Campaign*, *GLAAD* and *Freedom to Marry* created a broad social media movement. Founded in 2003, the organization *Freedom to Marry* has become one of the most influential gay rights organizations. This NGO has almost exclusively been dedicated to ensuring the implementation of same-sex marriage. *Freedom to Marry* was founded by the lawyer Evan Wolfson who soon established, in corporation with many ambitious professionals as well as volunteers, the so-called *Roadmap to Victory* whose central focus laid on grassroot campaigns and strategic litigation. The latter means the careful preparation of lawsuits with the intention of bringing major change to the legislative status quo. *Freedom to Marry* has usually combined the preparation phase for strategic litigation cases with an extensive coverage in social media. While, for example, *OutServe – The Service Members Legal Defense Network* did not adapt the potential of the social media as part of its strategy to bring an end to *DADT*, *Freedom to Marry* embraced the

opportunities which Facebook, Twitter and YouTube offered. The issue of same-sex marriage was the one that triggered the inclusion and extensive incorporation of social media in the strategy of raising awareness and creating a collective identity. The rise of influential gay rights organizations and the adaptation of effective strategies in combination with the increased use of social media by the general public laid the basis for a successful same-sex marriage movement. The strategy of pursuing strategic litigation resulted in a strong incorporation of YouTube videos in the movement's activism. Those video clips were the most efficient tool to reach out to the LGBTQ\* communities and the general public. They contributed essentially to the construction of a collective identity and the strengthening of the movement. The organization appealed to the viewers' aspiration to profit from the outcome. The videos created a bond and simultaneously spread LGB people's visibility.

This was also the reason why personal stories and incidents of oppression experienced by homosexual couples have been shared frequently on social media networks over the last couple of years. It actually constituted one of the most important strategies to deconstruct heteronormativity and raise awareness. The most efficient way to reach a wide coverage is by placing emphasis on unjust and unequal treatment by using the resources NGOs are providing.

A case which clearly exposes this strategy is the video covering the story of Mark Maxwell and Tim Young. *Freedom to Marry* uploaded the video clip "Tale of Two Dads" which delineates the experiences of the homosexual couple on YouTube in June 2013.<sup>106</sup> The Afro-American Maxwell had met his partner almost 23 years before the video was filmed. The couple is currently raising four children who were between 13 and 24 years of age at the time of the video's release. The two gay men have made every effort to start their own family and to lead a happy and fulfilling life. Nevertheless, it was exactly this aspiration that was so difficult to achieve as Maxwell and Young have faced extreme difficulties in getting married and adopting their sons. North Carolina, the state the family lives in, had not

---

<sup>106</sup> "A Tale of Two Dads," YouTube video, 04:55. Posted by Freedom to Marry, June 13, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oh1B9Ni9iEk>.

granted homosexual couples the opportunity to get married until they were forced to by the Supreme Court decision in 2015. Instead, the state's legislative body had even implemented an amendment to its constitution banning same-sex marriage and domestic partnerships in 2011. Consequently, at the time the clip was filmed it was neither possible for two men to get married nor to jointly adopt children in their home state. The challenge was thus exactly the one the U.S. Supreme Court was referring to in their majority opinion: Only one parent could become the legal parent of the children leaving the other one without any legal rights. In addition, North Carolina denied the recognition of their marriage that was licensed in Washington D.C. The result was the intentional infliction of instability to a family and a derogatory treatment of a couple that was willing to take responsibility for all family members' lives and well-being. The clip became part of the Campaign for Southern Equality's "*We Do*" Campaign delineating unequal treatment and seeking strategic litigation. The video shows Maxwell and Young as loving parents that are fulfilling every cliché of a functioning family. The only visible difference to a traditional family is the gender of the parents. However, on a legal basis the difference was much more pronounced. The couple accentuated the violence implicit and the harmful effects the legislation – especially the federal *Defense of Marriage Act* – had. *DOMA* was implemented in 1996 and granted every U.S. state the right to deny same-sex marriage via amendments to the states' constitutions. Furthermore, Article 3 of the Act defined the institution "marriage" as a relationship that could be exclusively entered into by two people of opposite sexes. Maxwell explains the violence of the legislation:

It [DOMA] was passed with the intent of placing groups of individuals at the back of the bus to say that you are not worthy of being heard. That your voices do not count. That you do not matter. And we deeply believe that if we as LGBT couples do not demand

that this is repealed, couples, families and children will continue to be harmed.<sup>107</sup>

Consequently, both take a stance against the inequality homosexuals face and define their intention as subverting the heteronormativity of society and heteronormative institutions that are so detrimental for lesbians, bisexuals and gays. They clearly state that they perceive the law as an instrument that degrades their relationship and their family; an instrument that effects homosexuals and their children and puts them in an inferior position. Marriage was an instrument that differentiated between people, between heterosexuals and homosexuals, and that imposed a hierarchy on society. At that time, marriage was not only an institution that united two people who love each other, it was also the manifestation of the heteronormativity that is dominating society and it represented the domination of heterosexuality.

Weddings play out and illustrate in practice the heterosexual matrix; they map it better than any diagram could possibly hope to do. A male who desires a female dresses up like a man – after spending the night before with a large group of other men engaged in thoroughly masculine activities. A female desires this male in such a way as to make her a woman, and she spends her own night out exclusively with women, engaged in stereotypically feminine activities. [...] Thus to see the heterosexual matrix, just go to a wedding.<sup>108</sup>

Therefore, the re-definition of marriage constituted a major step in challenging heteronormativity and the subordination of LGBTQ\* people. Illuminating the inequality that is embedded in the denial of homosexual weddings was part of the process of ending the reign of heteronormativity. Maxwell and Young are the parade example of gay men who are willing to commit, who have started a family and who are ready to fight for their

---

<sup>107</sup> “Mark and Tim Continue Advocating for Same-Sex Couples,” *Freedom To Marry*, accessed May 25, 2016, <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/blog/entry/mark-and-tim-continue-advocating-for-same-sex-couples-and-families-by-marry>.

<sup>108</sup> Samuel A. Chambers and Terrell Carver, *Judith Butler and Political Theory: Troubling Politics*, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 152.

rights. The moment when the couple is at the County's office asking for their marriage license and being denied this right shows the whole force of the inequity and degradation. Simultaneously to a clip of their wedding in Washington D.C., the video of the rejection by the County Clerk to wed the couple appears on the screen. Giving people affected by the structural violence a face and delineating them as charismatic and lovely people that simply want to marry the person they love is highlighting the injustice. The video clip has been watched 24,783 times (date: June 3, 2017) and shared more than a hundred times, it was discussed on Facebook and Twitter and had an impact on people. Even though 25,000 clicks do not seem to be much compared to more than 230 million U.S. citizens it has to be taken into account that the mass of video clips, postings, pictures and articles which are shared and retweeted, liked and discussed is what will eventually bring attention. Homosexuals sharing Maxwell's and Young's fate will feel the detrimental force of their story and will recognize the similarities to their own experiences. The couple demonstrates that there is a way to fight both – the cultural violence that is the breeding ground and the structural violence that is affecting LGBs lives. Pursuing strategic litigation and speaking out against any kind of unequal treatment is a device to gain power and change one's own fate. Therefore, the representatives of the NGOs participating in the grassroots and social media movement are chosen wisely. The agents' story has either to be one easily to identify with or it should illuminate the unequal treatment of people having an impressive reputation, held in high esteem. Thereby, the movement tried to attract new activists and create awareness.

For that reason, the organization *Freedom to Marry* started a campaign illustrating the unequal treatment of LGB military members and their families – often in collaboration with *OutServe*. Married homosexual employees serving on a federal state level were denied more than 1,100 rights and benefits while *DOMA*'s Article 3 was in effect.<sup>109</sup> This applied until the Supreme Court decision in *Windsor vs. US* in 2013. Thus, when

---

<sup>109</sup> "The Respect for Marriage Act," Freedom to Marry, accessed May 7, 2017, <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/pages/Ending-Federal-Marriage-Discrimination-The-Respect-for-Marriage-Act>.

*DADT* was annulled, gay and lesbian military members still faced unequal treatment and disadvantages. Even though they were no longer requested to serve closeted and to keep their relationships with their same-sex partners secret, they still did not receive the same benefits after marrying their partners as their heterosexual colleagues did. One of the videos circulating in social media was the one of Captain Steve M. Hill and his husband Joshua Snyder. It was posted on YouTube in June 2012 and has reached almost 66,000 views over the last years (clicks: 65,911; date: June 3, 2017).<sup>110</sup> Hill had become a public figure in November 2011 at a Republican Candidacy Debate when he has been sending in a question from Iraq asking how the candidate – in this particular case, Rick Santorum – would treat homosexuals in the military. Hill was booed and Santorum stated that he would reinstate the *Don't Ask, Don't Tell* policy. *Freedom to Marry* released a video in which the couple explains the consequences of the *Defense of Marriage Act* which was still in effect in 2012.

Hill joined the army in 1988 and has served in two wars – the Gulf War (1990-1991) and the Iraq War which started with the invasion in 2003. Hill had struggled a long time with his identity as a gay man and had faced many difficulties since *Don't Ask, Don't Tell* has prohibited coming-out as gay and performing any homosexual acts. Nevertheless, Hill stayed in the U.S. Army and participated in combats always knowing and accepting that he might not survive a mission. In 2010, he met his future husband Joshua Snyder and the two of them fell in love. A year later, the couple decided to drive from Ohio which still did not permit same-sex marriage to Washington D.C. where they got married. Even though, the repeal of *Don't Ask, Don't Tell* became ultimately effective four months after their marriage, in September 2011, Hill and Snyder had to suffer from inequalities and discrimination. In the clip, the couple refers to diverse disparities they had to face while *DOMA* was still in place. Since Article 3 of *DOMA* defined marriage as an institution that is exclusively available to opposite-sex couples their marriage in Washington D.C. was not recognized

---

<sup>110</sup> “Booed Soldier and Husband Boo the Defense of Marriage Act,” YouTube video, 03:08. Posted by Freedom to Marry, June 11, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZDzOLeCWfQ>.



by the federal government. Therefore, Josh was not accepted as Steve's spouse on a federal level; a treatment that was completely unequal to the one Hill's comrades experienced. As Snyder explains: "You don't get to be the first one to know that something happened. You may not find out for weeks that it happened. And that was tough – though that was the reality. Those calls [when mortar fire started] were two of the hardest moments of my life."<sup>111</sup> The consequence of Article 3, *DOMA* was that spouses of same-sex couples were simply not recognized. They did not receive the same benefits, could not list their partners as next-of-kin and they were not able to take emergency leave if something happened to their partners at home. Federal government treated the marriage between same-sex couples as if it had never been licensed and did not exist. Even though Hill spent his whole career in service for his country, defended American values such as democracy and freedom and always did his duty even in expectation of losing his life, he and his partner did not receive what they were longing for: "A special privilege is not hiding pictures in my house or God forbid, taking mortar fire again and not knowing if Josh will be recognized. I'm fighting every day to protect everyone's rights as human beings, and it seems counterintuitive for me to be fighting for those rights and not have them."<sup>112</sup> The unequal treatment has left scars. Psychologically, both Hill and Snyder had difficulties with coping with the given situation. The latter was always in fear of losing his husband and at the same time not being informed. Days without messages from Hill were excruciating and imposed a detrimental pressure. Hill, on the other hand, was emotionally hardly able to depart from his husband twice when being deployed as he had to leave Snyder in a state of instability and misery always knowing that Josh did not have the same rights as other soldier's partners. In addition to the natural pressure undoubtedly tied to the deployment of a loved one, Hill and Snyder had to face inequalities that could not be justified in any way. The Federal Government as well as the U.S. military intentionally exposed Hill and

---

<sup>111</sup> "Booed Soldier and Husband Boo the Defense of Marriage Act."

<sup>112</sup> GLAAD, "Military Shows Support for Fellow Soldier, Stephen Hill," November 21, 2011, accessed May 30, 2016, <http://www.glaad.org/blog/military-shows-support-fellow-soldier-stephen-hill>.

Snyder as well as many more homosexual couples to anguish they were hardly able to bear.

Matthew Phelps and Ben Schock experienced the same degree of unequal treatment like Hill and Snyder did. The Marine Captain Matthew Phelps proposed to his boyfriend in 2013 when DOMA was still in effect. *Freedom to Marry* reached out to Matthew Phelps and Ben Schock to tell their story shortly after their engagement (clicks: 54,829; June 3, 2017). Phelps publicly criticized the double standard implied in the treatment of gay and lesbian soldiers: “There seems to be a contraction between serving my country and my country not fully supporting my relationship with Ben. Ours is not the type of military family things happening easily for. The law prohibits the government of providing the same benefits to me and my soon to be husband.”<sup>113</sup> Phelps who actively decided to join the forces after 9/11 to serve his country and who was deployed to Iraq from 2007 to 2008 pointed out that his upcoming deployment to Japan bore some difficulties. Phelps and Schock wanted to get married before the date of the deployment; nevertheless, moving to Japan would have been associated with diverse challenges. Schock would not have qualified for a spouse visa which meant that the denial of a visa would have resulted in a protracted procedure. Schock would have had to leave the country every 90 days after the recurring expiration of his tourist visa; simply to reenter the country and start the process all over again. In addition, Phelps and Schock would have had to bear the financial burden themselves. Furthermore, while the spouses of heterosexual service members receive assistance in finding a job in the new country, Schock would not have been eligible to any support. The military also would not have covered the costs for housing as they do for heterosexual couples. All these aspects were pointed out by Phelps and Schock and they concluded with Phelps saying: “Every day I’m reminded that my marriage to Ben is different from everyone else’s marriage – and that’s just not right.” Phelps and Schock were among the first families of homosexual service members talking about the unequal treatment and the

---

<sup>113</sup> “A Marine and his soon to be husband on DOMA,” YouTube video, 02:25. Posted by Freedom to Marry, April 10, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhHgVg65bJE>.

psychological burden implicit, illustrating the consequences of such a discriminatory and unequal treatment.

Major Shannon McLaughlin and her wife, Casey McLaughlin, illustrated even more serious consequences of *DOMA*'s Article 3. Shannon McLaughlin has served in the U.S. military since 1999. Immediately after 9/11, she was deployed as part of the Navy Reserve to the Middle East. In 2011, she had to prepare for deployment to Afghanistan that eventually was not undertaken. At this point, Major McLaughlin was already married to Casey and the couple was planning on starting a family. Their decision to marry was – even though out of love – also a pragmatic one as Shannon McLaughlin explained:

One of the reasons that getting married was so important to both Casey and I was that we knew we wanted to have children. We knew that it was very important to us to do all that we could to legally protect our family. And there are so many protections that go along with being married when you have children that happen automatically. You'll hear people say that it's just a piece of paper, but it's so much more than that.<sup>114</sup>

Ultimately, Casey was the one who became pregnant with twins and had to go on maternity leave. After the children were born, she decided to stay home. The couple expected that Casey would fall under Shannon's health care plan since this is applicable for heterosexual families as well. Instead, Casey lost her health insurance completely because Shannon's health care provider did not recognize their marriage since Article 3 of *DOMA* was still effective. "I was excluded from being a part of the family plan because I was – although legally her spouse – I was a woman." The unequal treatment of the family resulted in a burden that could have easily been a threat to Casey's and the unborn children's physical health or even their lives. At the same time it stimulated a feeling of inferiority and created an emotional burden for all family members. As long as the adoption of the children was

---

<sup>114</sup> "A Major and Her Wife on the Effects of DOMA," YouTube video, 04:04. Posted by Freedom to Marry, May 9, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7GZ49ldH27k>.

not completed, Shannon would not have been the legal parent of the children and would not have a right to raise the children if anything had happened to Casey. The McLaughlins eventually decided to sue Shannon's employer, the U.S. military and the federal state, in a class-action lawsuit. The decision to speak about the treatment they had received resulted from their wish to gain equal rights and to eradicate their status as second-class citizens. Casey stressed this aspect: "I am as much a military wife as anybody else who is in the military. I want to be recognized. And I want our kids to understand that they are the same as well." Furthermore, Shannon specified her ideal scenario for the treatment of same-sex couples within the U.S. military: "I [want to be] able to take my wife to military family events and know that she is respected, and that there is no single doubt that she is as good as any other military wife or husband that is there."<sup>115</sup> The definition of the institution "marriage" as being exclusively between opposite-sex couples resulted in multiple disadvantages for the lesbian couple. Shannon perceived her relationship as subordinated in comparison to heterosexual ones' and considered herself as a second-class soldier whose service for the country was neither acknowledged nor compensated in an appropriate way. These feelings were shared by the other couples whose stories were delineated above. Facing this kind of unequal treatment on a daily basis leads to a collective feeling of inferiority. Being reminded of the disparities, being subject to discrimination will result in social stress and will have psychological impacts at some point. What connects all these couples is the decision to speak out and thereby attain power. They perceive their experiences of unequal treatment as a leverage point for their participation in the gay rights movement. The foundation for their involvement was laid by the gay rights organizations' decision to incorporate social media platforms into their agenda. The creation of awareness was thereby tremendously increased and the severity of the psychological impacts and its injustice could be fully exposed. The momentum of social media as a tool for gay rights organizations' struggles to fight against inequality and oppression started after Lady Gaga had

---

<sup>115</sup> "A Major and Her Wife on the Effects of DOMA."

highlighted the power of social media. However, the issue that really triggered the usage of social media was the struggle for the legalization of same-sex marriage. Illuminating the shortcomings and the violation of homosexuals' basic rights and working for the reversal of these detriments is the core of the movement. Activists try to create visibility and awareness in addition to a collective identity that eventually turns victims of inequality into activists themselves. They escape victimization by turning the disadvantages they experience into a source of activism. People that live their ordinary life, that do not intend to receive any special treatment, that simply want to be accepted and treated like heterosexuals generate a feeling of a shared fate. They convey the feeling that it is possible to influence the public opinion; that everyone is able to participate in the effort to erase inequality and sources of structural violence. Social media are the foundation of NGOs to spread this awareness and to mobilize the "common homosexual" who is facing inequality day-to-day. Video clips like the one of Steven Hill, the McLaughlins or Mark Maxwell and Tim Young were produced and distributed regularly. As a result, thousands watched the manifestations of structural violence, became aware of inequalities and started to identify with the movement. The potential to easily identify with the movement was laid by the telling of stories like the ones discussed. The videos conveyed the impression that everybody could contribute to the movement and had a voice. It created a bond and integrated a huge diversity of LGB people suffering from the denial of same-sex marriage.

### ***1.3.2 Heterosexual Celebrities and their Contribution to Raising Awareness***

Sharing personal experiences, creating visibility, elaborating on violence that was experienced, are strategies of LGBs who are affected by structural and direct violence themselves. As important as the work of bisexual, gay and lesbian activists is, it is indispensable to create a network that also involves heterosexuals who are willing to support LGBTQ\* rights, who have the ability to reach heterosexuals that have never been involved

with the movement, have never thought about the violence implicit in so many structures of society. As mentioned with respect to Lady Gaga, celebrities reach a wide coverage. Their *soft power* has the power to win new supporters, to establish a broad and diverse movement, to make activists' strikes more effective. The gay rights movement in the United States had to accept the reality that being joined by heterosexual activists would not destroy one's identity but strengthen the community and assure a faster progress. It has taken almost thirty years to create a substantial group of supporters within the community that is in favor of this strategy. However, the struggle over these past decades, the developments that would have never been made without the support of heterosexuals, the millennium of social media, all these advances contributed to the decision to amplify the movement's strategy. While we have seen that the means of raising awareness for the harm conducted by *Don't Ask, Don't Tell* were limited, the fight for achieving marriage equality reached a completely new level. Homosexuals and heterosexuals alike used the social media in an unprecedented way and were led by major gay rights organizations. NGOs were created all over the United States and became million dollar enterprises that reached out to celebrities, gained their support and distributed the testimonies of their encouragements and endorsements.

The U.S. vocalist Macklemore is among those celebrities who have illustrated the structural violence implicit in the refusal of same-sex marriage and the unequal treatment of homosexuals. In February 2012, Macklemore released his album *The Heist* which included one of his most famous songs *Same Love*. The singer who himself is heterosexual is dedicated to the hip hop genre – the genre which has been coined the most by patriarchal, sexist and homophobic views.

[M]asculinity is equated with patriarchy and homosexuality is itself considered a sin, a sign of sexual deviance. [...] Hip Hop reflects the important role that homophobia plays in defining masculinity. Women who are considered too independent, tough, or powerful are negatively labeled as lesbians. Men insulted for being too weak are often called

‘faggots’. In this version of heterosexual masculinity, the parameters of manhood are being protected when homosexuality is equated with ‘femininity’ and both are designated as weak and subordinated.<sup>116</sup>

Therefore, Macklemore’s song *Same Love* can be seen as an attack on the homophobic and patriarchal hip hop culture. The singer who was born in 1983 and grew up with gay uncles has illuminated the structural violence – not only the one inherent in hip hop – but also in every niche of society and especially in the denial of marriage equality.

A culture founded from oppression  
Yet we don't have acceptance for 'em  
Call each other faggots behind the keys of a message board  
A word rooted in hate, yet our genre [Hip Hop] still ignores it  
Gay is synonymous with the lesser  
It's the same hate that's caused wars from religion  
Gender to skin color, the complexion of your pigment  
The same fight that led people to walk-outs and sit-ins  
It's human rights for everybody, there is no difference!  
Live on and be yourself.<sup>117</sup>

Macklemore covers diverse fields which are still contested, still dominated by discrimination and violence; the subordination of homosexuality, and the dominance of heteronormativity are among them. He is even referring to the heritage of the American people who once fought for the people’s freedom from the crown’s oppression, from ideologies and structures that subordinated African-Americans. He is calling on people’s ethic and moralist feelings, to the inherent will to protest against inequalities. The official video shows simultaneously illustrations of all the episodes of U.S. history, the protests against segregation, right-wing extremists like the Ku-Klux-Clan and the successes achieved. This might be seen critical since

---

<sup>116</sup> Tricia Rose, *The Hip Hop Wars*, (Philadelphia: Basic Books, 2008), 237.

<sup>117</sup> “Macklemore & Ryan Lewis – Same Love,” YouTube video, 07:03. Posted by Ryan Lewis, October 2, 2012, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hlVBg7\\_08n0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hlVBg7_08n0).

Macklemore places homophobia on the same level with the institutional racism and segregation inherent in U.S. society prior to the Civil Rights Movement; an institutional racism that was efficiently and systematically applied and instituted for centuries. However, this sequence can also be considered as an indication that liberal and progressives have to rectify the wrong as several times before. The injustice might not be comparable in its intensity and malice with the racism and segregation of previous decades but it is nevertheless an injustice that requires a mentality of public discourse and activism that was the foundation of fighting inequality before. Macklemore is appealing to peoples' endorsement and their vigor in fighting the unequal treatment lesbians and gays are subject to every single day:

When everyone else is more comfortable remaining voiceless  
Rather than fighting for humans that have had their rights stolen  
I might not be the same, but that's not important  
No freedom 'til we're equal, damn right I support it.<sup>118</sup>

The video clip in itself is a challenge to the denial of marriage equality. It shows the life of an African-American gay man living in a society that has still reservations against homosexuals. It mediates the pain he had been feeling as a teenager when he was not able to identify with the heterosexual society that surrounded him. The confusion and the sorrows that was omnipresent. It reveals the difficulties the man's parents had when he came out to them, the violence he and his boyfriend faced on a daily basis, the starring, the verbal vilifications, the aggression of strangers, the isolation and the structural violence directed against him and his partner. Nevertheless, the video also shows the strong and loving relationship of the protagonist and his partner. Additionally, it displays Macklemore's aspirations, his wishes for the transformation of society into an accepting and diverse one in the future, for the development to the better and for the possibility to marry for heterosexuals as well as homosexuals:

---

<sup>118</sup> "Macklemore & Ryan Lewis – Same Love."



And a certificate of paper isn't gonna solve it all  
But it's a damn good place to start  
No law is gonna [sic] change us  
We have to change us  
Whatever God you believe in  
We come from the same one  
Strip away the fear  
Underneath it's all the same love  
About time that we raised up<sup>119</sup>

The video received a wide coverage and reached hundreds of millions of people. In July 2014, a year before the legalization of gay marriages, the official clip uploaded by Macklemore's business partner Ryan Lewis already had 122,386,290 clicks. The number of views has further increased over the last years so that currently 169,568,727 clicks (date: June 3, 2017) have been listed on the YouTube page presenting the official clip. Additionally, there are further uploads showing the video and Macklemore's song which have also received several million views. The number of comments on YouTube reaches 362.933 (date: June 3, 2017) and they reveal the whole range of opinions that come with the debate of same-sex marriage and homosexuality.

Macklemore has reached the general public and additionally people who are usually influenced by a rather conservative and patriarchal genre; he stirred a debate and shifted the focus on same-sex marriage, heteronormativity and sexual diversity. This effect was multiplied, when Macklemore's song was incorporated in an unprecedented stance for same-sex marriage during the Grammy Awards in 2014. The producers and organizers of the Grammy Awards decided to broadcast the weddings of 33 homosexual as well as heterosexual couples live on-air. The Grammy Award is the most important award in the music business and therefore attracts millions of viewers in the United States. More than 28.5 million

---

<sup>119</sup> "Macklemore & Ryan Lewis – Same Love."

people watched the show and the newly weds' ceremony. In addition, several video clips of the performance were uploaded to YouTube. The Grammy Awards' ceremony was one of the most discussed topics in social media over the next days. Starting with Mackelmore singing *Same Love*, the hip hop singer, actress and TV host Queen Latifah wedded the 33 couples in an emotional ceremony which was followed by a performance of Madonna who has been endorsing LGBTQ\* rights for decades. The support of influential heterosexual allies is inestimable. The discussions on social media following the Grammy Awards were not exclusively positive but the performance started a conversation. The issue of the restrictions same-sex couples still had to face at that point was brought to light. The Grammy Awards was a demonstration of how society should engage with the topic; it was a demonstration of how homosexuals should be treated: As equals. A major group of artists and producers allied and worked on a strategy to subvert the oppression resulting from the denial of same-sex marriage. The performance contributed to the destruction of heteronormativity and reached millions of people who otherwise would probably never detect the violence implicit in such discriminatory structures that deny gay and lesbian citizens equal treatment under the law.

Apart from heterosexual celebrities, gay rights organizations also sought to integrate the "common heterosexual (wo)man" in their movement for the implementation of same-sex marriage. This campaign also comprised the "*Straight Allies for the Freedom to Marry*" crusade. It includes several video clips that show heterosexuals supporting the freedom to marry – often due to having a direct connection to the community but not exclusively. *Freedom to Marry* spread a diversity of video clips showing different social groups – current or ex-military members speaking out against DOMA, Latinos emphasizing their support for homosexual family members, young conservative politicians speaking out in favor of the freedom to marry or simply common students trying to recruit supporters for the movement. All these short videos are the results of successful attempts to integrate individuals into the movement. The earliest ones uploaded are from the year 2012 when the same-sex marriage movement grew steadily stronger. Even though common heterosexuals do not receive nearly as much

resonance as their celebrated counterparts, their videos still recorded several thousands of views. Merely the fact that they, as heterosexuals, support the movement and are able to identify to some extent with the virtues as well as with the collective identity already constitutes a success for the LGBTQ\* activists. The gay rights organizations created a broad movement whose activism was integrating all potential social media strategies one could imagine. The LGBTQ\* community found a way to embrace its diversity and transform it into activism. It ultimately was so efficient that the legalization of same-sex marriage was successfully achieved. The grassroot activism of heterosexuals in combination with the initiatives of heterosexual celebrities and homosexuals contributed to a massive social media movement unprecedented in respect to LGBTQ\* campaigns and have been the example for future struggles that were yet to be faced by the social media community.

## ***1.4 “Maybe I can make a difference”: Structural Violence in Daily Life***

Surprisingly, lesbian and gay celebrities do not represent a major basis for the organization’s struggle for marriage equality. As pointed out, common homosexuals, heterosexuals and straight famous allies became the foundation of the fight of gay rights organizations for the recognition of same-sex marriage. Even though individual homosexual celebrities contributed to the promotion of marriage equality, there has never been a broadly based crusade which singularly focused on same-sex marriage. Instead, lesbian and gay celebrities concentrated their effort on turning the medial attention to manifestations of the overall structural violence they are confronted with in daily life; and the major gay rights organizations contributed strongly to the distribution of content showing celebrities’ involvement in gay rights. Homosexual celebrities’ intention has always been the deconstruction of heteronormativity by performative acts. Raising awareness and influencing the public discourse with the aim of changing the general perception of LGBTQ\*s serves the destruction of heteronormativity. Inequality and violence have to be presented in a way that exposes the flaws of the concept of heteronormativity. Consequently, the activism of celebrities is targeted on creating visibility as well as on highlighting injustice. Structural violence in daily life can be best illuminated by homosexual celebrities who suffer from all forms of inequality and discrimination themselves. Since 2010, the increase of homosexual celebrities positioning themselves in the public debate and fighting for equal rights has become steadily more visible – concurrent with the rise of the same-sex movement. It is not a coincidence that this development correlates with the rise of the gay rights organizations’ initiated movement for equality in the sphere of social media. Homosexual celebrities and the major gay rights organizations established an efficient collaboration.

A measure to promote the cause of equality was the performative act of “coming out”. In recent years there has been a massive increase of celebrities coming out as homosexual or bisexual. As Foucault states the

“gaze” is the tool to keep oneself and everybody else under surveillance.<sup>120</sup> The deviation from the given norm can be detected and efficiently corrected. Hannah Arendt explains: “Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together.”<sup>121</sup> Each individual contributes to the preservation of power and simultaneously has the potential to weaken groups by abandoning support. Therefore, the subversion of the virtues of the dominating group – in this case everybody supporting the concept of heteronormativity – can be reached by implementing a worldview which recognizes a variety of sexualities. The concept of diversity targets each individual and aims to deconstruct the belief in the superiority of a heteronormative society. As a result, the group of the sustainers of heteronormativity would be impaired. The invisibility of homosexuals and their suffering must be replaced by visibility. “Devoid of visibility, power becomes powerless.”<sup>122</sup> The establishment of a concept of sexual plurality can only be successfully reached if visibility is created. Visibility is the power that is concentrated within the LGBTQ\* movement and that is probably the strongest tool to subvert the existing concepts. In 2007, a poll of the Pew Research Center has already indicated that the acceptance of homosexuals and the likelihood of people endorsing gay rights increases if those know someone personally who is affected by the aligned injustices: “People who have a close gay friend or family member are more likely to support gay marriage and they are also significantly less likely to favor allowing schools to fire gay teachers than are those with little or no personal contact with gays.”<sup>123</sup> Consequently, coming out is a way of creating and increasing visibility and raising acceptance as well as gaining support. Every single time someone comes out to family, friends and the public the concept of heteronormativity is shaken in its very foundation. A similar effect is provoked if a celebrity comes out to the public as a range of people

---

<sup>120</sup> Foucault, “Power/Knowledge,” in *Power/Knowledge*, 155.

<sup>121</sup> Arendt, *On Violence*, 44.

<sup>122</sup> Neve Gordon, “On Visibility and Power: An Arendtian Corrective of Foucault,” *Human Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (2002): 137.

<sup>123</sup> “Four-in-Ten Americans Have Close Friends or Relatives Who are Gay,” *Pew Research Center*, accessed May 16, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/2007/05/22/fourinten-americans-have-close-friends-or-relatives-who-are-gay/>.

is reached and the coverage is much higher. The era we live in makes it possible to reach millions of people within a short time.

Ellen Page is a celebrity who had a wide coverage of her coming out at the Human Rights Campaign's convention in Las Vegas in February 2014. Even though the actress is Canadian, her coming out took place in the U.S. as her life and career's hub are situated in the United States. Page starred in many different productions and received a nomination for the Oscar award for her role in "Juno" in 2008. In 2014, Page decided to join the *Time to THRIVE* conference of the *Human Rights Campaign* which is constantly working on increasing the security, inclusion and mental as well as physical health of young LGBTQ\*s. Ellen Page's speech has been one of the most emotional and touching coming outs of celebrities of the recent years and exposed implicitly the violent effects from which homosexuals have to suffer due to social constructs:

It's weird because here I am, an actress, representing at least in some sense an industry that places crushing standards on all of us – and not just young people, everyone. Standards of beauty, of a good life, of success; standards that I hate to admit have affected me. You have ideas planted in your head – thoughts you never had before – that tell you how you have to act, how you have to dress, and who you have to be. And I've been trying to push back, to be authentic and follow my heart, but it can be hard.<sup>124</sup>

Page illuminates the heteronormative standard dominating U.S. society to which the film industry has contributed as well. *Hollywood* has been dominated by white, heterosexual, Anglo-Saxon and mostly protestant values for decades. It influenced society's expectations and standards and Page hints at the fact that she suffered from these principles as much as everybody else who is not compliant with these expectations, heteronormativity and the associated sex-gender-binary. However, the

---

<sup>124</sup> "Ellen Page Joins HRCF's Time to Thrive Conference", YouTube video, 08:38. Posted by Human Rights Campaign, April 10, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1hICEIUATzg&list=TL4v7U4WRReZCAmXQwLwUheyA5Q6HKCvwLs>.

actress, who was nearly 27 years old at the time she decided to come out to the public, decided to subvert these standards:

I also do it [coming out] selfishly, because I'm tired of hiding. And I'm tired of lying by omission. I suffered for years because I was scared to be out. My spirit suffered, my mental health suffered, and my relationships suffered. And I am standing here today, with all of you, on the other side of that pain. And I am young, yes. But what I have learned is that love – the beauty of it, the joy of it, and yes, even the pain of it – is the most incredible gift to give and to receive as a human being. And we deserve to experience love fully, equally, without shame, and without compromise.<sup>125</sup>

Ellen Page tries to contribute her share to a diverse and accepting society. She exposes the pain she has felt for years; the heaviness of the concept of heteronormativity that imposes a cruel standard on her as well as on all homosexuals, often resulting in physical and psychological traumata. Her voice is shaking throughout the speech and in the end she is even crying. While watching her speech one can anticipate the pressure she must have felt and how difficult and simultaneously liberating her coming-out must have been for her. She does not ask for being treated differently than heterosexuals – she demands the right to be herself.

Similar experiences are also well presented by the actor Wentworth Miller. The protagonist of the TV show *Prison Break* gave a speech at the Human Rights Campaign's convention in Seattle in September 2013. A couple of weeks before the event, he had come out in a letter addressed to the organizers of the film festival in St. Petersburg as they had invited Miller to join the event. However, the actor decided to show his dissatisfaction with and protest against Russia's legislations against LGBTQ\*s by not participating as a guest of honor at the festival. Miller's experiences as a young homosexual growing up in a rural town have affected him deeply:

---

<sup>125</sup> "Ellen Page Joins HRCF's Time to Thrive Conference."

Also, like many of you here tonight, growing up I was a target. Speaking the right way, standing the right way, holding your wrist the right way. Every day was a test and there were a thousand ways to fail. A thousand ways to betray yourself. To not live up to someone else's standard of what was acceptable, of what was normal. And when you failed the test, which was guaranteed, there was a price to pay. Emotional. Psychological. Physical. And like many of you, I paid that price, more than once, in a variety of ways.<sup>126</sup>

Miller exposes the pressure homosexuals have to endure, the consequences of betraying the concept of heteronormativity of failing to comply with the expected norm. Homosexuals often have to lead a secret life, to deny their identity, to act heterosexual and to surrender every day to these acts of self-destruction. Especially children, who have not found their way yet and are still in the process of maturing, are confronted with this pressure. They adopt patterns and behaviors helping themselves to pass as heterosexual which simultaneously harm themselves. Miller was fifteen years old when he tried to commit suicide for the first time; he was fortunate enough to survive. Nevertheless, he stayed depressive and suicidal even when he grew older. In May 2016, Miller responded to the publication of a paparazzi photo that pictured him in bad shape and overweighted six years earlier. He explained via Facebook that he had still been suicidal at that time, indicating that it had been difficult for him to cope with the consequences of being homosexual in a heterosexual society. A variety of researches conducted over the last decades have indicated that the rate of suicide attempts is much higher among LGB people than those identifying as heterosexual: "Since the early 1990s, population-based surveys of U.S. adolescents that have included questions about sexual orientation have consistently found rates of reported suicide attempts to be two to seven times higher in high school students who identify as LGB, compared to those who describe themselves

---

<sup>126</sup> "Wentworth Miller Talks About Being Gay," YouTube video, 10:43. Posted by Human Rights Campaign, September 10, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PLRWDAfOzvA>.



as heterosexual.”<sup>127</sup> Additionally, as stated before, mental disorders including substance use disorders, anxiety rates and depressions are one quarter to one third higher among LGBs than their heterosexual counterparts.<sup>128</sup> These findings delineated by the academic team of psychologists and medical scientists clearly suggest that the aforesaid higher rates are results of “social stigma, prejudice and discrimination associated with minority sexual orientation”.<sup>129</sup> Therefore, the before mentioned expressions *gay-related stress* and *minority stress* were created. The particular moment, when Miller started to accept himself and opened up to adapt a positive stance on his own identity was when he joined the *ManKind Project*, which “embraces multiple expressions of masculinity”<sup>130</sup>, in 2012. The new insights he acquired with the help of the *ManKind Project* laid the cornerstone for his decision to come out and to tell the world about the structures he has mentally suffered from:

I thought if even one person notices this letter [to the Russian film committee] in which I speak my truth, and integrate my small story into a much larger and more important one, it is worth sending. I thought, let me be to someone else what no one was to me. Let me send a message to that kid, maybe in America, maybe someplace far overseas, maybe somewhere deep inside, a kid who’s being targeted at home or at school or in the streets, that someone is watching and listening and caring. That there is an ‘us,’ that there is a ‘we,’ and that kid or teenager or adult is loved, and they are not alone.

Finally, Wentworth Miller experienced the feeling of a shared collective identity and pride. These experiences helped him to adapt the strength to become visible to fight against the concept of heteronormativity that reinforces violence against LGBTQ\*s every single day. Just like Ellen Page,

---

<sup>127</sup> Ann P. Haas, Mickey Eliason et. al., “Suicide and Suicide Risk in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Populations: Review and Recommendations,” *Journal of Homosexuality*, 2011 Jan; 58(1): 17.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>130</sup> “Wentworth Miller, the ManKind Project, and ‘Men’s Work,’” *ManKind Project*, accessed May 16, 2016, <http://mankindproject.org/wentworth-miller-the-mankind-project-and-mens-work/>.

Miller assumed control over his own destiny and was able to ascribe self-worth to his own existence. He became part of the *Human Rights Campaign* and made a huge contribution to reveal the mortal force of structural violence. The *Human Rights Campaign* uploaded Miller's and Page's speeches on YouTube, both went viral all over social media and received millions of clicks. They shifted the focus on injustices against LGB\*s and, as a consequence, visibility rose, heteronormativity was subverted and the LGBTQ\* movement against manifestations that generate structural violence strengthened.

However, not only homosexuals but also bisexual celebrities have started to create awareness and become visible. In 2012, the actress Evan Rachel Wood came out as bisexual on Twitter. Additionally, she provided insights into the experiences of bisexual women in her acceptance speech for the HRC Visibility Award in 2017 (clicks: 24,376; date: June 3, 2017) In her speech, she delineates her own confusion when she realized as a teenager that she felt attracted to women as well as men. She explains the feeling of loneliness because she could not sort out what her feelings actually meant and ultimately describes her relief when she first heard of the concept of bisexuality. Still, Wood struggled with her identity as a bisexual woman and experienced revulsion from heterosexual as well as homosexual people:

Statistics about suicide, addiction, sexual harassment, rape, and intimate partner violence specifically rang true for me. And I wracked my brain as to why, why were bisexuals so susceptible to these kinds of things? And I figured there was no better person to ask than myself, and the only answer that I could come back with was self-esteem. There was shame about what I felt and how I identified, from outside the community, and unfortunately as well as in at times.<sup>131</sup>

---

<sup>131</sup> "Evan Rachel Wood Receives the HRC Visibility Award," You Tube video, 13:49. Posted by Human Rights Campaign, February 7, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xLYTun4KaU>.

Bisexuals often face lack of understanding – surprisingly not only from heterosexual people but also from the gay and lesbian community. She clearly states that it sometimes feels like there is a “competition of suffering” among the LGBTQ\* community and that combined with the repulsion by the heteronormative society an immense pressure weighted heavily on her. When Wood came out on Twitter in 2012 she was confronted by a Twitter user<sup>132</sup> who could not conceive her sexual orientation:



The messages illuminate the difficulties the user roy efc encounters and concurrently expose the ignorance that is causing so much harm for bisexuals. Wood’s reply “Believe me, by now I am not bothered by it. :)” [sic] implies that there has been indeed a time when comments like the ones by roy efc affected her and caused negative implications. Especially in her early teens Evan Rachel Wood faced hardship when it was on her to come at terms with her own identity:

But later in life as a teenager who had bore witness to hate speech and taunting of the LGBT community I instinctually buried these feelings

<sup>132</sup> Roy efc, Twitter Post, August 23, 2012, 17:20 p.m., <https://twitter.com/evanrachelwood/status/238791671553351681>.

