RESEARCH

Analysis of Hate Crimes in Transgender Communities

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Research shows that the LGBTQ population is disproportionately affected by hate crimes and those against transgender individuals are especially violent. Given the considerable underreporting of these crimes, better insight into the victimization experiences and reasons for underreporting is necessary to improve the safety of the transgender community and secure necessary services for these victims. The current study takes a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach by creating and utilizing an Advisory Board made up of service providers in the transgender community in Los Angeles, to assist in the development of a survey instrument and focus group questions and provide venues for the focus groups. The study examines results from a short survey and five focus groups with transgender individuals on their experiences of hate crimes and reporting activities. Results indicate nearly all participants experienced some type of hate incident or crime based on their gender identity and/or expression. Almost half of the respondents did not report these crimes to the police because they did not think police would do anything, were afraid of being arrested, or were afraid of being victimized by the police. Narrative accounts describe mostly, though not entirely, negative encounters with the police and how participants take preventative measures to reduce their potential for hate-based victimization. Based on our findings several recommendations have been made to help improve relations between transgender communities and law enforcement with the goal of creating a safer environment for transgender individuals and increasing the reporting of hate crimes.

Introduction

Hate Crime Statistics from the FBI show that hate crimes against transgender and gender non-conforming individuals have increased 587% between 2013 and 2019 (Department of Justice, 2013, 2019). Because hate crimes statistics for gender identity have only been collected by the FBI since 2013, much of this change may be due to increased coverage and improved data collection processes over time; however, increases are also seen in data collected by non-law enforcement sources. According to the Human Rights Campaign, a record 44 transgender people were killed in 2020, the highest number since they began tracking transgender murders in 2013 (Human Rights Campaign, 2021). Of the 44 transgender murders in 2020, 40 victims were transgender women of color. Further, while data indicate that transgender people overall may not face a higher risk of victimization compared to cisgender people, young Black and Latina transgender women face a higher chance of being murdered than their cisgender counterparts (Dinno, 2017; Stotzer, 2017). While data show that anti-transgender crimes, particularly those against people of color, are an issue in the United States, it is likely we only understand a fraction of the problem because of reporting inaccuracies and underreporting by victims. The current exploratory study seeks to understand the hate crime experiences of transgender individuals, and their reasons for not reporting.

Literature Review

Underreporting

There are a variety of reasons that official hate crime statistics are not accurate. First, it appears that local and state law enforcement agencies underreport the instances of transgender hate crimes. Of the 15,588 participating law enforcement agencies, 86.1% reported that no hate crimes occurred in their jurisdictions in 2019 (Department of Justice, 2019). In addition to underreporting by police agencies, there are also pervasive inaccuracies in reporting that add to the difficulty in understanding the true scope of hate crimes against the transgender community. According to ProPublica (2018), law enforcement agencies investigating murders of transgender people regularly identify victims by names or genders they no longer use. Some agencies state they use an individual's government issued identification when referring to and reporting

about the individual, which can lead to incorrectly reporting the victim's demographic information because, according to the U.S. transgender survey (James et al., 2016), very few respondents indicated that all of their identifications listed their preferred name and gender. This inaccurate reporting on the part of police serves as a barrier to truly understanding the extent of hate crimes against the transgender community.

Perhaps one of the greatest impediments to our understanding, however, is the underreporting by hate crime victims. The Bureau of Justice Statistics found that approximately 60% of hate crime victimizations were not reported to the police in 2012 (Wilson, 2014). Similarly, transgender Latina women who were victims indicated only slightly more than half reported hate crimes to the police (Galvan & Bazargan, 2012). Moreover, research cited by the Williams Institute asserts that discrimination and harassment by law enforcement based on gender identity is an "ongoing and pervasive problem" (Mallory, Hasenbush & Sears, 2015). These experiences with law enforcement likely contribute to the transgender community's lack of trust in police and to the vast underreporting of hate crimes by transgender victims. Underreporting of these crimes creates problems for researchers, policymakers and service providers because without a complete picture of the hate crime problem, it is difficult to develop appropriate legislation and services for transgender communities. In order to increase the reporting of hate crimes, further research is needed on why transgender individuals choose to or choose not to report hate crime victimizations.

Institutional Betrayal

The lack of trust, and sometimes fear, of asking for help may stem from prior experiences of institutional betrayal. Institutional betrayal is an institution's failure to act or failure to protect an individual for whom that institution is responsible (Smith & Freyd, 2014). Institutional betrayal often includes experiences or perceptions that the institution will not take an individual's report of trauma or victimization seriously, will create a more hostile environment for the reporting individual, and/or not take proactive steps to address the reported experience (Smith & Freyd, 2013).

Smith and Freyd (2014) argue that institutional betrayal is more likely to occur in certain types of organizations, including those with strict membership requirements, identities, and that demand conformity. Further, because these institutions sometimes have high standing in the community, it is difficult for people to accept or even imagine they would be capable of abuse (Smith & Freyd, 2014). As research suggests, institutional betrayal is experienced by individuals in a variety of settings, including educational (Linder & Myers, 2018), healthcare (Smith, 2017; Tamaian, Klest & Mutschler, 2017), and military settings (Holliday & Monteith, 2019). The institutional betrayal is at times perpetrated by individuals working within the institutional setting but may also occur at a systemic level. For example, sexual assault survivors in universities have had their experiences invalidated by comments and actions made by individual advisors, faculty, and administrators, but have also been silenced by universities more broadly in an attempt by the institutions to maintain their reputation (Linder & Myers, 2018). In healthcare institutions, patients have been given inadequate medical or psychological care from individual practitioners and have also experienced systemic institutional betrayal due to time constraints or a shortage of doctors (Smith, 2017; Tamaian, Klest & Mutschler, 2017).

Regardless of the setting or circumstances under which institutional betrayal occurs, research suggests that individuals who perceive they are victims of institutional betrayal face a number of psychological and behavioral consequences. Those who have endured institutional betrayal experience a particular type of trauma referred to as betrayal trauma that is associated with more severe post-trauma sequalae such as increases in posttraumatic stress symptoms, anxiety, depression, and suicide attempts following an incident of violence (Monteith et al., 2016; Smidt et al., 2021; Smith, Cunningham & Freyd, 2016). Moreover, the lack of trust that follows institutional betrayal often results in individuals disengaging from the institution that is responsible (Smith, 2017). In fact, Holland and Barnes (2019) argue that institutional betrayal is a possible explanation for why individuals may choose not to report instances of military sexual trauma and to not seek services that may help them process the trauma.

While little research on institutional betrayal has focused on law enforcement, McAuliffe (2018) argues that institutional betrayal theory may be a useful framework for analyzing people's experiences with police. For instance, those who have reported incidents of violence to law enforcement in the past and were not taken seriously, or those who expect they will not be taken seriously if they report in the future, may have perceptions of institutional betrayal that will inhibit their reporting. In fact, Cramer et al. (2018) specifically called for future research to examine the impact of institutional betrayal on the underreporting of hate crimes. In addition, while some research has found that members of the LGB community have more experiences of institutional betrayal than heterosexual individuals (Smidt et al., 2021; Smith, Cunningham & Freyd, 2016), to our knowledge no research has looked at the institutional betrayal experiences of transgender individuals. The current study seeks to not only explore the hate crime experiences of members of transgender communities, but also their reasons for underreporting. Our research began with a few primary questions: what are the hate crime experiences of the transgender community; what are their experiences with law enforcement; and what are their reasons for reporting or not reporting hate crime victimizations to law enforcement?

Methods

The current study uses a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach to examine transgender and gender non-conforming people's encounters with hate crimes, their experiences with police, and reasons for reporting or not reporting hate crimes. Primarily used in public health research, CBPR is a collaboration between researchers and community members in every phase of the research process, from conceptualization to dissemination of findings (Israel et al., 2001; Israel et al., 2010). The main purpose of this approach is to gain knowledge about relevant issues in order to help create positive change, with the understanding that those within the community are best able to identify and define those key issues. The CBPR approach can take many methodological forms, but it is defined by its partnership between researchers and community and organizational stakeholders where all partners contribute their expertise (Horowitz et al., 2009).