[her attraction to women], I silenced my voice because I thought it could save me. On top of that there were inconsistencies to my feelings because I also thought men were beautiful. And I had no way to put what I felt into word, I had no role model. The only thing I knew was fear and confusion and loneliness; how can you be who you are when you do not understand what you are feeling.<sup>133</sup>

Wood was terrified and her self-esteem faded. Eventually she struggled with all the negative implications that were mentioned earlier: Suicide attempts, addiction, sexual harassment, rape and intimate partner violence. The expression “bisexual” which she first heard in an interview by an actress initiated a healing process. “The word didn’t make me feel marginalized, it made me feel less crazy, it made me feel less alone; it gave me hope. [...] It made a world of difference in my life and in my identity.”<sup>134</sup> The feeling of belonging, of a shared – bisexual – identity contributed its share to the stabilization of Wood’s mental and physical situation. It ultimately helped her to survive. Social structures and expectations made Wood as well as millions of LGBTQ\*s suffer. This is also why the actress decided to create awareness, to use the power of visibility. She highlights that visibility creates hope and that “[w]ords matter. Your voice matters. How you use it matters and why you use it matters.”<sup>135</sup> She embraces her soft power and sees her popularity connected to a responsibility to speak out. She envisions herself as the one who can speak out for those who are too terrified and petrified. Her coming-out as well as her speech at the HRC event does not only expose the scars she has suffered but also the power she has gained from these experiences and that entitle her to subvert the heteronormative structures manifested within the society of the United States.

However, not only celebrities engaged in the show business have the power to expose structural violence. Athletes are also in a position that is predestined to reach millions of people who are not aware of particular situations since they are not directly involved and who would hardly engage

---

<sup>133</sup> “Evan Rachel Wood Receives the HRC Visibility Award.”

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

in deeper analyses about these injustices. They have the power to shift the public's focus on political debates: "There is a rhetoric in sport and games: they are persuasive communications, texts that, intentionally or unintentionally, influence the social and political attitudes held by the public. [...] Sport and games rhetorically influence how we think about some major social issues."<sup>136</sup> Athletes participating in sport engage in a performative act that has a wide range and reaches a broad coverage. "The athlete entering an arena is much like the teacher entering a classroom."<sup>137</sup> Therefore, openly out athletes have the ability to establish a new era in which homosexuals in sports are as common and as accepted as heterosexuals. Nevertheless, most professional athletes who came out decided to do so after retiring from their career. The first openly homosexual athletes who participated in sports were mostly female soccer players; Abby Wambach and Megan Rapinoe are only two to name who have been part of the national team for many years (Wambach finished her career for the U.S. national team in 2015 after having been part of the team for fourteen years). Rapinoe still plays in professional leagues and the national team. However, the four most prestigious U.S. sport leagues are the *Major League Baseball* (MLB), the *National Basketball Association* (NBA), the *National Football League* (NFL) and the *National Hockey League* (NHL). The coverage and the influence are vividly higher if an athlete of one of these leagues comes out as gay. The first to do so while still playing as a basketball player was Jason Collins in 2013.

On May 6, 2013 *Sports Illustrated* published an article written by Collins himself exposing his battle of being a gay, black man who is always in the spotlight and trying to fulfill society's expectations of complying with the concept of heteronormativity: "When I was younger I dated women. I even got engaged. I thought I had to live a certain way. I thought I needed to marry a woman and raise kids with her. I kept telling myself the sky was

---

<sup>136</sup> Rachel Kraft and Barry Brummett, "Why Sport and Games Matter: Performative Rhetoric in Popular Culture," *Sporting Rhetoric: Performance, Games & Politics*, (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2009), 11.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

red, but I always knew it was blue.”<sup>138</sup> Society’s norms and standards forced Collins into denial; denial of his own identity. As a consequence, the basketball player became alienated from everybody he could not come out to – and he even became alienated from his true self: “By its nature, my double life has kept me from getting close to any of my teammates. Early in my career I worked hard at acting straight, but as I got more comfortable in my straight mask it required less effort. In recent days, though, little has separated ‘mask on, mask off’.”<sup>139</sup> Keeping distant is a logical reaction as it reduces the danger of revealing one’s own identity. Collins pursued this strategy for as long as he was able to and suffered from the consequences. Over time he realized that he was on the wrong track and that he could not continue to uphold his masquerade for the rest of his career or even his life:

No one wants to live in fear. I’ve always been scared of saying the wrong thing. I don’t sleep well. I never have. But each time I tell another person, I feel stronger and sleep a little more soundly. It takes an enormous amount of energy to guard such a big secret. I’ve endured years of misery and gone to enormous lengths to live a lie. I was certain that my world would fall apart if anyone knew. And yet when I acknowledged my sexuality I felt whole for the first time.<sup>140</sup>

The concept of heteronormativity pressured Jason Collins into living a life of fear, desolation and emotional stress. Coming out was a performative act; performative insofar that Collins finally acknowledged his own identity and decided to subvert the concept that forced him into isolation and self-rejection. Collins’ process of deciding to come out publicly had taken a couple of years. In 2012, he already felt the desire to march at gay prides and show his true self: “I want to do the right thing and not hide anymore. I want to march for tolerance, acceptance and understanding. I want to take a

---

<sup>138</sup> Jason Collins and Franz Lidz, “Why NBA center Jason Collins is coming out now,” *Sports Illustrated*, April 29, 2013, accessed May 17, 2016, <http://www.si.com/more-sports/2013/04/29/jason-collins-gay-nba-player>.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

stand and say, ‘Me, too.’”<sup>141</sup> Hiding was no longer an option. Instead, Collins decided to take a stance, make a contribution to fight the structures that imposed so much pain, that have made his life as a gay man so tough. Collins changed the discourse in professional sports and was finally ready to defend himself, acquire power over his life and show that homosexuality is not a flaw and should be just as accepted as heterosexuality is: “I’m a veteran, and I’ve earned the right to be heard. I’ll lead by example and show that gay players are no different from straight ones. I’m not the loudest person in the room, but I’ll speak up when something isn’t right.”<sup>142</sup> He is the athlete who enters the arena and educates society, the one who exposes the injustice and the emotional scars lesbian, gay and bisexual people receive every day by facing rejection. Social media are instrumental for accomplishing his fight for becoming visible and influencing people’s political attitude regarding homosexuality. The reactions on Twitter after the publication of the article were widespread. Not only Collins himself but many of his fellow teammates, athletes, celebrities and politicians commented and showed their support and appreciation. The former president Bill Clinton was one of them as well as the reporter David Aldridge, the former basketball player Kobe Bryant and many other famous and influential people.



The range of people reached via social media platforms like Twitter was enormous and it started a public debate. Kobe Bryant’s tweet alone has been

<sup>141</sup> Collins and Lidz, “Why NBA center Jason Collins is coming out now.”

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

retweeted more than 36,000 times.<sup>143</sup> Posts like this spread the word and create publicity. Kobe Bryant has obviously gone through a process himself. Two years before Collins' coming-out, Bryant made news because he had called a referee "fucking faggot" during a match. His positioning in the debate after Collins coming-out negated his former behavior. Celebrities like Kobe Bryant influence opinions and facilitate the transformation of social structures and his tweet contributed to that. Twitter is an instrument that has the potential to trigger a chain reaction and that is exactly what has happened right after Collins' coming out.

Ellen Page, Wentworth Miller, Evan Rachel Wood and Jason Collins are not the only ones who stirred the discourse of heteronormativity and unequal treatment as well as violent structures. Over the last years the number of LGBTQ\*s coming out has increased steadily. The vocalist Miley Cyrus, the actresses Maria Bello and Kristen Stewart, the actor Jim Parsons, and the football player Michael Sam are only a few examples of celebrities who came out as LGBTQ\*. Each individual's coming-out has contributed to the boost of visibility of homosexuals and bisexuals. In many cases, the coming-out was combined with a harsh criticism of the heteronormative system and an illumination of the personal consequences. The coming-outs always received wide social media coverage and have sometimes been debated for weeks and months. However, the most thoughtful statements went public in the context of events organized by the gay rights movement. It was also this combination that led to the implementation of same-sex marriage. The coming-out of homosexual celebrities and the highlighting of the heteronormativity, of daily structures that restrict lesbians, bisexuals and gays; these tactics contributed to a strengthening of the social media movement and created a collective identity to which many LGBTQ\* people felt attracted. The exposure of heteronormativity within structures such as families, the show business or sports serve the purpose of deconstructing this concept. The deconstruction of this concept in one sphere also serves the subversion in another sphere.

---

<sup>143</sup> Kobe Bryant, Twitter post, April 29, 2013, 09:01 a.m., <https://twitter.com/kobebryant/status/328901917507989504>.



## ***1.5 “Bye, bye mother monster”: Anti-LGB Bullying and Suicides***

Those who profit particularly from celebrities’ coming outs are LGBTQ\* youths. As Wentworth Miller mentioned, not too long ago LGBTQ\*s grew up without anybody to identify with and without being able to experience a feeling of belonging. The loneliness and the acknowledgment of being different and not part of the “community” led to alienation and a hidden life for most LGBTQ\* youngsters. Suicide attempts were and are still rather common during adolescence as these are the years in which teenagers figure out their own identity and are subject to a long process of finding their true self and their true identity. They are still unstable and easily influenced. Rejection is perceived more intensely than it would be years later when someone has already embraced her or his identity and accepted oneself as lesbian or gay. Multiple studies concluded that the risk for suicidal thoughts and behaviors, suicide attempts, and suicide among LGB youngsters is significantly higher than among heterosexual peers. The reported suicide attempts among LGB students are twice to seven times higher than among heterosexual counterparts.<sup>144</sup> Additionally, there are indications that substance use and mental disorders are more common among homosexual teenagers as well.<sup>145</sup> The increased rates of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts among LGB adolescents and young adults have also been exposed by further studies.<sup>146</sup>

Homosexual celebrities, with whom young LGBTQ\*s can identify, therefore have a massive potential to face direct and structural violence and to improve the life of several thousands of gay and lesbian youngsters. The *Trevor Project* was already starting to encounter the undeniable threat to LGBTQ\* youth’s lives in the late 1990s. Founded in 1998, the national

---

<sup>144</sup> Haas et al., “Suicide and Suicide Risk in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Populations,” 17.

<sup>145</sup> Youth.gov, “Behavioral Health,” *Youth.gov*, accessed December 20, 2016, <http://youth.gov/youth-topics/lgbtq-youth/health-depression-and-suicide>.

<sup>146</sup> Vincent M.B. Silenzio et al., “Sexual Orientation and Risk Factors for Suicidal Ideation and Suicide Attempts Among Adolescents and Young Adults,” *Am J Public Health*, 2007 November; 97(11): 2017–2019.

organization's aim is to provide crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to young LGBTQ\* people aged 13 to 24. It offers free and confidential intervention services via phone, instant messages and text messages for adolescent LGBTQ\*s who are considering suicide. The *Trevor Project* primarily uses social media to promote their crisis intervention service; a service which is invaluable. The organization tries to influence the spirit of vulnerable LGBTQ\*s positively and demonstrates that teenagers can always reach out for support from the *Trevor Project*. An even broader initiative to counteract consequences of direct and structural violence against the youth is the *It Gets Better* movement. It was started by a YouTube video of columnist and author Dan Savage and his partner Terry Miller whose intention it was to inspire hope for young people facing harassment, bullying and violence.<sup>147</sup> The major difference compared to the *Trevor Project* is that *It Gets Better* only acts via social media with the intent to foster the knowledge that even though life might be tough as a LGBTQ\* youngster, it eventually will get better. In contrast to the *Trevor Project* there is usually no direct contact on a personal level with the endangered teenagers. *It Gets Better* perceives itself as an organization that distributes videos, tweets and Facebook posts with the intention of persuading teenaged LGBTQ\*s that their future life offers many possibilities and that they will succeed in overcoming any hardship and challenges just like millions of LGBTQ\* people before. Their predominating strategy is the circulation of celebrities' messages stating that they have made it and that the addressees will be able to cope with all grievances and drawbacks. *It Gets Better* does not exclusively focus on the United States but rather sees its mission to improve the life of young LGBTQ\*s as a global undertaking. Nevertheless, the origin of the project was in Los Angeles, CA in 2010. Over the last couple of years, celebrities' statements have become the most appreciated form of promoting the cause of the organization.

Jason Collins was actually one of the icons that decided to participate in the joint project of the *It Gets Better Project* and *L/Studio*

---

<sup>147</sup> It Get's Better Project, "What is the It Get's Better Project", accessed July 26, 2016, <http://www.itgetsbetter.org/pages/about-it-gets-better-project/>.

which pictured celebrities' struggles to come out and the ensuing improvement of their lives in short video clips: The so-called *It Got Better* video series. In 2014, Jason Collins became part of the *It Got Better* series and told the younger generation his story always intending to give hope and create a positive prospective. The *It Got Better Project* delineates the important steps during the lives of the protagonists. It accentuates the milestones the person has achieved over the years that have ultimately contributed to the process of improvement. For Jason Collins, who has always been reluctant to accept his identity and come out, a clip of the comedian Keith Anthony in which he contributed to the *It Gets Better* campaign, was finally the catalyst that triggered Collins' coming out. During the shooting of the short clip, Collins describes the process he had to go through to become a self-confident sportsman who is out and proud. The football player acknowledges: "Being gay is just another part of my personality that I'm being proud of. And it took me a long time to get to that point in my life."<sup>148</sup> Collins' intention is to ease the burden many lesbian and gay teenagers have to bear by providing them with a positive example. Even though direct and structural violence are still imminent, there have been advances for the LGBTQ\* community and there is more acceptance for lesbian and gays which always correlates with meeting someone who supports you. Providing youngsters with this knowledge can help prevent desperation, depression, self-hatred, self-destruction and even suicides. Social media has increased the avenues to name the problems within society and in the same instance to provide support for all those affected by unequal treatment and violence. The availability of so many different tools to reach people via social media facilitates the enlargement of the number of different stories that can be shared. Jason Collins had to struggle with his gay identity as a black male athlete; the actress and model Portia De Rossi who is married to the comedian Ellen DeGeneres shared her story revolving around her true identity that she had to keep closeted for decades. The result was an eating disorder that De Rossi relates directly to the psychological pressure she had to endure because of her need to keep her sexual

---

<sup>148</sup> "It Got Better Featuring Jason Collins," YouTube video, 07:37. Posted by lstudiopresents, June 4, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-NnTnLqQcC>.

orientation a secret. The actor George Takei's story is also tied to his fear of destroying his career if he came out and was additionally complicated by the resentment he had to face as a Japanese-American citizen. Every single individual who contributed to the project had a story to tell that was affected by personal challenges and the fear of how families, friends and society would perceive oneself after coming out. Emotional tension, pretense, the compulsion to hide and the fear and experience of rejection and even harassment and violence are always crucial parts of the videos. Nevertheless, every single one of the participants pictures the relief after coming out, the process one has to undergo to acknowledge one's own identity, the comfort they start to feel for themselves after a while and the healing of the wounds received over all those years. The defining attribute that is definitely necessary to start this process is "*fortitude*" stimulated by hope; and *It Gets Better* tries to provide the essentials to believe in one's own inner strength. It also integrates a diversity of individuals into a collective that is supportive of each other and focuses on saving the lives of the younger generation. It incorporates the stories of common homosexual people, thereby making *It Gets Better* an inclusive project. Suicides of LGBTQ\* people are the point of intersection between structural and direct violence. Direct violence can not only be furthered by cultural violence but also by the experience of structural violence. Self-inflicted injuries and suicides are acts of direct violence someone performs against oneself. Their origin lies in deep-rooted self-hatred that was stimulated by external forces. Heteronormativity, constant encounters of unequal structures, degradations and bullying are major factors that contribute to these developments. *It Gets Better* seeks to create a community that stabilizes young LGBTQ\*s who are struggling. The project also tries to get them involved.

Jamey Rodemeyer was among those who participated in the project. In May 2011, the fourteen year old boy uploaded a video message as part of the *It Gets Better* project. In this video, Jamey covers his coming-out story and emphasizes that it actually does get better. He describes the bullying he constantly faced in school and online but also the support he received after coming-out to his friends and from people he did not even know before,

which probably refers to the LGBTQ\* online community.<sup>149</sup> He repeatedly claims that he reached the point that eventually has brought progress and eased his situation as a young gay teenager who has been facing homophobic slurs and bullying for years, who was told that he will burn in hell and that he should commit suicide. However, the repetition of his statement “It gets better” always sounds more like a credo, an inner hope, a pretension that might become true if he says it often enough. Only a month before Jamey Rodemeyer posted the *It Gets Better* video, he had uploaded a clip to his YouTube channel in which he talks about the anti-gay bullying he had been facing in school. Responding to the task of answering a classmate’s question more than half of the respondents replied to Jamey’s question if same-sex marriage should be legal in all 50 states with a negative response. The explanations ranged from “It goes against the bible” to “I think it’s disgusting, wrong and against the bible.” Jamey states in the video clip that he considers the latter one “rude and hurtful” and that responses like these are the reason why many LGBTQ\*s feel “unwanted, not loved and not good enough”. He even points out that “things like this is [sic] why people kill themselves”.<sup>150</sup> Jamey’s situation did not get better within the month that lay between this video and his *It Gets Better* message; it also did not get better the following months until the release of his second *It Gets Better* video. In September 2011, Jamey uploaded another video to his Tumblr page, a blogging website, and it was also added to YouTube by a different user nine days later. In his second message, that was only 39 seconds long, Jamey re-emphasizes that it gets better. However, this time it is more than obvious that Jamey does not really believe in what he is saying. He even admits that he is currently in a very difficult state saying “For me it is shitty as hell”<sup>151</sup> and shows his arms that reveal cuts from self-inflicted injuries. His voice is shaking and he seems to be close to tears. Still, he repeats the *It Gets Better* credo right after showing his arms and it becomes

---

<sup>149</sup> “It Gets Better, I promise!,” YouTube video, 02:04. Posted by And This is Jamey’s HAUS, May 4, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Pb1CaGMdWk>.

<sup>150</sup> “Anti-LGBT Bullying,” YouTube video, 03:43. Posted by xgothemo99xx, April 6, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wd11Hfeaz-8>.

<sup>151</sup> “Jamey Rodemeyer’s Second and Final ‘It Gets Better’ Video,” YouTube video, 00:39. Posted by Matt Algren, September 22, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JeIenb4MAZs>.

clear that the message he iterates is addressed to all the LGBTQ\*s watching the video but not to himself: “Don’t let anybody bring you down – be proud of who you are and love yourself. You were born this way.” Right before Jamey ends the video you can still hear him say: “No point in the video but ...” Five days after he had uploaded this video, Jamey took his own life. In the aftermath, it appears as if his last clip was already foreshadowing his suicide. The constant derogatory comments, the hate Jamey had to face brought him down. The *It Gets Better* project could not save him but his death shifted the focus on violence against LGBTQ\* kids nationwide. The night before his death, Jamey posted a message equivalent to a suicide note to the Twitter page of the vocalist Lady Gaga. In almost all of the videos he posted, Jamey was referring to Lady Gaga as an inspiration and a source of strength. Her song “Born this way” which Rodemeyer often cited accentuates self-worth and the beauty of diversity:

There’s nothing wrong with loving who you are  
She [mother] said, ‘cause he made you perfect, babe  
So hold your head up girl and you’ll go far,  
Listen to me when I say  
I’m beautiful in my way  
‘Cause God makes no mistakes  
I’m on the right track, baby I was born this way

Don’t hide yourself in regret  
Just love yourself and you’re set  
I’m on the right track, baby  
I was born this way<sup>152</sup>

Jamey Rodemeyer embraced Lady Gaga’s lyrics and the virtues she promoted. In his first *It Gets Better* video, Jamey mentions “Lady Gaga –

---

<sup>152</sup> “Lady Gaga - Born This Way,” YouTube video, 07:19. Posted by LadyGagaVEVO, February 27, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wV1FrqwZyKw>.

she makes me so happy and she let me know that I'm born this way." In his suicide note, Jamey wrote<sup>153</sup>:



“Paws up forever” also refers to the song “Born this way” as well as the affectionate expression “mother monster”. It goes back to Lady Gaga’s promise to protect minorities and everybody disadvantaged in society. Lady Gaga soon learned of Jamey Rodemeyer’s suicide and responded to it immediately on Twitter. With an empathy she has shown the LGBTQ\* community before she spread the news of Rodemeyer’s suicide. She combined her sadness with political activism and called for actions but did not hesitate to show her pain, frustration and anger that preceded her tweets.<sup>154155</sup>



<sup>153</sup> Misguided Jamey, Twitter post, September 17, 2011, 10:27 p.m., <https://twitter.com/hausofjamey/status/115295838594535424>.

<sup>154</sup> Lady Gaga, Twitter post, September 21, 2011, 03:03 p.m., <https://twitter.com/ladygaga/status/116633801706323969?lang=de>.

<sup>155</sup> Lady Gaga, Twitter post, September 21, 2011, 03:00 p.m., <https://twitter.com/ladygaga/status/116632826979422208>.

Her posts set off another chain reaction. Twitter users responded to her posts, retweeted them, tweeted messages themselves and created the hashtag #MakeALawForJamey thereby calling for a federal anti-bullying legislation. The respondents were diverse and they all expressed their sadness, anger and desperation that it is still so common that adolescents – especially LGBTQ\* adolescents – commit suicide because of intense experiences of bullying.



Social media and Twitter in particular provides every user with an instrument to create visibility and point to injustice to utter beliefs and concerns. Both tweets above show the attempt not only to create visibility but also to position oneself politically. The Twitter user Dean @Rebelcetti calls for an end of hate<sup>156</sup> while Toni A already clearly distinguishes between herself and “them” by saying “Yet they say homophobic remarks are ‘just words’”.<sup>157</sup> Both users speak their mind and try to provoke reactions – similar to Lady Gaga who uses her *soft power* to reach million of people. She even strengthened that effect when she dedicated the song “Hair” to Jamey at her concert in Las Vegas on September 25, 2011 – only six days after Jamey’s death. She said: “I wrote this record about how your identity is really all you’ve got when you’re in school – so tonight, Jamey, I know you’re up there looking at us, and you’re not a victim.”<sup>158</sup> In a very

<sup>156</sup> Dean, Twitter post, September 21, 2011, 03:39 p.m., <https://twitter.com/Rebelcetti/status/116642791022526465>.

<sup>157</sup> Toni A, Twitter post, September 21, 2011, 04:13 p.m., [https://twitter.com/Toni\\_hime/status/116651230264172544](https://twitter.com/Toni_hime/status/116651230264172544).

<sup>158</sup> “Lady Gaga - Hair (A Jamey Rodemeyer Tribute),” YouTube video, 08:19. Posted by MyLittlePonyTeam’s channel, October 15, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MpHSWMQwovA>.



emotional performance, Lady Gaga<sup>159</sup> created the prerequisite that Jamey Rodemeyer's suicide became part of the community's heritage. The LGBTQ\* community was shaken by the suicide of the teenager. The suicide visualizes the mortal force which the combination of cultural, structural and direct violence can unleash. The choice of the expression "victim" in Lady Gaga's statement is striking as this is exactly what the LGBTQ\* community has been fighting against for decades. The community pivots on the aspiration to end the victimization and instead aspire to the acquisition of power. It is what connects LGBTQ\*s nation- and worldwide. Lady Gaga's performance and her embracement of Jamey's tragic life and death were ultimately the steps that were necessary to transform the story of victimization into a story of empowerment. Jamey Rodemeyer's death shifted the focus on LGBTQ\* suicides and stirred attention and a nationwide debate. His parents attended a TV show a week after the suicide, telling the TV host about the anti-LGBTQ\* bullying that even continued after Jamey's death when the bullies chanted "You are better off dead – we are glad you are dead" at a school dance during home-coming week which Jamey Rodemeyer's sister attended.<sup>160</sup> Lady Gaga's reaction to the suicide made it an incident of public interest. In the aftermath, a lot of *It Gets Better* messages on YouTube were dedicated to Jamey Rodemeyer. Lady Gaga's effort was also acknowledged by the LGBTQ\* community. On December 4, 2011 the vocalist received the *Trevor Project Hero Award*. In her acceptance speech, she aligned the community to fight against anti-LGBTQ\* bullying. Jamey Rodemeyer's death brought the community closer together; it also depicted that more has to be done to support young LGBTQ\* kids who are full of self-hatred and/or despair.

A year before Jamey Rodemeyer's death, another suicide related to anti-LGBTQ\* bullying had made the news since the entertainer Ellen DeGeneres spoke out about it on public television. In September 2010, 18-

---

<sup>159</sup> In 2012, Lady Gaga and her mother, Cynthia Germanotta have founded the *Born This Way Foundation*, dedicated to "connecting young people in safe ways and empowering them with the skills and opportunities that will inspire them to create a kinder and braver world". (<https://bornthisway.foundation/about-the-foundation/>) The ultimate goal is to fight bullying and the hateful climate children have to face.

<sup>160</sup> "Parents Of Jamey Rodemeyer Say After Suicide, He's Still Being Bullied," YouTube video, 09:45. Posted by SuchIsLifeVideos, September 27, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmeMQtDU1mA>.

year-old Tyler Clementi jumped off a bridge after having been repeatedly bullied by his college roommate who outed him on social media and uploaded a video that showed Clementi in an intimate act with another man. DeGeneres stressed in her show that “This needs to be a wake-up call to everyone”. She asks for direct action against the climate of hate and the rising numbers of LGBTQ\* teenage suicides. The entertainer also tried to appeal to the teenagers’ sense of a community: “I want anyone out there who feels different and alone to know that I know how you feel. There is help out there. You can find support in your community. [...] Things will get easier, people’s minds will change, and you should be alive to see it.”<sup>161</sup> Nevertheless, the number of suicides related to anti-LGBTQ\* bullying that actually come to public attention is low. Initiatives like the ones that intend to codify bullying as a hate crime do not receive widespread support and therefore bills do not get passed. In addition, both cases – the one of Tyler Clementi and Jamey Rodemeyer – demonstrate that social media also poses a threat since bullying reaches a completely different level. It is no longer restricted to a specific space or time. It even affects LGBTQ\* youths in alleged “*safe spaces*”, namely their homes. Its vehemence is increasing dramatically. Still, social media must be also seen as a tool that has the potential to delineate injustices, unequal treatment and violence. It fulfills the role of bringing the community closer to the individual. The process of identifying oneself with the community and its collective identity is ensuing faster and the scars LGBTQ\* people have received from structural and direct violence might tighten that knot. Nonetheless, the challenge of anti-LGBTQ\* bullying is enormous and the community has to adapt a more efficient strategy to pursue the implementation of anti-bullying legislation that might additionally save teenagers from committing suicide. It must stress the importance of legislations against anti-LGBTQ\* bullying. It has to refer more persistently to the detrimental effects these actions have on adolescents. An instrument to pursue this task could be the violence triangle. Activists’ voices must be heard.

---

<sup>161</sup> “An Important Message - From Ellen DeGeneres (Gay Suicide),” YouTube video, 01:45. Posted by Fighting For Equality! HRC.org, September 30, 2011, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_B-hVWQnjJM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_B-hVWQnjJM).

## ***1.6 Homelessness among LGBTQ\* Youths***

Coming-out to one's parents is for most children a frightening and challenging task that puts a lot of pressure on a young LGBTQ\* person. Although one might be sure that one's parents' reaction will not be hurtful and – even more – that one's parents will embrace their child nevertheless, coming-out still represents the most difficult step for many gays and lesbians. The median age of LGB\*s when they first realize they might not be heterosexual is 12 years.<sup>162</sup> 41 percent of LGBTQ\*s had first told a friend or family member about their sexual orientation or gender identity before they reached the age of 19 years.<sup>163</sup>

While it is already often challenging to come-out to liberal and open-minded parents, it must be even more difficult for a child to discern one's own sexuality and simultaneously be sure that one's parents will never accept that part of one's identity. It seems to be so challenging that a considerable number of LGBTQ\* youths end up on the streets. A survey conducted in 2012 shows that LGBTQ\* teenagers are disproportionately represented among homeless youths in the United States. Estimates say that “between 240,000 and 400,000 LGBTQ\* youths go through at least one period of homelessness each year in the United States.”<sup>164</sup> LGBT youths comprise approximately 40 percent of the clientele served by agencies dedicated to the support of homeless people that participated in the study.<sup>165</sup> The estimated percentage of self-identified LGBTQ\*s among the U.S. society has been consistently around three to four percent over the last couple of years.<sup>166</sup> Consequently, 40 percent of LGBTs among the total

---

<sup>162</sup> “A Survey of LGBT Americans Attitudes, Experiences and Values in Changing Times,” *Pew Research Center*, June 13, 2013, accessed, February 2, 2017, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/06/13/a-survey-of-lgbt-americans/>.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> Geoffrey L. Ream and Nicholas R. Forge, “Homeless Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Youth in New York City: Insights from the Field,” *Child Welfare* Vol. 93, No. 2 (2014): 7.

<sup>165</sup> L.E. Durso and G.J. Gates, *Serving Our Youth: Findings from a National Survey of Service Providers Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth who are Homeless or At Risk of Becoming Homeless* (Los Angeles: The Williams Institute with True Colors Fund and The Palette Fund, 2012), 2.

<sup>166</sup> “Americans Greatly Overestimate Percent Gay, Lesbian in U.S.,” *Gallup*, accessed February 2, 2017, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/183383/americans-greatly-overestimate-percent-gay-lesbian.aspx>.

youths affected by homelessness is a dramatic overrepresentation. The 40 percent include teenagers categorized as officially homeless but also those non-homeless LGBT teenagers who are living in shelters. Teenagers who are considered non-homeless LGBTs are those that would be destined to share the fate of living on the streets if they did not have the opportunity to profit from a housing program. The number of non-homeless LGBTs is recorded by organizations that offer so-called housing programs including permanent housing and projects that try to prevent homelessness by intervening before a teenager runs away or gets kicked out. The Williams Survey showed that the predominating reasons for homelessness of LGBT youths are that teenagers ran away because of their family's rejection of their sexual orientation or gender identity (46 percent) or were forced to move out by their parents because of their sexual orientation or gender identity (43 percent). Additionally, physical, emotional or sexual abuse at home often stirred the adolescents' decisions to leave their homes voluntarily.<sup>167</sup>

A variety of organizations intend to counter homelessness among LGBTQ\*s with a diversity of measures. The strategies range from drop-in centers to mobile outreach programs as well as emergency housing and transitional living. In the case of the *Ali Forney Center*, a New York based organization, drop-in centers predominantly offer medical checkups including psychiatric evaluation, HIV counseling and testing and medicaid enrollment as well as warm meals, hot showers and clean clothing. Furthermore, many organizations offer counseling and therapy groups, workshops and recreational activities. The mobile outreach programs usually provide homeless LGBTQ\*s with safer-sex and hygiene supplies, underwear and socks, food and water, but also with information about shelters, drop-in centers and HIV/STI prevention. These programs try to ease the burden of homelessness and to make life on the streets easier.

Emergency housing and transitional living, instead, focus on eliminating homelessness altogether. The *Ali Forney Center* (AFC) provides emergency housing sites with a total of 47 beds. The program lasts from one

---

<sup>167</sup> Durso and Gates, *Serving Our Youths*, 4.

to six months and aims at integrating LGBTQ\* youths into transitional living. However, the waiting list for emergency housing often record the names of up to 200 young LGBTQ\*s and some might have to wait for months until finally being able to move into a facility of the AFC. The ultimate goal of the organization is to integrate LGBTQ\*s into transitional housing, a two-year program that helps young LGBTQ\*s to lay the foundation for a successful future. Teenagers in transitional living can stay at a shared apartment while finishing school and starting a vocational life. Programs like these are crucial in assisting homeless LGBTQ\* youths. There are a range of organizations in multiple cities in the United States that have perceived the need for LGBTQ\* specific programs. The reasons for this development are diverse. It has become apparent that LGBTQ\* teenagers do not only suffer from a disproportionately high probability of drifting into homelessness but also from harassment and an increased risk of becoming victims of violence on the streets. Years ago, reports indicated that LGBT homeless youths are up to seven times more likely than their heterosexual peers to become victims of a crime.<sup>168</sup> Additionally, shelters had proven to be unsafe spaces for LGBTQ\* youths and accounts of LGBTQ\*s illustrating that they had been “threatened, belittled and abused by staff and other youths because of their sexual orientation or gender identity”<sup>169</sup> indicated that organizations and facilities serving the specific needs of homeless LGBTQ\*s are essentially required.

In the 2000s, not only the *Ali Forney Center* dedicated itself to the mission of providing assistance to homeless LGBTQ\* youths. Many metropolitan areas offer facilities for LGBTQ\* youths that came into existence in the late 2000s and early 2010s. In 2008, the *Wanda Alston Foundation* became the only housing program in Washington D.C. solely dedicated to offering transitional living and support services to homeless or at-risk LGBTQ youths. In Los Angeles, the *LA LGBT Center* has extended its service to homeless youths. However, the most critical factor in securing an expansion of services and an increase of the availability of facilities

---

<sup>168</sup> Nicholas Ray, *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth: An Epidemic of Homelessness*, (New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute and the National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006), 3.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

remains the funding of organizations. In addition, it would be necessary to prevent young LGBTQ\*s from becoming homeless at all. An attempt to accomplish this aspiration was the introduction of the *Reconnecting Youth to Prevent Homelessness Act* in 2011 by the U.S. Senator of Massachusetts John Kerry. The bill also targeted the high rate of homeless LGBTQ\* youths and was supposed to give the Secretary of Health and Human Services authority to “establish a demonstration project to develop programs that are focused on improving family relationships and reducing homelessness for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth.”<sup>170</sup> However, the bill was not passed in Congress and information about further actions is rare. It appears as if legislation against youth homelessness does not stand a chance at being introduced or passed. Therefore, it is plausible to conclude that pressure on the legislative body to implement respective laws is low. This is also underpinned by the poor degree of social media activism against homelessness by major gay rights organizations. The *Human Rights Campaign* exclusively offers a singular page on its website dedicated to homeless LGBTQ\* youths. The information provided has not been updated for several years. A Twitter search for the expression “*homeless LGBTQ\**” resulted in a list of nine tweets posted by the *Human Rights Campaign* during the period from 2010 to 2017. The last tweet was added on April 15, 2015. The results for *GLAAD* were likewise modest. *GLAAD* posted only approximately 30 tweets addressing homeless LGBTQ\*s. Most of these tweets were uploaded in 2014 and since then activism has remained low. A YouTube search also quickly indicates that homeless LGBTQ\*s are not a key topic of major gay rights organizations. While the *Human Rights Campaign* has not uploaded a single video covering LGBTQ\* homelessness since it started using YouTube, *GLAAD* has only provided one clip on its channel. On December 1, 2014, the organization uploaded the video “*All Access: Taking in homeless LGBT youth for a living*” in which *GLAAD* broadcasted an interview with Rick Westbrook, Executive Director of *Lost-n-Found-Youth*, a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting homeless

---

<sup>170</sup> “S.961 - Reconnecting Youth to Prevent Homelessness Act of 2011”, *112th Congress (2011-2012)*, accessed February 3, 2017, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/112th-congress/senate-bill/961>.

LGBTQ\* youths up to the age of 25 years in Atlanta. Its primary goal is to assist adolescents to achieve permanent housing after a transitional phase. As part of the video the organization and its key goals are introduced. However, this video clip remains the only one approaching the topic of homeless LGBTQ\* youths that *GLAAD* broadcasted via its channel. Instead, news outlets or smaller organizations uploaded videos depicting the daily routine of homeless LGBTQ\*s, illustrating the reasons for their misery, and showing how organizations like the *Ali Forney Center* try to ease the situation for youngsters. *In The Life Media* was among those that created videos about homeless LGBTQ\*s and uploaded the clips to YouTube. In 2011, the television newsmagazine, which existed between 1992 and 2012, added two videos to its playlist. *In The Life Media* was dedicated to the production of videos portraying the life of LGBTQ\*s or documenting topics of importance to the community.

One of the video clips called “A Day in Our Shoes” depicts the life of a young homeless lesbian woman in New York City. The catalyst for shooting this video was the cutback of state funding for a \$65 million contribution to a rental assistance program in New York City called *Advantage*. The program provided homeless families with the ability to rent their own apartments and supported them with a rental voucher for up to two years given that the homeless adults found a job. However, only 30 to 40 percent of the income had to be spent on rents. The remaining costs were born by the cities. The program facilitated the transition between people’s lives in shelters and self-sufficiency. The cutback of funding led to a dramatic financial aggravation of the situation of homeless people in New York City.

*In The Life Media* tried to raise awareness and provide an understanding of the situation of LGBTQ\* teenagers living on the streets or in homeless shelters. The young lesbian woman Tiffany “Life” Cocco illustrates her daily routine on the streets and emphasizes the “need to be heard”. The clip contrasts the comfort that shelters provide with the risk that comes along when youngsters are forced to stay on the streets at night. To accentuate this disparity, Tiffany Cocco provides insight into where she spent many nights: On benches all over the city, in parks, in abandoned

buildings, irrespective of freezing temperatures. Cocco says that she had been homeless for seven years at the time the video was taken. She delineates how difficult life on the streets is – especially if you identify as LGBTQ\*. “When you’re gay and homeless and it’s obvious that you are a part of the LGBTQ\* community, you get discriminated on – hard. [...] In our homes we’re not free to be who we are – but the streets are a lot worse.”<sup>171</sup> Cocco describes how she usually does not get a lot of sleep at night because she is always checking her surroundings to make sure that she is safe. Instead, she tries to sleep during the day. Cutting funding for shelters hits organizations severely and Cocco feels that this is even intensified by the reality that “nobody shows that they care.” The clip illustrates the protest against the cutback of funding and shifts the focus on the cruelty resulting from financial curtailments. The displaying of the protests against the cutback are intended to generate cohesion among the community; a cohesion that could trigger a movement. Nevertheless, it becomes obvious that the currently active organizations are mainly local chapters involved in counteracting homelessness. A reality that is startling, since LGBTQ\* youth homelessness is a major manifestation of structural violence. Carl Siciliano, Executive Director of the *Ali Forney Center*, highlights in the clip that he does not think that “there is a more terrible example of homophobia in our times.”<sup>172</sup> Even though agonies can and should not be compared with each other, LGBTQ\* homelessness is among the most severe manifestations of structural violence resulting from heteronormativity. LGBTQ\* teenagers are often either so afraid of coming-out to their families that they decide to run away or are even forced out of their homes by their family because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Furthermore, they are assaulted and harassed on the streets and in a variety of shelters. They are completely dependent on the work of some minor organizations that acknowledge the desperate need for special facilities for LGBTQ\* people. Nonetheless, hardly any initiatives to fight the detrimental situation of LGBTQ\* youths

---

<sup>171</sup> “A Day in Our Shoes - Homeless LGBT Youth,” YouTube video, 05:45, Posted by In The Life Media, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZXv1-fHd6Ug>.

<sup>172</sup>Ibid.



are launched. On the contrary, the few organizations that exist have to struggle constantly to keep their funding.

*In The Life Media* additionally assessed the situation of LGBTQ\* homelessness in a seventeen minute clip in 2011.<sup>173</sup> It starts with Sassafras Lowrey who ran away from home at the age of seventeen and who later published books on LGBTQ\* homelessness. *Ze*<sup>174</sup> highlights that homelessness has never been embraced by the LGBTQ\* community, because the topic is simply not as striking for many activists as same-sex marriage. This correlates with the major tool to create a collective identity: The benefit one could gain from one's own commitment. While same-sex marriage is an attractive goal, since it promises one the possibility to get married, homelessness does only affect a small, voiceless minority of the community. Sassafras Lowrey criticizes that "LGBTQ\* homelessness really happens in every community yet this is something that so few people are talking about." The video further delineates the situation at homeless shelters like "The Crib", a LGBTQ\* program in Chicago, IL and shares the stories of LGBTQ\*s that are dependent on assistance to overcome homelessness. The producers illuminate the challenges the young people had to face and the chances that come with shelters and transitional living. They portray initiatives started by organizations to provide homeless LGBTQ\*s with a place to stay until they finish their education. The clear intention is to support homeless LGBTQ\* teenagers in creating a social network that also functions as a safety net and in constituting preconditions that will ultimately serve as a point of origin for a successful life. The focus of the clip is on the contributions that organizations can provide for homeless LGBTQ\* youths. The video accentuates the essential need for support systems that create the basis for LGBTQ\*s' fresh starts. It is an important contribution to raising awareness but the outreach of the clip remained moderate (105,526 clicks; date: June 3, 2017).

The *Los Angeles LGBT Center* chose a different strategy to shift the focus on homeless LGBTQ teenagers. In October 2013, the organization

---

<sup>173</sup> "Kicked Out: LGBT Youth Experience Homelessness," YouTube video, 16:55. Posted by In The Life Media, October 27, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TUhqodigPFk>.

<sup>174</sup> Sassafras prefers non-traditional pronouns to emphasize *hir* gender-fluidity.

uploaded a video depicting the story of a fictional young gay man who is forced out by his parents after they found out about his homosexuality.<sup>175</sup> The protagonist embodies a gay homeless teenager who undergoes a stereotypical process. After he was kicked out of his home, he faces bullying and assault on the streets due to his homosexuality. Without a place to go, he finally engages in survival sex; sex in exchange for money that he desperately needs for survival on the streets. A survey conducted in 2011 indicates that homeless LGBTQ\*s between the ages of 10 and 25 years are 70 percent more likely than homeless heterosexual youths to engage in survival sex.<sup>176</sup> Survival sex does not exclusively mean that homosexual homeless teenagers engage in sex in exchange for money. Many homeless teenagers also look for one-night stands, so that they can spend the night at their sex partner's place. Nowadays, social media apps make it easier to get in contact with people and engage in survival sex.