Research utilizing the CBPR approach has made important contributions to the study of vulnerable populations because not only does it help establish trust between researchers and the community and identify key research issues, but it also helps provide outlets for the dissemination of findings in ways that will most benefit the community (Israel et al., 2001; Israel et al., 2010; Olshansky & Zender, 2016). This approach sets the current study apart from previous research, which has mostly been grounded in more traditional research designs. To our knowledge, CBPR has not previously been used in the study of hate crimes. The current research, therefore, may help reveal information that more traditional approaches cannot and thus may help lead to more effective or culturally relevant interventions that are grounded in the community. This is especially important in transgender communities, which are so vulnerable to victimization and mistreatment.

Our CBPR approach began with a partnership with the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations. A contact from the Commission arranged for us to present our research proposal to the Transgender Service Providers Network in Los Angeles. An Advisory Board of Network members and other members of the transgender community was convened. Their role was to evaluate the research design, survey and focus group questions, help recruit study participants, provide context and recommendations based on the outcomes of the work, and disseminate findings. Through the Community-based research prism, the current study is primarily qualitative, though a brief survey was completed by study participants prior to participation in the focus groups, making this a mixed-methods design.

Participants

Five focus groups at five different agencies were conducted. These agencies were chosen because they provide various services to transgender individuals and because they were made available by members of the Advisory Board. At each of these agencies, flyers were posted with information about the study, the date/time of the focus group, and contact information of the researchers. Some participants contacted the researchers in advance stating they would participate while others just showed up to the scheduled focus group. A total of 32 people participated in the focus groups, which ranged in size from 2 to 12 participants. The majority of participants were transgender women (n = 25), five were transgender men and two people identified as gender non-conforming. About one-third of participants were Hispanic/Latino (n = 11), followed by African American (n = 6), Native American (n = 5), White (n = 4), Multi-Racial (n = 3), and Other (n = 3). The ages of participants ranged from 18 to 59 years old with a mean age of 35.64 (*SD* = 13.08). While all of the participants lived within Los Angeles County at the time of the study, some of the focus group discussions focused on experiences participants had prior to living in Los Angeles.

Measures

The collection of survey data was intended to address the extent to which the participants had experienced hate crimes or incidents, provide details about those experiences, give some preliminary information about how they had been treated by police, and whether they sought help from law enforcement following the experience. The qualitative data gathered through focus group sessions were collected to further explore these experiences through the stories participants provided. These data offer insight into the subjective meaning participants attach to their experiences in ways survey data cannot provide.

The survey questions were brief and mostly focused on demographic information, experiences with hate crimes, and help-seeking or reporting behaviors.

Hate crimes and reporting. Participants were given a definition of hate crime and then given the following prompt: "In considering the following questions, please indicate whether or not you have experienced any of the incidents **and** you feel it happened because of your gender identity or how someone else perceives your gender identity." The incidents included 1) discrimination, 2) verbal harassment, 3) vandalism of their personal property, 4) physical threats, and/or 5) sexual assault. Participants were also asked who perpetrated these crimes against them, whether there were ever any incidents they felt were crimes they did not report to the police, and if so, what was the reason. Response categories for these reasons included: 1) did not think it was serious enough, 2) did not want anyone to know, 3) did not think the police would do anything, 4) were afraid of how you would be treated by the police because of your gender identity, 5) were afraid of how you would be treated by police because you are involved in sex-work, 6) afraid of being arrested, 7) immigration status, 8) fear of having

sexual orientation exposed, 9) fear of retaliation. Participants were asked to check all that applied and were also able to write in other responses.

Betrayal trauma. One scale was used to assess the level of betrayal trauma for those who reported hate crimes to the police. The Betrayal Trauma scale, adapted from Smith and Freyd (2013, 2014) was used to assess the support, or lack thereof, from organizations following a report of a crime or victimization experience. The only adaptation to the scale was the prompt, which was adapted so participants responded to the questions based on their interactions with *the police following a hate crime report* rather than contact with a general institution following any type of victimization. The scale included 16 questions (a = .877) (all items can be seen in **Table 2**).

Focus groups were semi-structured and were guided by four questions:

(1) Have you ever experienced a bias crime, or what most people call hate crimes, because of your gender identity or gender expression?
(2) Some people who have been the victim of a hate crime report the crime to law enforcement and some people do not for a variety of reasons. What has been your experience with this?
(3) What did you do to cope with or deal with these experiences?
(4) What advice would you give to law enforcement that might make people in the Trans community comfortable to report crimes against them or feel satisfied with the experience if they do report?

Qualitative data analytic strategy

A thematic analysis was conducted on the focus group transcriptions using Dedoose (2017) to explore the research questions. To begin, each of the focus group recordings was transcribed by a research assistant and then reexamined by a second research assistant to identify and correct any errors. The transcriptions were then analyzed and coded to identify themes that occurred within and across focus groups. There was a focus, during the coding, on participants experiences with hate crimes, law enforcement, and recommendations, but the deductive coding method also allowed for emergent themes to occur. Three coders examined the transcripts to identify themes.[1]

Results

Survey Results

Only two individuals stated they had *never* been a victim of a hate crime or incident based on their gender identity; thus, 93.7% of the participants had experienced at least one of the six types of hate crimes or incidents in the survey. On average, participants experienced 3.48 types of hate crimes/incidents (*SD* = 1.92) with four people reporting they had experienced all six types (see **Table 1**). The most common type of hate incident/crime was verbal harassment, but it is also notable that more than half of participants had been physically assaulted and more than a third had been sexually assaulted because of their gender identity. Seventy-two percent of participants had been victimized by strangers at some point, and approximately 97% had been victimized by someone they know (i.e., acquaintances, family members, friends and current or former intimate partners combined). There was an equal split between those who had reported at least one hate crime to the police (n = 14) and those who had not reported any (n = 14); four people did not answer this question.

The reasons for not reporting varied broadly, but the most common responses participants gave for not reporting an incident to the police was that they did not think the police would do anything (21.4%), were afraid of how they would be treated because of their gender identity (17.9%) and were afraid of being arrested (14.3%). Other responses included they did not think it was serious enough (7.1%), did not want anyone to know (10.7%), immigration status (3.6%), were afraid of having sexual orientation exposed (7.1%) and were afraid of retaliation (7.1%). All participants responded to the Betrayal Trauma questions whether or not they had ever reported a crime to the police. Data in **Table 2** show that the majority of participants felt some aspects of Betrayal Trauma. For example, most participants felt law enforcement had helped to create an environment where hate crimes against them seemed normal, more likely to occur and made it difficult to report the experiences when they happen. In addition, the majority of participants felt law enforcement created an environment where they no longer felt like valued members of the community and were discriminated against based on their identity (see **Table 2** for all responses).

Focus Group Results

Five themes were identified in the focus group transcriptions: experiences with hate crimes and incidents, experiences with law enforcement and reporting, preventative measures, changing times and recommendations for law enforcement. Three of these themes came about as a direct result of the questions that were asked and two, changing times and preventative

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[1] A random sample of three transcripts were double coded and Cohen's Kappa was run to determine strength of agreement between coders. Strong agreement between coders was found (K = .823) (see Landis & Koch 1977).

Table 1: Types of Hate Crimes/Incidents Experienced and Offender Types.

	%	n
Type of Victimization		
Discriminated Against	68.8%	22
Verbally Harassed	75.0%	24
Personal Property Vandalized	21.9%	7
Threatened with Harm	59.4%	19
Physically Attacked	53.1%	17
Sexually Assaulted	37.5%	12
Experienced None	6.3%	2
Offender Type		
Stranger	71.9%	23
Acquaintance	22.0%	7
Family Member	28.1%	9
Friend	25.0%	8
Current or Former Intimate Partner	22.0%	7
Law Enforcement	31.3%	10
Social Service Provider	18.8%	6
Unknown	12.5%	4

Note: Total N = 32.

Table 2: Betrayal trauma.