Furthermore, "LGBT homeless youths are more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to trade sex with a stranger, have more than 10 sexual partners who are strangers, have sex with a stranger who uses intravenous drugs, have anal sex with a stranger, have unprotected sex with a stranger, and have sex with a stranger after using drugs."<sup>177</sup> In addition, studies suggest that runaway LGBTQ\* youths have 3.3 times the risk of an HIV infection compared to nonrunaways.<sup>178</sup> Moreover, LGBTQ\* youths are at a higher risk of physical and sexual victimization which is also depicted in the video clip, when the protagonist gets raped. The young man in the clip ultimately starts to consume drugs and obviously struggles with mental problems in an intensity that brings him to the edge of suicide. This development reflects a variety of studies that show the increased risk of drug consumption, depressions and suicidal behavior of homeless LGBTQ\* youths.<sup>179</sup> The intention of the video is to illuminate the challenges that

---

<sup>175</sup> "Parents abandon him for being gay; what happens next is too common," YouTube video, 06:30. Posted by Los Angeles LGBT Center, October 17, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1t3vfQIJ-zk>.

<sup>176</sup> Alex S. Keuroghlian, Derri Shtasel and Ellen L. Bassuk, "Out on the Street: A Public Health and Policy Agenda for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth Who Are Homeless," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, Vol. 84, No. 1 (2014): 67.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

LGBTQ\* teenagers who live on the streets have to face. Additionally, it also shows the support network that has developed over the years. At the end of the clip, a range of celebrities appear on the screen providing the viewer with facts on homeless LGBTQ\* youths. Among them are the musician Elton John, the actors Jamie Foxx and James Woods and the CNN reporter Lisa Ling. The *Los Angeles LGBT Center* tried to use the *soft power* of celebrities to raise awareness for homelessness. The video clip has been watched 1,333,605 times (date: June 3, 2017) since it was uploaded on October 17, 2013. The discussion in the commentary section of the video has not ceased over the years. Among those comments were messages which condemned the behavior of the parents who forced their child out of their home for being gay. The user AnimeLionessMika commented: “if you hate your child all of sudden for being gay, then you have never loved them at all. you only hold them as a trophy of your fake-perfect life, and this is obviously not what parenting is about.”<sup>180</sup> [sic] The user Jesse T responded to this post by saying<sup>181</sup>:

Jesse T vor 11 Monaten (bearbeitet)

+AnimeLionessMika

Bullshit. It just means that the child didn't hold up to the parent's expectations. There is no preventing disappointment. In addition to that, the fact that the child is gay will most likely mean that he wont reproduce. Many parents want their children to reproduce, so they can continue the species. This is a huge disappointment.

Families are not tied up by law, and when your child reaches a certain age, you're allowed to throw them out of your household. You aren't obliged to keep in touch with them, either.

It's obvious that you are still a child, and in your black and white world everything that you do not like is wrong. What a truly stupid comment.

[Weniger anzeigen](#)

Antworten • 1  

This post exposes, again, the heteronormativity that still dominates society. The video's protagonist is perceived as a disappointment to his parents due to his homosexuality. The “parents' expectations” are framed as a natural belief that their child would be heterosexual and would eventually marry a woman and procreate. A deviation from the norm is perceived by people like Jesse T as a justification to reject one's child. This narrow concept completely neglects the fact that gays and lesbians are able to reproduce and

---



<sup>180</sup> “Parents abandon him for being gay; what happens next is too common.”

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

exclusively focuses on a stereotypical view of how people are supposed to live their lives. It is the rule of heteronormativity and individuality that is reflected in Jesse T's comment. He perceives something as personal that does not influence his life. He perceives someone's homosexuality as threatening to his way of life, his heteronormative concept. Because of this, he is even willing to justify the misery of thousands of LGBTQ\* youths and the consequences that homeless people have to bear. The same attitude is reflected in Darth Septimus' post<sup>182</sup>:

Darth Septimus vor 11 Monaten

+AnimeLionessMika Being gay is not necessarily as 'feeling' gay. This is probably just a phase in the teenager's life; he will change eventually. I have nothing against lesbians; i like girls. but gay men are absolutely disgusting. They are a blemish on the face of humanity.

Antworten • 1  

The YouTube user argues in a stereotypical way that not only exposes his heteronormative beliefs, but also his sexism and ignorance. "Being gay is just a phase" is often the response to a teenager's or young person's coming-out. This phrase embodies the conviction that the heteronormative system can not be frail and resembles the assurance of the utterer's own beliefs that his/her social concept is legitimate. Moreover, the comment clearly shows how predominantly gay men are seen as a threat to one's heteronormative world view. Lesbians, instead, receive the role of "girls" that satisfy the sexual fantasies of males like the user Darth Septimus. The sentence "I have nothing against lesbians; I like girls" depicts the sexism and the patriarchal system that dominates their world. It reduces lesbians to objects by the implication that the user "likes" the imagination of two "girls" in bed. The expression "girls" is a symbol of the patriarchal view. Darth Septimus denies lesbians their *raison d'être* as two independent human beings that love and desire each other free from any male's fantasies.

Thus, what reactions do videos like the one of the *Los Angeles LGBT Center* stir? They stir the revulsion of people who do not support the heteronormative system; they illuminate the potential of the masses that can be unified in a movement. However, they also elicit the advocates of the

---

<sup>182</sup> "Parents abandon him for being gay; what happens next is too common."

heteronormative system that oppose any different concept and that sustain the concept that causes mental and physical pain on LGBTQ\* people. The comment section below the video exposes that most discussions surround the topics of heteronormativity, although the expression is hardly used. People discuss the foundation of all this hate and homophobia and therefore contribute to the creation of a social system that is all-inclusive and less prejudiced. While the topic of same-sex marriage stirred a powerful and broad movement, homeless LGBTQ\* teenagers do not have an influential or efficient pressure group. The major gay rights organizations hardly engage in raising awareness or in the coordination of activism. Even though the power of social media activism has already been proven, homeless LGBTQ\* youths are neglected and not included in the discourse of major organizations. Discussions like the one in reaction to the video of the *Los Angeles LGBT Center* are hardly started, because organizations like the *Human Rights Campaign* and *GLAAD* do not engage in activism. Moreover, the refusal of the major organizations to spread a movement against homelessness implicates that the chance of implementing legislation challenging homelessness among young people remains low. This was also illustrated by the failure of the *Reconnecting Youth to Prevent Homelessness Act* in 2011 and also by cutbacks in funding of shelter programs in different U.S. states. Instead, organizations committed to easing the situation for homeless LGBTQ\*s have to find ways to raise awareness themselves. However, most of these organizations lack funding and manpower and are unable to foster efficient lobbying campaigns that additionally target the implementation of legislation. The activism against LGBTQ\* homelessness is dependent on individuals and minor organizations and therefore lacks tremendous resources that could be catalyzed into creating an influential movement supported by the LGBTQ\* community. The few video clips that were uploaded received a decent amount of views. “A Day in Our Shoes” was watched 261,263 times (date: June 3, 2017) while the statistics for “Kicked Out” show 105,525 views (date: June 3, 2017). However, *In The Life Media* was a TV newsmagazine, and not a political pressure group that could unify the support of the community and transform it into activism. The *Los Angeles LGBT Center* is a local chapter and only engages in

political activism in California. Homeless LGBTQ\* youths need organizations that work on a federal level, reach millions of people, and have the ability to influence the general society as well as politicians.

The role of major crusaders is currently filled by a few celebrities that regularly shift the focus on LGBTQ\* homelessness. In November 2016, the vocalists Madonna and Lady Gaga visited the *Ali Forney Center* in New York. On Thanksgiving, Madonna spent some time with the homeless youths and tweeted about her day at the Center. A day later, on Black Friday, Lady Gaga met LGBTQ\* teenagers at the *Ali Forney Center* and performed her song “*Million Reasons*”. Both vocalists tweeted about their visits at the Center and informed the public about their mission. Lady Gaga was also accompanied by a team of the TV Show *Today* for its #ShareKindness campaign which aired on television on December 5, 2016.<sup>183</sup> The video shows Lady Gaga engaged in conversations with young LGBTQ\*s and how she opened up about her own post-traumatic stress disorder she had developed after being raped at the age of 19. She thereby started a dialogue about mental illnesses which many of the homeless LGBTQ\* teenagers face due to their experience of being neglected by their own family, ostracized and assaulted on the streets.

Miley Cyrus is also among those celebrities who try to shift the focus on homeless LGBTQ\*s. In September 2014, the musician founded the *Happy Hippie Foundation*, an organization committed “to rally young people to fight injustice facing homeless youths, LGBTQ youths and other vulnerable populations.”<sup>184</sup> The main focus is on homeless LGBTQ\* teenagers and the organization offers support services, education and employment opportunities. It also cooperates with a variety of local organizations. However, the activism is predominantly restricted to active support of homeless youths and less so on political activism. The *Happy Hippie Foundation* has a YouTube channel as well as a Facebook and Twitter account. The YouTube channel almost exclusively lists music clips

---

<sup>183</sup> “Lady Gaga talks about rape and PTSD, encourages young people to ShareKindness,” YouTube video, 05:28. Posted by TodayToday, December 5, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8tOOXeT7hZQ>.

<sup>184</sup> “Our Work,” *The Happy Hippie Foundation*, accessed February 8, 2017, <http://www.happyhippies.org/>.

sang by Miley Cyrus. Even though she performs the songs as part of the foundation's channel, hardly any viewers discuss the work of the foundation. The channel's page features two videos directly linked to Miley Cyrus' foundation and her activism: The first one is the clip introducing the *Happy Hippie Foundation* in the U.S. TV show *The Voice* in which Cyrus had been fulfilling the role of a jury member.<sup>185</sup> The second clip that was uploaded is her acceptance speech given after receiving the *Power of Women Award* of the magazine *Variety*. The vocalist also took the chance and introduced her foundation in her speech.<sup>186</sup> These two videos – apart from the music clips – were those most often watched. Still, the views of both videos combined remained below 310,000 clicks. Those clips that were dedicated to educating the public and informing about the foundation's work only received between 81 and 879 views (date: June 3, 2017).<sup>187</sup> The *Happy Hippies Foundation's* Facebook and Twitter accounts are mere instruments of redistribution of tweets and posts added to social media platforms by other organizations. From tweets of the *Human Rights Campaign* regarding the impact of Trump's immigration ban on LGBTQ\* refugees over reports to Hurricane Matthew's devastating effects on Haiti up to tweets on the *Pulse* shooting – the foundation's twitter page lists messages on a diversity of issues. Although most of these issues are interrelated and must be addressed to ultimately deconstruct heteronormativity, the Foundation does not fulfill the role of an organization that contributes new approaches to the discourse. Their manifesto states: “We will challenge each other and the world & will stop pointless judgment.”<sup>188</sup> [emphasis in original] However, to challenge world views and social norms requires more pointed and creative measures than re-tweeting social media posts of other organizations. The *Happy Hippie Foundation* might engage in important work on the local scene but they do not

---

<sup>185</sup> “The Voice 2016 - Miley's Happy Hippies at The Voice (Digital Exclusive),” YouTube video, 03:12, Posted by The Voice, November 1, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BuY5x-nVkmA>.

<sup>186</sup> “Miley Cyrus - Variety's Power of Women Full Speech,” YouTube video, 05:51. Posted by Variety, October 20, 2016, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SSUT\\_kHEMmo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SSUT_kHEMmo).

<sup>187</sup> “The Happy Hippie Foundation,” YouTube, accessed June 3, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqx9zQijSJaGfYDJ4dY39yA/featured>.

<sup>188</sup> “Manifesto,” The Happy Hippie Foundation, accessed February 8, 2017, <http://www.happyhippies.org/#manifesto>.

contribute to raising awareness and imposing pressure on politicians and the heteronormative system via social media. The Foundation does have the potential to add an important share to this task, since they could profit from Miley Cyrus' *soft power*, but to this day they have not been able to trigger significant social media activism.

The implications resulting from the insufficient activism are severe. Not only mental and physical impacts result from homelessness. A study published in 2014 suggests that 39.3 percent of homeless LGBTQ\*s do not finish high school – even though the *Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program* that was established by the *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act* in 1986 improved funding and the availability of public schools to homeless children. Administered by the U.S. Department of Education, it is supposed to provide every homeless adolescent with an education that qualifies them for vocational life. Nonetheless, as indicated in the chapter on bullying, LGBTQ\* youths face a higher degree of bullying, sexual harassment and/or physical abuse at school compared to their heterosexual counterparts.<sup>189</sup> This can result in negative academic and emotional implications, including non-attendance of classes, poor academic performances which ultimately result in lower grades and worse life chances.<sup>190</sup> The study additionally indicated that “LGBT homeless youths are at heightened risk for psychosocial problems as well as experience levels of verbal and physical school harassment comparable to non-homeless LGBT youths.”<sup>191</sup> Passivity and the prevalence of a lack of efficient legislations threaten the well-being of thousands of LGBTQ\* youths that drift into homelessness. This behavior has even more far-reaching implications: A disproportionally high number of homeless LGBTQ\* youths drop out of school and weaken their chances to escape a life of hardship, poverty and jeopardy.

It is alarming that those LGBTQ\*s who are suffering tremendously from the impacts of a heteronormative society are also those who experience

---

<sup>189</sup> Markus P. Bidell, “Is There an Emotional Cost of Completing High School? Ecological Factors and Psychological Distress Among LGBT Homeless Youth,” *Journal of Homosexuality*, 61 (2014): 369.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 372.



a substantial amount of neglect by their own community. The pressure group of homeless LGBTQ\* youths is inefficient and social media activism is vanishingly low. Homeless youths do get neglected in the face of mainstream topics like the implementation of same-sex marriage. While the latter basically affects the life of each individual lesbian and gay community member, homelessness affects a minority of the LGBTQ\* community. The personal gain is not clearly visible for many potential activists and the bond with the homeless youths is hardly perceived. The fact that it could have been oneself, if the circumstances were different, is ignored as well as the interconnectedness with all the other major topics that entail activism. The movement does not embrace the potential that an active struggle against LGBTQ\* homelessness could have on the deconstruction of heteronormativity. One could even say that major parts of the LGBTQ\* community are guilty of complicity in respect to the mental and physical consequences that homelessness entails for LGBTQ\* people.

The reluctance of major gay rights organizations in raising awareness and their decision to leave it to local chapters to face the challenges that homelessness implicates is dangerous. The neglect of homeless LGBTQ\* people ostracizes them from the community. Homeless LGBTQ\* are remaining voiceless and often desperate.

## ***1.7 LGBTQ\*s in the Workplace: Inequality and Neglect***

It is not surprising that the topic of same-sex marriage received so much attention in comparison to – for example – homelessness. Its relevance for the whole community has been the unifying factor that created a movement. Each individual LGBTQ\* might potentially be affected by the discriminatory essence of any laws or regulations that denied same-sex couples the right to marry. After the reversal of sodomy laws, it quickly became the central topic of the movement – also, because of the prevalence of the *Defense of Marriage Act* which the LGBTQ\* community intended to destruct by applying strategic litigation. However, another manifestation of inequality that, at first sight, one would characterize as an issue affecting all LGBTQ\*s was embedded within the workplace.

Since 1973, the LGBTQ\* community fights for the implementation of a federal bill protecting LGBTQ\*s from workplace discrimination. To this day, though, no federal bill was passed in Congress and successfully turned into law. The protection LGBTQ\* people have is restricted to several state laws and, on a federal level, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VII defines it as unlawful to discriminate on the basis of sex. In 1998, the U.S. Supreme Court decided to follow a broader interpretation of the term “sex” in *Oncale v. Sundowner Offshore Services, Inc.* in which a male heterosexual oil-rig worker filed a complaint against his employer for tolerating and endorsing constant sexual harassment. In his delivery of the opinion of the court, Justice Scalia stated that: “[W]e conclude that sex discrimination consisting of same-sex sexual harassment is actionable under Title VII.”<sup>192</sup> Even though this decision granted LGBTQ\* people a legal basis that has the potential to serve as a precedent, workplace discrimination still remains a major threat to LGB employees. The last two decades have

---

<sup>192</sup> U.S. Supreme Court, “*Oncale v. Sundowner Offshore Services, Inc.*,” No. 96—568. argued December 8, 1997, decided March 4, 1998.

shown that not all circuit courts recognize a broad interpretation of sex stereotypes.<sup>193</sup>

Therefore, the LGBTQ\* community actively pursued several attempts to implement a piece of legislation that specifically protects LGBTQ\* people, among the latest were the *Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA)* and the *Equality Act*. The primary intention of *ENDA*, which was last introduced into Congress in 2013, was to “address the history and persistent, widespread pattern of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity by private sector employers and local, State, and Federal Government employers.”<sup>194</sup> While the Senate passed the bill, the House of Representatives never voted on it, since House Speaker John Boehner and many Republicans opposed the potential legislation and did not initiate a vote in the House.

The second legislative attempt, the *Equality Act* was introduced in 2015 and was meant to prohibit discrimination or segregation in places of – among others – public accommodation, the education system, federally funded programs and also in the workplace. It was supposed to amend the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* to include sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity among the prohibited categories of discrimination.<sup>195</sup>

These initiatives are the result of major discrimination against LGBTQ\* people on the job. The 2008 *General Social Survey (GSS)*, conducted by the *National Opinion Research Center* at the University of Chicago, showed that 42 percent of the nationally representative sample of LGB-identified people were subject to at least one form of employment discrimination because of their sexual orientation at some point in their lives. 35 percent of those who were out at their workplaces reported that they had been harassed during their career and 16 percent were even laid off due to their sexual orientation. One third (33 percent) of LGB employees

---

<sup>193</sup> Yeongsik Kim, “Using Collective Bargaining to Combat LGBT Discrimination in the private-sector workplace,” *Wisconsin Journal of Law, Gender & Society* Vol. 30, 1 (2015): 81.

<sup>194</sup> “S.815 - Employment Non-Discrimination Act of 2013, 113th Congress (2013-2014),” U.S. Congress, accessed February 11, 2017, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/senate-bill/815/text>.

<sup>195</sup> “H.R.3185 - Equality Act, 114th Congress (2015-2016),” U.S. Congress, accessed February 11, 2017, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/3185/text>.

were not open about being LGB at their workplace.<sup>196</sup> Several studies indicate that discrimination and the fear of discrimination force LGBTQ\* people into hiding their identities from co-workers. As a consequence of apprehension of getting outed at work, LGBTQ\* people are hesitant of taking employment opportunities at companies that might not pursue LGBTQ\*-friendly policies. Furthermore, several studies indicated that homosexual men earn ten to 32 percent less than their heterosexual counterparts.<sup>197</sup> However, studies on pay gaps also lack from shortcomings and have to be scrutinized. A recent study published in 2016 delineates the inaccuracy of these research findings. The major criticism by the sociologist Trenton D. Mize is that there has never been a distinction between bisexual and homosexual men. He therefore concludes that the findings were most likely falsified. While Mize would explain the wage gap between homosexual and heterosexual men as manifestations of a “preferential treatment of married men and fathers”<sup>198</sup>, he instead detects a higher wage gap for bisexual men and women. Still he also emphasizes that these findings are not integrating any further intersectional categories like race, ethnicity or class.<sup>199</sup> Thus, there is an urgent need for more comprehensive studies that disclose the full extent of potential wage gaps between heterosexual and homosexual employees.

While the implications of one’s homosexuality on the salary are still not completely uncovered, it has been affirmed by a variety of researches that discrimination of LGB people in the workplace contributes to minority stress.<sup>200</sup> Apart from the effects on homosexual’s mental wellbeing discussed in the previous chapters, studies have also demonstrated that minority stress directly influences one’s physical health outcomes, such as immune function, AIDS progression, and perceived physical health.<sup>201</sup> It

---

<sup>196</sup> Jennifer C. Pizer et al., “Evidence of Persistent and Pervasive Workplace Discrimination Against LGBT People: The Need for Federal Legislation Prohibiting Discrimination and Providing for Equal Employment Benefits,” *45 Loy. L.A. L. Rev.* 715 (2012): 723.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 737.

<sup>198</sup> Trenton D. Mize, “Sexual Orientation in the Labor Market,” *American Sociological Review* Vol. 81(6) (2016): 1153.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 1155.

<sup>200</sup> Pizer et al., “Evidence of Persistent and Pervasive Workplace Discrimination Against LGBT People,” 738.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 739.

can not be denied that workplace discrimination can lead to the aggravation of one's mental and physical wellbeing which can culminate in one's diminished life chances and even lower life expectancy.

In academia, discrimination against LGBTQ\* people in the workplace has been widely discussed and analyzed. Not only sociologists but also researchers of law have dedicated their works to the study of workplace discrimination that analyze cases of strategic litigation, the lawmaking process and strategies of collective bargaining. The issue of employment discrimination and the potential effect that it might have on affected LGBTQ\* employees also establishes the subject as one of the most political ones within the realm of political lobbyism.

The *Human Rights Campaign* has been engaged in advancing discrimination protection on the grassroots level for years. On its website, the organization provides information about sample employment non-discrimination policies, the *Equality Act* and required steps for the advancement of equality legislation. In 2009, the *Human Rights Campaign* also published its *Degrees of Equality Report* that illuminated the prevalence of an anti-LGBTQ\* climate in the workplace.<sup>202</sup> The report includes statistics surrounding experienced discrimination, one's coming-out at work, the degree of inclusion and interactions with colleagues as well as the impacts that one's sexual orientation might have on social relations in the workplace environment. In addition, the *Degrees of Equality Report* offers assessment questions to employers that facilitate the evaluation of a company's inclusiveness and LGBTQ\*-friendliness. It further provides advice for managers about how to improve the workplace climate and how to create awareness for LGBTQ\* topics that eventually will prevent discrimination from spreading or even erase it completely.

The Foundation also pushed for the implementation of essential legislations by using social media, publishing informational sheets and calling their followers to engage in direct actions like influencing their Senators. The *Equality Act* was among those topics that were boosted by the

---

<sup>202</sup> The Human Rights Campaign Foundation, *Degrees of Equality: A National Study Examining Workplace Climate for LGBT Employees*, Washington, D.C: The Human Rights Campaign, 2009.

organization; the *Human Rights Campaign* even introduced the hashtag #equalityforward. However, the discourse circulating around these initiatives has always remained limited. The tweets received hundreds of re-tweets as well as “likes”, but discussions in the commentary section have never developed prolifically. Most Twitter users exclusively posted their consent to the endorsement of laws and protections but a decision to engage into organized activism was not perceptible – also because the *HRC* did not provide any guidance.

The *Human Rights Campaign* additionally relied on YouTube videos to promote their cause. In 2015, two clips explaining the essence of the *Equality Act* were supposed to educate viewers and to impose pressure on politicians to implement the act. The clip “*HRC Leads Call in Fight for Federal Equality for LGBT Americans on Capitol Hill*” summarized the opinions of important supporters, among them political leaders of the Democratic as well as Republican parties. Furthermore, Luke Peterson, a gay man who was fired three times for being gay, and Carter Brown, a transgender Texan man who experienced workplace harassment, testified in the video. The testimonies were followed by a statement of the President of the *Human Rights Campaign* Chad Griffin who highlighted: “In most states in this country still today, a couple who gets married at 10 a.m. is still at risk of being fired from their jobs by noon and evicted from their home by 2 [p.m.]. All on the same day. Simply for posting that wedding photo on Facebook. This is fundamentally wrong and it needs to change.”<sup>203</sup> Griffin directly refers to the success of gaining marriage equality, but also to the fact that there are still manifold shapes of inequality that make a LGBTQ\*’s life burdensome. Sean Patrick Malony, U.S. Representative for the State of New York, ended the video by appealing to the conscience of Representatives and Senators. He stressed the prospect that, ultimately, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity will be banished by a federal legislation and that it is only a question of time:

---

<sup>203</sup> “HRC Leads Call in Fight for Federal Equality for LGBT Americans on Capitol Hill,” YouTube video, 04:53. Posted by Human Rights Campaign, July 23, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0mXDJIQKM>.

Where were you when it came to the Equality Act? Were you standing in the doorway or were you opening the door? And to those who still oppose us, we ask you to look into your hearts and to look into the future. Because history will judge very harshly your decision in the next few weeks about your position on this bill. There is still time to do the right thing – join us and let’s move forward together.<sup>204</sup>

Malony’s statement simultaneously subtly refers to the last time history has judged politicians very harshly, after denying their support for civil rights: The time, when the civil rights movement brought the end of segregation, the time, when the *Civil Rights Act* was implemented into law – the last major federal piece of legislation that bans discrimination on the basis of the characteristics of race, color, religion, sex or national origin.

Nevertheless, the number of YouTube videos posted by the major gay rights organizations is lower than expected. *GLAAD*, for example, hardly focused on employment discrimination. In 2013, the organization uploaded a clip fostering the implementation of the *Employment Non-Discrimination Act*.<sup>205</sup> The video is composed of a conference call in which LGBTQ\* activists participated and that intended to analyze the reasons, why the *Employment Non-Discrimination Act* has not been passed to that date and why it is so essential to implement it in the future. Even though the topic is crucial and should be a major one within the movement, *GLAAD* did not endeavor to create an appealing clip. The audio quality is poor and the video takes more than 30 minutes. The probability that someone might watch the clip to the end is low. This is neither the way to convince people to join a movement nor to educate them, since hardly anybody will watch 30 minutes of that low-quality video clip.

Almost the same applies to the YouTube presence of the *Human Rights Campaign*. The video clip that was discussed above is the best attempt of reaching the LGBTQ\* community and medial awareness. But besides that, videos that focus on employment discrimination have been

---

<sup>204</sup> “HRC Leads Call in Fight for Federal Equality for LGBT Americans on Capitol Hill.”

<sup>205</sup> “The time is now: Pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act,” YouTube video, 31:35. Posted by GLAAD, November 6, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SI2apAXyHKc>.

exclusively dedicated to the education of potential employers and LGBTQ\* youths that are in the process of joining the workforce. This has become one of the central pieces of the Foundation's focus, apart from political lobbying.

In 2013, the *HRC's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Leadership and Career Summit* addressed LGBTQ\* adolescents and provided them with information regarding their job entrance as LGBTQ\*s and behavioral strategies after entering the workforce.<sup>206</sup> A year later, in 2014, the *Human Rights Campaign* distributed a clip, together with the *U.S. Small Business Administration*, that provides advices on how to make a small business LGBTQ\*-inclusive.<sup>207</sup> Deena Fidas, Director of the Workplace Equality Program, briefs a number of small business owners on – among other points – non-discrimination, equitable benefits for LGBTQ\* people and transgender health care coverage. However, the clip that takes almost an hour is the recording of a conference call that is also of poor quality. Each of the two YouTube videos has been watched less than 3,000 times (date: June 3, 2017). Still, what both of these videos illuminate is that the *Human Rights Campaign* is seeking an active cooperation with business owners and LGBTQ\* employees and tries to ease the challenges that LGBTQ\* people face on a grassroots level.

However, what has been shown by the efficient movement for same-sex marriage is that celebrities and personal stories by people who face inequality on a daily basis is the key to creating a collective identity, raising awareness and influencing politicians. So why has this strategy never been adapted by major gay rights organizations? The few Twitter posts that *GLAAD* as well as the *Human Rights Campaign* have circulated indicate that they actively favor an employment non-discrimination act and supported the *Equality Act*. Why do these organizations not promote the realization of their goals with more precise social media activities? The pressure could certainly be intensified and the political process accelerated.

---

<sup>206</sup> “Generation Equality: Entering the Workforce, a Twitter Town Hall,” YouTube video, 1:05:54. Posted by Human Rights Campaign, November 5, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1O0xIYrxv0>.

<sup>207</sup> “Making Your Small Business Workplace LGBT-Inclusive, presented by HRC,” YouTube video, 52:10. Posted by U.S. Small Business Administration, July 26, 2014, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hkw\\_P-Z\\_j8I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hkw_P-Z_j8I).



This was also shown in 2013, when the overall activism on Twitter to promote employment equality reached one of its peaks. The primary motive was the users' ambition to pressure President Obama into issuing an Executive Order that was supposed to protect LGBTQ\* employees. Although the *Employment Non-Discrimination Act* was introduced into Congress the same year, it was almost certain that it would not pass the House of Representatives, in which the Republicans had the majority. Therefore, individual Twitter users engaged in the endorsement of an Executive Order that was ultimately issued by President Obama in 2014. Additionally, 200 Democratic Congress members issued a letter to President Obama in March 2014, urging him to sign an Executive Order and fulfill his promise of a "year of action".<sup>208</sup>

Ultimately, President Obama signed *Executive Order 13672* on July 21, 2014 and thereby amended *Executive Order 11478* from 1969 (Equal Employment Opportunity in the Federal Government) and *Executive Order 11246* (Equal Employment Opportunity) from 1965. *Executive Order 11478* was accordingly adjusted, so that, after Barack Obama's Executive Order was issued, it also guaranteed non-discrimination in federal employment under the categories of sexual orientation and gender identity. *Executive Order 11346* prohibited "federal contractors and federally-assisted construction contractors and subcontractors, who do over \$10,000 in Government business in one year from discriminating in employment decisions on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or national origin."<sup>209</sup> The categories of sexual orientation and gender identity were appended by President Obama's Executive Order. The Executive Order issued in 2014 assured equal treatment in the federal workspace and for federal contractors for the years it was in effect. But the most profitable companies, to which federal contractors belong predominantly, have anti-discrimination policies anyway – at least on paper.

---

<sup>208</sup> "Pallone Calls for Executive Order to Protect LGBT Workers from Workplace Discrimination," [pallone.house.gov](http://pallone.house.gov), accessed February 24, 2017, <http://pallone.house.gov/press-release/pallone-calls-executive-order-protect-lgbt-workers-workplace-discrimination>.

<sup>209</sup> Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP), "Executive Order 11246 — Equal Employment Opportunity," United States Department of Labor, accessed February 23, 2017, [https://www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/ca\\_11246.htm](https://www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/ca_11246.htm).

In 2010, 87 percent of the 500 largest publicly-traded companies, which collectively employ nearly 25 million people,<sup>210</sup> had anti-discrimination policies that included sexual orientation, 46 percent of them also covered gender identity or expression. LGBTQ\*s can therefore revert to policies implemented by their employers, given that they are enforced by the company’s officials. A breach of internal policies can be persecuted internally while chances to succeed with a lawsuit on a legal level in the judicial system are low.<sup>211</sup> Moreover, the number of companies covering gender identity should be increased and policies efficiently enforced.

Number and Percentage of Employers with Non-Discrimination Policies that Include **Gender Identity or Expression**

	<b>Fortune 100</b>	<b>Fortune 500</b>	<b>Fortune 1000</b>	<b>AmLaw 200</b>
<b>2010 Total</b>	69 (69%)	229 (46%)	310 (31%)	119 (60%)
<b>2008 Total</b>	69 (69%)	207 (41%)	254 (25%)	112 (56%)
<b>2003 Total</b>	11 (11%)	26 (5%)	—	—

Number and Percentage of Employers with Non-Discrimination Policies that Include **Sexual Orientation**

	<b>Fortune 100</b>	<b>Fortune 500</b>	<b>Fortune 1000</b>	<b>AmLaw 200</b>
<b>2010 Total</b>	94 (94%)	434 (87%)	726 (73%)	157 (79%)
<b>2008 Total</b>	97 (97%)	434 (87%)	702 (70%)	157 (79%)
<b>2003 Total</b>	96 (96%)	360 (72%)	—	—

Nonetheless, the most persistent employment discrimination of LGBTQ\* people can probably be found in small businesses in rural areas. These employees are those most in need of the community’s support. These are the people that would profit from an active campaign by major gay rights organizations and from the implementation of anti-discrimination laws. However, these LGBTQ\*s are destined to remain voiceless and are not integrated into the pursuance of political action. Comments on Twitter are rare and, as mentioned before, neither *GLAAD*’s nor the *Human Rights Campaign*’s approach affected LGBTQ\*s positively and they also did not help them to make their voices heard. There are certainly reservations and doubts LGBTQ\* people would have if they were asked to speak out; the risk

<sup>210</sup> “LGBTQ Equality at the Fortune 500,” Human Rights Campaign, accessed February 23, 2017, <http://www.hrc.org/resources/lgbt-equality-at-the-fortune-500>.

<sup>211</sup> If above mentioned Executive Orders get violated judicial consequences could be enforced.

of coming out and being discriminated against is still high and, after experiencing discrimination before, it is probably a frightening idea to endanger one's integrity again. Nevertheless, there are LGBTQ\*s who would join the movement and contribute to the task of raising awareness despite any potential negative consequences.

The *Center for American Progress*, a progressive policy research and advocacy organization, in fact, applied the strategy of sharing LGBTQ\*s' stories in their YouTube video series on workplace discrimination against LGBTQ\* people. In 2013, when *ENDA* was introduced into Congress, the center uploaded eight clips delineating the unequal and discriminatory treatment of transgender people, gay men and lesbian and bisexual women. All of them were targets of harassment and discrimination, after colleagues or employers had found out about their sexual orientation or gender identity. The *Center for American Progress* helped to share their stories and to raise some awareness.

Ashland Johnson, a black lesbian woman, illuminated how she had become a victim of discrimination at a company in Atlanta that actually had an internal anti-discrimination policy. However, when her supervisor found out that she was in a relationship with a woman, Johnson was asked to resign which she denied. From that point on, Johnson had to face overt discrimination and was ultimately fired while she had to stay at the Intensive Care Unit for a week. The termination letter even amplified the stress that she had already felt due to the financial burdens that her hospital stay had entailed. In the beginning, Johnson was certain that she could sue her employer for the discrimination and harassment she had experienced: "Finding out there was nothing I could do just surprised me. I think a lot of times people look at internal policies and think that is enough, but it took that experience for me to realize that policies don't mean anything unless someone is willing to enforce them."<sup>212</sup> Johnson had to face overt discrimination that impacted her life and brought her in a threatening situation when she was laid off while being hospitalized. Still the only steps she could take were sharing her story and thereby emphasizing the need for

---

<sup>212</sup> "Workplace Discrimination Series: Ashland Johnson," YouTube video, 02:29. Posted by seeprogress, October 21, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JmmWgl5PWHk>.

a comprehensive law that protects LGBTQ\* people in the private sector as well as in local, state and federal governments and agencies. Johnson's decision to tell her story was a political act whose intention was to reach out to people, raise awareness and influence politicians. Even though Johnson is currently working as a social justice advocate, and therefore probably shows a higher degree of political activism than other citizens, engaging in political acts is not limited to professionals.

Sam Hall, a white gay man, also participated in the "*Workplace Discrimination Series*". Hall had worked for a mining company in West Virginia for seven years and faced harassment on a daily basis:

Later on [after he had already experienced verbal harassment] did it escalate to a lot more violence, destruction of my personal property, my vehicle, my locker my clothing, I've had my lockers broken into; I've had a screwdriver taken to a brand new explorer which I just bought ... I've had my wheel weights taken off and pounded on my tires to make my car steer one way coming off of a one lane mountain that had a complete drop off. I've had a lot of instances where I've had supposedly friends call me out in front of you know, 16 employees for the coal company. Call me names, make fun of it, say they wish all faggots would die.<sup>213</sup>

Hall's complaints to his supervisor had never been persecuted and he ultimately learned that he had no rights and that there was no judicial basis for taking any legal actions against workplace discrimination based on his homosexuality.<sup>214</sup> He spent his time at the company in fear of becoming a victim of direct violence and, at the same time, had already faced a treatment that left mental scars. After he had decided to leave the mining company, Hall regained his strength and decided to fight for his rights and for all those who are not able to do it for themselves: "[...] I just don't want people going through what I had to go through; because I know how painful

---

<sup>213</sup> "Workplace Discrimination Series: Sam Hall," YouTube video, 05:12. Posted by seeprogress, July 16, 2013, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z6VX\\_oZmJIL](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z6VX_oZmJIL).

<sup>214</sup> Even though he eventually tried to sue his former employer which led to a confidential agreement in 2012.

it is. I know what it is to sit in your truck and cry, going to work, coming home. How miserable it is. You just want to lay down and say heck with it, I don't want no more of it. You just got to dig down deep and find it. And just keep going." Sam Hall's story shows that LGBTQ\* people are willing to speak out and to share their stories; that it is important to let all those who still suffer from harassment and violence know that they are not alone; that there is a community backing them up. The *Center for American Progress* showed that there are LGBTQ\*s who are willing to talk about what they experienced. The challenge is to spread the stories to an influential and large public that is able to influence politicians. All these videos that were part of the "*Workplace Discrimination Series*" hardly received more than 2,000 to 3,000 views (date: June 3, 2017). An initiative by the *Human Rights Campaign* or *GLAAD* would have the potential to reach distinctly more people and the distribution of a higher amount of videos could even multiply this effect.

Thus the question prevails why major gay rights organizations do not embrace actions against employment discrimination more tightly. The presumption that a climate of ignorance and egotism penetrates this specific issue is sustainable. The mental and physical implications workplace discrimination can have on LGBTQ\* people are not instantly obvious. If someone is not directly affected by workplace discrimination or the fear of becoming subject to harassment, the matter is quickly erased from one's mind. Furthermore, the assumption that not coming-out and hiding one's sexual orientation is always a potential tool to prevent discrimination seems to be a valid solution for many people. At the same time, mental consequences are being ignored.

This is where the debate, or the lack of a debate, also results in self-inflicted structural violence; self-inflicted, because the major gay rights organizations do have the potential and the resources to initiate social media activism that can unify the community and increase the pressure on political actors. It can give LGBTQ\* people a feeling of belonging and ease the burden they experience. It is striking that the *Human Rights Campaign* and *GLAAD* – in cooperation with *Freedom to Marry* – have constructed an efficient movement for same-sex marriage and against inequality that

characterizes the U.S. society and that defines the perception of LGBTQ\*s in the public sphere every single day. But when it comes to issues that do not necessarily affect each individual LGBTQ\*, the organizations stay reluctant. Bullying of LGBTQ\* youths and resulting suicides are targeted by organizations that exclusively focus on these challenges and that sometimes face support by the *Human Rights Campaign* and *GLAAD*. Homeless LGBTQ\* youths, however, face total neglect from the majority of the community and especially from the most influential gay rights organizations. It is peculiar that primarily local organizations lead the struggle against homelessness and it is also interesting that the *Human Rights Campaign* and *GLAAD* seem to have the impression that traditional grassroots activism and political lobbyism will be enough to advance equality in the workplace. However, the last years have shown that their activism is not efficient enough to endorse federal bills that could ultimately provide LGBTQ\* people with a legal basis to fight workplace discrimination. Yet in relying on these tactics, they jeopardize LGBTQ\*s mental and physical health. The social media movement has to spread its strategy to use the whole variety of tactics targeting different emotions. They have to create a strong grassroots that integrates the different ways to reach people. The diverse approaches discussed above show that celebrities and the common man are as valuable in pursuing equality since they all stimulate feelings that are appealing for potential activists: While the common man usually creates a bond of a shared fate, celebrities have the power to motivate people who are not experiencing violence on a daily basis. At the same time homosexual celebrities can also create a feeling of understanding and belonging among LGBTQ\*s. Fear, anger, despair as well as frustration, the shocking realization to be affect oneself or to be a potential target – all these emotions can be stimulated and utilized for the movement's cause. Even a single post or tweet can be valuable - irrespective of the ultimate amount of people reached. Sometimes a single post of someone affected by violence might lead to the desire of dozen of people to engage in activism. The value and relevance of the posts and tweets can not be compared – and as mentioned before, this is also not the intention of this thesis. The diverse forms of social media activism complement each other.

It is the combination of different tactics that transforms the movement into an efficient body. And it is this strategy that has to be applied and extended to ensure successes for the social media movement.

## 2. Direct Violence

### 2.1 *Bringing Attention to Direct Violence*

***“He wanted to make a difference. Did he? You tell me.”***

- Dennis Shepard, father of Matthew Shepard. Statement to the Court on 11/4/99.