	Yes		No		N/A	
	%	n	%	n	%	n
Whether or not law enforcement contributes to their experiences of hate crimes in the following ways:						
Actively supporting you with either formal or informal resources	25.0%	8	65.6%	21	6.3%	2
Believing your report	31.3%	10	34.4%	11	28.1%	9
Creating an environment where this type of experience was recognized as a problem	25.0%	8	53.1%	17	18.8%	6
Not doing enough to prevent this type of experience	50.0%	16	28.1%	9	15.6%	5
Creating an environment in which this type of experience seemed common or normal	56.3%	18	25.0%	8	12.5%	4
Creating an environment in which this experience seemed more likely to occur	56.3%	18	18.8%	6	18.8%	6
Making it difficult to report the experience	56.3%	18	21.9%	7	15.6%	5
Responding inadequately to the experience, if reported	40.6%	13	25.0%	8	28.1%	9
Mishandling your case	53.1%	17	18.8%	6	21.9%	7
Covering up the experience	34.4%	11	25.0%	8	31.3%	10
Denying your experience in some way	56.7%	17	18.8%	6	21.9%	7
Punishing you in some way for reporting your experience	43.8%	14	25.0%	8	25.0%	8
Creating an environment where you no longer felt like a valued member of the community	62.5%	20	21.9%	7	9.4%	3
Responding differently to your experience based on your identity	62.5%	20	18.8%	6	12.5%	4
Creating an environment in which you felt discriminated against based on your identity	62.5%	20	18.8%	6	12.5%	4
Expressing a biased or negative attitude toward you and/or your experience based on your identity	59.4%	19	21.9%	7	12.5%	4

measures, emerged during the discussions but were not related to specific questions that were asked. Four of the five themes, with exemplar quotes, are discussed below.[2]

Experiences with hate crimes and incidents. Whereas the survey data showed how prevalent the hate crimes and incidents were, the qualitative data highlight the severity of these experiences and the context in which they occurred. Some of these incidents were perpetrated by strangers. For instance, when asked about hate crimes they may have experienced because of their gender identity, a transgender woman reflected on an interaction with a homeless person; she said, "He walked up to me and was like what the fuck are you looking at you fucking tranny and punched me in the face." Another participant reported:

> And then, uh, two guys in a … in a white car drove up next to me as I was riding my bike and they were laughing and they slowed down to keep pace with me … Um, I could hear them laughing and they started yelling at me, like laughing and yelling "dyke" out the window … so I started pedaling faster and just not, I didn't turn to look at them. I just tried to ignore them and kept going and, and then they, they, uh, kept up with me and they started maneuvering their car towards me like they wanted to run me off the road.

Sometimes, however, the offender was known by the victim. For example, in one case a transgender woman was living in the group home and was attacked by someone else living there. She went on to state she could not even defend herself because the policy of the group home was to kick out anyone who actively fought:

> I was living in a group home and this guy like um he wasn't okay with like my gender identity and he um like starting wailing on me and like the staff had to like pull him off of me and like separate us cause like yeah he just like wouldn't stop.

Experiences with law enforcement. Several people also talked about being harassed or victimized by the police. Some of these experiences occurred as people went about their daily lives, but others occurred when they were reporting hate crime victimizations to the police.[3]

A couple of people spoke specifically about being intentionally misgendered by the police or being referred to in ways that do not reflect their gender identity. For example, one transgender woman was pulled over by the police and was being treated respectfully. She informed the officer she was transgender because her identification did not match her appearance, but after she told the officer his use of pronouns changed to reflect her sex rather than her gender identity:

> I got pulled over before and he was like oh miss, I was like well I'm transgender […] and he's like okay sir […].

Another participant discussed being detained by the police for no reason while on his college campus:

> I forgot to print a paper, uh, and I was running on my college campus with a paper in my hand, and I was like, "Okay, I need to go turn this in." And, this, there's a police officer who stopped me and said, "Where are you going?" And, I was like, "I'm going to class. I have a paper to turn in." He's like, "No, sit down." And he just put me in handcuffs, no questions asked. He was like, "Oh, you want to be a man. I'm going to treat you like a man." … I have never been sat down by a police officer, on the concrete with my hands behind my back, on my college campus. Where, where I was like, 'I go to school here. Like, this is my paper.