Violence is diverse in its appearances and also in its effects. It might be invisible to one’s glance and gradually spreading its impact. Or it might be institutionalized and hard to discover. It might affect a group of people – or it might simply hit a single person with an immense and visible outcome that one is hardly able to conceal from the general public. Direct violence, aggression that is affecting gays and lesbians physically, has been a life-threatening challenge for LGBTQ\*s for decades. The first gay rights movement was born out of a revolution against violence against LGBTQ\*s. *Stonewall* was the result of decades of massive intimidation, physical degradation and enduring traumas that LGBTQ\*s had to experience individually as well as collectively. However, the *Stonewall Riots* were only the beginning. Still, advancements during the first couple of decades after *Stonewall* have been rare. Even nowadays, violence is still custom and experienced on regular basis by individuals and therefore at the same time by the whole community. Any attack against an individual conducted because of one’s sexual or gender identity is an attack against the LGBTQ\* community. Any attack motivated by the sexual orientation or gender identity of the target is a rejection of the community, of the life LGBTQ\*s lead. Direct violence is hurtful – not only for the one who experiences the violence personally but also for everybody else sharing the gender identity and/or sexual orientation. Direct violence will always leave scars and it will always trigger a reaction. The *Stonewall Riots* were a sudden outburst of emotions originating from violence endured for years. At the same time, *Stonewall* was supposed to be the trigger to fight for progress and it was supposed to eventually initiate a healing process. Time has shown that the



fight for advancements is a tough one which needs resilience and absolute commitment. Time has also shown that the healing process will have to continue for an indefinite period and that it will be characterized by the recurrence of events that constitute a backlash. Scars will burst open and start bleeding again. The murder of Matthew Shepard was such an incident. On the night of October 6, 1998 the 21-year-old student was given a ride by Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson whom he had met at the Fireside Lounge in Laramie, Wyoming, a bar well-known to be predominantly frequented by gays. McKinney and Henderson drove to a rural area outside of Laramie, robbed Shepard, tortured and beat him, tied him to a fence and left him to die in the freezing night. Matthew Shepard never regained consciousness and died six days later in hospital. McKinney and Henderson were charged with first degree murder, kidnapping, and aggravated robbery. Media attention increased steadily and soon worldwide attention was paid to the brutal killing of Matthew Shepard. At the same time, Shepard's sexuality was spotlighted and the murder was soon perceived as a hate crime. Over the course of the trial the hate crime allegations were never fully clarified – also because hate crime legislations were absent not only from the federal but also from the state laws at that time – but evidence suggests that Matthew Shepard's sexual identity had a dominant role in his murderers' motivation to kill the 21-year-old.<sup>215</sup> The demeaning reactions of several religious groups right after the emergence of the facts and the presenting of the murderers even highlighted the role of Shepard's homosexuality. The funeral was accompanied by protests coordinated by religious and conservative groups. Statements like “No Tears for Queers”<sup>216</sup> and “Matt in Hell” were broadcasted all over the world and elicited reactions from gay rights activists. Matthew Shepard's killing was an act that hit the whole LGBTQ\* community. And so did the anti-gay protests in the aftermath. The murder of Matthew Shepard became a key moment for

---

<sup>215</sup> Over the last two decades, the media has contributed to the speculations that Shepard's murder had not been stipulated by homophobic feelings but by a disagreement between crystal meth addicts - even though there has hardly been any evidence provided which could underline this theory. According accusations have tried to demote Shepard's role as a symbol of the LGBTQ\* community.

<sup>216</sup> The ultra-conservative Westboro Baptist Church especially fostered slogans like “No Tears for Queers” and “God Hates Fags” and gained attention for its blatant anti-LGBTQ\* attitude and radicalism.

the gay rights movement. It illuminated that successes and improvements since the 1960s were short-lived and that LGBTQ\* lives were still under threat. Furthermore, the circumstances in Wyoming showed that masses of people even justified the torture and killing of homosexuals. Matthew Shepard made a difference: He showed the world that LGBTQ\* people are still a target and that the struggle for LGBTQ\* rights has to be led more intensely. This also implied that the gay rights movement has to reinvent itself constantly. One – and almost the only – reaction to the Matthew Shepard murder on a legislative basis was the fight for hate crime legislations all over the United States. One of the most important initiators was Shepard's mother, Judy Shepard, who led an intense lobbying campaign in favor of hate crime legislations which eventually succeeded in 2009 when Congress passed the *Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act*. The act defines any offenses due to actual or perceived religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability as hate crimes. The passage of the act was more than just symbolic; the act guarantees the ability of the federal law enforcement to prosecute hate crimes and it additionally grants financial resources to local and state authorities in order to investigate and prosecute respective crimes more effectively. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) 18.7 percent of the 6,727 single-bias incidents were motivated by the victim's sexual orientation in 2014.<sup>217</sup> The number of victims targeted due to their gender identity was reported as 109 people (1.6 percent). In 2015, the FBI reported 1,263 hate crime victims (17.7 percent of total amount) targeted due to sexual-orientation and 122 victims (1.7 percent) of gender-identity bias.<sup>218</sup> The report for the year 2016 has not been published so far.

The FBI statistic is far from transparent and complete, and additionally, the percentages of the 2014 report do not match the actual figure of people mentioned in the report. Nevertheless, the reported hate crime victims by the FBI slightly coincide with the number of 1,359 (2015:

---

<sup>217</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, "2014 Hate Crime Statistics," *Federal Bureau of Investigation*, accessed August 29, 2016, [https://ucr.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/hate-crime/2014/topic-pages/victims\\_final](https://ucr.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/hate-crime/2014/topic-pages/victims_final).

<sup>218</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, "FBI Releases 2015 Hate Crime Statistics," *Federal Bureau of Investigation*, accessed January 26, 2017, <https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2015>.

1,253)<sup>219</sup> incidents of hate violence from LGBTQ\* and HIV-affected survivors<sup>220</sup> reported by the *National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs* in 2014.<sup>221</sup> Both figures apply to the incidents reported in the territory of the whole United States. Nevertheless, the FBI reports hate *crimes* while the NCAVP refers to hate *violence*. This implies that the incidents listed by the NCAVP were not necessarily reported to the police and that their nature as hate *crimes* not legally determined. In contrast, the FBI only includes bias attacks for which “law enforcement investigation reveals sufficient evidence to lead a reasonable and prudent person to conclude that the offender’s actions were motivated, in whole or in part, by his or her bias, should an agency report an incident as a hate crime.”<sup>222</sup> Yet, the *National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs* emphasizes that the number of hate violence reported by their organization as well as hate crimes by the FBI is probably way below the real figure and that the majority of hate violence often remains un-reported. The NCAVP, on the one hand, sees its own inability to cover more acts of hate violence as part of a decline in its outreach and staffing as a result of a transition phase they had gone through. On the other hand, the reasons for the inability of the FBI to cover all hate crimes are manifold. Statistics of the NCAVP indicate that only half of the survivors of hate violence who are part of the NCAVP survey report the incident to the police due to negative experiences like hostility and excessive force with law enforcement.<sup>223</sup> In 2015, the number of those who have reported the incident to the police has dropped from 54 percent in 2014 to 41 percent. In addition, even the *Bureau of Justice Statistics*, another federal agency, also estimates that the hate crimes reported to the FBI on a national basis are

---

<sup>219</sup> National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and HIV-Affected Hate Violence in 2015*, (New York: Arcus Foundation, 2016), 14.

<sup>220</sup> This number includes all “survivors” that identify as LGBTQ\* or are HIV-affected. Therefore, it can not be compared directly to the FBI statistic since the methodology as well as the composition of those identity categories integrated into the reports does not correspond.

<sup>221</sup> National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and HIV-Affected Hate Violence in 2014*, 8.

<sup>222</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, “2015 Hate Crime Statistics – Methodology”, accessed January 26, 2017, [https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2015/resource-pages/methodology\\_final](https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2015/resource-pages/methodology_final).

<sup>223</sup> National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and HIV-Affected Hate Violence in 2014*, 11.

about 40 percent less than the ones really conducted.<sup>224</sup> Another striking factor contributing to the low numbers of reported hate crimes could be the ambiguous definition of “*hate crime*” per se and the difficult differentiation between the mere intention to commit a hate crime and potential other factors triggering the crime. The FBI even confirms that due to the fact that “motivation is subjective” it is difficult to determine which crimes constitute a hate crime and therefore a criminal offence.<sup>225</sup> Being robbed and beaten as a gay man is often statistically considered a robbery and not treated as a hate crime – even if some indications, like homophobic slurs, would suggest otherwise. Furthermore, there seems to be a lack of adequately trained police officers which results in an insufficient awareness of homophobic hate crimes and an inappropriate handling of the situation.<sup>226</sup>

Another concept to be factored into the reporting and analyzing of hate crimes is the concept of intersectionality. If a black, lesbian woman is subject to direct violence it would not be sufficient to consider the attack exclusively as a hate crime due to homophobia. Instead, it would be necessary to evaluate the impact of the woman’s racial background to the act of violence. Inequality and violence rarely result from a single factor; in general the culmination of different identity categories and power structures constitute the foundation of violent acts. Therefore, violence against homosexuals always has to be investigated in regard to the racial background of the victim as well. In addition, homophobic hate crimes usually do not exclusively stem from the victim’s sexual orientation but also from his or her gender performance. As Doug Meyer has indicated in his work on intersectional analysis of anti-queer violence “lesbians and gay men both experience violence for violating gender norms”.<sup>227</sup> The concept of heteronormativity and the resulting homophobia is not the sole trigger for anti-lesbian violence; sexism as well as misogyny contributes to the decision to use direct violence against a lesbian woman. So, how is it

---

<sup>224</sup> National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and HIV-Affected Hate Violence in 2014*, 18.

<sup>225</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, “2015 Hate Crime Statistics – Methodology.”

<sup>226</sup> National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and HIV-Affected Hate Violence in 2014*, 62.

<sup>227</sup> Meyer, “An Intersectional Analysis of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) People’s Evaluations of Anti-Queer Violence,” 851.

possible to build a coherent LGBTQ\* activism in spite of their differences and the diverse identity constructs that contribute to violence? How can one construct a functional movement that aims to fight structural as well as direct violence? Is the struggle for the disbanding of the concept of heteronormativity far-reaching enough?

There might be multiple approaches to integrate the diversity of the community into a movement and pursue the multiplicity of goals. However, dissolving the concept of heteronormativity is still the logical starting point. Heteronormativity is the concept that links all homophobic violence – regardless of other factors. Not targeting society’s heteronormativity would result in a total devastation of LGBTQ\*s aspirations. The unification of the LGBTQ\* community is realistic but always has to be adapted to the current social, political, economic and technological conditions. Social media broadens the space of interaction, the possible outreach and the diversity in which objectives can be illuminated. Every single individual is able to share his or her or someone else’s story. The coverage can be enormous if someone knows how to use social media efficiently. Gay rights organizations have developed efficient strategies targeting some manifestations of unequal structures. Surprisingly, LGBTQ\* organizations are hesitant to canalize more resources into the medial discourse of direct violence.

## ***2.2 “I Take Bullets”: Direct Violence and Social Media Activism***

After Matthew Shepard’s murder hardly any acts of direct violence against LGB people have received much media attention for precisely a decade. Shepard actually remains the most significant symbol of direct violence against the LGBTQ\* community to the present day.

However, another murder which attracted much public attention in 2008 was the shooting of the fifteen year old Lawrence “Larry” King at E.O. Green Junior High School in Oxnard, California. Larry King had come

out as gay at the age of ten and never hid his sexual orientation afterwards. He was subject to bullying since the day he came out and his gender non-conformity probably enhanced the intensity of the bullying he experienced. Teachers' and classmates' reports indicate that King started to wear women's clothing, high heels and makeup shortly before he was murdered and thereby did not comply with the general public expectations of gender norms. It appears as if Larry King and his murderer and classmate Brandon McInerney were facing an ongoing conflict and that McInerney had intense feelings of repugnance towards King. While McInerney bullied King on a regular basis, King seems to have started to provoke him with comments like "Love you, baby" and valentine's proposals at some point. On February 11, 2008 Brandon McInerney pulled out a gun from his backpack and shot King twice in the back of his head. Afterwards, McInerney dropped the gun in the computer lab where the two had a class and left the building. Larry King was declared brain-dead on February 13, 2008 and was taken off life support shortly after that. Heteronormativity and gender norms have cost Larry King his life and have led to the imprisonment of Brandon McInerney who was seventeen at the time of his conviction.

The trial showed that convicting someone on the additional basis of the hate crime legislation is not easily done – even though hate crime legislations were in effect in California. The first trial was a mistrial due to the failure of the jury to find a consensus if a manslaughter conviction or a first- or second-degree murder conviction should be reached. At the beginning of the second trial the hate crime charges were dropped to avoid another failure of the trial. Eventually, Brandon McInerney pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and his attorney bargained a sentence of 21 years imprisonment. The case has received coverage by several U.S. TV stations and newspapers. However, in the sphere of social media there was almost no coverage at all. The rise of social media was still at its inception and the LGBTQ\* community had not been able to utilize the potential of social media platforms yet. It still took two more years until Lady Gaga promoted the repeal of *DADT* via social media and illuminated the vast power that YouTube, Twitter and Facebook contain. Nevertheless, Larry King's murder did receive public attention due to Ellen DeGeneres' decision to

make a statement against violence only two weeks after the killing.<sup>228</sup> The comedian, who already created a lot of visibility by coming out as gay in 1997, criticized the homophobic, heteronormative and aggressive social climate in a very emotional speech:

And, somewhere along the line the killer, Brandon, got the message that it's so threatening, so awful, and so horrific that Larry would want to be his Valentine that killing Larry seemed to be the right thing to do. And when the message out there is so horrible that to be gay, you can get killed for it, we need to change the message. Larry was not a second-class citizen. I am not a second-class citizen. It is ok if you're gay.<sup>229</sup>

Ellen DeGeneres' approach has always been to deconstruct heteronormativity and demand equality instead. Even though her show is usually characterized by joyful and funny moments she regularly speaks out against violent acts with the intention to initiate change. Here she addresses the sensitive issue of cultural violence – even though she does not use the actual expression:

I would like you to start paying attention to how often being gay is a punchline of a monologue or how often gay jokes are in a movie. And that kind of message, laughing at someone 'cause they are gay, is just the beginning. It starts with laughing at someone; then it's verbal abuse, then it's physical abuse, and then it's this kid Brandon killing a kid like Larry. We must change our country.<sup>230</sup>

Cultural violence and direct violence are closely interrelated. As long as it is acceptable to joke about homosexuals, as long as they are perceived as second-class citizens, citizens without equal rights, direct violence will be

---

<sup>228</sup> “Ellen DeGeneres on 15-year-old boy, Larry King, killed for being Gay,” YouTube video, 02:38. Posted by Larry Goben. May 8, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PeM9w3L4H6I>.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

considered an acceptable reaction. Therefore, Ellen appeals to the consciousness of her audience to consider wisely for whom they will vote in November 2008 when the U.S. presidential election was held. Ultimately, Ellen's statement was basically the only contribution to a social media representation of Larry King's murder. In the months of March and May 2008, two different YouTube users uploaded the video and thereby made it accessible for viewers worldwide (clicks: 1,380,129; date: June 3, 2017). Nevertheless, a real dialogue and debate was missing and progress did not evolve. Still, Ellen's decision to speak out shifted the focus on direct violence against homosexuals and created some visibility for a short period of time.

Over the next four years the representation of direct violence against gays and lesbians in social media was vanishingly low. The occasion that actually stimulated the highest degree of social media activity after the Larry King murder was the attack on a lesbian couple in Portland, Texas in June 2012. Mollie Judith Olgin and Mary Kristene Chapa were robbed and sexually assaulted in Violet Andrews Park. Afterwards, the assailant shot both execution-style which left Mollie Judith Olgin dead and her girlfriend Mary Kristene Chapa severely injured. Chapa survived and has put great effort in regaining her physical and mental health since the assault. She is still recovering even though her physical shape is steadily improving. In 2014, David Strickland was arrested for the alleged assault on the lesbian couple and the murder of Mollie Olgin and the attempted murder of Kristene Chapa. The trial was delayed until September 2016 when he was eventually sentenced to life in prison without parole. Right after the attack was brought to public attention in 2012, Twitter users started to send tweets based on this act of violence. The tweets were dominated by condolences and appeals for fundraisings to support the recovery of the surviving Mary Kristine Chapa financially. In addition to the diverse tweets the *Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation* (GLAAD) started raising awareness and spreading the story of the violence the two young women had to face. In 2015, Chapa shared her story at the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual GLAAD Media Awards in



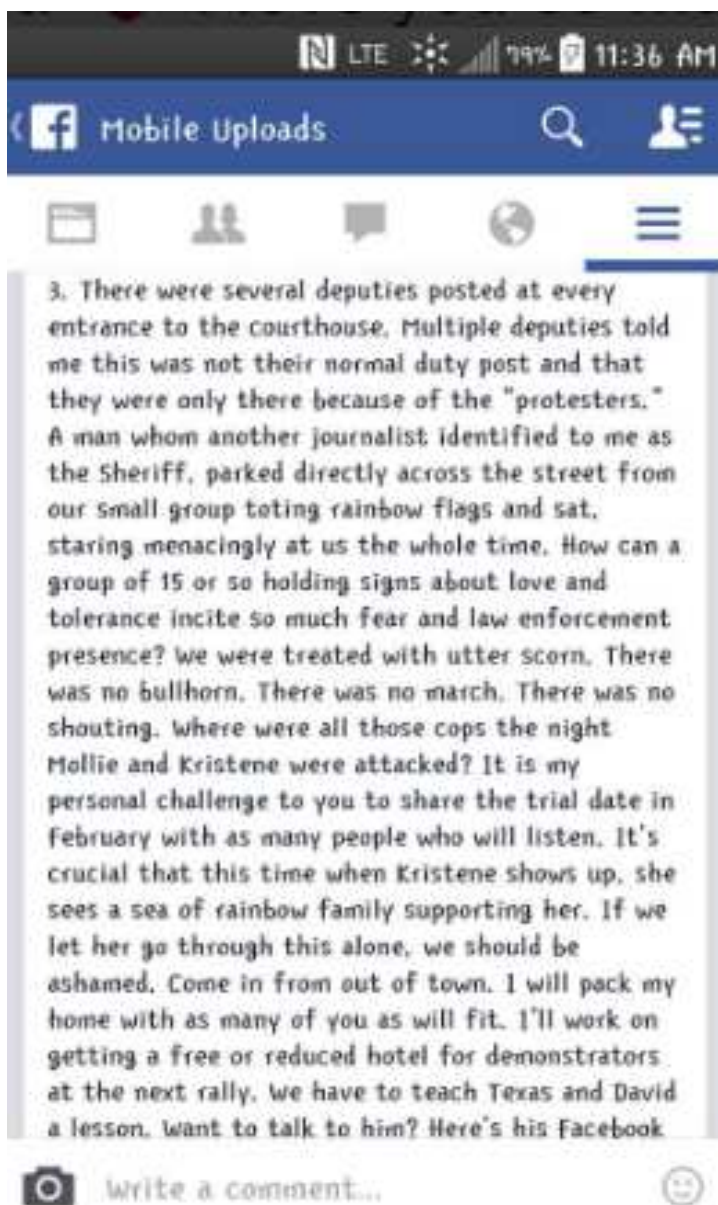
New York.<sup>231</sup> The young woman, who was 18 years of age at the day of the attack, still showed signs of her severe head injury. Her left hand seemed to be paralyzed and her voice indicated that she still has trouble talking. Both is not surprising since her left side had gotten paralyzed and Chapa had to re-learn walking as well as speaking. Nevertheless, Chapa contributed to *GLAAD's Southern Story Tour* by telling her mother's experiences right after Kristene Chapa and her girlfriend were brutally attacked. Her mother was restlessly waiting for her to come home all night, not knowing that her daughter had been sexually assaulted and shot in the head, not knowing that Kristene was with her girlfriend that evening since her daughter had not come out to her yet. Finally, the next day at 4 p.m. a police officer was at her door, behaved quite uncomfortably and had a strange look on his face. He eventually started by saying: "Your daughter was with a girl – she is gay". Even though Kristene Chapa was struggling to survive in this particular moment due to being victim of a cruel act of violence, the police officer decided to start by telling her mother that Kristene was gay which led to Chapa's mother's response: "I don't care that she's gay. I just want to know that she's ok." The fact that the police officer started the conversation by informing Grace Chapa about something negligible must be seen as a manifestation of heteronormativity and homophobia rooted deeply in U.S. society. What else would trigger someone to start a conversation like this the way the police officer did? There is no logical explanation.

The alleged perpetrator was not charged with a hate crime and it remains uncertain what prompted him to choose the two young women as victims. During the trial, Strickland denied that he had been the perpetrator and therefore neither Chapa nor the public received any information as to whether the girls' homosexuality was a decisive factor. Nevertheless, the possibility that the women's homosexuality might have been a cause for the attack stirred the debate and demonstrated that homosexuality has to be considered a potential catalyst of direct violence. The Twitter user Jozette Morales (@143zettey) tried to stir some activism after Strickland was

---

<sup>231</sup> "Kristene Chapa shares her story at the #glaadawards," YouTube video, 07:00. Posted by GLAAD, May 11, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0YZoJWraqc>.

presented to the court on November 15, 2014<sup>232</sup>. She criticized the police and the court and accused them of bias but also mentioned the little support Chapa had received from the community:



Jozette Morales, who is a friend of the surviving Kristene Chapa, emphasizes the importance of the community's support to Chapa. She tries to stimulate a movement and to appeal to the collective identity of the community when she uses the expression "rainbow family". Nevertheless,

<sup>232</sup> Jozette Morales, Twitter post, November 15, 2014, 09:39 a.m. <https://twitter.com/143zettey/status/533675679657623552>.

this remained the only explicit attempt to unite the community in active support for Kristene Chapa on Twitter. Still, due to the re-tweeting of articles and condolences, the attack received the highest social media coverage of an attack against gays or lesbians since the murder of Larry King. Kristene Chapa's decision to speak out about the difficulties of being a lesbian in the Southern part of the United States contributed to raising awareness and maybe also to accelerating acceptance. However, neither Larry King nor Kristene Chapa's and Marry Olgin's agony have launched a movement against direct violence LGBs have to face on a regular basis.

Another atrocity that was only superficially dealt with was the brutal beating of Aaron Keahey, a gay man from Texas in 2013. Keahey had been chatting with a man on an online dating site and eventually arranged a personal meeting. In September 2013, he went to the apartment of his date and was immediately ambushed by the 18-year old. He was severely beaten and suffered skull and facial fractures and brain injury. The aggressor Brice Johnson assumed that he killed Keahey and therefore put him in the trunk of his car, drove to a friend's place where Keahey was able to rouse attention by screaming and alerting neighbors. Johnson was eventually pressured by his friend and neighbors to transport the injured man to the hospital and was arrested while Keahey went into surgery. In November 2015, Johnson was sentenced to 15 years in prison after he had pled guilty in exchange for the drop of hate crime charges. Nevertheless, the act of violence was undeniably a hate crime motivated by homophobia. Still, media coverage was low. During the first four months after the attack only two dozen tweets referring to the incident were registered on Twitter. All of them simply re-tweeted the coverage of some local news stations. A man lured someone else into meeting him with the intention to beat him up and even risk killing him – simply for the fact that the victim was gay. Where was the outrage among the LGBTQ\* communities? Neither the communities nor the rest of the society responded to the attack compassionately. Why is it that the fate of individuals is ignored while, at the same time, a very active movement against particular outgrowths of structural violence was already developed and promoted by the community? In 2013, the *Human Rights Campaign* and *Freedom to Marry* already used Twitter, Facebook and YouTube very

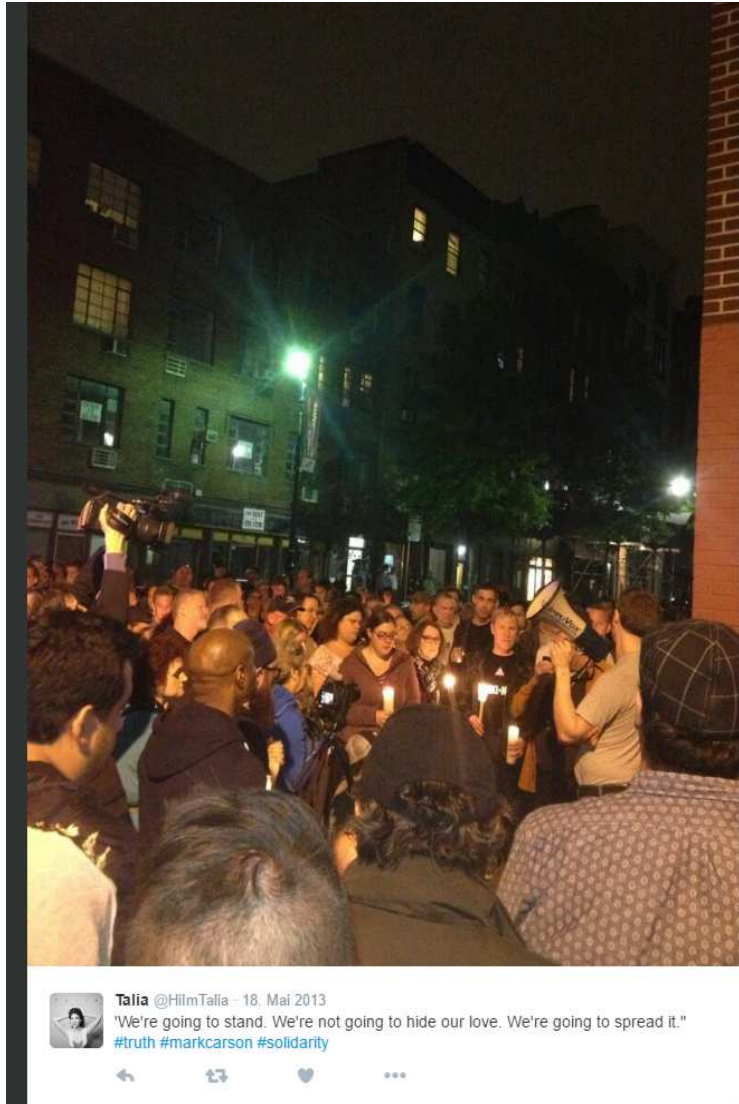
efficiently in their struggle for nationwide marriage equality. Direct violence, however, was underrepresented and neglected.

One of the few moments in which direct violence received more attention and also stimulated a response of a major group of the LGBTQ\* community was the occurrence of multiple atrocities in New York City within several months only. The outrage against a series of direct violence against gays was initiated by the killing of the black gay man Mark Carson on May 18, 2013. That particular night, Mark Carson and a friend were approached by a Latino man in New York's Greenwich Village, the gay town of the city. The Stonewall Inn, where the Gay Rights Movement got started, was only a few streets away. The offender Elliot Morales started to shout anti-gay slurs at the two men, clearly intending to provoke a reaction. In a dark corner of the street he pulled out a gun and shot Mark Carson in the face while Carson's friend was still on the phone alerting the police and asking for help. Mark Carson died at the crime scene and the perpetrator was arrested. The crime was considered a hate crime as soon as investigations were started and Elliot Morales was charged on this basis in addition to a second-degree murder charge. In June 2016, Morales was sentenced to 40 years to life in prison. During the trial he decided to defend himself and argued that the murder was not motivated by him being homophobic, as he once dated a transsexual woman and would consider himself "trisexual, bisexual – multiple."<sup>233</sup> In addition to the fact that Morales is obviously not familiar with constructs of sexual orientation and gender identity and the appropriate terminology, his homophobic motive was confirmed by his behavior prior to the crime and had been witnessed by several people in the Village. The reactions in social media right after the crime were, for the first time, remarkable. Compared to the atrocities mentioned before, Twitter results with the hashtag #MarkCarson skyrocketed. The news about the crime spread quickly via social media and LGBTQ\* activists started to organize vigils. Even though many tweets simply re-tweeted the coverage of news stations, countless additional users

---

<sup>233</sup> Joe Williams, "Man found guilty of homophobic murder sentenced to 40 years in prison," *PinkNews*, June 14, 2016, accessed September 3, 2016, <http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2016/06/14/man-found-guilty-of-homophobic-murder-sentenced-to-40-years-in-prison/>.

started to tweet political statements. The user Talia noted on May 18, 2013: “We’re going to stand. We’re not going to hide our love. We’re going to spread it.” The tweet was followed by the hashtags #truth #markcarson #solidarity.<sup>234</sup>



This was one side of the responses uttered by the community and its supporters: Resilience and pride, total commitment and oaths to cohesion and solidarity. It was this response that stimulated the vigils and marches that were organized after the murder of Mark Carson. The other side that contributed to that spirit of protesting was despair and frustration. LGBTQ\* people in the United States face direct violence almost each day. There is a constant threat of becoming targeted. Nevertheless, the murder of Mark

<sup>234</sup> Talia Hilm, Twitter post, May 18, 2013, 09:37 p.m., <https://twitter.com/HiImTalia/status/335977458119634945>.

Carson was the first incident since Matthew Shepard that stimulated such intense reactions. One of the major reasons for this development is reflected in Shea Richards' Twitter post from May 21, 2013. The Twitter user posted a photo of the crime scene and voiced "If you can't be gay in the goddamn village, where can you? #MarkCarson".<sup>235</sup>



The question is legitimate. *The Village* has always fulfilled the role of a “safe space” and a place where the LGBTQ\* community could exist without being constantly judged by the heteronormative society. The murder of MarkCarson was a violent intrusion into this particular safe space and inflamed fear. The LGBTQ\* community started to indicate publicly that they were attacked – it was the first time after the killing of Matthew Shepard that the murder of a gay man was brought to the attention of the majority of society. The call for reforms became louder – education and raising awareness was shifted into focus. Vigils and marches were held and social media were used as a tool of distribution. The community moved closer together and became pro-active.

<sup>235</sup> Shea Richards, Twitter post, May 21, 2013, 12:39 a.m., <https://twitter.com/shearichards/status/336929372218990592>.

Patrick J. Hamilton was one among many people who tweeted the photograph of a sign stating “Marriage means nothing if we are gunned down” which was used during a rally in memory of Mark Carson in New York.<sup>236</sup> The reasoning to express a statement like this is understandable. The possibility to marry will only bear deeper meaning if you are able to profit from it; getting killed will automatically thwart someone from this experience. However, the right to marry – which was already in place in New York in 2013 – represents an important step towards equality. It leads to a deconstruction of heteronormativity and weakens the foundation of cultural violence which always justifies structural as well as direct violence. Structural and direct violence have to be fought simultaneously with the identical amount of vigor and commitment. The reality has always been that the community puts much more effort in fighting unequal structures than facing the threats of direct violence.

Only two weeks prior to the killing of Mark Carson, two gay men, Nick Porto and his partner Kevin Atkins, were attacked during daylight on the streets of New York City. Both suffered facial injuries as well as injuries covering the whole body. The vehemence and the impudence of the attack were tremendous. The couple tried to alert the public, raise awareness and show that direct violence against gays and lesbians remains to be an immense challenge that will not disappear if it is not faced. However, the degree of response was alarming as is also exposed by the post of a blogger spread via Twitter:

Talking with them I learned that they attempted to bring their story to any national media outlet, to get the conversation going about the need to protect our community, but no one seemed to be interested. Not even now, where a man has been murdered in cold blood on the streets of NYC just for being gay and walking on the street.<sup>237</sup>

---

<sup>236</sup> Patrick J. Hamilton, Twitter post, May 20, 2013, 03:57 p.m.  
[https://twitter.com/ask\\_patrick/status/336616658288386048](https://twitter.com/ask_patrick/status/336616658288386048).

<sup>237</sup> Sion Fullana, “We Are All Mark Carson,” *BlackSpace*, accessed December 13, 2016,  
<http://www.backspac.es/r/AJGQdqzRX/we-are-all-mark-carson>.

Ultimately, the *New York Times* decided to share their story via its official YouTube channel by posting a video. Not the community but a news outlet chose to bring the story to national attention. The video recorded more than 247,508 views (date: June 3, 2017).<sup>238</sup> The clip opens with the statement “An Attack on Equality” and illuminates the experiences the couple had faced: For them it started with hearing anti-gay rhetoric, being shoved to the ground and beaten in the face while both were still crouching on the ground. They were passed by many pedestrians but no one intervened or called the police. Nick Porto decided to share their story on Facebook. Even though he received many compassionate responses, he was shocked by several reactions which implicated that he should “man up” and “grow balls”.<sup>239</sup> Disturbingly, these comments came from gay men – a reality that suggests that resignation has already spread within the community and that it comes in different shades. This was also affirmed by several further messages of gay men responding to Nick Porto’s Facebook post<sup>240</sup> of the gay bashing of another man in New York City, Dan Contarino:

---

<sup>238</sup> “An Attack on Equality: Gay Couple Tells of Their Assault | Op-Docs | The New York Times,” YouTube video, 05:45. Posted by The New York Times, August 7, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qmWjQdhtStU>.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

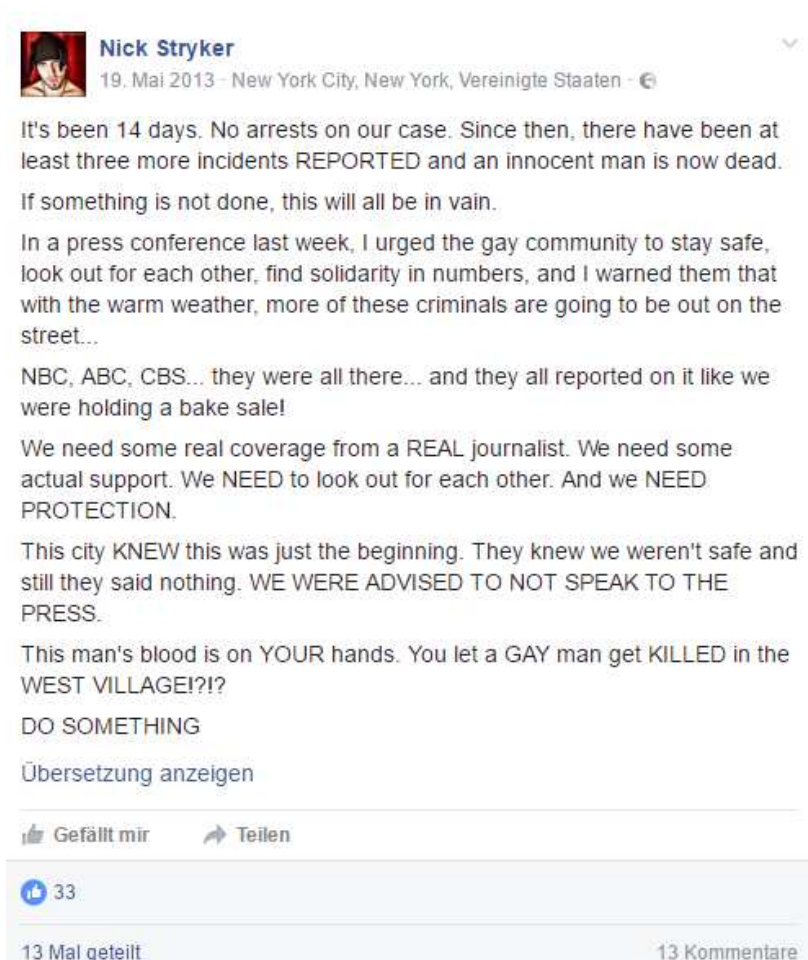
<sup>240</sup> Nick Stryker, Facebook post, May 21, 2013, 07:08 p.m., <https://www.facebook.com/nick.j.stryker/posts/869981124249>.





These posts expose a radicalization of parts of the community since they do not perceive any progress in fighting direct violence. Jimmy Tunstall's comment "I never advocate violence. Never. Well I used to never ... but I am just so sick and tired of this. And No one seems to take it seriously" reveals the desperation of many LGBTQ\* people. This development is threatening the cohesion of the movement and also its peaceful nature which can only be hurtful to its course. It is essential to counteract this trend. Resignation should not be fostered by the movement's hesitance to embrace those affected by direct violence. In the NY Times video, Nick Porto expresses his feelings after having experienced the attack: "[It] is kind of incredible having to worry of somebody to beat us up – for holding hands." Passing for straight men and hiding their own identity in the public has become a daily task since the offence. In contrast to the gays who have lost hope that the situation will eventually improve, the attack made Porto and his partner realize that remaining silent will not alter the conditions and that fighting violence and inequality in all its manifestations is inevitable: "We have marriage now, yay, yay, fight is over? No! Fight has never been over. It has never been about that. We still are not being treated equal. That's all

it's coming down to: The fight is certainly not over.”<sup>241</sup> As a consequence, Porto posted several comments on Facebook relating to his own experiences as well as to other felonies which took place in New York over the following weeks. His desperation and craving for solidarity and support became more and more observable. On May 19, 2013, a day after the shooting of Mark Carson, Porto posted<sup>242</sup>:



Nick Porto tried to raise awareness, to create some kind of solidarity within the community and to urge everybody to start fighting – the successes were marginal. For him, Mark Carson’s murder was predictable and a consequence of the failure of the community. Only one of Porto’s

<sup>241</sup> “An Attack on Equality: Gay Couple Tells of Their Assault | Op-Docs | The New York Times,” YouTube video, 05:45. Posted by The New York Times, August 7, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qmWjQdhtStU>.

<sup>242</sup> Nick Stryker, Facebook post, May 19, 2013, 08:10 p.m., <https://www.facebook.com/nick.j.stryker/posts/869209360869>.

perpetrators – Martin Martinez – was caught and sentenced to two years on probation. On the Internet, the news about the sentence was difficult to find. However, Nick Porto shared the court decision as well as his thoughts and feelings he had since the attack. On August 17, 2016 he delineated his well-being, his post-traumatic stress disorder and how he has relived the moment of the attack every single day since May 2013.<sup>243</sup> In the subsequent discussion, during which several other gay men shared their stories of direct violence, Porto sheds light on his psychological state in more detail:

And I've not been myself since. I am constantly triggered, in a perpetual state of fight or flight. I would lash out at work even. When I worked for Runway I was almost fired for talking back to some bitch with a superiority complex. I was suicidal, and my direct superiors had a laugh about it with my ex saying I should kill myself. Sometimes I wish I had. I've lost myself in this process. I've spent years trying to be me, and I don't think I know who I am anymore.<sup>244</sup>

The impact of direct violence is extreme and there are many victims willing to talk about their experiences, willing to support a strategic movement against direct violence which gays and lesbians have to face regularly. They refuse to be victimized and instead see themselves as “survivors” who want to share their story and initiate change. The Facebook user Daniel J Cartier decided to share his experience of direct violence as a response to Nick Stryker's post:

When I was 19 years old, six “men” beat me, and a guy I was on a first date with, to the point of blacking out. I had a rock smashed over my head and I was dragged across the sidewalk while they took turns kicking me. They made me watch while they strangled my friend until he passed out. I thought they'd killed him. I thought I was next. Staring death in the face... is just a concept until you're actually

---

<sup>243</sup> Nick Stryker, Facebook post, August 17, 2016, 04:01 p.m., <https://www.facebook.com/nick.j.stryker/posts/10100498398542679>.

<sup>244</sup> Nick Stryker, Facebook post, August 19, 2016, 15:58 p.m., <https://www.facebook.com/nick.j.stryker/posts/10100498398542679>.

staring it down for real. No fear I've felt since that night 27 years ago can match the fear I felt at that moment. It exists in a world all it's own. [sic]

I don't remember how I got away. One second I was being beaten, the next second I was running down a crowded street with shocked onlookers gawking at me. My clothes were all torn, and I was screaming. I ran up to some kids standing outside a movie theater and grabbed one of the girls [sic] arms. "Where's the police???" I screamed. I took my hand off her arm and saw I'd left a bloody handprint on her shirt. I had no idea where my friend was - but wherever he was - I thought he was dead. It wasn't until hours later when he found me at the hospital that we realized we'd survived. We couldn't speak to one another. It was like there was this massive wall of shame that had been erected between us. Years later I bumped into him in NYC and we exchanged awkward small talk. We didn't mention the incident.<sup>245</sup>

An act of violence against gays or lesbians is always an attempt to impose the heterosexual matrix on those targeted. The exercise of violence due to one's sexuality often triggers an irrational feeling of shame; a feeling one has to fight against for years. The experience of a collectivity and the adaption of a collective identity might help to overcome this phase. Daniel J Cartier emphasizes that it was on the gay pride parade in Seattle – probably in 2004 – when he took the microphone and shared his story for the first time:

Ladies and Gentlemen... Years ago, six men tried to beat the gayness out of me. Well, I want them all to know - wherever they are - that they failed miserably. I'm still here. I'm still queer... and and [sic] I'm yelling it on a stage into a microphone! I'm not afraid to say loudly to all you fine people - and the entire park for that matter - that what

---

<sup>245</sup> Daniel J Cartier, Facebook post, August 18, 2016, 12:43 p.m., <https://www.facebook.com/nick.j.stryker/posts/10100498398542679>.

doesn't kill us makes us fabulous... and honey... I am FUCKING EXTRA FABULOUS!<sup>246</sup>

Stories like these and the discourse surrounding similar experiences stir the feeling of a shared fate, a collective identity. It does not really matter if violence was experienced the week before or years ago. The binding string is the experience of harm due to the same catalyst – homophobia and the enforced heteronormative concept. This shared fate contains the potential to resonate in activism. People like Nick Porto or Daniel J Cartier try to come to terms with their experiences by engaging in political actions. However, too often, they share Porto's experience: Porto was left on his own – neither the society nor – which is even more dramatic – major parts of the community provided any guidance or support. This amplifies the impact direct violence has on its victims; it makes them more prone to negative mental consequences. Nick Porto's intention was to try to make a difference and to create a broader movement against direct violence – but all individuals who have tried to initiate a broader movement are basically left all on their own. Shocking killings like the one of Larry King, Mollie Olgin or Mark Carson initiate a small momentum but they could not ignite an efficient and long lasting movement. Seven hate crimes in New York City within the month of May 2013 stirred the debate – but only for a short period of time. Despite the potential social media entails to organize movements and reach out to people, the LGBTQ\* movement remains reluctant.

Another severe incident of direct violence that took place in New York City over the next months was the beating of Dan Contarino which Nick Porto mentioned in one of his Facebook posts. The 45-year-old was brutally attacked by an acquaintance after the man learned that Contarino was gay. This hate crime took place two days after the murder of Mark

---

<sup>246</sup> Daniel J Cartier, Facebook post, August 18, 2016, 12:43 p.m., <https://www.facebook.com/nick.j.stryker/posts/10100498398542679>.

Carson. Contarino posted a photograph of his smashed face on Facebook and commented<sup>247</sup>:



The response on Facebook was immense. Many users were shocked and shared the story on their Facebook page. However, a consensus that an act of defiance is necessary was missing and so was a reaction by a broad movement to confront direct violence against lesbians and gays. This matches Dan Contarino's Facebook post: "U JUST WANNA CRY N MOVE ON..." Contarino shared his story because he felt the urge to do it in this particular moment but ultimately he just wanted to forget what happened. He obviously does not see a reasonable chance of success in defeating direct violence against LGB people. Just like the community had not reacted with a widespread movement after the beatings of Nick Porto or Dan Contarino the same scenario became visible in the case of Josh Williams, Tony Maenza and Ben Collins.

On June 2, 2013 a gay man was arrested by police officers without sufficient elements of an offense. The police officer assumed that Josh Williams, who was on his way home at 4 a.m. after spending the night out, was urinating at the side of the stationhouse. Williams as well as his

<sup>247</sup> Dan Contarino, Facebook post, May 21, 2013, 01:04 a.m.  
<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10151479192758445&set=a.10150219917393445.325295.710738444&type=3&theater>.

roommates who accompanied him deny that the young man was actually urinating. Still, the officer called five additional policemen and arrested Williams in a very brutal way which led to a laceration in his face, bruised ribs, a black eye, and scrapes on his torso. In the process of the arrest one of the officers called the three men “faggots” which led to an exchange of abusive language on both sides. Tony Maenza, one of the roommates, videotaped the incident and the arrest with his cell phone camera.<sup>248</sup> After he indicated that he had videotaped the situation several police officers, who initially told them to go home, changed their minds, followed them and arrested Maenza and Ben Collins without sharing the legal basis for the arrest. They were held in custody for more than 24 hours before they were allowed to go home. The video was still on the cell phone since the officers were not able to get past the security password. Eventually, the *New York City Anti-Violence Project* uploaded the video clip on YouTube seven days after the incident. In the meantime more than 61,111 views have been recorded (date: June 3, 2017). However, apart from this step hardly any social media activity was noticed. Twitter, for example, does not list any Tweets with the hashtags #JoshWilliams #policeviolence. Only a few local newspapers reported about the confrontation. The community remained almost completely silent.

Another video clip that went viral on YouTube in 2013 was an incident in a New Yorker subway train at the day of the gay pride parade in New York City. A group of young LGBTQ\*s was faced with homophobic insults expressed by two men on the train. In addition, one of them threatened to rape the young lesbian women. Hearing the insults and threats, a female bystander started to videotape the incident with her phone. One of the perpetrators attacked the woman who was videotaping after grasping her intention and tried to destroy the phone. He injured the woman slightly while doing so. The gay bashing continued, became more intense and ultimately also physical when one of the offenders put his hand around the neck of a young queer woman. After a few more minutes of a heated

---

<sup>248</sup> “Anti-LGBTQ police violence in Bed-Stuy Brooklyn, Sunday June 3, 2013,” YouTube video, 03:08. Posted by New York City Anti-Violence Project, June 10, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ArQTF0ZJZY>.

confrontation which included one of the offenders' threats to kill a lesbian woman at the scene, the perpetrators left the subway and fled out of the station. The video circulated on YouTube and was watched more than 1,137,418 times (date: June 3, 2017).<sup>249</sup> It is not possible to determine which feelings stirred the viewers' decision to watch the video: widespread concern or craving for sensation. It might have been a combination of both. What can be said for sure is that, except from the uploaded video and local news reports, no outcry was discernable and the perpetrators were never caught – at least no reports on an arrest were published in online media. It appears as if the community has drifted towards a state of isolation; an emotional isolation from the heteronormative society as well as from one another; an isolation that is serving the intention to protect oneself from the mental implications that might result from the confrontation with acts of direct violence. The initiator to upload the video was the initial bystander who started to videotape the situation – not the affected gays and lesbians. Both cases discussed show that incidents like these have resulted in exhaustion and stimulated a skepticism that the situation can be changed; they are endured by the community because they have become part of LGBTQ\*s' daily life.

The following year, 2014, has seen many incidents of direct violence against lesbians and gays. Similar to the incidents of the previous years, social media representation remained in most of the cases low. The beating of J.P. Masterson in a subway in New York City was hardly discussed – only a few LGBTQ\* online newspapers published a minor amount of articles. Social media activity regarding direct violence against gays and lesbians was hardly detectable over the next few months. The felony that eventually stirred the public outrage and social media activity was the beating of two gay men in Philadelphia, PA. Philadelphia is known among the community as very LGBTQ\* friendly and liberal. The brutal beating that occurred on September 11, 2014 raised much criticism. Zachary Hesse and his boyfriend, Andrew Haught, were verbally harassed by a group of

---

<sup>249</sup> "LGBT Hate Crime New York Subway," YouTube video, 05:30. Posted by StoppHating, July 2, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jhtwgMSYVf8>.



young people asking Hesse repeatedly if he was with his boyfriend. Ultimately, the group started yelling “you dirty faggot, you dirty faggot”<sup>250</sup>. Immediately, after the gay men affirmed they were a couple the group physically attacked both men. The physical injuries included multiple fractures of the face, a broken jaw which required the victim’s mouth to be wired shut for eight weeks, and several other bleeding wounds. The perpetrators were caught on a surveillance camera and the shots were released to the public a few days later. The Philly hate crime was the first atrocity against LGBTQ\*s that was solved with the help of social media. After the photographs of the offenders were released, a Twitter user called Greg Bennett posted a picture of a group having dinner at a restaurant which he had received from a friend at third-hand. Some of the young men and women were obviously the same as in the photographs which the police had released. Another Twitter user, FanSince09, therefore decided to re-tweet it, hoping that someone of his several thousand followers would be able to identify one of the people or at least the place where they had spent the night on this particular day. Shortly after posting the tweet he received the information that the restaurant was *La Viola*, an Italian place in Center City. FanSince09, who wants to remain anonymous, was subsequently able to identify three of the perpetrators via the restaurant’s Facebook page. The offenders had “checked-in” at the restaurant’s page, meaning that they had shared on *La Viola*’s Facebook page that they visited that place at that night in question.<sup>251</sup> Social media became the tool to find the alleged suspects. The story spread quickly and the medial attention rocketed. The positive effect was definitely that people were confronted with the reality of hate crimes against gays and lesbians and also that the focus shifted to the absence of hate crime laws regarding sexual orientation and gender identity in Philadelphia’s city legislation. In the aftermath of the gay bashing, Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown and Councilman Jim Kenney

---

<sup>250</sup> David Chang, “Gay Couple Speaks Out After Brutal Assault in Center City,” *NBC Philadelphia*, September 19, 2014, accessed September 6, 2016, <http://www.nbcphiladelphia.com/news/local/Gay-Couple-Speaks-Out-After-Brutal-Assault-in-Center-City-275226821.html>.

<sup>251</sup> Enid Shaw, “Philly Hate Crime Suspects Tracked Down by Anonymous Twitter Hero,” *Gawker*, September 16, 2014, accessed September 9, 2016, <http://gawker.com/philly-hate-crime-suspects-tracked-down-by-anonymous-tw-1635661609>.

introduced a new hate crime bill including sexual orientation, gender identity and disabilities. On October 30, 2014, more than two months after the respective assault in which the District Attorney was unable to prosecute it as a hate crime due the lack of the necessary legislation, the City Council unanimously passed the bill. Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown declared:

We are not brought into this world with hate in our hearts; that is something learned along the way. This is a teaching moment not only for the bullies out there, but for the parents of bullies. We all have a responsibility to protect one another. My heart hurts for all people who are targeted because of who they are. No one has a right to diminish someone else's shine, and our message today is, if you think it is appropriate to hurt someone with hate in your heart, there will be a price to pay.<sup>252</sup>

The beating of the two gays had a positive side-effect. It created awareness and it stirred people to reflect on the current situation LGBTQ\*s are facing. Furthermore, it led to the City Council's decision to charge people also for the hate penetrating their thoughts and behavior, that provokes violence and that destroys any empathy. This particular hate crime and the social media activity in the aftermaths initiated a change. This is exactly what the representation of direct violence in social media should invoke. The suspects were eventually charged. Philip Williams and Kevin Harrigan both pleaded guilty to conspiracy and – in the case of Philip Williams – aggravated assault, and in Kevin Harrigan's case simple assault. Both received sentences on probation and were banned from downtown Philadelphia during their probation time. Kathryn Knott, who had also been charged, was found guilty of simple assault, conspiracy and reckless

---

<sup>252</sup> Blondell Reynolds Brown, "Hate Crime Bill Passes City Council," *City Council Philadelphia*, October 30, 2014, accessed September 9, 2016, <http://phlcouncil.com/hate-crime-bill-passes-city-council/>.

endangerment.<sup>253</sup> Knott had a prominent role in the case that was exploited by the media. As she was the daughter of a police chief, she became the face of the hate crime attack. This was additionally stirred by the fact that she had tweeted anti-gay messages even before the incident occurred.<sup>254</sup> Ultimately, Knott was sentenced to five to ten months in prison from which she was released on July 12, 2016 after serving a bit more than five months of her sentence. The outstanding fact of the Philly hate crime was that social media were the decisive tool to find and prosecute the offenders and that it has simultaneously created awareness.<sup>255</sup> Furthermore, the hate crime has created change. The city of Philadelphia passed its own hate crime legislation which opens up the opportunity to charge someone with a hate crime in district courts. In contrast, New York City, which had been facing so many hate crimes against gays and lesbians in 2013, had already had hate crime legislations since the *Hate Crimes Act of 2000*. A reaction to the wave of violence would have had to involve new strategies to find perpetrators or secure districts which showed a high number of violent attacks. However, none of this has happened.

Another striking case became the murder of Dionte Greene, a 22-year old black gay man from Kansas City, Missouri. Green was shot dead in October 2014 and it became one of the atrocities against lesbians and gays that made the social media news. Greene intended to meet a “*trade*” on October 30, 2014. The expression “*trade*” is almost exclusively used in the black LGBTQ\* community and “describes a man who doesn’t ‘appear gay’ but who engages in sex with men unbeknownst to his family and most of his

---

<sup>253</sup> Associated Press, “Philly hate crime update: Kathryn Knott convicted of simple assault and reckless endangerment,” *LGBTQ Nation*, December 18, 2015, accessed September 9, 2016, <http://www.lgbtqnation.com/2015/12/philly-hate-crime-update-kathryn-knott-convicted-of-simple-assault-and-reckless-endangerment/>.

<sup>254</sup> LGBTQ Nation, “Philly hate crime: Kathryn Knott sentenced to 5-10 months in prison,” *LGBTQ Nation*, February 8, 2016, accessed September 9, 2016, <http://www.lgbtqnation.com/2016/02/philly-hate-crime-kathryn-knott-sentenced-to-5-10-months-in-prison/>.

<sup>255</sup> There have been voices criticizing the use of the social media for the search of delinquents because it is so easily possible to prejudge alleged suspects in a public sphere which could ruin an innocent’s reputation and life. This is definitely something one has to be careful with and which has to be considered by the police before releasing any information to the public.

friends.”<sup>256</sup> After being killed in his car while waiting for the man Greene wanted to meet, it appeared as if the young black gay man was shot by his “trade” for being gay. This was the story that made the news – even though only limited. However, Greene’s murder is noteworthy for several reasons: Dionte Greene was an African-American man who was murdered at a moment in U.S. history when the whole world’s focused on violence against African-Americans. The killing took place in the same state that became site of massive protests against violence once the young black man, Michael Brown, was killed by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. However, the outrage after the murder of Dionte Greene was not comparable to the reactions after the shooting of Michael Brown. There might be two explanations for this fact: Firstly, it was quickly assumed that the perpetrator was black himself as the “trade” was supposed to be a black man and all evidence suggested that Greene’s date was the murderer. It stands to reason that the media would have been more interested and therefore the public would have been much more agitated if the killer had supposedly been white or if police violence had been involved. Secondly, the victim was a gay black man in a Midwestern state dominated by rural areas and cities that do not exceed the population of 500,000. Among the African-American community homosexuality is still a contested topic. Polls have shown that African-Americans are less likely to support same-sex marriage.<sup>257</sup> Additionally, the proportion of black Americans who believe that people are born gay or lesbian is half the number (26 percent vs. 52 percent) of those defined as white.<sup>258</sup> More than half (58 percent) of those African-Americans questioned stated that they would be upset if they had a gay child.<sup>259</sup> Consequently, the fundament for creating a popular outrage was not promising at all. Social media activity was low and the hate crime

---

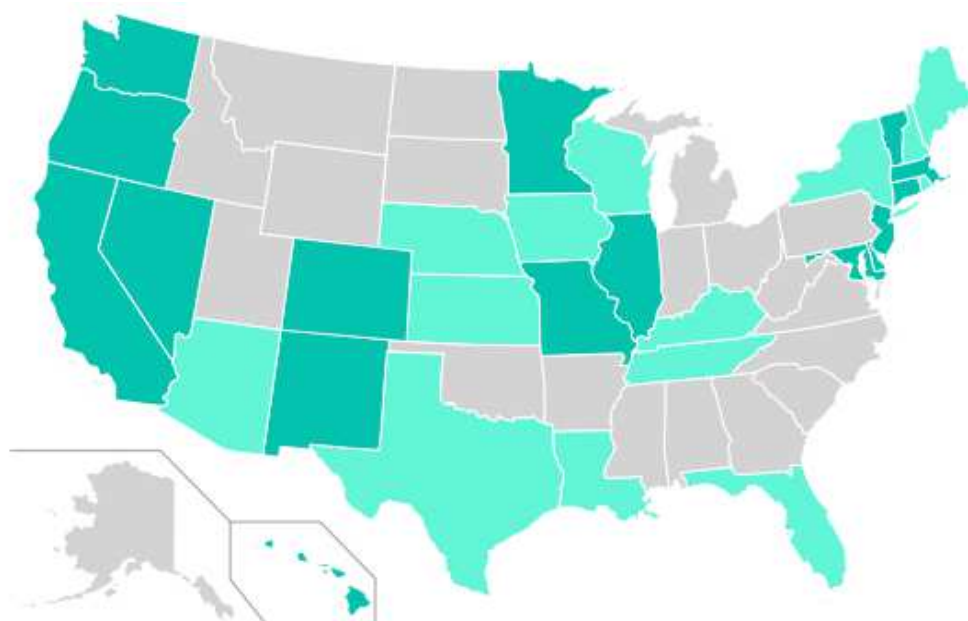
<sup>256</sup> Zach Stafford, “Black, gay and shot dead in his own car: this is another Missouri killing we should talk about,” *The Guardian*, December 2, 2014, accessed September 16, 2016, [https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/dec/02/-sp-missouri-killing-dionte-greene?CMP=tw\\_t\\_gu](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/dec/02/-sp-missouri-killing-dionte-greene?CMP=tw_t_gu).

<sup>257</sup> Pew Research Center, “Support for Same-Sex Marriage at Record High, but Key Segments Remain Opposed,” *Pew Research Center*, June 8, 2015, accessed December 20, 2016, <http://www.people-press.org/2015/06/08/support-for-same-sex-marriage-at-record-high-but-key-segments-remain-opposed/>.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

allegations were eventually dropped from the charges that the two alleged perpetrators – one of them was the man Greene intended to meet – had to face. The offenders stated that their intention was to rob Greene and that his homosexuality was not decisive. The case shows, like many others before, that the hate crime legislation is insufficient and ineffective. The number of states that provide hate crime legislations on a state level is still moderate.<sup>260</sup> Additionally, hate crime prosecutions entail the challenge to extract evidence for one’s true intention to perform an act of direct violence. On a subjective level it will also be difficult to prove the perpetrator’s motivation to act violently.



Updated April 25, 2017

All but five states (Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, South Carolina and Wyoming) have laws addressing the scourge of hate crimes, but there is variation in the list of protected classes. The laws that address hate or bias crimes against LGBT people are as follows.

\*Laws lacking LGBT inclusion: States that have a law that addresses hate or bias crimes based, but do not address sexual orientation or gender identity (15 states): Alabama, Alaska, Idaho, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Utah (no categories listed), Virginia and West Virginia.

\*\*Data Collection Only: Indiana (sexual orientation), Michigan (sexual orientation) and Rhode Island (gender identity).

- Address hate or bias crimes based on sexual orientation and gender identity** (16 states & D.C.): California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Vermont, Washington
- Address hate or bias crimes based on sexual orientation only** (14 states): Arizona, Florida, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Wisconsin

<sup>260</sup> “State Maps of Laws & Policies – Hate Crime Legislation,” The Human Rights Campaign, accessed June 11, 2017, <http://www.hrc.org/state-maps/hate-crimes>.

Missouri is one of the states that have hate crime laws which cover sexual orientation and gender identity. Nevertheless, reality shows that hate crime charges are often dropped or bargained in exchange for a plea of guilt. The reason for this development is easily explained with the concept of intersectionality. Using the case of Dionte Greene as an example, it becomes apparent that most victims contain several characteristics that might constitute someone as a target: Greene was black and gay, but the fact that he was attacked by two black men might also suggest that the crime could be attributed to the category of class as a determining factor. Crimes are often simply defined as gang rivalries if black men are involved.

It is difficult to delineate which features led to the perpetrator's decision to choose Greene and to pull the trigger. The same applies to the vicious attack on the lesbian couple Mollie Judith Olgin and Mary Kristene Chapa mentioned before. As the offender still denies his guilt and has not made a public statement, it remains unclear if Olgin and Chapa became victims due to their sexual orientation or simply because of the fact that they were female. There are always several characteristics that might correlate and induce a reaction – intentionally or not. This is also well-represented by the case of Stephanie Dorceant, a black lesbian woman in her twenties who was attacked in July 2015 by an off-duty cop. Stephanie Dorceant and her girlfriend Nandi Allman were on their way home after a night out when a white man crossed their path and bumped into them. According to Dorceant's Facebook post she asked him if he was okay when he started to shout "mind [your] own business 'you fucking dyke!'"<sup>261</sup> Immediately afterwards he allegedly attacked Dorceant who eventually ended up in custody after several police officers had arrived at the scene and arrested Dorceant and her girlfriend. Several characteristics correlated in this case: Dorceant was not only black but also lesbian and not exactly gender-conforming. One might ask which category has led to the man's reaction but this question misses the point. All these categories combined might have triggered the man's reaction and Dorceant was aware of that:

---

<sup>261</sup> Made Moisselle, Facebook post, July 13, 2015, 06:51 p.m., <https://www.facebook.com/StephanieGPD/posts/10106430134850063>.



Made Moïselle

16. Juli 2015 · 🌐

I am only one out of thousands of people that get attacked and falsely imprisoned by cops! Today I spoke up for all those that unfortunately can't speak for themselves and I don't intend to stop! We all need to stand up and let these monsters know that this will no longer be accepted! Let's all show them that ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!! !

#policebrutality #63rdprecinct #brooklyn #newyork #flatbush #injustice #hatecrimes #lgbt #queer #gay #lesbian #blacklivesmatter #womensrights #sayhername

Her Facebook post on July 16, 2015<sup>262</sup> states a variety of hashtags including #lgbt, #blacklivesmatter, #womensrights and #sayhername. The later one represents a campaign that tries to raise awareness for disproportionately high gender-based anti-black police violence against black women with a strong focus on gay or queer women.<sup>263</sup> All hashtags combined represent the identity categories that probably led to the attack on Stephanie Dorceant. Therefore, all of them have to be approached. Strategies must be developed to face all challenges ahead. Distinguishing between potential causes is neither possible nor useful. Being homosexual increases the risk of becoming a victim of violence and the interplay with other characteristics should not negate the fact that sexual orientation might have additionally triggered a violent act. This correlation between several aspects can not be the grounds for neglecting an essential motivation to use violence against another person; especially, as the consequence is the inefficiency of a law that is supposed to diminish direct violence against a minority group.

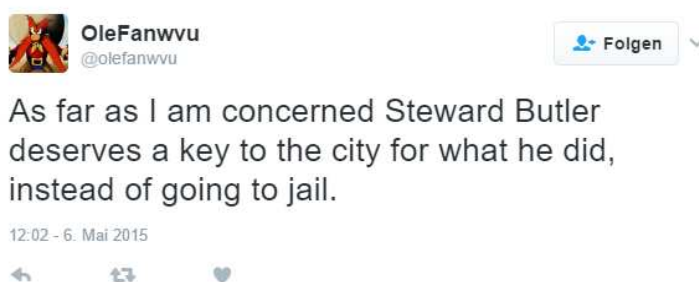
The year 2015 was dominated by a similar pattern in social media activity on violence against lesbian and gays as the years before. Selected incidents made headlines due to some distinguishing factors. The majority of cases, however, did not receive any social media coverage. The dominating debates remained the same, progress was rare. The first act of violence that received some social media attention in 2015 was the beating

---

<sup>262</sup> Made Moïselle, Facebook post, July 16, 2015, 10:42 p.m., <https://www.facebook.com/StephanieGPD/posts/10106441269052033>.

<sup>263</sup> “#SayHerName,” African American Policy Forum, accessed January 27, 2017, <http://www.aapf.org/sayhername/>.

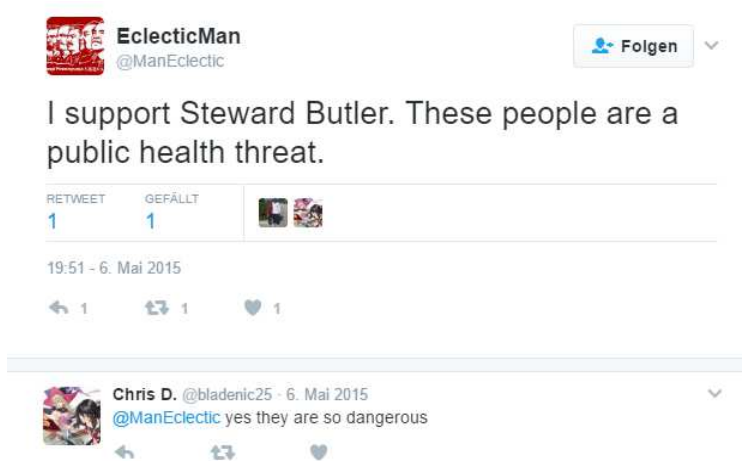
of a gay couple in Huntington, West Virginia. The reason for making headlines was that the offender was a young black college football player by the name of Steward Butler. Butler allegedly used anti-gay slurs and eventually attacked Zackery Johnson and Casey Williams after he had seen the couple kissing. The football player, who was dismissed from the team after the incident had gone viral, is being charged with violating an individual's civil rights and a misdemeanor battery charge. Even though the attack was obviously a hate crime, it was not possible to indict Butler with a hate crime charge. West Virginia does not have sexual orientation included in its hate crime legislation. Still, the district attorney tried to charge him on a hate crime law condemning crimes due to a person's sex saying that the couple would never have been attacked if one of them had been female. The court did not see any admissibility and thereby highlighted the necessity of implementing hate crime laws based on sexual orientation and gender identity in West Virginia. The trial is still pending and even though a celebrated college football player was involved, media representation was limited to posts of individuals and re-tweets of online articles. Instead derogatory statements via Twitter supporting Steward Butler and harassing the gay couple, implying that they deserve what they had gotten spread.<sup>264265</sup>



<sup>264</sup> OleFanwvu, Twitter post, May 6, 2015, 12:02 a.m., <https://twitter.com/olefanwvu/status/596027342465716224>.

<sup>265</sup> EclecticMan, Twitter post, May 6, 2015, 07:51 p.m., <https://twitter.com/ManEclectic/status/596145207705346050>.





All these cases exposed, that the representation of direct violence in social media remains low if the survivors do not speak out themselves. Instead, individuals post occasional messages – either to condemn the act of violence or to justify it. However, they hardly provoke a deeper debate as seen in the case of the above posts supporting Steward Butler. Instead, the incidents soon vanish from notice.

The alternative scenario discernible was the emergence of small and spontaneously activated movements if an atrocity was extremely violent and shocking for the community. However, the activism against LGB violence emerged quickly, reached the surface and evaporated shortly afterwards. The murder of Mark Carson had such an effect and it remained the only one that resulted in such an outcry since the brutal killing of Matthew Shepard – at least until June 2016. In the meantime, the attempted beating of another gay couple reached some social media attention. Again, the decisive cause for the public perception was a Facebook post by one of the attacked gay men<sup>266</sup>.

---

<sup>266</sup> Larry Lennox-Choate III, Facebook post, August 2, 2015, 04.50 a.m., <https://www.facebook.com/larry.choate/posts/10100220517647780>.



Larry Lennox-Choate III and his husband were assaulted by a stranger in a store in Soho. However, Lennox-Choate III and his husband Daniel Lennox-Choate, who are both West Point graduates, were able to defend themselves. After the incident took place, Larry Lennox-Choate III decided to speak out and take action against LGB violence and hate crimes in general. In his first Facebook post right after the beating he refused to be victimized and illuminated his intention to respond with strength and vehemence. Nevertheless, he also stated clearly that he is well aware that not everybody is able to defend him- or herself. Therefore, he calls for vigorous activism against hate crimes and violence:

Instead of hashing it out in the comments section of a news article, reach out to your political representatives and call for zero tolerance policies that aim to make good on the promise that all men (and women, of course) actually are created equal in this country. Find an organization, either local or national, that takes up this cause and tries to stand up for every victim of this sort of heinous crime. Let's be the generation that says ENOUGH!<sup>267</sup>

---

<sup>267</sup> Larry Lennox-Choate III, Facebook post, August 5, 2015, 06:03 p.m., <https://www.facebook.com/larry.choate/posts/10100221432354700>.

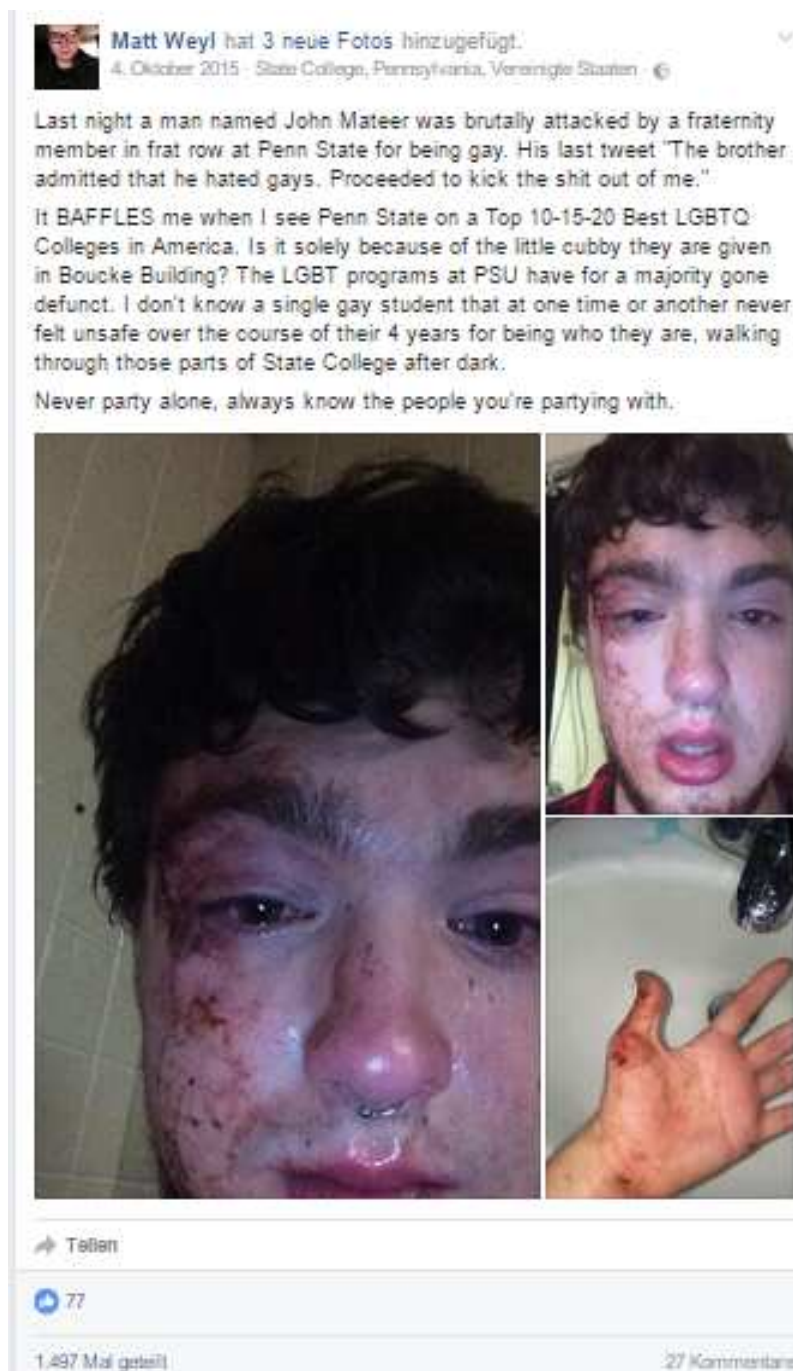
Both Facebook posts were shared – the first one even 328 times. The initial post has received 6,515 likes (date: June 3, 2017) while the second one was close to a thousand likes (date: June 3, 2017 – 916 likes). If victims reach out to the public, direct violence receives the attention that would be needed to build a strong and effective movement against it. Those affected have to be the ones who call attention to these incidents but they also have to be supported by the community.

Another case that proves this right is the beating of the student John Mateer. In October 2015, Mateer spoke out after he had become a victim of direct violence in the aftermath of a fraternity party at the Sigma Nu house at Pennsylvania State University on October 4, 2015. He was verbally and physically attacked by a stranger and ended up unconscious on the street. After he was able to get home, Mateer tweeted “Don’t let a frat guy know that you’re gay”<sup>268</sup>, assuming that he had been attacked by a fellow frat member. The tweet was deleted after it ultimately turned out that the offender was not a member of the fraternity. Nevertheless, after tweeting about the atrocity and including photographs of his facial wounds the social media community startled. John Mateer’s tweets were re-tweeted several hundred times and additionally, his Facebook friend Matt Weyl posted an account of the attack which was shared over a 1,500 times (date: September 21, 2016 – 1,501 times; date: June 3, 2017 – 1,496 times).<sup>269</sup>

---

<sup>268</sup> Daniel Craig, “Man says he was beaten by PSU fraternity member because he's gay,” *PhillyVoice*, October 5, 2015, accessed September 21, 2016, <http://www.phillyvoice.com/man-says-beaten-psu-fraternity-brother-gay/>.

<sup>269</sup> Matt Weyl, Facebook post, October 4, 2015, 06:20 p.m., <https://www.facebook.com/mattweyl/posts/10205153528261769>.



Again, the reactions ranged from shock to anger and sadness as well as disbelief. The exposure of photographs of obvious injuries amplifies the outrage and the yearning for change and improvements.

Every single incident of direct violence reported on social media intends to provoke a reaction. The endeavor can only be to reach out to the LGBTQ\* community as well as to the general public and force them to discern the reality and stimulate the feeling that a proactive attitude is needed. The attempts of individuals to raise awareness and to expose the

direct violence gays and lesbians experience on a regular basis can only be the beginning. The vulnerability gays and lesbians have to live with and the highlighting of a shared fate and sorrow is a significant bond that ties the community to a collective identity and which therefore has the potential to establish a fundament for an effective movement against direct violence comparable to the one focusing on structural violence. To reach this effect a struggle for power and self-determination has to be fought and the community has to actively engage in this battle by harnessing social media. John Mateer, Larry Lennox-Choate III, Nick Porto and all those affected by direct violence who have been speaking out have one thing in common: They refuse to be victimized and instead try to regain power over their lives and destinies. Becoming a victim of direct violence will always result in a loss of trust; the trust in society, in the community, in the belief that there is a line nobody will cross; the line of physical integrity. Direct violence not only breaks bones, but also the faith in the good will of people. One's body is harmed and the only way to conquer the fear, the loss of trust and the victimization is by speaking out. Violence is about power and exercising violence, harming a person is the ultimate act of subordinating the one targeted. This subordination can only be overturned if the "victim" fights back by engaging in a public discourse aiming at subverting the fundament of violence. Violence has to be conquered by raising awareness and thereby challenging society's heteronormativity and simultaneously finding virtues that ally LGBTQ\*s despite their differences. The reason why acts of direct violence do not have the same binding effect like the experience of struggling for marriage equality is that it does not directly affect each and every individual LGBTQ\* personally. Even more: The human being is steadily constraining any thought that might suggest that direct violence could affect oneself. This act of self-protection is crucial to maintain the trust into one's own integrity and the good nature of humanity. Loosing this trust would result in a life of fear and misery. However, not engaging in a movement against direct violence means that the people directly affected are left without any structures that support them and will face tremendous difficulties to regain power and escape the destiny of victimization. Psychological studies have shown that acts of direct violence will have

long-lasting effects on the ones affected. Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are common and especially high among LGBTQ\*s.<sup>270</sup> The higher risk is directly linked to sexual orientation minorities' greater exposure to violence as well as their exposure to potentially more traumatic events – especially at early ages.<sup>271</sup> As shown above, the representation of direct violence against LGBTQ\*s in social media suggests that the community's support is low. Even though the reasons for this are slightly understandable in respect to the intention of self-protection, it still shows that the LGBTQ\* movement is also infiltrated by the neoliberal virtues of ignorance and egoism. While the experience of unequal treatment has become the dominating unifying construct for the development of a collective identity, direct violence is neglected. The manifestations of structural violence in daily life or in the denial of same-sex marriage affects every LGB(TQ)\*. Engaging in a movement will be an act of empowerment and ultimately lead to the realization of one's own aspiration. However, participating in a movement against direct violence does not necessarily bring benefits if the person who takes an active part in the interest group has never been affected by direct violence her- or himself. The advantage remains abstract and the satisfaction will not reach the same level as in some cases of structural violence. The individual LGBTQ\* acts egoistically – exactly how the neoliberal system has taught society.

The refusal to embrace direct violence and transform it into a potential source of stimulus for the LGBTQ\* movement for empowerment has weakened the community altogether. Even though the discussion of direct violence against LGBTQ\*s is tough, it has to be led ultimately. And the time has come: The year 2016 saw a horrific outburst of direct violence against LGBTQ\*s that possessed the power to transform the movement completely. On June 12, 2016, 49 people of the LGBTQ\* community lost their lives in a nightclub in Orlando, Florida. The club that epitomized the center of a vibrant gay Latin-American culture became a place of death. 29-year old Omar Mateen entered Pulse Nightclub around 2 a.m. while the

---

<sup>270</sup> Andrea L. Roberts et al., “Pervasive Trauma Exposure Among US Sexual Orientation Minority Adults and Risk of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder,” *Am J Public Health*, December 2010; 100(12): 2433–2441.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*

party-goers celebrated Latin night and immediately started shooting, using a semi-automatic weapon. 49 women and men were hit mortally; 53 were seriously wounded. The shooting has gone into history as the most destructive shooting in the United States' recent history – up until 2017. The LGBTQ\* community has never had to face a deathlier single act of direct violence. The *Pulse* and *Orlando* will always stand for a moment that has changed the community – but will it also represent a turning point for the LGBTQ\* movement? Suddenly, becoming a victim of direct violence was no longer an abstract scenario. Orlando exposed its vulnerability to the community. It showed lesbian and gays the insufficiency of the current level of aspired equality. It showed every single individual of the community that LGBTQ\*s are targets and that the successes achieved are jeopardized. It also exposed that there lays a long way ahead before equality can be reached and a social climate be created that does not encourage violence against LGBTQ\*s. And it additionally illuminated that the current political and social situation is more multifaceted and difficult than imagined which will be discussed in the next chapter.

The impact and the destructiveness of the mass shooting are probably difficult to imagine for people not identifying as gay, bisexual, lesbian or transgender. As delineated before, living in a heteronormative society is tied to structural and direct violence in multiple of outgrowths. Any kind of displaying affection, like holding hands or kissing, can be the trigger that makes someone else comment on you, shout at you, harass and bully you or even hurt you physically. Living openly as a homosexual individual and/or couple is always tied to negative responses and reservations. There is hardly a day on which you will not perceive disapproving looks or face any derogatory comments. It has definitely gotten better over the last decades but still: This is the reality of LGBTQ\*s living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Western societies. Over the years, lesbian and gays have created safe havens; spaces where they can be themselves, where no one will question your sexual and/or gender identity, your way of living your life, your right to love someone of the same sex. The concept of *safe spaces* has been applied gradually to those places and spaces which have an immense importance to the LGBTQ\* community. Originating from a

concept constituted within the educational sector, *safe spaces* depict a welcoming space free of “homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism.”<sup>272</sup> The LGBTQ\* community adapted the concept of *safe spaces* to all spaces where lesbians and gays were protected from violence and could be themselves. Most urban centers have seen the development of gay-towns and, – if not – have at least gay bars that create a feeling of belonging and constitute a *safe space*. No gay or lesbian person will ever forget the feeling of relief, inner peace and happiness that one has experienced when spending the first night in a queer *safe space*. Suddenly, you realize that this is it and that you belong amidst the people surrounding you; that no one in this space will question your sexual orientation or gender identity. You are safe and free.

Omar Mateen destroyed that *safe space* within a few seconds that stretched into hours – not only for the more than a hundred people in Pulse but also for the rest of the LGBTQ\* community. This is the decisive reason why the mass shooting in Pulse has prompted the reaction of the LGBTQ\* community that has become visible in social media immediately after the news of the shooting was released. The agony and the shock were crucifying, the frustration and anger were growing steadily. Especially the abuse of the shooting from conservatives like the Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump in particular led to an extreme outrage within the LGBTQ\* community. Degrading the shooting to an attack motivated solely by a radical-Islamic sentiment of the offender is definitely one-sided and would be dishonoring the victims of the event. Donald Trump quickly embraced the shooting and called it a terrorist attack even before condoling the victims and family members. One of his first tweets after the incident stated: “Appreciate the congrats for being right on radical Islamic terrorism, I don’t want congrats, I want toughness & vigilance. We must be smart!”<sup>273</sup> The LGBTQ\* community responded quickly to remarks like the above or other feigned sympathies:

---

<sup>272</sup> Catherine O. Fox and Tracy E. Ore, “(Un) Covering Normalized Gender and Race Subjectivities in LGBT “Safe Spaces”,” *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 3, Sex and Surveillance (Fall 2010), 633.

<sup>273</sup> Donald J. Trump, Twitter post, June 12, 2016, 09:43 a.m., <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/742034549232766976?lang=de>.





The shooting exposed all the frustration and anger that was growing for years and it broke the surface uncoordinated. Noah Michelson's post<sup>274</sup> mediates all emotions he felt after *Pulse*; it mediates grief but also disgust for those people who have ostracized the community for a long time. The constant degradation and revulsion coming from conservative right-wingers and radical religious leaders have contributed to a climate of disrespect, hate and disapproval of homosexuality. Hearing and seeing exactly these people abusing the hate crime for their political agenda was too much to bear for many LGBTQ\*s. They started to shift the focus to the real problem manifested in U.S. society – heteronormativity and homophobia. The Twitter user @EffyDxn re-tweeted a Facebook message on June 15, 2016<sup>275</sup>:

You weren't the gunman, but you didn't want to see gay people kissing in public. You weren't the gunman, but you don't like gay characters on TV. You weren't the gunman, but you think gay people are sinful and need saving.

<sup>274</sup> Noah Michelson, Facebook post, June 13, 2016, 00:37 a.m., <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10153582231872823&set=a.215722862822.131915.548627822&type=3&theater>.

<sup>275</sup> Elyssa Edwards, Twitter post, June 15, 2016, 10:48 a.m., <https://twitter.com/EffyDxn/media>.

You weren't the gunman, but you were upset when gay people gained the right to marry. You weren't the gunman, but you use slurs for gay people. You weren't the gunman, but you would vote against legal protections for gay people.