Some of these incidents were relatively minor, but some of the experiences with law enforcement were quite severe. For example, one transgender woman who was a sex worker talked about being beaten by police and put into the trunk of their car:

> He knocked me down, he handcuffed me, he was calling me faggot … His partner was just watching me. His partner didn't do nothing to me. Um, so after he was beating me and calling me a faggot, he handcuffed my back, you know, I mean, um, from the back. His partner helped him put me in his partner's car because it was bigger, into the trunk. So, I was in the trunk. So, they drove me, I was all dirty. I had a split, my, my mouth was split open from the inside.

We also asked participants if they reported their hate crime victimizations to law enforcement, how it went if they did, and, if they did not, why. Some of the respondents stated they did not report because of prior negative experiences with police and were fearful reaching out to them. For example, the woman who had been put in the trunk of the car by law enforcement officers also stated she was afraid to report:

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[2] The fifth theme reflected participants' recommendations for law enforcement. In order to save space, the full discussion of this theme is not included here, but the findings helped to inform the authors' recommendations discussed in the last paragraph.

[3] While most participants had negative experiences with police, a few reported having positive experiences as well.

> Who could I tell … I got put in the cell when the sergeant asked me what happened. I couldn't tell him nothing, because I knew I was going to go back out again, and he was going to be out there … if I opened my mouth, I was sure I would've been dead and they would have made it look like I was killed by a trick. You know. So you live in fear. You can't talk to the cops.

Other respondents stated they had negative experiences with law enforcement when they tried to report their victimizations. Some of these respondents said the police did not take the crimes against them seriously or blamed them for their victimizations. For example, one transgender woman was assaulted in a public restroom and her boyfriend called the police to report it. She stated that once the police realized she was transgender, they would not help her:

> Okay, first they were serious. [...] And, once they see my ID, all that, the help from the police and all the seriousness went, it just went down the drain, and then afterward they told me, at the end they said, 'We can't do anything.'

Another transgender woman was followed and threatened by two men in a car, and when she reported it to the police, they focused on what she was doing and wearing rather than what the men had done:

> Uh, but when the cops came, I told them what happened, and they told me, 'Well, why do you dress this way?' [...] they completely disregarded everything I told them [...].

Preventative measures. Participants were asked about how they cope with the very negative experiences they have had. A theme that emerged from these discussions centered around preventative measures they take to avoid being a victim of hate crimes and avoid contact with law enforcement. Participants emphasized the need to change their behaviors so they could remain safe, including carrying weapons and avoiding interactions with people. For example, one person said they carry a weapon: "And I happen to have this knife that my boyfriend had gave me, and I kept it in my boot." A few people talked about avoiding people:

> [...] I don't talk to anyone on the street. I don't look at anybody. I don't interact. [...] I don't take the bus anymore. I don't ride my bike anymore. I get in and out with my car, um, so then I'm in something always. I try and come home before 11 every night. Um, I'm usually home much earlier, but on the weekends I don't stay out late. And I have friends who understand. I don't stay out late. I call my mom and my brother throughout the day and check in and see how things are going.

Other participants focused on behaviors used to protect themselves from law enforcement specifically. For example, a couple of participants talked about trying to use language to get out of potential negative situations with law enforcement. For example, one participant stated:

> I use my privilege at all times. And, what I mean by that is my privilege of having access to vocabulary that say the police have or having access to their bosses or their superiors or name-dropping, whatever I need to do to make me feel safe [...] Or my privilege of being able to pass as, you know, a Latina Tia.

Finally, one person talked about avoiding interaction with law enforcement altogether:

> I actually avoid at all costs talking to them because every time that I had any interaction, um, with law enforcement it just hasn't, it just left a very sour taste in my mouth. So, uh, as I'm sure other people like myself, I have had to in many occasions carry my own sort of protection, um, because I feel that I can protect myself rather than have someone depend on someone else to protect me.

Changing times. Across focus groups, another theme that emerged was that the cultural climate for transgender individuals was changing. Sometimes the discussion was about changes with society in general. For example, one participant stated "people are getting a better understanding of who we are, people are more respectful nowadays and I just think that it's getting better for us." One person pointed specifically to how transgender individuals are being portrayed in the popular media, which may be having an impact on how the community is seen.
She stated:

> Well, I think [things] are different now, we have like six different TV shows like where we are like represented and like we didn't have that last year, we didn't have any of that. Like the newer generation of trans people are going to be so lucky because like they are going to grow up in like homes and people are actually going to know what they are [...].