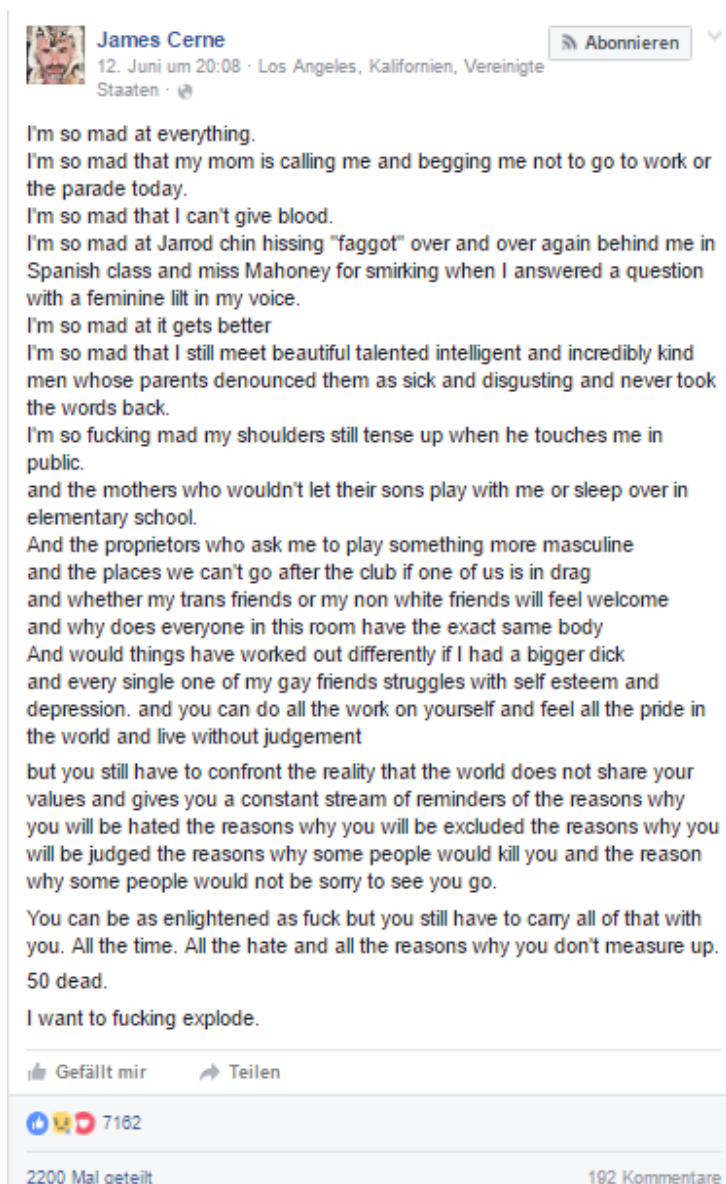
You weren't the gunman, but you're the culture that built him. You're the bullets in his gun.<sup>276</sup>

The culture that built him; the culture that fostered a structure disadvantaging lesbians and gays; the culture that subordinated homosexuals and implemented a rule of heteronormativity; structural and direct violence closely correlate with each other. Where structural violence dominates society, direct violence will be easily justifiable. If politics is not able to implement laws protecting minorities efficiently, direct violence will not be prosecuted to its fullest that might entail the power to prevent hate crimes. Lesbians and gays all over the United States (and worldwide) illuminated the challenge that comes along with a culture that makes it easy to judge and to hate and that alienates people from one another; their posts show how this climate fuels the discourse with hate that frustrates LGBTQ\* people to an extent that creates despair and isolation; isolations that leads to messages like the one above.

The shooting at *Pulse* was too much for many lesbians and gays. It was the incident that forced them to speak out openly against violence in all shades. It forced lesbians and gays to acknowledge that not everything has gotten better and that it is not even certain if it will ever get better at all. It made many lesbians and gays aware that a stronger and more efficient movement is needed. At the same time, resignation and hopelessness became more and more visible between the lines.

---

<sup>276</sup> Elyssa Edwards, Twitter post, June 15, 2016, 10:48 a.m., <https://twitter.com/EffyDxn/media>.



The desperation that James Cerne must have felt while writing this message and especially his last paragraph is easy to detect: “You can be as enlightened as fuck but you still have to carry all of that with you. All the time. All the hate and all the reasons why you don’t measure up. 50 dead. I want to fucking explode.”<sup>277</sup> Cerne, as well as many other users, did not narrow the incident down to its physical nature but instead identified its socio-political context. *Pulse* was not exclusively about the shooting per se but also about society’s reaction to it: hypocritical phrases and condolences, a misrecognition of the treatment of LGBTQ\*s in society, a mother who is

<sup>277</sup> James Cerne, Facebook post, June 12, 2016, 08:08 p.m., <https://www.facebook.com/james.cerne/posts/10153654710641099>.

worried for her child and asks him not to join the gay pride parade; a reaction that simultaneously illuminates that she does not apprehend the importance of her gay child's participation in the parade; his urge to live his pride and to be himself no matter what. *Pulse* imposed a state of emergency on LGBTQ\* people and it hit them with full force. Many Facebook and Twitter posts of LGBTQ\*s and their supporters exposed a consistent response: Shock, disbelief, grieve and the consensus that direct violence has to stop, that it is enough, but also that the tools for containment are ambiguous. The struggle against structural and direct violence has been fought for so many decades and still advances regarding the restraint of direct violence are low. Only 16 states possess a hate crime legislation covering sexual orientation and gender identity, 14 states address sexual orientation only.<sup>278</sup> All remaining 20 states do not cover sexual orientation or gender identity in its hate crime legislation or do not even offer any hate crime laws. The political and social reality is not comforting and satisfying. Incidents like Orlando lead to an aggravation of the psychological state of lesbians and gays as they are suddenly no longer able to ignore the points that do not get better. Suddenly, the illusions that improvements have led to less violence against lesbians, gays and bisexuals were destroyed. Their world and safe heaven were shaken. The reaction of individuals was therefore much higher and more extreme than in all cases of direct violence discussed before. Additionally, gay rights organizations started reacting and realizing that direct violence has to be recognized and opposed. Two weeks after the atrocity, the *Human Rights Campaign*, the organization which had tremendous impact on undermining manifestations of unequal structures, posted a YouTube video that was shifted into the spotlight via Facebook and Twitter (clicks: 1,837,095 – date: October 13, 2016; clicks: 1.970.457 – date: June 3, 2017). With the slogan “*Stop the Hate*”, 49 celebrities honored the 49 victims of the Orlando shooting.<sup>279</sup> The video starts with the simple message: “The victims live in our memories. These are their names. These

---

<sup>278</sup> “Maps of State Laws and Policies – Hate Crime Legislation,” Human Rights Campaign, accessed October 13, 2016, [http://www.hrc.org/state\\_maps](http://www.hrc.org/state_maps).

<sup>279</sup> “Stop the Hate: 49 Celebrities Honor 49 Victims of Orlando Tragedy in Ryan Murphy-Produced Tribute,” YouTube video, 18:08. Posted by the Human Rights Campaign, June 29, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nq6xRZlCSoM>.

are their stories.” Celebrities like Lady Gaga, Laverne Cox, Jane Fonda and Cuba Gooding Jr. tell the names and stories of each individual killed in Pulse by the shooter. The viewer of the video catches a glimpse of the lives of the 49 victims. The clip that lasts 18 minutes illuminates the past and the future that would have lain ahead of all of them. It demonstrates that the lives they led were similar to one’s own and that one could have been among the victims if the circumstances had been different. The clip ends with the message expressed by Lady Gaga: “It’s time to stop the bleeding” and is followed by appeals to *stop the hate* and the slogan that *love conquers hate*. Both slogans are used by the social media community to circumscribe calls against hate crimes and direct violence. The *Human Rights Campaign* made some effort to revive their “*Love conquers hate*” campaign and additionally adapted the hashtag #stopthehate more often than before the Pulse shooting. Four months after the shooting HRC remembered the victims and affirmed their intention to fight more efficiently against direct violence and therefore called for supporters.

Furthermore, *Pulse* generated many public statements of celebrities condemning violence against LGBTQ\*s. One of them was again Lady Gaga, who spoke out at a vigil in Los Angeles a day after the shooting. The vocalist condemned the attack and called it an “attack on humanity”.<sup>280</sup> She also stressed her solidarity with the LGBTQ\* community:

But tonight I will not allow my anger and outrage over this attack to overshadow our need to honor those who are grieving truly for their lost ones; lost members of the LGBT community. I hope you know that myself and so many are your allies. Not only me, but everyone here. We represent the compassion and the loyalty of millions of people around the world that believe in you. You are not alone, you are not alone.<sup>281</sup>

---

<sup>280</sup> “Lady Gaga honors Orlando victims at Los Angeles vigil,” YouTube video, 09:42.

Posted by Los Angeles LGBT Center, June 14, 2016,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P0XODPy8zPE>.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

The sense of solidarity, the sense of a shared identity and of common values is visible between the lines. Lady Gaga showed many times that she is aware of the meaning of a celebrity's support and also of the power of the social media. Still, her support and her emotions always feel honest. Her voice is heard all over the world by millions and millions of people – and she can influence them. The *Human Rights Campaign's* video has effectively used celebrities' standing and their voices to promote their aims. Direct violence has to be addressed on a regular basis – not only mass shootings but also singular incidents that take place every single day. Individuals targeted for their sexual orientation have to be shifted to the spotlight; they need to voice what they had to experience. But they also need the support of celebrities that communicate the message to everybody not affected by direct violence due to their sexual orientation. This is the most promising way of raising awareness, undermining structures that foster direct violence. This was exactly the strategy that was eventually successful in respect to legitimizing same-sex marriage. On a long-term basis, it will also achieve successes in regards to direct violence.

Another organization that also contributed to the highlighting of direct violence against homosexuals and particularly Orlando was *GLAAD (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation)*. They organized vigils and speeches the days after the shooting. Kristene Chapa, the young lesbian woman who was attacked together with her girlfriend Molly Olgins in Texas, spoke at a rally for the victims of *Pulse*.<sup>282</sup> This videoclip was uploaded to YouTube as well as the speech of the actor Wilson Cruz whose aunt was killed in the shooting when she shielded her gay son, saving his life.<sup>283</sup> *GLAAD* also engaged in the production of a song in honor of the victims. "*Hands*" calls for the end of hate and for promoting acceptance. It was produced in honor of the victims of the shooting and financially benefited their families. The song featured vocalists like Selena Gomez, P!nk, Jennifer Lopez and Adam Lambert and both uploaded videos received

---

<sup>282</sup> "Kristene Chapa speaks at rally for victims of Orlando shooting," YouTube video, 03:35. Posted by GLAAD, June 15, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0mfSCzI5vZA>.

<sup>283</sup> "Wilson Cruz shares personal story about Orlando during #glaadgala San Francisco," YouTube video, 13:46, Posted by GLAAD, September 16, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJHe9oItriM>.

more than three million views on YouTube (date: June 3, 2017).<sup>284</sup> The people depicted in the video are diverse in their appearance but about the same age. They represent the diversity of sexual orientation and gender identity without clearly pointing at it. These pictures are taking turns with some photographs taken at vigils for the victims of the *Pulse* shooting, that show the sorrow but also the solidarity. The striking message is that hate has to cease and that every individual deserves living a happy and fulfilling life and that this will only be achieved by standing together. The cooperation between gay rights organizations and celebrities in targeting direct violence has thus been initiated in the aftermath of the shooting.

Additionally, celebrities have also raised awareness without the impulse of gay rights organizations. The song “*The Greatest*” by the Australian vocalist Sia has been a tribute to the 49 people killed in Pulse. 49 dancers represent the victims of the shooting in the official video clip. It appears as if the protagonist, the ballet dancer Maddie Ziegler, tries to save the other dancers but eventually fails to do so. In the light of the music video the refrain, “Don’t give up; I won’t give up. Don’t give up, no no no”, describes the fight for survival, just like the men and women who fought for their lives in *Pulse*. However, the refrain also sounds like a credo for the survivors of the shooting as well as the LGBTQ\* community altogether to stay strong and to continue the fight for equality and against direct and structural violence. The video was watched more than 250 million times by December 2016 (254,813,048; date: December 5, 2016) and the comments section recorded 130,421 posts (date: December 5, 2016).<sup>285</sup> The number of views increased to almost 445,000,000 by June 2017. It was additionally widely discussed on other social media channels.

The lesbian comedian Ellen DeGeneres has also approached *Pulse* in a – for her – typical way. DeGeneres had already addressed direct violence before – not only in the aftermath of the killing of Larry King by his classmate Brandon McInerney but also at a vigil for Matthew Shepard. In her show on September 8, 2016, Tony Marrero, a *Pulse* survivor, joined the

---

<sup>284</sup> “Hands,” YouTube video, 04:24. Posted by Interscope Records, July 5, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3SKR1VMxTM>.

<sup>285</sup> “Sia – The Greatest,” YouTube video, 05:51, Posted by SiaVEVO, September 5, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKSRYLdjsPA>.

Ellen DeGeneres show after having been invited by the host. Marrero was shot four times in the back and miraculously survived. He was rescued by a police officer who helped Marrero to drag himself out of the club. On the way to hospital Marrero's heart stopped beating but he received two adrenalin shots and got reanimated. In the show, Marrero shared his experiences and also the story of his heterosexual friend Luis Vilma's who got shot in Pulse. DeGeneres eventually surprised the young man with the appearance of the singer Katy Perry who was an essential support for Marrero's recovery as he gained a lot of strength from her song "*Rise*", as he explained. The story of Tony Marrero clearly had an emotional impact on the viewers of the show. Being shot four times and making a recovery from such a tragic event, in which Marrero lost one of his best friends, definitely affects anybody watching the clip of his journey. The combination of photographs of the worldwide solidarity and Marrero's speech in front of colleagues that were mourning the death of their friend Luis Vilma creates dismay and compassion at the same time. Surviving an atrocity like the one in Orlando and facing the devastating reality of what happened to oneself and to beloved ones, represents, to some extent, heroism. Heroism is one of the concepts that are upheld in American culture and society as very influential and defining. The county's pop culture is dominated by the film industry in Los Angeles. Hollywood has created masses of "heroes" over the last decades and the symbolism of heroism within society has a high standing and is a bonding tie. It often correlates with patriotism and the reputation of the U.S. military troops but is also perceived as an action that is characterized by facing circumstances that demand an extra-ordinary amount of courage. Highlighting the personal grief and tragedy as well as the recovery and retrieval of one's life constructs a bond between the person who is represented in the media and the viewers. This is exactly the result of the appearance of Tony Marrero in the Ellen DeGeneres Show. The portrayal of Marrero's story generated emotions among the viewers that made them aware of the injustice, the horror and the pain lesbians and gays have to face. At the same time, Marrero was depicted as a human being that lives, loves and has dreams like everyone else irrespective of his or her sexual orientation. The interview with Tony Marrero had the same effect as



the video of the *Human Right Campaign* that has portrayed the victims of the shooting: It breaks down barriers and it humanizes gays and lesbians. Homosexuality, which probably remains an abstract identity for many heterosexual people not familiar with gays, bisexuals or lesbians, becomes more sizable and might even lose the awkwardness it sometimes might have created. The structure justifying violence is destabilized, heteronormativity is undermined and a major step is taken to educate society and change social order. The shooting in Pulse had the effect that a range of individuals as well as organizations adapted strategies similar to those acquired in the struggle against structural violence in daily life or the denial of same-sex marriage. Not only Twitter and Facebook users spoke out against the violence. Also Ellen DeGeneres and Lady Gaga, the Human Rights Campaign and *GLAAD* have accepted the challenge the LGBTQ\* community faces every single day and reacted accordingly. They are the ones who are able to empower the LGBTQ\* community, who can stop the victimization and instead, contribute to the implementation of change. They create visibility and awareness and they are the ones who can construct a collective identity.

The years prior to the rise of social media, the tools for fighting direct violence have not been methodologically sound and a coherent movement could not be developed. Orlando has initiated a broader and stronger response than all acts of direct violence since the murder of Matthew Shepard. The LGBTQ\* movement has to maintain the vigor and the acknowledgment that a united front to fight direct violence is as much needed as a movement focusing on issues that can be classified as structural violence. The organization and the players who are able to influence the society are out there and they have the capacity to additionally focus on direct violence. Social media has proven to be of immense value; it constitutes the tool that can influence people, create a collective identity and an influential movement. It might be the moment in time that the LGBTQ\* movement's fight against direct violence is taking the next step. It is on the LGBTQ\* movement to assure that the 49 LGBTQ\* people as well as the straight allies who have lost their lives in Pulse have not died in vain.

### **III. The Violence Triangle, Socio-Political**

#### **Influences and the Era of Donald Trump**

##### **1. Past Influences on the LGBTQ\* Movement**

The way of LGBTQ\* activism has changed over the last decades. It shifted to an activism dominated by a strong egotism and self-staging of the actors. Activism against LGBTQ\* violence moved from the streets into the realm of social media and the World Wide Web. As the analysis of social media activism has shown the social bond among activists is restricted to a shared experience of violence. Once LGBTQ\* people are not directly affected by a certain form of violence, they hardly engage in social media activism.

This has been proven by Nick Porto's experiences when he shared his story on social media. His posts conveyed that he felt neglected, isolated and desperate after he experienced direct violence. However, people's responses to his Facebook posts were a reflection of egotism and superficiality that has become so prominent in our times. Most reactions were short messages of condolences but lacked honest emotions. Those messages that transferred feelings of emotions and honest sympathy were posted by LGBTQ\*s that experienced direct violence themselves and criticized the community's reluctance to challenge acts of direct violence. The circumstance that Nick was told "to man up" and "grow some balls" by gay social media users is an excellent example for the deeply entrenched egotism and ignorance of many members of the LGBTQ\* community.

Moreover, the discussions of the major gay rights organizations' neglect of minorities within the communities has also illustrated that the social media movement and the LGBTQ\* movements in general are corrupted by a strong and pervasive egotism. Discrimination that affects the majority of the community defines the activism on social media. The denial of same-sex marriage and manifestations of discrimination encountered on a daily basis have become the core of the major gay rights organizations'

struggle. Activists have allocated much energy and resources to the exposure of these injustices – however, other LGBTQ\* people are being completely marginalized and neglected. Topics that affect the majority of the LGBTQ\* communities receive the support that is necessary for political activism. The attraction of a collective identity that ties the individual to the cause increases the base of activists. The expectation of benefiting from the movement's cause stimulates an individual's disposition to contribute their share. However, which profits arise for a lesbian or gay couple that earns more than 80,000 US Dollar a year and is planning on getting married and raising children, if they engage in activism against homelessness among LGBTQ\* youths? Apart from a feeling of satisfaction that might be stirred, there is no striking revenue. Nowadays, one's individual happiness and aspirations always exceed the need to support minorities and fight for their rights while they have no voice. One's personal gain is too low and therefore engaging in time and energy-consuming activism does hardly entail any attraction. It is this kind of egotism that has been resulting from the neoliberal culture; it is this egotism that is a major aspect of the neoliberal values cherished nowadays – even though the original intention was a different one. Combined with ignorance it is also the stimulator for individuals' rejection of engaging in activism against workplace discrimination. If one has never been subject to bullying or denunciation at the workplace, the very need to support those suffering from these manifestations remains far-fetched. Those whose voice is currently not heard among the dominating group within the LGBTQ\* movement could profit from the integration of the violence triangle. The imminent threat of getting fired from one day to the other due to one's homosexual or transgender identity could be faced by integrating the violence triangle into the discourse. Even though it is a major manifestation of structural violence, this manifestation is still not contested; simply because one can protect him- or herself by hiding his or her sexual or gender identity or by switching jobs.

Furthermore, the difficult access to health care coverage for gay men is also among the neglected topics. An HIV infection has often been a reason for health insurance providers to deny coverage. Still, the LGBTQ\* movement does not adapt any major strategies to counter this injustice. As

mentioned in the beginning of this thesis, egotism is one of the most influential factors that stirred this trend. Combined with the era of social media which is also the age of self-staging, superficiality and ignorance, the neoliberal side-effect of egotism also turned the LGBTQ\* movement into a fragmented construct unable to integrate the diversity of the community. The results range from isolation and frustration to radicalization and despair. This fragmentation is a major threat to the internal stability and success of the movement. In addition to that, external factors imperil the achievements of the last years. While the policies implemented by the Obama administration created a climate of hope for LGBTQ\*s, conservatives experienced frustration and repudiation. This stipulated a climate that creates the basis for a backlash for the LGBTQ\* movement. U.S. politics as well as the society as such have become more polarized over the last two decades. Combined with the liberal minority politics of the Obama administration, these developments will rise to a major threat to all LGBTQ\* people. It is essential to understand the socio-political climate for analyzing the current LGBTQ\* movement and assessing future developments. Therefore, the next paragraphs will discuss the socio-political developments during the Obama Era and expose in which way these evolutions have influenced U.S. society and to which extend these developments impair the LGBTQ\* movement nowadays and in the upcoming years.

The polarization of the U.S. society in the midst of the Obama presidency becomes evident while studying reports of the Pew Research Center. The number of people “who express consistently conservative or consistently liberal opinions has doubled over the past two decades from 10 percent to 21 percent.”<sup>286</sup> The ideological overlap between the parties has disappeared almost completely. The findings show that 92 percent of Republicans are to the right of the median Democrat, and at the same time 94 percent of Democrats are to the left of the median Republican.

---

<sup>286</sup> “Political Polarization in the American Public,” Pew Research Center, June 12, 2014, accessed December 21, 2016, <http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-american-public/>.

Furthermore, partisan animosity has increased severely over the last twenty years, but especially during the Obama presidency. While 16 percent of Democrats were very unfavorable of Republicans in 1994, twenty years later the number has risen to 38 percent. The percentage of Republicans very unfavorable of Democrats has increase by 26 percent to 43 percent in the period from 1994 to 2014. 36 percent of that number even considers the Democratic Party a threat to the nation's well-being. President Obama was perceived extremely negatively by the opposition; 84 percent of Republicans disapproved his policy, 71 percent of them very strongly.<sup>287</sup> In December 2016, the disapproval rating of Republicans has reached 68 percent.<sup>288</sup> The percentages sample those of the Democratic approval rate for President George W. Bush in 2008. The disapproval ratings among the opposite party with which Obama and Bush have been confronted have been the highest, modern presidents received for more than have a century. No president since 1953 had comparably high disapproval ratings among members of the opposite party as President Obama.<sup>289</sup> What triggered this development over the last two decades? The list of reasons contributing to this phenomenon is long. However, the evolution of the economic situation that we are facing nowadays combined with the globalization have probably contributed extensively. Neoliberalism alienated people from each other. It not only widened the gap between rich and poor but also between those measuring up to the globalized world and those who feel estranged from the social, political and economic developments of the last years. Nowadays, life and virtues are changing fast. Barack Obama has not only encouraged and supported progressive legislations in minority politics; he was also a symbol of the fast-changing world. The election of a black man – even though this does not mean that the institutionalized racism within the political and social structures has been dissolved<sup>290</sup> – was a renunciation of the rule of “white, old men”. The election already symbolized the citizens’

---

<sup>287</sup> “Political Polarization in the American Public.”

<sup>288</sup> “Obama Leaves Office on High Note, But Public Has Mixed Views of Accomplishments,” Pew Research Center, December 14, 2016, accessed December 21, 2016, <http://www.people-press.org/2016/12/14/obama-leaves-office-on-high-note-but-public-has-mixed-views-of-accomplishments/>.

<sup>289</sup> “Political Polarization in the American Public.”

<sup>290</sup> Any discussions in the aftermaths circulating around the heralding of the era of post-racism had been naïve and were proven wrong by the Ferguson riots.

desire for change<sup>291</sup>, for the subversion of the “establishment”. Barack Obama stirred change in a variety of spheres – even though it might not have been in the way many had wished for. However, what will always persist is his ambitious pursuit of the improvement of U.S. minority rights. The legacy of the first black president of the United States in domestic politics is that of a pioneer in opening the door for many – but not all – Americans who had to struggle with inequality, discrimination and disdain by major parts of the society. It will also be the fact that alienated his opponents even more strongly and contributed to a rising polarization.

So what distinguished the minority politics of the Obama administration? The explicit integration of minority interests into broader agendas was one point. During the financial crisis of 2008/2009, the policies implemented were also supposed to benefit African-Americans in particular. For instances, the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (2009)* was among the measures to counter the spiral that drove the United States deeper and deeper into the financial crisis and also assured that almost 1.4 million African Americans were kept out of poverty as a report of the Obama Administration emphasized.<sup>292</sup> Besides that, the *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (2010)*, generally known as Obamacare, and its amendment, the *Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010*, were also – albeit certainly not exclusively – supposed to diminish the discrepancy between the availability of health care for white and black Americans. The Obama administration always thoughtfully integrated the special needs for the advancement of African-Americans. The Department of Justice Civil Rights Division continuously received slight increases of their budget.<sup>293</sup> Also, the Community Development Financial Institutions Budget was increased with the intention to “finance community

---

<sup>291</sup> “Change we can believe in” was also Barack Obama’s slogan during the election campaign in 2008. Even though, the rallying cry became “Yes, we can”.

<sup>292</sup> “Obama Administration Record for the African American Community,” The White House, February 29, 2012, accessed November 9, 2016, [https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/african\\_american\\_community\\_record.pdf](https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/african_american_community_record.pdf).

<sup>293</sup> “FY 2016 Performance Budget Congressional Submission,” U.S. Department of Justice – Civil Rights Division, February 1, 2015, accessed November 9, 2016, [https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/jmd/pages/attachments/2015/02/01/14.\\_civil\\_rights\\_division\\_crt.pdf](https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/jmd/pages/attachments/2015/02/01/14._civil_rights_division_crt.pdf).

development projects in distressed areas” which can be predominantly defined as city centers showing a majority of black poor inhabitants.<sup>294</sup>

Additionally, conservatives were further alienated by Obama’s willingness to pursue the spreading of minority rights by executive orders. When Obama started his first term as president of the United States his intention was to reform the U.S. immigration legislation. During his first years in office Obama worked on passing the *Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act*. The essence of this bill was the grant of a legal status to undocumented immigrants who entered the country under the age of 16 – given that they fulfilled a variety of preconditions.<sup>295</sup> However, the opposition by politicians of the Republican Party was tremendous and therefore passage of the bill was prevented. Instead, the Obama administration successfully implemented the *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)* program by passing an executive order. The *DACA* was supposed to realize some major endeavors targeted by the *DREAM Act*. On the forefront were children who immigrated into the United States over the last years. The executive order pursued the strategy of deferred actions, meaning that immigrants, predominantly young adults ages 15 to 30, who were brought to the U.S. illegally as children, receive a temporary reprieve from deportation and a two-year work permit to obtain a professional qualification.<sup>296</sup> However, the Obama administration’s decision to pass an executive order was widely opposed by the Republicans which resulted in the symbolic decision to defund *DACA* by the House of Representatives in 2013; a decision that was overturned by the Democratic controlled Senate.<sup>297</sup> Furthermore, the Obama administration set an end to the *Secure Communities Program* that contributed to the arrest and deportation of immigrants who committed minor offenses without

---

<sup>294</sup> “Obama Administration Record for the African American Community.”

<sup>295</sup> “The Dream Act: Good for Our Economy, Good for Our Security, Good for our Nation,” The White House, November 22, 2011, accessed November 10, 2016, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/DREAM-Act-WhiteHouse-FactSheet.pdf>.

<sup>296</sup> Mark Hugo Lopez and Jens Manuel Krogstad, “5 facts about the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program,” *Pew Research Center*, August 15, 2014, accessed November 10, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/08/15/5-facts-about-the-deferred-action-for-childhood-arrivals-program/>.

<sup>297</sup> Marcia Zug, “The Mirage of Immigration Reform: The Devastating Consequences of Obama’s Immigration Policy,” *Kansas Law Review*, 2015, Vol. 63, Issue 4, 956.

conviction. Instead, the *Priority Enforcement Program (PEP)*, implemented in 2015, was supposed to prioritize the deportation of undocumented immigrants depending on the severity of the crime committed.<sup>298</sup> It is unquestionable that the implementations of the immigration programs also had negative effects: Undocumented immigrants who came to the United States after January 1, 2010 had almost no chance of staying in the country. As a consequence, the numbers of deported immigrants rose drastically and reached record heights since the implementation of the *DACA* program.<sup>299</sup> Immigrants who were waiting for deportation were locked up in detention centers – adults and children alike. Human rights violations such as denial of food and medical care, lack of due process, and allegations of sexual assault were common.<sup>300</sup> Despite these facts, conservatives' perception of Barack Obama's immigration policy is defined by a strong liberalism which, in parts, was actually its initial intention. However, the progressive ideas Obama might have had, were corrupted by a legislation that responded to his initiatives with rejection. Nevertheless, conservatives will always perceive Obama as a liberal president who was weak on undocumented immigrants.

However, the most significant point that distinguished President Obama's support for minorities was his rhetoric; his firm stance on specific minority rights and his announcements of these to the American people. Barack Obama was straight forward in responding to the civil unrest erupting after the killing of the African-American teenager Michael Brown and the acquittal of the shooter, the white police officer Darren Wilson. In contrast to President George Bush Sen., whose response to the civil unrest in Los Angeles after the brutal beating of the African-American Rodney King (1991) was evidence of his and the Republicans ignorance, Obama

---

<sup>298</sup> Jeh Johnson, "Priority Enforcement Program – How DHS is Focusing on Deporting Felons," *Homeland Security*, July 30, 2015, accessed November 10, 2016, <https://www.dhs.gov/blog/2015/07/30/priority-enforcement-program-%E2%80%93-how-dhs-focusing-deporting-felons>.

<sup>299</sup> Ana Gonzalez-Barrera and Jens Manuel Krogstad, "U.S. deportations of immigrants reach record high in 2013," *Pew Research Center*, October 2, 2014, accessed November 10, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/10/02/u-s-deportations-of-immigrants-reach-record-high-in-2013/>.

<sup>300</sup> Sarah Lazare, "Hundreds of Women in Immigrant Prison on Hunger Strike for Immediate Release," *Common Dreams*, November 3, 2015.



understood the socio-political dimension behind the Ferguson Riots. He took a stand on supporting the cause but not the violent tactics. Obama tried to de-escalate, but also to lay the foundation for progress – exactly as he did after the killing of the 17-year old African-American Trayvon Martin in Florida in 2012. His support for African-Americans was undeniably strong and was perceived accordingly by the conservative population. A research published by the Pew Research Center in June 2016 shows the dissatisfaction of white Americans – especially Republicans. 32 percent of all white respondents stated that Obama had made race relations worse. Among supporters of the Republican Party the share rose up to 63 percent (in contrast to five percent among Democrats). In addition, more than half of white Republicans (59 percent) interviewed said too much attention was paid to race and racial issues nowadays. The minority politics of the Obama administration led to an obvious alienation of white conservatives.

Still, the minority group Obama has been most supportive of over the course of his presidency was actually the LGBTQ\* community. Never before has the LGBTQ\* community had such a persistent ally in the White House who was so determined to contribute his share to LGBTQ\* equality. The only president who was willing to initiate legislative measures to facilitate gay rights before was President Bill Clinton who terribly failed, since neither the U.S. citizens nor its politicians were progressive and open-minded enough to accept and promote a society distinguished by its diversity in the 1990s. When Barack Obama ran for president in 2008 and pledged to repeal *Don't Ask, Don't Tell*, the LGBTQ\* community might only have slightly anticipated how central he would be as an ally in the White House. *Don't Ask, Don't Tell* was repealed in 2010, exactly as he had promised two years before, and in the subsequent year the Obama administration decided to no longer back up the discriminatory *Defense of Marriage Act* in court and to propose a bill to Congress that was supposed to repeal *DOMA*. This decision was the pathway towards the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Windsor v. United States* in 2013 which declared Article 3 unconstitutional. The Supreme Court's decision defined that homosexual couples who were married under state law had to receive the same benefits and protections as heterosexual couples did. Even prior to the ruling in

*Windsor v. United States*, Barack Obama affirmed his tie with the LGBTQ\* people when he stated in an ABC News Exclusive Interview that he supports same-sex marriage. Even though Obama had still been hesitant on the issue a few years before and the endorsement for the implementation of gay marriage came right before the presidential election in 2014, he proved his commitment over the next years. The President was always on the forefront when the LGBTQ\* community needed support, constantly reminding the U.S. people that the principle of equality, on which the nation was founded, also applied to the LGBTQ\* community. In 2009, Barack Obama gave a speech at the Human Rights Campaign Dinner emphasizing that he stood with every LGBTQ\* in that fight and that he would assure the passing of a hate crime legislation.<sup>301</sup> The *Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act* was signed into law the same month. In 2011, Obama returned to the HRC Dinner and gave another speech, confirming his persistence in the endeavor to spread equality and sending out the message that all Americans should be endowed with the same rights. Barack Obama's support for the LGBTQ\* community was unprecedented. The LGBTQ\* community quickly realized that they had an ally in Barack Obama who would support their initiatives. The movement's share had to be to continue their work of strategic litigation and lobbying and they even had to spread it. The movement had to reach out to the community as well as the U.S. people. They had to create awareness, construct a collective identity and gain energetic supporters and advocates for their cause. "The cause" was more or less predefined due to the encouragement of the Obama administration; it had to be the issues which can be categorized by the term "structural violence" – particularly same-sex marriage. As shown before, the LGBTQ\* movement engaged more and more in social media activities pursuing their goals of equality. Same-sex marriage became the core of their struggle and their agents to promote it were diverse.

The Obama administration's support coincided with a strengthening of the LGBTQ\* movement; and even more it contributed to its success. The

---

<sup>301</sup> Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President at Human Rights Campaign Dinner," *The White House*, October 11, 2009, accessed November 10, 2016, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/10/01/remarks-president-human-rights-campaigns-annual-national-dinner>.

rise of social media in 2008 and the years to come laid the foundation for the advancement of equal rights. The movement chose the right channels to reach millions of people and influence them – and simultaneously they benefitted from the President’s allegiance. Yet, while the LGBTQ\*’s social media movement was so enthusiastic about these advancements, they missed the emergence of virtues and strategies that were threatening the cohesion and the success of the movement. Simultaneously to the constitution of egotism as a threatening concept, an alienation of conservative and overwhelmed segments of society led to a major polarization of the U.S. people. Obama’s minority politics transformed the socio-political landscape as much as the economic developments resulting from the rule of neoliberalism. While neoliberalism as well as President Obama’s policies had undeniably positive effects on LGBTQ\* rights they also created sentiments that led the United States towards an isolated and reactionary existence. Among the outgrowths are polarized and irrational political actors. The American people is as divided as it has not been for decades and the LGBTQ\* communities are among those groups who will be suffering from it.

## **2. The Future of the LGBTQ\* Movement**

Current political and social developments have been built up over a certain period of time. Already in the aftermath of President Obama’s inauguration, a countermovement to the progressivism dominating domestic politics emerged. The Tea Party movement, which was mostly supported by right-wing politicians of the Republican Party, dedicated itself to the implementation of conservative goals. Originally, the Tea Party started as a grassroots movement preoccupied with heralding an economic conservatism. The politicians representing the Tea Party movement on a political level have additionally adopted a populist rhetoric that completely

lacked strategies to implement their goals pragmatically.<sup>302</sup> However, the Tea Party Movement is not merely aligned with economic conservatism, but has also stood for social conservatism over the course of their political activism. Politicians like Sarah Palin, Michele Bachmann, Marco Rubio, and Ted Cruz, who sided with the Tea Party and became the face on a federal level, hold tremendous social conservative beliefs. A Pew Research also found that Tea Party supporters tend to have very conservative opinions on social matters as well.<sup>303</sup> Additionally, the Tea Party and the religious right are closely linked and the latter has explicit influences on views of same-sex marriage and abortion as the survey showed. The Tea Party Movement was a manifestation of the attempt to give conservatives a place of belonging, to unite them in a movement that would bring change and that would stir up the establishment. However, what the movement actually accomplished was the immense fractioning of the Republican Party.

The polarization within the political and social landscape which has been illuminated before was spread even more and additionally accompanied by the expansion of a harsh and hateful rhetoric. Especially the Tucson shooting in 2011, in which the Democratic Representative Gabrielle Giffords barely survived an assassination attempt and six other people were wounded, gave rise to criticism of the evolving hateful environment in the United States. Nevertheless, the socio-political climate even aggravated and reached its momentum during the last two years of the Obama presidency. The candidacy of Donald J. Trump has changed the political discourse. Trump, a man without any political experience, fought an election campaign that was unprecedented. His campaign as well as the nomination and election process was characterized by hate, contempt of minorities and women and the attempt to set groups against each other. The radicalism he has stirred divided the nation to a degree that has not been

---

<sup>302</sup> For instances, the Tea Party Patriots organization's major ambition is, according to their own definition, the conservation of the American Dream and the creation of the economic basis that helps to achieve it. The Tea Party Patriots have adopted a traditional, narrow agenda that concentrates on the limitation of federal power, tax cuts and "fiscal responsibility". More information: Tea Party Patriots, "Our Vision," *Tea Party Patriots*, accessed November 11, 2016, <https://www.teapartypatriots.org/ourvision/>.

<sup>303</sup> Scott Clement and John C. Green, "The Tea Party, Religion, and Social Issues," *Pew Research Center*, February 23, 2011, <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1903/tea-party-movement-religion-social-issues-conservative-christian>.

seen for almost half a century. Women, immigrants, African-Americans, and disabled people were humiliated and verbally harassed. Since the election of Donald Trump, minorities fear for their rights in the United States. The Republican Party was shaken as well as the American people. Donald Trump appealed to all those who were dissatisfied with the politics of the past years. 78 percent of his supporters claimed that a continuation of the Obama politics under a potential Clinton administration would be a “bad thing”.<sup>304</sup> On top of the rejection of Obama’s economic policies, Republicans and Republican leaners disproportionately do not perceive discrimination against racial minorities, immigrants, Muslims, women or LGBTQ\*s. Additionally, they are also disproportionately sure that no further progress is needed in e.g. racial equality.<sup>305</sup> The irrational striving for a defeat of the political establishment, for which Hillary Clinton was one of the most distinguished representatives, led to the election of a radical populist. The voters’ decision for opposing the established politicians must be associated with an insufficient knowledge of the political system. The election of the U.S. president will never bring a total change to the political system and will never extinguish the establishment because the legislative body always consists of people that are part of the so-called establishment with whom the executive branch will have to cooperate. Eventually, the laws passed and the decisions made are those approved and supported by the legislative branch – the “establishment”.

The decision-making power of the executive branch is limited but still, its rhetoric and its symbolism are influential. The cabinet which Donald Trump appointed does not only have prominence for a strong focus on economic politics it is also infamous for its conservative values and especially its anti-LGBTQ\* stance as well as its ignorance regarding minority politics. Donald Trump’s cabinet does not include a single LGBTQ\* ally. On the contrary – among its members are politicians that belong to the most dedicated anti-LGBTQ\* politicians in the United States.

---

<sup>304</sup> “Clinton, Trump Supporters Have Starkly Different Views of a Changing Nation,” Pew Research Center, August 18, 2016, accessed December 21, 2016, <http://www.people-press.org/2016/08/18/clinton-trump-supporters-have-starkly-different-views-of-a-changing-nation/>.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

The Attorney General Jeff Sessions has casted votes against every single bill benefiting LGBTQ\* people. He not only voted to ban same-sex marriage by an amendment to the U.S. constitution but also co-sponsored the *First Amendment Defense Act* that would guarantee the right to discriminate against LGBTQ\*s on grounds of religious beliefs. The essence of the bill says that the act would:

Prohibit the federal government from taking discriminatory action against a person on the basis that such person believes or acts in accordance with a religious belief or moral conviction that: (1) marriage is or should be recognized as the union of one man and one woman, or (2) sexual relations are properly reserved to such a marriage.<sup>306</sup>

The *First Amendment Defense Act* would enshrine another piece of discriminatory practice into law and thereby constitute itself as part of a structure that would contribute to ostracizing LGBTQ\* people. If passed by Congress, Donald Trump has already promised to sign the bill into law.<sup>307</sup> Additionally, Sessions opposes the inclusion of LGBTQ\* people as a vulnerable group into U.S. hate crime legislations.<sup>308</sup> However, the Attorney General has to sign off on federal hate crime prosecutions, which makes it very likely that over the course of the Trump administration no crimes will be prosecuted as federal hate crimes. This weakens the fight against hate crimes and violence tremendously.

But not only the office of the Attorney General is held by a committed anti-LGBTQ\* official, also Tom Price, Trump's initial Secretary of Health and Human Services<sup>309</sup>, has a clear standing that opposes gay as well as transsexual rights. Price who also co-sponsors the *First Amendment*

---

<sup>306</sup> "H.R.2802 - First Amendment Defense Act," U.S. Congress, accessed January 15, 2017, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/2802>.

<sup>307</sup> Donald Trump, "Issues of Importance to Catholics," accessed January 27, 2017, <https://www.donaldjtrump.com/press-releases/issues-of-importance-to-catholics>.

<sup>308</sup> "Trump's Attorney General Pick Opposes Hate Crime Laws And Roe v. Wade," *The Huffington Post*, accessed January 15, 2017, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/jeff-sessions-attorney-general\\_us\\_5874f71be4b043ad97e5bba1](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/jeff-sessions-attorney-general_us_5874f71be4b043ad97e5bba1).

<sup>309</sup> Price resigned in September 2017 after his trips with charter planes that cost more 400,000 USD became public.

*Defense Act* has voted against hate-crime protections and opposes same-sex marriage. While the Attorney General is essential for the protection of minority rights, the Secretary of Health and Human Services has the responsibility to ensure the funding of anti-HIV researches – a topic that is especially significant for the LGBTQ\* community. Donald Trump endangered these major topics by appointing Price.

However, the number of anti-LGBTQ\* politicians within the cabinet was even higher: Betsy DeVos, a billionaire who has been the chair of the Windquest Group, an investment management firm, and has been appointed Secretary of Education has previously funded organizations that are committed to restricting LGBTQ\* rights.<sup>310</sup> Among those was the group *Focus on the Family*, a conservative Christian group that supports conversion therapy.<sup>311</sup>

James Mattis, the former four-star general who served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1969 to 2013 and was appointed as Secretary of Defense has openly opposed the repeal of *Don't Ask, Don't Tell*. In his confirmation hearing as Secretary of Defense, Mattis avoided any clear positioning when he was questioned by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand on his stance on LGBTQ\* people serving in the U.S. military.

Apart from the ministers that have the ability to impact LGBTQ\* rights directly, the remaining cabinet also has a strong anti-LGBTQ\* standing. Ben Carson, Rick Perry, Elaine Chao, Wilbur Ross as well as Trump's initial Chief of Staff Reince Priebus<sup>312</sup> – they all have a history of supporting anti-LGBTQ\* legislations and voicing disapproval and contempt for homosexuality.

---

<sup>310</sup> Benjamin Wermund and Kimberly Hefling, "Trump's education secretary pick supported anti-gay causes," *POLITICO*, November 25, 2016, accessed January 15, 2017, <http://www.politico.com/story/2016/11/betsy-devos-education-secretary-civil-rights-gay-transgender-students-231837>.

<sup>311</sup> Conversion therapy rests on the belief that a person's "abnormal" sexual orientation can be adjusted by providing psychological treatment or spiritual counseling. The result is supposed to be the conversion of a homosexual or bisexual orientation into a heterosexual one. In the past (predominantly before the 1980s), aversive treatments like electro-shock therapy or chemical castration with hormonal treatment and ice pick lobotomies were used with the intention to adjust one's sexual orientation. More on conversion therapies: Garnets, Linda and Douglas Kimmel, ed. *Psychological Perspectives on Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Experiences*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

<sup>312</sup> Priebus was replaced by John F. Kelly in July 2017.

Vice-President Mike Pence, an evangelical Christian, has not only voted against the *Employment Non-Discrimination Act*, the repeal of *Don't Ask, Don't Tell* and the *Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act* but has also signed a Religious Freedom Restoration Act during his term as Governor of Indiana. Furthermore, Pence has a record of supporting conversion therapy even though his current attitude on this procedure is not clear. Moreover, the close alignment of Donald Trump with his key advisor and strategist Stephen Bannon over the course of the election process and the first days in office was alarming. Bannon has formerly been the executive chair of the far-right online magazine *Breitbart News*, a website that is well-known for its extremist conservative, right-wing opinions that fuels hate against immigrants, minority groups and liberals. Even though Trump has distanced himself from Bannon which became especially apparent when the strategist was removed from the Security Council in 2017 and ultimately also in 2018 when Trump openly broke with Bannon, his cabinet choices and the selection of his closest advisors have already exposed right after his election that LGBTQ\* equality will be under threat for the next years. The election in 2016 has also secured the Republican Party a solid majority in the House of Representatives as well as in the Senate. During – at least – the first two years of the Trump administration, anti-LGBTQ\* bills can easily be passed while it is unlikely that equality bills will be enacted. The threat that anti-LGBTQ\* bills will be implemented is imminent. It is expected that anti-LGBTQ\* bills which have been introduced into state's legislations and in the U.S. Congress on a regular basis will be actually passed over the next years. A potential implementation of the *First Amendment Defense Act* on the federal level might be a threat to LGBTQ\* equality as well as bathroom bills to transgender rights. In addition, the passage of the *Employment Non-Discrimination Bill*, which has been introduced into each Congress since 1994, will recede into the distance. In fact, the first 100 days of Donald Trump as President of the United States have already set the agenda for minority politics.

*Executive Order 13769*, titled *Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States* that was signed on January 27, 2017,



banned citizens from Iraq, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen from immigrating into and/or entering the United States. This order (and those to follow) already pointed towards Donald Trump and his administration's position on minority and human rights. The opposition that emerged after the introduction of the executive order clearly depicted the commitment of liberal Americans to defy the U.S. government and its conservative and reactionary legislations. The election of Donald Trump has revitalized liberal protest movements in the United States – and also worldwide. The *Women's March* which was organized a day after Donald Trump's inauguration in Washington D.C. as well as in major cities of all seven continents was in response to the hateful rhetoric Donald Trump utilized in his election campaign. The movement is dedicated to equality, diversity and inclusion and the spreading of the understanding of women's rights as human rights.<sup>313</sup> It envisions itself as a progressive movement. The magnitude of the marches worldwide was impressive and it symbolized the desire of millions of people to counter the populist, anti-democratic and paternalistic developments. The protesters carried their fight to the streets and deployed a long-standing tradition that has become a symbol of the power of the people: A march on Washington. Multiple times revolutions grew in strength and influence on the streets of Washington D.C. These streets have stirred the Civil Rights Movement, the Women's Rights Movement and the Anti-War Movements in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This time, in 2017, the March on Washington was in opposition to conservatives and their values, vestiges of the past and inhuman rhetoric. It was the embracement of diversity and globalism.

The progressives in the United States benefit from highly motivated supporters and plenty of resources constituting the foundation to oppose the developments that might evolve over the next years. Gay rights organizations were among those that quickly started campaigns to affront any anti-LGBTQ\* activities. The *Human Rights Campaign* initiated an online study a month after the election of Donald Trump. The organization tried to retrieve a synopsis of the election's effects on U.S. adolescences

---

<sup>313</sup> "Women's March Global," Women's March on Washington, accessed April 14, 2017, <https://www.womensmarch.com/global/>.

between 13 and 18 years. Even though the survey is not representative it provides a clear indication which impact the current political situation had on young people belonging to minority groups. Of the 50,619 respondents, 70 percent reported witnessing bullying, hate messages or harassment during or since the 2016 election. Among young people who reported seeing bullying and harassment, 70 percent had seen incidents motivated by race or ethnicity, 63 percent had observed incidents motivated by sexual orientation, 59 percent had witnessed incidents motivated by immigration status, and 55 percent had seen incidents motivated by gender.<sup>314</sup> Although it must be considered that respondents have become more sensitive about occurrences of bullying and harassment in the aftermath of the election, the study nonetheless shows that the socio-political situation has become tenser and affects minorities' minds. The *Human Rights Campaign* already tried to raise awareness to these developments and to create the foundation for more wide-spread actions against anti-LGBTQ\* politicians and activists in early 2017.

It was also the *Human Rights Campaign* that has started to post photographs and charts of Donald Trump's cabinet nominees (and later secretaries) and their anti-LGBTQ\* and anti-minority reputations since Trump had announced the candidates.



<sup>314</sup> "Human Rights Campaign Post-Election Survey of Youth," Human Rights Campaign, January 18, 2017, accessed January 20, 2017, [http://hrc-assets.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com/files/assets/resources/HRC\\_PostElectionSurveyofYouth.pdf](http://hrc-assets.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com/files/assets/resources/HRC_PostElectionSurveyofYouth.pdf).

Furthermore, videos have been uploaded on YouTube that expose the cabinet member's anti-LGBTQ\* record. The Human Rights Campaign has additionally published leaflets delineating the anti-LGBTQ\* positions of the cabinet members. In January 2017, the activists uploaded a pamphlet headlining "JEFF SESSIONS: A HISTORY OF ANTI-LGBTQ ACTIONS".<sup>315</sup> It exposes the Attorney General's positions on LGBTQ\* rights and includes an open letter written by Judy Shepard, the mother of the murdered Matthew Shepard. Judy Shepard has been an active promoter of LGBTQ\* rights and has – as mentioned before – contributed particularly to the implementation of the federal hate crime law which was opposed by Jeff Sessions. On July 20, 2009 the former Senator held a long speech against the *Matthew Shepard and James L. Byrd Hate Crimes Prevention Act* and the pamphlet cites one of his most distinctive exclamations:

Instead of administering justice without fear or favor, this legislation that has been placed on this bill creates a new system of justice for individuals because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, providing them with a special protection, while excluding vulnerable individuals, such as the elderly or police officers or soldiers, from such special protections. I don't think we can justify that.<sup>316</sup>

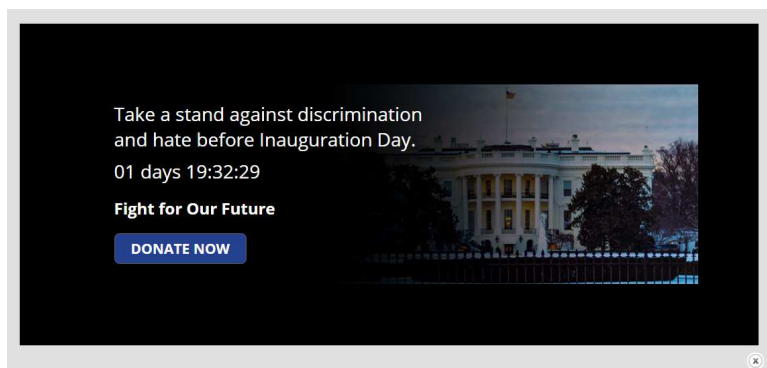
This statement among others strongly offended LGBTQ\* people and became valuable in the activist's attempts to create a cohesion among the movement's participants in its struggle against the challenges that arose with the election of Donald Trump and the Republican dominated U.S. Congress. Images like the ones above that show the cabinet's negative record on LGBTQ\* rights are supposed to raise awareness and illuminate what might result from the current political developments. Not only the *Human Rights Campaign* but also *GLAAD* has started to post similar photos on social media. *GLAAD* has launched the "Trump Accountability Project"

---

<sup>315</sup> "Jeff Sessions: A History of Anti-LGBTQ Actions," Human Rights Campaign, accessed January 18, 2017, [http://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2017/images/01/09/session\\_report-rev.pdf](http://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2017/images/01/09/session_report-rev.pdf).

<sup>316</sup> "Sessions expresses concern about the Hate Crimes Act," Jeff Sessions – United States Senator for Alabama, accessed January 18, 2017, <http://www.sessions.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2009/7/sessions-expresses-concern-about-the-hate-crimes-act>.

that depicts itself as a “resource for journalists, editors, and other news makers reporting on the Trump administration, which catalogues the anti-LGBTQ statements and actions of President-elect Donald Trump and those in his circle.”<sup>317</sup>



The LGBTQ\* social media movement tried to bring itself into position. After entering the website of the Trump Accountability Project weeks and days before Donald Trump’s inauguration above window appeared. The rallying cry “*Fight for Our Future*” had a dual function: It implied that minority rights will be on stake over the course of the Trump administration and it also highlighted that it is not just someone’s future but *ours* [emphasis added]. It intends to create a unity among LGBTQ\* people and the window additionally stresses the urgent need to contribute to the movement by showing the countdown until the inauguration of Donald Trump. *GLAAD* also continued this kind of rhetoric after Trump’s inauguration. The newest slogan titles TOGETHER#WeResist and is followed by the exclamation “LGBTQ people under attack” and a clock counting the days Donald Trump is in office.

However, will these measures be sufficient to confront social-conservative and reactionary legislation that lay ahead? It stands to reason that the Trump administration will promote structural violence even if the number of bills intending to restrict LGBTQ\* equality stays limited. The fact that such persistent opponents of minority rights are in possession of the executive power is a manifestation of the continued existence of structural violence against LGBTQ\*. The next years will hardly see the

---

<sup>317</sup> “Trump Accountability Project,” GLAAD, accessed January 18, 2017, <http://www.glaad.org/trump>.

implementation of laws that intend to protect LGBTQ\* people. The progress will stagnate and instead a backlash is likely to unfold its power.

The first 100 days of Donald Trump have shown that his strategy of promoting legislative pieces harmful to LGBTQ\* rights is subtle. On January 31, 2017, the White House published a press release assuring LGBTQ\* people that Donald Trump would not reverse *Executive Order 11246* which was amended by Barack Obama's *Executive Order 13672*. After Obama's amendment *Executive Order 11246* prohibited "federal contractors and federally-assisted construction contractors and subcontractors, who did over \$10,000 in Government business in one year from discriminating in employment decisions on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or national origin."<sup>318</sup> As discussed in the chapter on workplace discrimination, this executive order is the single federal regulation that protects LGBTQ\* workers slightly. However, only two months later on March 27, 2017, Trump enforced the *Presidential Executive Order on the Revocation of Federal Contracting Executive Orders*. Section 1 revoked Obama's amendment that prohibited sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination for federal contractors.<sup>319</sup> The enforcement of Trump's executive order was done silently and there was a clear intention to avoid attracting too much attention. Interestingly, his strategy was successful. The major gay rights organizations hardly covered news on Trump's order; instead they remained surprisingly passive.

It might be that the gay rights organizations like *GLAAD* and the *Human Rights Campaign* were preoccupied with the developments that evolved the following day. On March 28, 2017, the criteria for the Census 2020 were released and it became apparent that *sexual orientation* and *gender identity* will be erased from the survey. The *Human Rights*

---

<sup>318</sup> Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP), "Executive Order 11246 — Equal Employment Opportunity," United States Department of Labor, accessed April 14, 2017, [https://www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/ca\\_11246.htm](https://www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/ca_11246.htm).

<sup>319</sup> "Presidential Executive Order on the Revocation of Federal Contracting Executive Orders," The White House, accessed April 14, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/03/27/presidential-executive-order-revocation-federal-contracting-executive>.

Campaign reacted instantly on Twitter and Facebook and introduced the hashtag #CantEraseUs<sup>320</sup>:



Apart from the distinct anti-LGBTQ\* cabinet Donald Trump retains, these developments expose the most dangerous threat to LGBTQ\* people in the United States: Ignorance. Trump has always envisioned himself as an ally of the LGBTQ\* community. He has explicitly stressed his alleged allegiance after the *Pulse* shooting when he presented himself as the only presidential candidate who intends to protect LGBTQ\* people from Islamic terrorism:

<sup>320</sup> HumanRightsCampaign, Twitter Post, March 28, 2017, 20:07 p.m. <https://twitter.com/HRC/status/846921656220209152>.

And by the way the LGBT community is just – what’s happened to them is just so sad and to be thinking about where their policies are currently with this administration is a disgrace to that community, I will tell you right now.

Clinton wants to allow radical Islamic terrorists to pour into our country. They enslave women, and they murder gays. I don’t want them in our country.<sup>321</sup>

He showed himself with a gay flag<sup>322</sup> and abused gay rights for his agenda against immigrants, appealing to homonationalism. He faced massive criticism within the community when he abused the *Pulse* shooting for his anti-immigrant agenda and still he portrayed himself as the major ally of LGBTQ\* people, as the good shepherd who will secure their freedom and their beliefs in sexual and gender diversity.<sup>323</sup> But simultaneously he draws a line between the community and himself when he states “your freedoms and beliefs” which include the belief in diversity and equality – something Donald Trump does obviously not consider as “his” beliefs.

---

<sup>321</sup> “Donald Trump speaks after Orlando massacre,” YouTube video, 33:26. Posted by CNN, June 13, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qhqQqvTij4k>.

<sup>322</sup> Which he held up-side-down. Link to a photo: “Donald Trump Waves LGBT Rainbow Flag at Colorado Rally,” *The Advocate*, October 31, 2016, accessed June 11, 2017, <http://www.advocate.com/2016/10/31/donald-trump-waves-lgbt-rainbow-flag-colorado-rally>.

<sup>323</sup> Donald J. Trump, Twitter post, June 14, 2016, 10:31 a.m. <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/742771576039460864>.



Nevertheless, he continues to emphasize his support for the LGBTQ\* community. This is well-illustrated by his press statement in January 2017 when he reassured the community to enforce LGBTQ workplace protection:

President Donald J. Trump is determined to protect the rights of all Americans, including the LGBTQ community. President Trump continues to be respectful and supportive of LGBTQ rights, just as he was throughout the election. The President is proud to have been the first ever GOP nominee to mention the LGBTQ community in his nomination acceptance speech, pledging then to protect the community from violence and oppression.<sup>324</sup>

Donald Trump seems to perceive his stance on LGBTQ\* rights as liberal and progressive. He perceives the United States as a place in which discrimination and violence against LGBTQ\*s is only exercised by Islamic terrorists and immigrants. He ignores the fact that U.S. citizens are also among the perpetrators and that the political system has not eliminated

---

<sup>324</sup> "Presidential Executive Order on the Revocation of Federal Contracting Executive Orders," The White House, accessed April 14, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/03/27/presidential-executive-order-revocation-federal-contracting-executive>.



discrimination and structural violence against LGBTQ\*s. He does not comprehend that social concepts like heteronormativity are still established and threaten the well-being of LGBTQ\* people. Moreover, neither Trump nor Republican voters, nor Trump's cabinet members see the requisiteness to initiate further steps to assure equality. A Pew Research from October 2016 clearly indicated that 71 percent of Republicans and Republican Leaners favor that shop owners of wedding services are able to refuse to serve gay or lesbian couples. In addition, 67 percent of people identifying as Republican insist that transgender people use the restroom for the gender they were born into – even if the current appearance does not fit this gender.<sup>325</sup> These beliefs clearly show that there is a lack of understanding and ignorance for the consequences of these attitudes that get manifested in society's structure. On the day of Donald Trump's inauguration all LGBTQ\*-related pages of the White House website were archived and not replaced by any statement by Donald Trump or the new administration. Even though this did not come as a surprise it is symbolic for the new era under Donald Trump. LGBTQ\* rights are not part of the Republican agenda. The decision to erase the categories of gender identity and sexual orientation from the Census 2020 has probably not been out of viciousness but out of ignorance and the belief that the level of equality already reached by LGBTQ\*s is sufficient; that it is no longer necessary to pay particular attention to these categories since the progress of the last years has been erasing all grievances. This ignorance combined with the firm anti-LGBTQ\* attitude of many cabinet members is threatening the community. The circumstance that Neil M. Gorsuch has become the newest member of the U.S. Supreme Court is not reassuring. Gorsuch has a record of conservative rulings and is closely aligned with religious groups. He will probably be serving the court for the next decades and liberal votes from his side can hardly be expected.

The next years will bring a backlash against LGBTQ\* rights – may it be intended or unintended. May it be under a President called Donald

---

<sup>325</sup> Rob Suls, "Deep divides between, within parties on public debates about LGBT issues," *Pew Research Center*, October 4, 2016, accessed April 15, 2017, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/10/04/deep-divides-between-within-parties-on-public-debates-about-lgbt-issues/>.

Trump or a President by the name Mike Pence. An impeachment of Donald Trump can not be ruled out. He, himself as well as the virtues he stands for are too controversial to predict if Donald Trump will remain in office for the full term. However, an administration led by Mike Pence would indeed be a major threat that could even lead to an aggravation of the situation for LGBTQ\* people. Either way, the consequences LGBTQ\*s will suffer from over the course of the next years will include an impairment of their mental and/or physical well-being. On March 29, 2017 the new administration sent its budget for the fiscal year 2017 to Congress and indicated that the Department of Defense will receive an increase in 54 billion US Dollar. Therefore, the budget for the health department will be cut dramatically. It is expected that 1.2 billion US Dollar will be cut from the National Institutes of Health, 50 million US Dollar from CDC HIV research and prevention programs and nearly 300 million US Dollar from the global HIV and AIDS treatment through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).<sup>326</sup> It is this ignorance that threatens lives; the spirit of egotism that leads to the ignorance of the well-being of other people. Neoliberalism has not promoted human rights; instead it has given rise to a society that often lacks the ability empathize. Donald Trump is the embodiment of the neoliberal nature and combines its virtues. Moral reasoning is unbeknownst to him.

So, how can the LGBTQ\* community and particularly the major gay rights organizations confront this force of anti-LGBTQ\* politicians and the spirit of egotism and ignorance; an egotism and ignorance that does not only penetrate the heteronormative society but also the LGBTQ\* movement itself? The initial activism against Donald Trump and his administration was promising but the first 100 days have shown that the Trump administrations' strategy to cut back LGBTQ\* rights and to subvert homosexuals', bisexuals' and transgenders' visibility are challenging. How can LGBTQ\* people address these developments and reach out to people when the

---

<sup>326</sup> Andrea Levario, "Trump's Proposed Budget Threatens Cuts to NIH & HIV Research," *Human Rights Campaign Foundation*, March 31, 2017, accessed April 15, 2017, <http://www.hrc.org/blog/trumps-proposed-budget-threatens-cuts-to-nih-hiv-research>.

administration's methods are so subtle? Donald Trump's social media activism as well as his press secretaries' and advisors' public performances take up much space and distract the public's attention.

The reign of social media has heralded an era in which fake news and populist messages can be quickly and efficiently distributed. Donald Trump has mastered the strategies to play this game. This development has been defined as the rise of post-truth politics over the last months. The concept of "post-truth politics" was already introduced by the writer Ralph Keyes in 2004 but has not come to much prominence until the year 2016. Since then the expression has undergone an impressive rise of usage. It would be naïve to believe that post-truth politics represent a new development. History has seen the exploitation of lies and half-truths by politicians. What has changed is that the distribution of these lies has become easier and more difficult to penetrate due to the rise of social media. Donald Trump has understood the potential of social media and has proven to be the pioneer, the one who demonstrated the successfulness of spreading populist politics via social media. It has been his advisor Kellyanne Conway who has created the term "alternative facts" and depicted it as a true construct.

The propagation of superficial and incomplete knowledge, the expansion of incorrect information, the tendency to consume only selected news sources, or even exclusively social media posts, is a threat to the heritage of the enlightenment Western societies have gone through in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. Additionally, it has become a threat to all minorities. Manipulation can be easily achieved via social media networks and might even be driven by political players.<sup>327</sup>

Moreover, there have already been attempts to set minorities against each other. The *Pulse* shooting is probably the best example. Donald Trump himself played the terrorism card and thereby tried to appeal to a construct

---

<sup>327</sup> Cambridge Analytica, a company that applies "behavioral microtargeting" on social platforms has worked for Trump's election campaign and might have manipulated the distribution of information according to the user's specific profile. However the impact of the company's work remains uncertain. More on that: Hannes Grassegger and Mikael Krogerus, "Ich habe nur gezeigt, dass es die Bombe gibt," *Das Magazine*, December 3, 2016, accessed December 21, 2016, <https://www.dasmagazin.ch/2016/12/03/ich-habe-nur-gezeigt-dass-es-die-bombe-gibt/>.

that is called *homonationalism*. The term was introduced by the gender studies researcher Jasbir K. Puar in his book “Terrorist Assemblages” (2007). The concept attempts to explain why LGBTQ\* people gather around the nationalistic views of the far-right, the politics of which are also targeted against LGBTQ\*s themselves; a behavior that seems to be contradictory but traces back to the fear of some LGBTQ\*s of immigrants – especially Muslim immigrants – assuming that these will be threatening gay rights and sexual diversity. In times of populism, homonationalism also becomes a peril for the cohesion of the LGBTQ\* movement. The *Pulse* shooting has shown that the movement additionally has to confront and thwart the rising paternalistic behavior of white heterosexuals who depict themselves as open-minded and accepting but are instead driven by ignorance and a sense of egotism. People who were allegedly mourning the death of the 49 victims and called the shooting an act of terror lack basic understanding of the deeper meaning of the occurrences. Omar Mateen might have sworn his allegiance to ISIL but the hate for LGBTQ\* people has been fed to him – at least partially – in the United States. In 1986, Mateen was born in New Hyde Park, New York to Afghan parents. He was raised in the United States in a moderate Muslim family. ISIL preaches predominantly hate against disbelievers, namely those who are not believing in the religion of Islam, the radical interpretation of the Qur'an and the shariah. Even though homosexuality is supposed to be punished with death in the view of radical Islamists, an attack on any ordinary American would have served Mateen's intention. Yet he chose a gay bar. The real motivation for his choice will never be unfolded but what persists is the circumstance that it is not sufficient to reduce the shooting to an act of terror. The people who died were LGBTQ\*s and their allies. Whether Mateen's hate against LGBTQ\* people was stirred by radical Islamism or the heteronormative society or even both, either way or another, the act was a hate crime. It was an act that has shown that the methods to face direct violence have to be adapted and that new threats have joined the persisting ones. Some members of the LGBTQ\* community might anticipate an increased level of violence they might be confronted with. People like Donald Trump even try to stir this fear and abuse it for their political cause. Homonationalism and the rise of

Islamic fear additionally jeopardize the cohesion of the community. The current socio-political developments expose LGBTQ\* people to a variety of threats and increase the danger of fractioning.

The *Pulse* shooting has also uncovered an additional challenge imposed by the use of social media for LGBTQ\* activism: fake news and hoaxes. Soon after the first accounts of the shooting and the offender were released, rumors started spreading that Omar Mateen was well known among many patrons in Pulse. Several witnesses reported independently of one another that Mateen had been a regular visitor at the gay club. In addition, a couple of men claimed that they had been in contact with Mateen via the gay dating apps Grindr, Jack'd and Adam4Adam.<sup>328</sup> Mateen's ex-wife was quoted to be certain that Mateen was gay and that his father had teased him for his allegedly feminine behavior. Furthermore, a Latin-American man reached out to the media and declared that he had had a sexual relationship with Omar Mateen for several months prior to the shooting. The man, who wanted to remain anonymous and called himself Miguel, stated that he had had sexual intercourse with Mateen more than 20 times and that they had always met in a hotel room. In his opinion, the attack on Pulse was an act of revenge as Mateen feared to have conceived HIV<sup>329</sup> from a gay Puerto Rican.<sup>330</sup> Miguel's credibility was immediately doubted by major U.S. newspapers and the doubts were confirmed by the FBI which has found no evidence that Omar Mateen had had a sexual relationship with another man.<sup>331</sup> In addition, the Washington Post questioned the reliability of *Univision*, the American Spanish language broadcast television network that broadcasted the interview with Miguel and

---

<sup>328</sup> Molly Hennessy-Fiske, "FBI investigators say they have found no evidence that Orlando shooter had gay lovers," *Los Angeles Times*, June 23, 2016, accessed October 8, 2016, <http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-orlando-gay-fbi-20160623-snap-story.html>.

<sup>329</sup> According to the FBI, the autopsy showed that Omar Mateen was HIV-negative.

<sup>330</sup> Joe Tacopino, "Omar Mateen's gay lover says attack was 'revenge' for HIV-positive hookup," *New York Post*, June 22, 2016, accessed October 8, 2016, <http://nypost.com/2016/06/22/omar-mateens-alleged-gay-lover-claims-he-hated-puerto-ricans/>.

<sup>331</sup> Hennessy-Fiske, "FBI investigators say they have found no evidence that Orlando shooter had gay lovers."

that usually only provides entertainment broadcasts.<sup>332</sup> In addition, the Internet blog ABC news published an article in which they hinted that Mateen's last text message to his wife stated: "I'm Gay, That's Why I'm Doing This."<sup>333</sup> The article was unexposed as a hoax but it illuminates that the social media landscape constructs a system difficult to penetrate. The Internet and social media pose a major challenge; the objectiveness and credibility of media outlets become more difficult to determine. The selectivity of consumers of social media platforms and Internet users poses a peril to an open and target-oriented discourse as extremism can easily be fostered and stir emotions that prevent dialogues between opposing factions. Misinformation and misrepresentation can influence masses and spark reactions corresponding to a political or ideological player's intention. Choosing only one source of information will automatically result in incompleteness and the quantity of one-sided information can easily stimulate polarization and radicalism. Instead of applying selective behaviors consumers must be committed to question any social media content and reflect on its essence. But how can billions of social media consumers be persuaded to become responsible actors in the sphere of social media? The presidency of Donald Trump will definitely not bring reforms that will result in a responsible and cautious utilization of social media by the common Internet user. Therefore, the challenges for the LGBTQ\* movement will be dominated by the development of measures to counter the radicalization of the rhetoric on social media platforms, the rise of committed anti-LGBTQ\* politicians to public office and the containment of the spirit of egotism and ignorance. And it especially has to face the challenge of ensuring the cohesion of the LGBTQ\* movement.

A potential tool to preserve its cohesion, stimulate its diversity and to raise awareness despite the radical rhetoric on social media platforms might lie in the violence triangle. Embracing the violence triangle would

---

<sup>332</sup> Erik Wemple, "Univision exclusive on Omar Mateen's secret gay life comes under fire," *The Washington Post*, June 24, 2016, accessed October 8, 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/erik-wemple/wp/2016/06/24/univision-exclusive-on-omar-mateens-secret-gay-life-comes-under-fire/?utm\\_term=.beebe44cf949](https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/erik-wemple/wp/2016/06/24/univision-exclusive-on-omar-mateens-secret-gay-life-comes-under-fire/?utm_term=.beebe44cf949).

<sup>333</sup> Jimmy Rustling, "Omar Mateen's Final Text To Wife Released: I'm Gay, That's Why I'm Doing This," *ABC News*, November 10, 2016, accessed December 15, 2016, <http://abcnews.com.co/omar-mateens-final-text-to-wife-released-im-gay/>.

lead to a broadening of the movement and a higher degree of inclusiveness. Those who currently often feel abandoned by the movement, who do not receive the degree of support, they are in need of to improve their situation – those might be integrated into the collective. The violence triangle can spread the knowledge about the interdependency of the different manifestations of violence. Only if all three branches of the triangle are permanently targeted with the same intensity, unequal structures and violence will be subverted. As shown before, the abandonment of direct violence has led to despair among those who have been targeted. *Pulse* has additionally revealed that the fear of direct violence and the desolation resulting from the inner knowledge that it has not been adequately confronted yet, is immanent for each individual LGBTQ\* person. *Pulse* exposed each LGBTQ\*'s vulnerability and it stirred a fear that is often suppressed by oneself. The reactions after the shooting revealed the hopelessness of the community and they have also exposed the peril of radicalization of LGBTQ\* people. The shock and the helplessness resulted in harsh words and a tendency towards isolating oneself. Posts like the one by @EffyDxn show the encapsulation one can go through.<sup>334</sup>



Elyssa Edwards, who is the person behind the user name EffyDxn, named the cultural violence that results from the rule of heteronormativity. However, simultaneously her post transfers feelings of despair and

<sup>334</sup> Elyssa Edwards, Twitter post, June 15, 2016, 10:48 a.m., <https://twitter.com/EffyDxn/media>.

allegations. This reaction is legitimate as a first response to the *Pulse* shooting while shock and sorrow dominate emotions. Yet it must be prevented that these feelings remain at the forefront of one's mind. The LGBTQ\* movement, under the leadership of the most influential gay rights organizations like the *Human Rights Campaign* and *GLAAD*, has to integrate direct violence into their social media activism more strongly – otherwise the rapture of the movement as well as the alienation of major parts of U.S. society will continue. In addition, they have to engage in a debate of major manifestations of structural violence that have been neglected so far; neglected, because they did not affect the majority of the community. Homeless kids and teenagers need the support of the whole community. The LGBTQ\* community can not criticize the heteronormative society's ignorance and malice while not scrutinizing their own strategies. It is not exclusively on heterosexual conservatives or people who do not question the heteronormative system and their deeply-rooted sense of egotism and ignorance; it is also on LGBTQ\* activists to disclose the flaws of their movement and to counteract negative developments. The neglect of minorities and victims of direct violence are among these challenges that must be countered by the community. They have to be confronted if the LGBTQ\* movement intends to succeed in their struggle for the elimination of all factors affecting the well-being of LGBTQ\*s. The persistence of the virtue of egotism within the community threatens the movement as much as the opposition of conservatives fighting LGBTQ\* rights. The gay rights organizations have to lead the way; they have to structure the movement efficiently and work inclusively. Otherwise, not only the lives of individuals are on the line but also the cohesion of the broader movement.

The neglect of direct violence in social media activism will lead to the inability to realize the major goals of the movement. Equality will only be of value if LGBTQ\*s are able to be themselves in the public sphere without being a potential target. The neoliberal society feeds us with a strong affection towards egotism and ignorance. To some extent, participating in the LGBTQ\* movement serves exactly these virtues. LGBTQ\* people profit from the successes achieved; it is what forces them to engage and join the movement. This can be utilized and adapted to the



preexisting conditions. It will not be feasible to change the climate of egotism near-term. Instead, the solution to the challenges the movement is facing might be that social media actors must be forced into expanding their activity of self-staging. Potential activists must be convinced that supporting the course of fighting all manifestations of LGBTQ\* violence benefits the individual as well. The violence triangle is the tool of persuasion and the individual's longing for self-staging the catalyst that convinces individuals to engage in social media activism. The movement has to stimulate more of the feelings they are already approaching. It is not sufficient to confide in the empathy of social media users since only a small minority will react on this and engage in activism. Instead it will be necessary to nurse such feelings like the desire for self-staging; the yearning for attention and likes. This strategy might activate new sources and new advocates. The LGBTQ\* movement has to continue and even spread their strategy of staging the fate of individuals. Combined with the adaption of the violence triangle social media users can be fed with the direct linkage to their own fate and act on their desire of self-staging. The goal must not be the achievement of uniformity of LGBTQ\* activists. The movement must instead strive for the inclusion of diversity and integrate as many different LGBTQ\* activists as possible. The violence triangle will demonstrate the connection between different manifestations of violence and expose the implicit advantages each individual will profit from – no matter how different they are from each other.

Raising awareness for direct violence will result in legislative actions that might impact society. Hate crime legislations are symbolic for the support of the administrative body, for the inexcusability of hate. They subvert the heteronormativity, since they indicate that irrespective of ones gender or sexual orientation<sup>335</sup> a person's physical and mental integrity must not be harmed. And by integrating direct violence or spheres of structural violence often not debated, it additionally might be mediated that the collective is the movement's strength and power each individual LGBTQ\* can profit from.

---

<sup>335</sup> Additionally, most hate crime laws include race, ethnicity/national origin, religion, sex and disabilities.

What is currently missing is that the LGBTQ\* movement uses the expressions of cultural, structural and direct violence. There is an essential need to explain the violence triangle to the movement's activists themselves as well as to the society in general. Facing and discussing the violence triangle would result in each individual LGBTQ\*'s realization of the importance to embrace direct violence and implement it into the movement's strategy. And it would also expose the more deeply rooted structural violence.

The application of the violence triangle as a tool of social media activism has the power to strengthen the LGBTQ\* movement. The interrelationship of cultural, structural and direct violence must be the foundation of a new activism. Delineating the interrelationship exposes the need to approach all manifestations of violence and not exclusively the one that affects oneself. The justification of unequal structures and acts of discrimination is directly linked to the tolerance of direct violence. All three forms of violence are interrelated and fighting one serves the deconstruction of the foundations for the other categories.

It would be naive to believe that, if structural violence got eliminated, direct violence would automatically be eradicated as well. The intention of the violence triangle was to destruct one form of violence and directly impact the others. The deconstruction of cultural violence will benefit the fight against direct and structural violence but it will not completely eradicate both forms. The process of eradication of violence will never be fully completed. Violence will always remain a tool for subordination and for the demonstration of power. Therefore, humans will always thrive for the exercise of violence. Peace is an illusion that will – once temporarily reached – eventually always constitute a transition period between conflicts. However, the violence triangle must be a representative tool that serves the movement for emphasizing inequality. It can stimulate the discourse and shift the focus on the negative impact structures and physical violence have on the individuals targeted. It diversifies the movement and accentuates social grievances that have an impact on people's health and it could serve the purpose of being heard despite the large-scale of information one receives via social media; especially in light

of the harsh rhetoric of conservatives and the ultra-right. The violence triangle would undeniably heat up the rhetoric to some extent. It defines unequal structures as violence which will definitely appall opponents of anti-LGBTQ\* rights – but those will probably get outraged no matter which tactic the movement will apply. It might be a risk to choose a harsher rhetoric that could lead to an even deeper polarization, but it might also be a chance. The violence triangle could gain the attention the movement desperately needs in times of threats to liberal and progressive thoughts, in times that lay directly ahead of the U.S. people; in times, in which ignorance marginalizes LGBTQ\*s and constrains their visibility. It can be a tool to point to the inequality and violence LGBTQ\* people have to face nationwide each single day. Its potential is that it might even raise more awareness among those who are not directly affected by LGBTQ\* topics, but also among those who belong to the LGBTQ\* community and who are desperately needed to advance equal rights and non-violence policies. The violence triangle can create visibility, it can help to empower the movement and reject victimization but it has to be applied carefully. There is a thin line between creating awareness and alienating those heterosexuals whom the movement wants and needs to be their allies. So, how should this challenge be approached? The answer can only be by openness and dialogue. The violence triangle is supposed to call attention and get through the masses of information. However, to assure the realization of the movement's goals and prevent alienation, the community has to communicate their situation and aspirations clearly. The violence triangle should not be used for denouncements but for a demonstration of the restrictions and confrontations LGBTQ\*s' lives bear. The mental and physical effects have to be illuminated, but the focus has to be on approaches to solutions. The LGBTQ\* movement must not isolate itself but has to keep an open dialogue going that integrates different perceptions. This is how further polarization resulting from the embracement of the violence triangle could be prevented.

The years ahead will be challenging for the LGBTQ\* movement. The current social and political situation is agonistic and the major threat is the disintegration of the movement's cohesion by the polarization of society. The violence triangle could help to restructure the movement, to spread

inclusiveness and to strengthen coherence. It can prevent radicalism of LGBTQ\*s themselves, if it is carefully applied by gay rights organizations. It is probably only one approach among many that could increase the movement's efficiency but it might be the right one for the times ahead.

## **IV. Conclusion**

Violence – once experienced will alter everything. One’s life, health, happiness and trust are on the line. The scars left will always be part of a human being and old wounds can easily be re-opened. However, being victimized must not remain the response of those affected by violence. Instead, they are endowed by the power to strike back. Why should the act of violence exclusively be a tool of those who ostensibly possess power? Why should the recounting of this act of violence not be a tool to regain the power over one’s destiny? Why not reverse the effect of violence?

This thesis is supposed to be an approach to the applicability of Galtung’s violence triangle on the LGBTQ\* movement. It is also an attempt to elaborate on the movement’s strategies, to counter victimization and inequality by the construction of a collective identity including the diversity of the LGBTQ\* community. I have decided to include Johan Galtung’s violence triangle as a tool for evaluation for specific reasons: Firstly, I wanted to illuminate the interrelatedness of two major struggles: The one against physical violence and the one against inequality. Both are closely linked but not treated as such. Structural violence is only rarely integrated into the activists’ discourse – even though it is occasionally mentioned.

Secondly, because I felt like the concept might become valuable for the movement. Plainly as an instrument to respond to violence as well as to the movement’s own shortcomings adequately: To counter power structures, to reverse the effect of violence, to create visibility and to destroy egotism and ignorance.

And finally: Galtung’s violence triangle is an honest approach; an approach that does not limit violence exclusively to physical acts. Instead it recognizes different manifestations of violence. Denying the harmfulness of a society’s structure is an escape from any responsibility one might have for the misery of those affected negatively. People are suffering from particular structures; LGBTQ\* people are often suffering from the heteronormative structure within society. It is easy to hide from the truth and to remain inactive but it is also ignorant and eventually costs lives. An attitude like this equals Hannah Arendt’s “banality of evil” theory: The failure to think;

the failure to broaden one's mind and consider consequences of one's own actions - it may be an active deed or a passive one; the action to exercise direct violence or to tolerate violent structures. The denial of a broader interpretation of violence is a failure to assess the consequences of one's own actions or passiveness; it is a failure to think.

Even though Galtung's concept has often been criticized, I have shown that it is applicable in respect to LGBTQ\* violence. The thesis' second part has additionally exposed that the LGBTQ\* movement is able to approach the struggle against inequality and violence via social media successfully. The integration of social media slowly evolved. While the fight for the repeal of *Don't Ask, Don't Tell* was predominantly led by Lady Gaga in social media networks, the struggle for same-sex marriage represented the starting point for social media activism by gay rights organizations. They embraced a variety of tactics that ranged from personal stories of homosexual couples to the support by heterosexual activists. Even though their outreach varied they are all valuable in its own terms. Subsequently, inequality confronted by homosexuals in their daily life as well as bullying became major issues. Activists were able to establish powerful strategies that served their ambitions to fight for equal rights and influence the U.S. people as well as significant politicians. However, the analysis also indicates that the movement's social media activism has flaws and that many manifestations of structural violence have been, and still are, neglected. Homeless LGBTQ\* youths and victims from workplace discrimination are among those marginalized; simply for the circumstance, that a betterment for them does not result in every individuals' personal advantage.

Furthermore, the representation of direct violence is weak and often leads to an alienation of those targeted. The collective identity which is based on the mutual motivation to subvert heteronormativity and end inequality is thereby jeopardized. Additionally, a radicalization of some parts of the community has become likely and has already taken the first steps.

In the third part of this thesis, the analysis of the socio-economic and socio-political dimension has shown that neoliberal virtues led to the rise of

egotism which is also responsible for the neglect of a variety of LGBTQ\* people by its own major gay rights organizations and the social media movement. Furthermore, the economic circumstances have contributed to a polarization of U.S. society that was even further aggravated by the minority politics of the Obama administration. A strong focus on minority – especially LGBTQ\* – rights as well as the symbiosis between the LGBTQ\* movement and the Obama administration have alienated major parts of society. They have led to an aggravation of the polarization. The election of Donald Trump was symptomatic for the socio-political developments and it personifies the threats the LGBTQ\* movement will have to confront in the years ahead: The threat of misinformation, sciolism, and populist politics; the threat of the capacity to influence masses via social media and of the rise of conservative and populist politics; and especially the threat of ignorance and the loss of ethics and moral rules.

As illuminated, Galtung's violence triangle might be an approach to confront these challenges. Its embrace can strengthen the diversity of the movement, it can – if applied correctly – prevent radicalization within the community and it can also call attention to the inequality and violence that LGBTQ\*s face. Moreover, it exposes the synergy of different forms of violence: direct, structural and cultural. The violence triangle might be a tool to empower the LGBTQ\* movement and to influence the power imbalance in their favor. It will reverse the negative effects of violence; its intention to victimize and thereby subordinate LGBTQ\* people.