Others discussed that today there are more resources for the transgender community, and this is leading to changes with relationships with law enforcement. For example, one participant stated, "there is a lot more empowerment happening in transgender communities, so people are developing a better relationship with law enforcement."

Discussion

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the transgender community's experiences with hate crimes and victims' reasons for reporting or not reporting these crimes to the police. The results of the survey revealed that the majority of participants experienced hate incidents or crimes based on their gender identity and/or expression. Verbal harassment was the most common incident, but over half those surveyed were also victims of a physical attack and more than a third were victims of hate motivated sexual assaults. These findings are consistent with past research that found high rates of violence in hate crimes perpetrated against transgender individuals (Lombardi et al., 2002; Stotzer, 2008). For example, the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations reported that in recent years more than 90% of hate crimes against transgender individuals were violent (2016, 2017). Despite the severity of these crimes, our research found that half the victims of hate crimes did not report them to law enforcement, at least in part, because of their fear and distrust of the police.

This distrust arises from the many negative experiences our respondents had with law enforcement. In fact, nearly all the focus group participants spent most of their time discussing their experiences with law enforcement, even though this topic was intended to only be one part of a larger discussion. Our findings support past research that shows transgender individuals are misgendered, verbally harassed, and physically assaulted by law enforcement (Bettcher et al., 2010; Woods et al., 2013), and adds to the previous research by shedding light on the pervasiveness and severity of these experiences with police. Negative experiences with law enforcement have clearly caused the transgender community to distrust the police and feel uncomfortable interacting with them. This distrust and discomfort have led to transgender individuals' attempts to avoid contact with the police, and their decisions not to report hate crimes against them. Underreporting of hate crimes leads to difficulty in understanding and measuring the problem which, therefore, reduces agencies' and communities' ability to create meaningful and lasting solutions. One of the goals of this current research was to gain a better understanding of why hate crimes against those in the transgender community are greatly underreported. Survey results showed that the majority of respondents reported the police made them feel like they were not valued members of the community and would not be taken seriously if they reported a hate crime. In fact, of those respondents who had not reported a hate crime in the past, most stated it was because they did not trust the police to support them. While participants did not use the term "institutional betrayal" or "betrayal trauma" to identify what happened to them, it was clear they felt betrayed by the way they were treated by the police. Future quantitative and qualitative research must examine further these perceptions of institutional betrayal among transgender hate crime victims to better understand its effects on the probability that a victim will report a hate crime to law enforcement or seek services from other agencies.

Two important additional themes emerged; (1) preventative measures, and (2) changing times. Consistent with past research about transgender people feeling unsafe in public (cited in Stotzer, 2009), many of the participants in this study described altering their lives in various ways to avoid victimization, discrimination, or violence. Given that the majority of participants in this research had experienced multiple victimizations, the avoidance and hypervigilance the participants recounted may be further evidence of traumatic stress (Ford et al., 2015). Relatedly, the experience of institutional betrayal and the prevalence of betrayal trauma likely exacerbate these feelings and behaviors. This is likely to be especially true for people who reported feeling as though law enforcement had contributed to an environment where one no longer feels valued in one's community and where these experiences with institutional betrayal seem normal. Indeed, the majority of participants responded affirmatively to these survey items (see **Table 2**). Future research on hate crimes in transgender communities should include outcome measures of psychological distress to help us further understand how betrayal trauma and the preventative measures victims begin to use are associated with traumatic stress reactions and other post-trauma sequalae in order to further advocate for appropriate interventions.

One positive theme that emerged was the recognition that the cultural climate for transgender individuals has been changing over time. Participants discussed how there is growing recognition and understanding of trans-issues and trans-people in both the media and within law enforcement. Some participants discussed that they felt that the younger trans-community will have a very different experience with bias and will find more acceptance because of the social changes occurring throughout society. Participants felt that more positive portrayals of trans-people in the media, in particular, contributed to a more supportive society. While this may contrast with participants unwillingness to report hate crimes or engage with police, they appeared to be somewhat hopeful for the future.