Even though the nature and the intensity of LGBTQ\* violence has changed over the last decades violence has not disappeared entirely. The fight against violence in all its manifestations has not become obsolete but it is even more important than ever before. It has to be led in order to prevent backlashes and to counter any attacks on LGBTQ\* rights; and also, to ensure the community's cohesion and diversity. The advancements of the last years have lured the LGBTQ\* movement into a state of fraudulent safety; a safety that hid the shortcomings of the social media movement. Donald Trump woke up all those blinded by the achievements of the last years. The LGBTQ\* movement has to develop its strategies and partly reinvent itself.

Currently, there is no need for LGBTQ\* people to pour out to the streets on a dark night in Greenwich Village and fight for their rights. Today's battleground is everywhere – mastering social media is equivalent to influencing the masses. This is where we have to succeed; this is where we have to persevere.



## **Bibliography**

### Primary Sources

Collins, Jason and Franz Lidz. "Why NBA center Jason Collins is coming out now." *Sports Illustrated*, April 29, 2013. Accessed May 17, 2016. <http://www.si.com/more-sports/2013/04/29/jason-collins-gay-nba-player>.

Freedom to Marry. "Mark and Tim Continue Advocating for Same-Sex Couples." Accessed May 25, 2016. <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/blog/entry/mark-and-tim-continue-advocating-for-same-sex-couples-and-families-by-marry>.

Freedom to Marry. "Lead plaintiffs in DOMA case call for the freedom to marry in new video." Accessed May 30, 2016. <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/blog/entry/lead-plaintiffs-in-doma-casecall-for-the-freedom-to-marry-in-new-video>.

Fullana, Sion. "We Are All Mark Carson." *BlackSpace*. Accessed December 13, 2016. <http://www.backspac.es/r/AJGQqdqzRX/we-are-all-mark-carson>.

GLAAD. "Military Shows Support for Fellow Soldier, Stephen Hill." November 21, 2011. Accessed May 30, 2016. <http://www.glaad.org/blog/military-shows-support-fellow-soldier-stephen-hill>.

GLAAD. "Trump Accountability Project." Accessed January 18, 2017. <http://www.glaad.org/trump>.

Human Rights Campaign Foundation. *Degrees of Equality: A National Study Examining Workplace Climate for LGBT Employees*. Washington, D.C: The Human Rights Campaign, 2009.

Human Rights Campaign Foundation. "Human Rights Campaign Post-Election Survey of Youth." January 18, 2017. Accessed January 20, 2017. [http://hrc-assets.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com//files/assets/resources/HRC\\_PostElectionSurveyofYouth.pdf](http://hrc-assets.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com//files/assets/resources/HRC_PostElectionSurveyofYouth.pdf).

Human Rights Campaign Foundation. "Jeff Sessions: A History of Anti-LGBTQ Actions." Accessed January 18, 2017. [http://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2017/images/01/09/session\\_report-rev.pdf](http://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2017/images/01/09/session_report-rev.pdf).

YouTube. "The Happy Hippie Foundation." Accessed June 3, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqx9zQijSJaGfYDJ4dY39yA/featured>.

#### *Facebook Posts*

Cartier, Daniel J. Facebook Post. August 18, 2016. 12:43 p.m. <https://www.facebook.com/nick.j.stryker/posts/10100498398542679>.

Cerne, James. Facebook Post. June 12, 2016. 08:08 p.m. <https://www.facebook.com/james.cerne/posts/10153654710641099>.

Contarino, Dan. Facebook Post. May 21, 2013. 01:04 a.m. <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10151479192758445&set=a.10150219917393445.325295.710738444&type=3&theater>.

Lennox-Choate III, Larry. Facebook Post. August 2, 2015. 04:50 a.m. <https://www.facebook.com/larry.choate/posts/10100220517647780>.

Lennox-Choate III, Larry. Facebook Post. August 5, 2015. 06:03 p.m. <https://www.facebook.com/larry.choate/posts/10100221432354700>.

Michelson, Noah. Facebook Post. June 13, 2016. 00:37 a.m. <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10153582231872823&set=a.215722862822.131915.548627822&type=3&theater>.

Moiselle, Made. Facebook Post. July 13, 2015. 06:51 p.m.

<https://www.facebook.com/StephanieGPD/posts/10106430134850063>.

Moiselle, Made. Facebook Post. July 16, 2015. 10:42 p.m.

<https://www.facebook.com/StephanieGPD/posts/10106441269052033>.

Stryker, Nick. Facebook Post. May 19, 2013. 08:10 p.m.

<https://www.facebook.com/nick.j.stryker/posts/869209360869>.

Stryker, Nick. Facebook Post. May 21, 2013. 07:08 p.m.

<https://www.facebook.com/nick.j.stryker/posts/869981124249>

Stryker, Nick. Facebook Post. August 17, 2016. 04:01 p.m.

<https://www.facebook.com/nick.j.stryker/posts/10100498398542679>.

Stryker, Nick. Facebook Post. August 19, 2016. 15:58 p.m.

<https://www.facebook.com/nick.j.stryker/posts/10100498398542679>.

Weyl, Matt. Facebook Post. October 4, 2015. 06:20 p.m.

<https://www.facebook.com/mattweyl/posts/10205153528261769>.

#### *Twitter Posts*

A, Toni. Twitter post. September 21, 2011. 04:13 p.m.

[https://twitter.com/Toni\\_hime/status/116651230264172544](https://twitter.com/Toni_hime/status/116651230264172544).

Bryant, Kobe. Twitter Post. April 29, 2013. 09:01 a.m.

<https://twitter.com/kobebryant/status/328901917507989504>.

Dean. Twitter post. September 21, 2011. 03:39 p.m.

<https://twitter.com/Rebelcetti/status/116642791022526465>.

EclecticMan. Twitter post. May 6, 2015. 07:51 p.m.  
<https://twitter.com/ManEclectic/status/596145207705346050>.

Edwards, Elyssa. Twitter Post. June 15, 2016. 10:48 a.m.  
<https://twitter.com/EffyDxn/media>.

Hamilton, Patrick J. Twitter Post. May 20, 2013.03:57 p.m.  
[https://twitter.com/ask\\_patrick/status/336616658288386048](https://twitter.com/ask_patrick/status/336616658288386048).

Hilm, Talia. Twitter Post. May 18, 2013. 09:37 p.m.  
<https://twitter.com/HiImTalia/status/335977458119634945>.

HumanRightsCampaign. Twitter Post. March 28, 2017. 20:07 p.m.  
<https://twitter.com/HRC/status/846921656220209152>.

Lady Gaga. Twitter Post. September 21, 2011. 03:03 p.m.  
<https://twitter.com/ladygaga/status/116633801706323969?lang=de>.

Lady Gaga. Twitter post. September 21, 2011. 03:00 p.m.  
<https://twitter.com/ladygaga/status/116632826979422208>.

Misguided Jamey. Twitter Post. September 17, 2011. 10:27 p.m.  
<https://twitter.com/hausofjamey/status/115295838594535424>.

Morales, Jozette. Twitter Post. November 15, 2014. 09:39 a.m.  
<https://twitter.com/143zettey/status/533675679657623552>.

OleFanwvu. Twitter Post. May 6, 2015. 12:02 a.m.  
<https://twitter.com/olefanwvu/status/596027342465716224>.

Richards, Shea. Twitter Post. May 21, 2013. 12:39 a.m.  
<https://twitter.com/shearichards/status/336929372218990592>.

Roy efc. Twitter Post. August 23, 2012, 17:20 p.m.

<https://twitter.com/evanrachelwood/status/238791671553351681>.

Trump, Donald J. Twitter Post. June 12, 2016. 9:43 a.m.

<https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/742034549232766976?lang=de>.

Trump, Donald J. Twitter Post. June 14, 2016. 10:31 a.m.

<https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/742771576039460864>.

### *YouTube Videos*

“A message from Lady Gaga to the Senate Sept 16, 2010.” YouTube video, 07:29. Posted by Lady Gaga. September 17, 2010.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GG5VK2lquEc>.

“Lady Gaga’s Portland Speech.” YouTube video, 16:38. Posted by WMTW-TV. September 20, 2010.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MoqOvFJ5-0c>.

“A Tale of Two Dads.” YouTube video, 04:55. Posted by Freedom to Marry. June 13, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oh1B9Ni9iEk>.

“Booed Soldier and Husband Boo the Defense of Marriage Act.” YouTube video, 03:08. Posted by Freedom to Marry. June 11, 2012.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZDzOLeCWfQ>.

“A Major and Her Wife on the Effects of DOMA.” YouTube video, 04:04. Posted by Freedom to Marry. May 9, 2013.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7GZ49ldH27k>.

“Macklemore & Ryan Lewis – Same Love.” YouTube video, 07:03. Posted by Ryan Lewis. October 2, 2012.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hlVBg7\\_08n0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hlVBg7_08n0).

“A Marine and his soon to be husband on DOMA.” YouTube video, 02:25.  
Posted by Freedom to Marry. April 10, 2013.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhHgVg65bJE>.

“Ellen Page Joins HRCF's Time to Thrive Conference.” You Tube video,  
08:38. Posted by Human Rights Campaign. February 14, 2014.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1hlCEIUATzg&list=TL4v7U4WReZCAmXQwLwUheyA5Q6HKCvwLs>.

“Wentworth Miller Talks About Coming Out, Overcoming Struggles at  
HRC Dinner.” YouTube video, 10:43. Posted by Human Rights Campaign.  
September 10, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZUREm24MQU>.

“Evan Rachel Wood Receives the HRC Visibility Award.” You Tube video,  
13:49. Posted by Human Rights Campaign. February 7, 2017.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xLYTun4KaU>.

“It Got Better Featuring Jason Collins.” YouTube video, 07:37. Posted by  
Istudiopresents. June 4, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-NnTNLqqCc>.

“It Gets Better, I promise!” YouTube video, 02:04. Posted by And This is  
Jamey's HAUS. May 4, 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Pb1CaGMdWk>.

“Anti-LGBT Bullying,” YouTube video, 03:43. Posted by xgothemo99xx.  
April 6, 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wd11Hfeaz-8>.

“Jamey Rodemeyer's Second and Final ‘It Gets Better’ Video.” YouTube  
video, 00:39. Posted by by Matt Algren. September 22, 2011.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JeIenb4MAZs>.

“Lady Gaga - Born This Way.” YouTube video, 07:19. Posted by LadyGagaVEVO. February 27, 2011.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wV1FrqwZyKw>.

“Lady Gaga - Hair (A Jamey Rodemeyer Tribute).” YouTube video, 08:19. Posted by MyLittlePonyTeam's channel. October 15, 2011.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MpHSWMQwovA>.

“Parents Of Jamey Rodemeyer Say After Suicide, He's Still Being Bullied.” YouTube video, 09:45. Posted by SuchIsLifeVideos. September 27, 2011.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmeMQtDU1mA>.

“A Day in Our Shoes - Homeless LGBT Youth.” YouTube video, 05:45. Posted by In The Life Media. November 16, 2011.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZXv1-fHd6Ug>.

“Kicked Out: LGBT Youth Experience Homelessness.” YouTube video, 16:55. Posted by In The Life Media. October 27, 2011.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TUhqodigPFk>.

“Parents abandon him for being gay; what happens next is too common,” YouTube video, 06:30. Posted by Los Angeles LGBT Center. October 17, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1t3vfQIJ-zk>.

“Ellen DeGeneres on 15-year-old boy, Larry King, killed for being Gay.” YouTube video, 02:38. Posted by Larry Goben. May 8, 2015.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PeM9w3L4H6I>.

“Lady Gaga talks about rape and PTSD, encourages young people to ShareKindness.” YouTube video, 05:28. Posted by TodayToday. December 5, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8tOOXeT7hZQ>.

“The Voice 2016 - Miley's Happy Hippies at The Voice (Digital Exclusive).” YouTube video, 03:12. Posted by The Voice. November 1, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BuY5x-nVkmA>.

“Miley Cyrus - Variety's Power of Women Full Speech.” YouTube video, 05:51. Posted by Variety. October 20, 2016. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SSUT\\_kHEMmo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SSUT_kHEMmo).

“HRC Leads Call in Fight for Federal Equality for LGBT Americans on Capitol Hill.” YouTube video, 04:53. Posted by Human Rights Campaign. July 23, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0mXDJIIdQKM>.

“The time is now: Pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act.” YouTube video, 31:35. Posted by GLAAD, November 6, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SI2apAXyHKc>.

“Generation Equality: Entering the Workforce, a Twitter Town Hall.” YouTube video, 1:05:54. Posted by Human Rights Campaign, November 5, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1O0xIYrxv0>.

“Making Your Small Business Workplace LGBT-Inclusive, presented by HRC.” YouTube video, 52:10. Posted by U.S. Small Business Administration, July 26, 2014. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hkw\\_P-Z\\_j8I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hkw_P-Z_j8I).

“Workplace Discrimination Series: Ashland Johnson.” YouTube Video, 02:29. Posted by seeprogress. October 21, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JmmWgl5PWHk>.

“Workplace Discrimination Series: Sam Hall.” YouTube video, 05:12. Posted by seeprogress, July 16, 2013. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z6VX\\_oZmJII](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z6VX_oZmJII).



“An Important Message - From Ellen DeGeneres (Gay Suicide).” YouTube video, 01:45. Posted by Fighting For Equality! HRC.org. September 30, 2011. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_B-hVWQnjjM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_B-hVWQnjjM).

“Kristene Chapa shares her story at the #glaadawards.” YouTube video, 07:00. Posted by GLAAD. May 11, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0YZoJWraqc>.

“An Attack on Equality: Gay Couple Tells of Their Assault | Op-Docs | The New York Times.” YouTube video, 05:45 . Posted by The New York Times. August 7, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qmWjQdhtStU>.

“Anti-LGBTQ police violence in Bed-Stuy Brooklyn, Sunday June 3, 2013.” YouTube video, 03:08. Posted by New York City Anti-Violence Project. June 10, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ArQTF0ZJZY>.

“LGBT Hate Crime New York Subway.” YouTube video, 05:30. Posted by StoppHating. July 2, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jhtwgMSYVf8>.

“Stop the Hate: 49 Celebrities Honor 49 Victims of Orlando Tragedy in Ryan Murphy-Produced Tribute.” YouTube video, 18:08. Posted by the Human Rights Campaign. June 29, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nq6xRZICSoM>.

“Lady Gaga honors Orlando victims at Los Angeles vigil.” YouTube video, 09:42. Posted by Los Angeles LGBT Center. June 14, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P0XODPy8zPE>.

“Kristene Chapa speaks at rally for victims of Orlando shooting.” YouTube video 03:35. Posted by GLAAD. June 15, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0mfSCzI5vZA>.

“Wilson Cruz shares personal story about Orlando during #glaadgala San Francisco.” YouTube video, 13:46. Posted by GLAAD. September 16, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJHe9oItriM>.

“Hands.” YouTube video, 04:24. Posted by Interscope Records. July 5, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3SKR1VMxTM>.

“Sia – The Greatest.” YouTube video, 05:51. Posted by SiaVEVO. September 5, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKSRYLdjsPA>.

“Donald Trump speaks after Orlando massacre.” YouTube video, 33:26. Posted by CNN. June 13, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qhqQqvTij4k>.

Secondary Sources

African American Policy Forum. “#SayHerName.” Accessed January 27, 2017. <http://www.aapf.org/sayhername/>.

Arendt, Hannah. *On Violence*. New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1970.

Associated Press. “Philly hate crime update: Kathryn Knott convicted of simple assault and reckless endangerment.” *LGBTQ Nation*, December 18, 2015. Accessed September 9, 2016. <http://www.lgbtqnation.com/2015/12/philly-hate-crime-update-kathryn-knott-convicted-of-simple-assault-and-reckless-endangerment/>.

Baberowski, Jörg. *Räume der Gewalt*. Frankfurt a. Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 2015.

Barclay, Scott, Bernstein, Mary and Anna-Maria Marshall, ed. *Queer Mobilizations: LGBT Activists Confront the Law*. New York: New York University Press, 2009.

Bernstein, Mary and Verta Taylor, ed. *The Marrying Kind?* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013.

Bidell, Markus P. “Is There an Emotional Cost of Completing High School? Ecological Factors and Psychological Distress Among LGBT Homeless Youth.” *Journal of Homosexuality*, 61 (2014): 366–381

Bostwick, Wendy B. and Carol J. Boyd, Tonda L. Hughes and Brady West. “Dimensions of Sexual Orientation and the Prevalence of Mood and Anxiety Disorders in the United States.” *Am J Public Health*, 100(3) (2010): 468–475. doi:10.1037/h0098851.

Bostwick, Wendy B. and Carol J. Boyd, Tonda L. Hughes and Brady West. "Discrimination and Mental Health Among Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Adults in the United States." *Am J Orthopsychiatry*, 84(1) (2014): 35–45. doi:10.1037/h0098851.

Burrelli, David F. "An Overview of the Debate on Homosexuals in the U.S. Military." In *Gays and Lesbians in the Military: Issues, Concerns, and Contrasts*, edited by Wilbur J. Scott and Sandra Carson Stanley, 17-28. New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1994.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Butler, Judith. *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Chambers, Samuel A. and Terrell Carver. *Judith Butler and Political Theory: Troubling Politics*. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Chang, David. "Gay Couple Speaks Out After Brutal Assault in Center City." *NBC Philadelphia*, September 19, 2014. Accessed September 6, 2016. <http://www.nbcphiladelphia.com/news/local/Gay-Couple-Speaks-Out-After-Brutal-Assault-in-Center-City-275226821.html>.

Clement, Scott and John C. Green. "The Tea Party, Religion, and Social Issues." *Pew Research Center*, February 23, 2011. Accessed November 3, 2015. <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1903/tea-party-movement-religion-social-issues-conservative-christian>.

Comstock, Gary David. *Violence Against Lesbians and Gay Men*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.

Craig, Daniel. "Man says he was beaten by PSU fraternity member because he's gay." *PhillyVoice*, October 5, 2015. Accessed September 21, 2016. <http://www.phillyvoice.com/man-says-beaten-psu-fraternity-brother-gay/>.

Davies, William. "The Emerging Neocommunitarianism." *The Political Quarterly*, Vol. 83, No. 4 (2012): 767–776.

Debbage Alexander, Sharon E. "A Ban by Any Other Name: Ten Years of Don't Ask, Don't Tell." *Hofstra Labor & Employment Law Journal*, Volume 21, No. 2, (Spring 2004): 403-436.

Duggan, Maeve and Aaron Smith. "The Political Environment on Social Media." Pew Research Center. October 25, 2016. Accessed February 25, 2017, <http://www.pewinternet.org/2016/10/25/the-political-environment-on-social-media/>.

Durso, Laura E. and Gary J. Gates. "Serving Our Youth: Findings from a National Survey of Services Providers Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth Who Are Homeless or At Risk of Becoming Homeless." *The Williams Institute UCLA*, July 12, 2012. Accessed December 14, 2016. <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/80x75033>.

Embser-Herbert, Melissa Sheridan. *The U.S. Military's 'Don't Ask Don't Tell' Policy*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007.

Feder, Jody. "Don't Ask, Don't Tell': A Legal Analysis." *Congressional Research Service*. August 6, 2013. Accessed June 16, 2016. <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R40795.pdf>.

Federal Bureau of Investigation. "2014 Hate Crime Statistics." Accessed August 29, 2016. [https://ucr.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/hate-crime/2014/topic-pages/victims\\_final](https://ucr.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/hate-crime/2014/topic-pages/victims_final).

Federal Bureau of Investigation. "FBI Releases 2015 Hate Crime Statistics." Accessed January 26, 2017. <https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2015>.

Federal Bureau of Investigation. "2015 Hate Crime Statistics – Methodology." Accessed January 26, 2017. [https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2015/resource-pages/methodology\\_final](https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2015/resource-pages/methodology_final).

Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge*. Edited by Colin Gordon. New York: Vintage, 1980.

Fox, Catherine O. and Tracy E. Ore. "(Un) Covering Normalized Gender and Race Subjectivities in LGBT "Safe Spaces"." *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 3, Sex and Surveillance (Fall 2010), 629-649.

Frank, Nathaniel. *Unfriendly Fire: How the Gay Ban Undermines the Military and Weakens America*. New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2009.

Freedom to Marry. "The Respect for Marriage Act." Accessed May 7, 2017. <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/pages/Ending-Federal-Marriage-Discrimination-The-Respect-for-Marriage-Act>.

Gallup Inc. "Americans Greatly Overestimate Percent Gay, Lesbian in U.S.," Gallup Inc. Accessed February 2, 2017. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/183383/americans-greatly-overestimate-percent-gay-lesbian.aspx>.

Galtung, Johan. "Cultural Violence". *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (1990): 291-305.

Galtung, Johan and Tord Höivik. "Structural and Direct Violence: A Note on Operationalization". *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1971): 73-76.

Galtung, Johan. "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research". *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1969): 167-191.

Giddens, Anthony. *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984.

Gonzalez-Barrera, Ana and Jens Manuel Krogstad. "U.S. Deportations of Immigrants reach record high in 2013." *Pew Research Center*, October 2, 2014. Accessed November 10, 2016. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/10/02/u-s-deportations-of-immigrants-reach-record-high-in-2013/>.

Gordon, Neve. "On Visibility and Power: An Arendtian Corrective of Foucault." *Human Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (2002): 125-145.

Greenwood, Shannon, Perrin, Andrew and Maeve Duggan. "Social Media Update 2016." *Pew Research Center*. November 11, 2016. Accessed February 25, 2017. <http://www.pewinternet.org/2016/11/11/social-media-update-2016/>.

Haas, Ann P. et. al. "Suicide and Suicide Risk in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Populations: Review and Recommendations." *Journal of Homosexuality*, 58 No. 1 (2011): 10-51.

Happy Hippie Foundation. "Our Work." Accessed February 8, 2017. <http://www.happyhippies.org/>.

Happy Hippie Foundation. "Manifesto." Accessed February 8, 2017. <http://www.happyhippies.org/#manifesto>.

Herek, Gregory M. and Kevin T. Berrill, ed. *Hate Crimes: Confronting Violence Against Lesbians and Gay Men*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc, 1991.

Hess, Sabine, Langreiter, Nikola and Elisabeth Tim, ed. *Intersektionalität Revisited*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2011.

Hennessy-Fiske, Molly. "FBI investigators say they have found no evidence that Orlando shooter had gay lovers." *Los Angeles Times*, June 23, 2016. Accessed October 8, 2016. <http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-orlando-gay-fbi-20160623-snap-story.html>.

Human Rights Campaign Foundation. "Maps of State Laws and Policies – Hate Crime Legislation." Accessed October 13, 2016. [http://www.hrc.org/state\\_maps](http://www.hrc.org/state_maps).

Human Rights Campaign Foundation. "LGBTQ Equality at the Fortune 500." Accessed February 23, 2017. <http://www.hrc.org/resources/lgbt-equality-at-the-fortune-500>.

Johnson, Jeh. "Priority Enforcement Program – How DHS is Focusing on Deporting Felons." *Homeland Security*, July 30, 2015. Accessed November 10, 2016. <https://www.dhs.gov/blog/2015/07/30/priority-enforcement-program-%E2%80%93-how-dhs-focusing-deporting-felons>.

Katz, Jonathan Ned. *The Invention of Heterosexuality*. New York: Penguin Books, 1995.

Keuroghlian, Alex S., Shtasel, Derri and Ellen L. Bassuk. "Out on the Street: A Public Health and Policy Agenda for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth Who Are Homeless." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, Vol. 84, No. 1 (2014): 66 –72.

Kim, Yeongsik. "Using Collective Bargaining to Combat LGBT Discrimination in the private-sector workplace." *Wisconsin Journal of Law, Gender & Society* Vol. 30, 1 (2015): 73-97

Kimport, Katrina. *Queering Marriage: Challenging Family Formation in the United States*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2014.



King, Michael and Joanna Semlyen, Sharon See Tai, Helen Killaspy, David Osborn, Dmitir Popelyuk and Irwin Nazareth. "A systematic review of mental disorder, suicide, and deliberate self harm in lesbian, gay, and bisexual people." *BMC Psychiatry*. 8:70 (2008): 1-17. Accessed January 19, 2017. doi:10.1186/1471-244X-8-70

Knight, Charlotte and Kath Wilson. *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans People (LGBT) and the Criminal Justice System*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Kraft, Rachel and Barry Brummett. "Why Sport and Games Matter: Performative Rhetoric in Popular Culture." In *Sporting Rhetoric: Performance, Games & Politics*, edited by Barry Brummett. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2009, 9-26.

Lazare, Sarah. "Hundreds of Women in Immigrant Prison on Hunger Strike for Immediate Release." *Common Dreams*, November 3, 2015. Accessed November 10, 2016.  
<http://www.commondreams.org/news/2015/11/03/hundreds-women-immigrant-prison-hunger-strike-immediate-release>.

Lehring, Gary L. *Officially Gay: The Political Construction of Sexuality by the U.S. Military*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003.

Levario, Andrea. "Trump's Proposed Budget Threatens Cuts to NIH & HIV Research." *Human Rights Campaign Foundation*, March 31, 2017. Accessed April 15, 2017. <http://www.hrc.org/blog/trumps-proposed-budget-threatens-cuts-to-nih-hiv-research>.

LGBTQ Nation. "Philly hate crime: Kathryn Knott sentenced to 5-10 months in prison." *LGBTQ Nation*, February 8, 2016. Accessed September 9, 2016. <http://www.lgbtqnation.com/2016/02/philly-hate-crime-kathryn-knott-sentenced-to-5-10-months-in-prison/>.

Lopez, Mark Hugo and Jens Manuel Krogstad. "5 facts about the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program." *Pew Research Center*, August 15, 2014. Accessed November 10, 2016. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/08/15/5-facts-about-the-deferred-action-for-childhood-arrivals-program/>.

ManKind Project. "Wentworth Miller, the ManKind Project, and 'Men's Work'." Accessed May 16, 2016. <http://mankindproject.org/wentworth-miller-the-mankind-project-and-mens-work/>.

Meyer, Doug. *Violence against Queer People: Race, Class, Gender, and the Persistence of Anti-LGBT Discrimination*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015.

Meyer, Doug. "An Intersectional Analysis of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) People's Evaluations of Anti-Queer Violence." *Gender & Society*, Vol. 26 (December 2012), 849-873.

Meyer, Ilan H. "Prejudice, Social Stress, and Mental Health in Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Populations: Conceptual Issues and Research Evidence." *Psychological Bulletin* 129 No. 5 (2003): 674–697.

Mize, Trenton D. "Sexual Orientation in the Labor Market." *American Sociological Review* Vol. 81(6) (2016): 1132–1160.

Momjian, Veronica and Kaleefa Munroe. "Economic Insecurity, Mental Health, and the Economic Crisis in New York City." *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (2011): 196-207

National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs. *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and HIV-Affected Hate Violence in 2014*. New York: Arcus Foundation, 2015.

National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs. *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and HIV-Affected Hate Violence in 2015*. New York: Arcus Foundation, 2016.

Obama, Barack. "Remarks by the President at Human Rights Campaign Dinner." *The White House*, October 11, 2009. Accessed November 10, 2016. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/10/01/remarks-president-human-rights-campaigns-annual-national-dinner>.

Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP). "Executive Order 11246 – Equal Employment Opportunity." United States Department of Labor. Accessed February 23, 2017. [https://www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/ca\\_11246.htm](https://www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/ca_11246.htm).

Ott, Brian L. and Robert L. Mack. *Critical Media Studies – An Introduction*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2010.

OutServe-Service Members Legal Defense Network. "About OutServe SLDN." Accessed June 13, 2016. [https://www.outserve-sldn.org/?page=about\\_us](https://www.outserve-sldn.org/?page=about_us).

Oxfam International. "Richest 1% will own more than all the rest by 2016." Accessed June 5, 2017. <https://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressreleases/2015-01-19/richest-1-will-own-more-all-rest-2016>.

Pallone.House.Gov. "Pallone Calls for Executive Order to Protect LGBT Workers from Workplace Discrimination." Accessed February 24, 2017. <http://pallone.house.gov/press-release/pallone-calls-executive-order-protect-lgbt-workers-workplace-discrimination>.

Patomäki, Heikki. "What Next? An Explanation of the 2008–2009 Slump and Two Scenarios of the Shape of Things to Come." *Globalizations*, Vol. 7, Nos. 1–2 (2010): 67-85.

Pew Research Center. "Political Polarization in the American Public." June 12, 2014. Accessed December 21, 2016. <http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-american-public/>.

Pew Research Center. "Support for Same-Sex Marriage at Record High, but Key Segments Remain Opposed." June 8, 2015. Accessed December 20, 2016. <http://www.people-press.org/2015/06/08/support-for-same-sex-marriage-at-record-high-but-key-segments-remain-opposed/>.

Pew Research Center. "Clinton, Trump Supporters Have Starkly Different Views of a Changing Nation." August 18, 2016. Accessed December 21, 2016. <http://www.people-press.org/2016/08/18/clinton-trump-supporters-have-starkly-different-views-of-a-changing-nation/>.

Pew Research Center. "Obama Leaves Office on High Note, But Public Has Mixed Views of Accomplishments." December 14, 2016. Accessed December 21, 2016. <http://www.people-press.org/2016/12/14/obama-leaves-office-on-high-note-but-public-has-mixed-views-of-accomplishments/>.

Pew Research Center. "Four-in-Ten Americans Have Close Friends or Relatives Who are Gay." Accessed May 16, 2016. <http://www.pewresearch.org/2007/05/22/fourinten-americans-have-close-friends-or-relatives-who-are-gay/>.

Pew Research Center. "A Survey of LGBT Americans Attitudes, Experiences and Values in Changing Times." *Pew Research Center*. June 13, 2013. Accessed, February 2, 2017. <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/06/13/a-survey-of-lgbt-americans/>.

Pierce, Andrew J. *Collective Identity, Oppression, and the Right to Self-Ascription*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012.

Pincus, Fred L. "Discrimination Comes in Many Forms: Individual, Institutional, and Structural." *The American Behavioral Scientist* 40, 2 (1996): 186-194.

Pizer, Jennifer C. and Brad Sears, Christy Mallory and Nan D. Hunter. "Evidence of Persistent and Pervasive Workplace Discrimination Against LGBT People: The Need for Federal Legislation Prohibiting Discrimination and Providing for Equal Employment Benefits." *45 Loyola Law Review Los Angeles*. 715 (2012): 715-780.

Polletta, Francesca und James M. Jasper. "Collective Identity and Social Movements." *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 (2001): 283-305.

RAND National Defense Research Institute. "Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy: An Update of RAND's 1993 Study." *RAND Corporation*. Accessed January 19, 2017. [http://dnt.law.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/RAND\\_sexual-orientation-updated1993study-2010.pdf](http://dnt.law.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/RAND_sexual-orientation-updated1993study-2010.pdf).

Ray, Nicholas. *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth: An Epidemic of Homelessness*. New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute and the National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006.

Ream, Geoffrey L. and Nicholas R. Forge. "Homeless Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Youth in New York City: Insights from the Field." *Child Welfare* Vol. 93, No. 2 (2014): 7-22.

Reynolds Brown, Blondell. "Hate Crime Bill Passes City Council." *City Council Philadelphia*, October 30, 2014. Accessed September 9, 2016. <http://phlcouncil.com/hate-crime-bill-passes-city-council/>.

Richards, David A. J. *The sodomy cases: Bowers v. Hardwick and Lawrence v. Texas*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009.

Roberts, Andrea L., Austin, S. Bryn, Corliss, Heather L., Vandermorris, Ashley K., and Karestan C. Koenen. "Pervasive Trauma Exposure Among US Sexual Orientation Minority Adults and Risk of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder." *Am J Public Health*, 100 No. 12 (December 2010): 2433–2441.

Rose, Tricia. *The Hip Hop Wars*. Philadelphia: Basic Books, 2008.

Rustling, Jimmy. "Omar Mateen's Final Text To Wife Released: I'm Gay, That's Why I'm Doing This." *ABC News*, November 10, 2016. Accessed December 15, 2016. <http://abcnews.com.co/omar-mateens-final-text-to-wife-released-im-gay/>.

Scarce, Michael. *Male on Male Rape: The Hidden Toll of Stigma and Shame*. Cambridge: Perseus Publishing, 1997.

Sessions, Jeff – United States Senator for Alabama. "Sessions expresses concern about the Hate Crimes Act," Accessed January 18, 2017. <http://www.sessions.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2009/7/sessions-expresses-concern-about-the-hate-crimes-act>.

Shaw, Enid. "Philly Hate Crime Suspects Tracked Down by Anonymous Twitter Hero." *Gawker*, September 16, 2014. Accessed September 9, 2016. <http://gawker.com/philly-hate-crime-suspects-tracked-down-by-anonymous-tw-1635661609>.

Silenzio, Vincent M.B. and Juan B. Pena, Paul R. Duberstein, Julie Cerel and Kerry L. Knox. "Sexual Orientation and Risk Factors for Suicidal Ideation and Suicide Attempts Among Adolescents and Young Adults." *Am J Public Health*, 97(11) (2007 November): 2017–2019.

Sloan, Lacey and Nora Gustavsson, ed. *Violence and Social Injustice Against Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual People*. New York: The Haworth Press, 1999.

Smith, Aaron. "6 New Facts about Facebook." *Pew Research Center*. February 3, 2014. Accessed February 25, 2017.  
<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/02/03/6-new-facts-about-facebook/>.

Stanford University. "Section 571 of the National Defense Authorization Act." Stanford Law School. Accessed June 20, 2016.  
<http://dost.stanford.edu/regulations/pl103-60.pdf>.

Stafford, Zach. "Black, gay and shot dead in his own car: this is another Missouri killing we should talk about." *The Guardian*, December 2, 2014. Accessed September 16, 2016.  
[https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/dec/02/-sp-missouri-killing-dionte-greene?CMP=tw\\_t\\_gu](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/dec/02/-sp-missouri-killing-dionte-greene?CMP=tw_t_gu).

Stojanović, Božo. "Homo Economicus: The (Lost) Prophet of Modern Times." *Panoeconomicus*, Vol. 62, Issue 3 (2015): 401-407.

Suls, Rob. "Deep divides between, within parties on public debates about LGBT issues." *Pew Research Center*, October 4, 2016. Accessed April 15, 2017. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/10/04/deep-divides-between-within-parties-on-public-debates-about-lgbt-issues/>.

Tacopino, Joe. "Omar Mateen's gay lover says attack was 'revenge' for HIV-positive hookup." *New York Post*, June 22, 2016. Accessed October 8, 2016. <http://nypost.com/2016/06/22/omar-mateens-alleged-gay-lover-claims-he-hated-puerto-ricans/>.

Timm, Bastian. *Die Macht der Stars: Celebrities in der Weltpolitik*. Opladen & Farmington Hills: Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2009.

The Advocate. “Donald Trump Waves LGBT Rainbow Flag at Colorado Rally.” October 31, 2016. Accessed June 11, 2017.

<http://www.advocate.com/2016/10/31/donald-trump-waves-lgbt-rainbow-flag-colorado-rally>.

The White House. “Obama Administration Record for the African American Community.” February 29, 2012. Accessed November 9, 2016.

[https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/african\\_american\\_community\\_record.pdf](https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/african_american_community_record.pdf).

The White House. “The Dream Act: Good for Our Economy, Good for Our Security, Good for our Nation.” November 22, 2011. Accessed November 10, 2016. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/DREAM-Act-WhiteHouse-FactSheet.pdf>.

The White House. “Presidential Executive Order on the Revocation of Federal Contracting Executive Orders.” Accessed April 14, 2017.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/03/27/presidential-executive-order-revocation-federal-contracting-executive>.

Trump, Donald. “Issues of Importance to Catholics.” Accessed January 27, 2017. <https://www.donaldjtrump.com/press-releases/issues-of-importance-to-catholics>.

It Get’s Better Project. “What is the It Get’s Better Project.” Accessed July 26, 2016. <http://www.itgetsbetter.org/pages/about-it-gets-better-project/>.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. “The Recession of 2007–2009.” Accessed October 31, 2016.

[http://www.bls.gov/spotlight/2012/recession/pdf/recession\\_bls\\_spotlight.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/spotlight/2012/recession/pdf/recession_bls_spotlight.pdf)

U.S. Census Bureau. “National Population Totals Tables: 2010-2016 – Monthly Population Estimates for the United States: April 1, 2010 to



December 1, 2017.” Accessed February 24, 2017.

<https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2016/demo/pepest/nation-total.html>.

U.S. Congress. “S.961 - Reconnecting Youth to Prevent Homelessness Act of 2011.” *112th Congress (2011-2012)*. Accessed February 3, 2017.

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/112th-congress/senate-bill/961>.

U.S. Congress. “H.R.2802 - First Amendment Defense Act.” Accessed January 15, 2017. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/2802>.

U.S. Congress. “S.815 - Employment Non-Discrimination Act of 2013, 113th Congress (2013-2014).” Accessed February 11, 2017.

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/senate-bill/815/text>.

U.S. Congress. “H.R.3185 - Equality Act, 114th Congress (2015-2016).”

Accessed February 11, 2017. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/3185/text>.

U.S. Department of Defense. “Enclosure 2 of DODD1304.26: Qualification Standards for Enlistment, Appointment, and Induction.” Accessed June 13, 2016. <http://dont.law.stanford.edu/statutes-regulations/>.

U.S. Department of Defense. “Attachment: Applicant Briefing Item on Separation Policy.” Accessed June 13, 2016.

<http://dont.law.stanford.edu/statutes-regulations/>.

U.S. Department of Justice – Civil Rights Division. “FY 2016 Performance Budget Congressional Submission.” February 1, 2015. Accessed November 9, 2016.

[https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/jmd/pages/attachments/2015/02/01/14.\\_civil\\_rights\\_division\\_crt.pdf](https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/jmd/pages/attachments/2015/02/01/14._civil_rights_division_crt.pdf).

U.S. Department of Labor. "Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP): Executive Order 11246 — Equal Employment Opportunity." Accessed February 23, 2017.

[https://www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/ca\\_11246.htm](https://www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/ca_11246.htm).

U.S. Supreme Court. "Obergefell et al. v. Hodges, Director, Ohio Department of Health et al." No. 14–556. Argued April 28, 2015. Decided June 26, 2015, 22.

U.S. Supreme Court. "Oncale v. Sundowner Offshore Services, Inc." No. 96—568. Argued December 8, 1997. Decided March 4, 1998.

Webster, James G. "The Duality of Media: A Structural Theory of Public Attention." *Communication Theory* 21 (2011): 43–66.

Weller, Katrin. "Trying to Understand Social Media Users and Usage: The Forgotten Features of Social Media Platforms." *Online Information Review*, Vol. 40 No. 2 (2016): 256 - 264

Wemple, Erik. "Univision exclusive on Omar Mateen's secret gay life comes under fire." *The Washington Post*, June 24, 2016. Accessed October 8, 2016. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/erik-wemple/wp/2016/06/24/univision-exclusive-on-omar-mateens-secret-gay-life-comes-under-fire/?utm\\_term=.beebe44cf949](https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/erik-wemple/wp/2016/06/24/univision-exclusive-on-omar-mateens-secret-gay-life-comes-under-fire/?utm_term=.beebe44cf949).

Wermund, Benjamin and Kimberly Hefling. "Trump's education secretary pick supported anti-gay causes." *POLITICO*, November 25, 2016. Accessed January 15, 2017. <http://www.politico.com/story/2016/11/betsy-devos-education-secretary-civil-rights-gay-transgender-students-231837>.

Williams Institute. "Discharges under the Don't Ask/Don't Tell Policy: Women and racial/ethnic minorities." Accessed June 18, 2016. <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Gates-Discharges2009-Military-Sept-2010.pdf>.

Williams, Joe. "Man found guilty of homophobic murder sentenced to 40 years in prison." *PinkNews*, June 14, 2016. Accessed September 3, 2016. <http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2016/06/14/man-found-guilty-of-homophobic-murder-sentenced-to-40-years-in-prison/>.

Women's March on Washington. "Women's March Global." Accessed April 14, 2017. <https://www.womensmarch.com/global/>.

Youth.gov. "Behavioral Health." Accessed December 20, 2016. <http://youth.gov/youth-topics/lgbtq-youth/health-depression-and-suicide>.

Zug, Marcia. "The Mirage of Immigration Reform: The Devastating Consequences of Obama's Immigration Policy." *Kansas Law Review*, Vol. 63, Issue 4 (2015): 953-980.

## **Illustration Credits**

RAND National Defense Research Institute. "Figure 9.5 Personal Problems Attributed by Gay Service Members to DADT." *RAND Corporation*. Accessed January 19, 2017. [http://dont.law.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/RAND\\_sexual-orientation-updated1993study-2010.pdf](http://dont.law.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/RAND_sexual-orientation-updated1993study-2010.pdf).

Human Rights Campaign. "Employers with Non-Discrimination Policies." Accessed February 23, 2017. <http://www.hrc.org/resources/Workplace-Discrimination-Policies-Laws-and-Legislation>.

The Human Rights Campaign. "State Maps of Laws & Policies – Hate Crime Legislation." Accessed June 11, 2017. <http://www.hrc.org/state-maps/hate-crimes>.