It is important to note, however, this finding of "changing times" may be location and time specific. The current research was conducted in Los Angeles, a major city in a relatively progressive part of the country, in the months *before* the 2016 presidential election. It is possible transgender individuals in more rural, conservative parts of the country may not perceive the same levels of progress in terms of hate crimes and treatment by police. For example, recent research has demonstrated

that rural transgender students experience higher rates of bullying because of their gender identity (Eisenberg et al., 2018), and experience verbal harassment and physical assault with more frequency (Palmer, Kosciw & Bartkiewicz, 2012) than their city peers. Few studies have examined differences by region in the policing of transgender people, but it is clear some rural communities and police departments may lack the resources to help improve relations between the transgender community and the police, (Calhoun, 2017) or may lack the motivation to do so. Further, recent research has demonstrated that since the 2016 presidential election, transgender individuals have been fearful because they perceive that hate speech and violence against them has been legitimized (Veldhuis et al., 2018). It is, therefore, possible that any progress perceived by our participants has diminished since the 2016 election. Thus, the data here must be understood within the context of the time and location in which they were collected.

There are, of course, limitations to the current study. Since each of the focus groups were conducted at service agencies, all of the participants had sought services of some kind, and it is possible individuals who have not sought out services are different in some important ways. Further, the survey and focus group questions did not allow for any analysis of the intersections of race/ethnicity and gender identity. Future research that asks specific questions related to intersectionality and allows for the disaggregation of survey and focus group data would provide important insights into the experiences of transgender persons of color. Finally, it is possible that participants may not be completely forthcoming about their experiences due to the open nature of focus groups.

Despite these limitations, the current study provides relevant insights into the experiences of transgender individuals with hate crime and law enforcement and with their decisions to report to the police. Making sense of the connection between experiences and reporting is crucial if the goal is to increase reporting and thus our understanding of the issue. These insights are particularly important given the Community Based Participatory Research approach this study utilized. The CBPR approach is designed to bring together research and practice so that important social issues can be addressed (Leung, et al., 2004). The results of this research have been shared with several entities who have the capacity for broad dissemination of research findings, which can impact policy and practice around these issues. In this way, the CBPR approach is important because it can reach beyond the academic community and attempt to create real change within the communities where the research was actually conducted.

While the current research is exploratory, perhaps its greatest contribution to the literature is the recognition that issues related to the underreporting of hate crimes in the transgender community should be examined from an institutional betrayal framework. The finding that transgender individuals are hesitant to report instances of hate crime because of the way they have been treated by police or expect to be treated by police is, of course, not new. However, this theoretical framework can lead to a more nuanced understanding of the effects that the experiences with law enforcement can have on transgender individuals both in terms of trauma and the disengagement from the offending institutions that result. Therefore, future research seeking to understand underreporting of hate crimes, particularly in the transgender community, should examine the effects of institutional betrayal.

Our findings also have implications for law enforcement practice. Focus group discussions and survey results both suggest that members of the transgender community lack trust in police officers because of the way they have been treated in the past. This betrayal by an institution that is supposed to protect and serve the community, not only inflicts trauma but causes victims to refrain from reporting hate crimes when they occur. To alleviate these issues, it is important that law enforcement agencies prioritize trust-building with the transgender community. This can be done in a number of ways, including attending events, setting up strategic meetings with stakeholders from the transgender community, and requiring on-going, quality trainings on transgender competence for law enforcement. In addition, in order to increase hate crime reporting, we also recommend the creation of a Hate Crime Advocate or Liaison position within law enforcement agencies. An advocate could help ensure victims are treated fairly and that all appropriate and possible steps are taken to investigate a crime, even when an officer is the offender. This advocate could also aid victims in connecting to appropriate services in order to address the potential trauma associated with hate-based victimization and institutional betrayal. While these recommendations are based on our findings and suggestions from participants, they are not significantly different than what others have suggested in the past. However, the vast majority of law enforcement agencies in the United States have not, as of yet, implemented any new policies to improve their relationship with the transgender community. Given this lack of action, it is imperative that research and calls for change continue.

Competing Interests
The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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