Introduction to the Discipline

What is Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies?
Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies is an area of academia that studies, somewhat obviously, gender, sexuality, and women's studies. In GSWS/WGST, critically examining the world around us with regards to power, privilege, and marginalized groups and identities is at the forefront of all topics. Gender and sexuality are typically the primary points of entry into course material, but the significance of intersecting identities is also a prominent academic purpose. At its core, GSWS as a subject examines the pervasiveness of sexism/misogyny and other oppressions in our society and culture, and attempts to deconstruct these structures to better understand them.

What skills and abilities are required to write in this major?

- GSWS writers must possess strong research skills, with an ability to identify up-to-date and credible sources.

- GSWS writers must be able to implement feminist and queer theory in writing and research. Research assignments often ask a student to research a particular topic related to the class material and evaluate it through a feminist, queer, or gender-studies lens. In order words, rather than researching information and just synthesizing it, students are asked to add a significant amount of their own evaluation through a particular lens to whatever topic it is they are researching.

- GSWS writers must be willing to explore all sides of cultural norms, activities, and behaviors perhaps previously taken for granted. They must be willing to be vulnerable and regularly practice introspective writing: GSWS is a reading- and writing-intensive realm of study, and much of the course writing is directed at personal reflection.

- GSWS writers must keep up with changes in terminology and theory. This is central to being a credible actor in the field. Whereas in some subject areas the material hasn't changed in decades, in GSWS the accepted material is evolving constantly. You can find a list of important terminology below.
GSWS is a multidisciplinary field of study

One of the factors that makes Gender and Sexuality Studies, and particularly the GSWS department at UVM, so interesting and complex is the way in which it ties in many different subject areas. Our department, although it has been steadily growing over the last few years, is still quite small. One consequence of this is the fact that many of the professors teaching GSWS courses are often teaching cross-listed courses and might even primarily teach in another department. GSWS classes are commonly cross-listed with classes in history, political science, English, philosophy, health, theater, classics, or environmental studies.

What this means with regards to writing in the discipline is that required writing for a GSWS class might look very different depending on the specific class you are taking. That is to say, the way you formulate your argument, the type of argument you create, the terminology you are expected to implement, and the citations you are asked to use may vary greatly depending on whether you are writing for a GSWS/History class or a GSWS/Sociology class or a GSWS/Philosophy class. Many professors, because of the interdisciplinary nature of the department, will be flexible regarding preferred citation methods, but they often will be expecting a particular paper structure or focus related to their primary realm of academic writing.

All that being said, there are similarities that can be seen across disciplines with writing pertaining to GSWS. The theory and perspective will often look similar across disciplines, even if the details and formats of the paper differ. To help illustrate some of these concepts through example, sample papers from two different disciplines can be found below.

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**Important Terminology**

**Asexual:** a term pertaining to sexuality that is used to describe a person who does not experience sexual attraction. Note: be careful not to conflate sexual attraction with romantic attraction when thinking about asexuality; a person who identifies as asexual might have any number of romantic relationships, just relationships absent of sexual intimacy.

**Cisgender:** the term for a person whose biological sex “matches” the gender that society associates with that sex (i.e. being biologically female and also identifying as a women, as opposed to being born biologically female and identifying as a male).

**FTM:** Female-to-Male; someone who was assigned female at birth, but who identifies as a male.
Gender: 1) A socially constructed system of classification that ascribes qualities of masculinity and femininity to people. Gender characteristics can change over time and are different between cultures. 2) One's sense of self as masculine or feminine or anywhere in between regardless of genitalia or other sex characteristics.

Gender Binary: The opposition system of gender that has been constructed that is comprised of femaleness and maleness in opposition to one another.

Gender Expression: The way a person's gender is expressed to the world.

Gender Identity: The way a person experiences and identifies their gender.

Gender nonconformity: Any number of practices that reject participation in the gender binary. Most genderqueer folks are gender nonconforming, but not all gender nonconforming folks identify as genderqueer. Similarly the trans* umbrella is inclusive of any gender nonconforming person, but that does not mean all gender nonconforming people identify as transgender, trans, or trans*.

Genderqueer/Genderfuck: An identifying label for someone who redefines or plays with gender, or who refuses gender altogether. A label for people who bend/break the rules of gender and/or blur the boundaries.

Heterosexual: The dictionary definition of this would be “a sexual orientation in which a person is romantically and sexually attracted to a person of the opposite gender.” This definition should be problematized because there are not only two genders. Perhaps a better, more accurate definition of this descriptor would be “a person who is attracted to primarily people of other genders, as opposed to their same gender.”

Heterosexism: The personal practice or systematic/institutionalized oppression of assuming that everyone is heterosexual, therefore marginalizing people who do not identify or live their lives that way. Heterosexism can also describe and incorporate the prejudicial belief that heterosexuality is superior to all other sexualities.

Internalized Oppression: The process through which a marginalized person or group comes to believe, accept, or live out inaccurate stereotypes and misinformation about their group because of the pervasive degree to which they have been steeped in prejudice and discrimination against their identity group.

Institutionalized Oppression: A specific arrangement of society that benefits one group at the expense of another through cultural and social institutions such as language, media, religion, economics, education system, etc.

Intersex: A set of medical conditions that feature congenital anomaly of the reproductive and sexual system. That is, intersex people are born with “sex chromosomes,” external genitalia, or internal reproductive systems that are not considered “standard” for either male or female. The existence of intersex people shows that there are not just two sexes and that our ways of thinking about sex (trying to force everyone to fit into either the male box or the female box) is socially constructed. About 1 in 2000 infants born are at risk for intersex genital mutilation (meaning a decision is made at birth by either parents, a doctor, or both, to alter the infant's genitalia to be either fully male or female). An even
Higher proportion of the population is intersex in some way. This word replaces “hermaphrodite,” which is generally considered rude, not politically correct and/or derogatory.

Marginalized group: Any group of people who does not hold power and privilege in a particular social category and are therefore disadvantaged and/or excluded.

Misogyny: A cultural attitude of hatred or dislike of women that manifests itself in a myriad of ways, usually some form of social disadvantage, oppression, and/or violence.

MTF: Male-to-Female; Someone assigned male at birth who identifies as female.

Passing: An arguably problematic term that refers to a trans*, homosexual, etc. person being read by the world as part of the dominant group. In other words, a homosexual man being read by the world as heterosexual, or a trans* person being read as cisgender, specifically the gender they identify with. The idea of “passing” is fairly innocuous when in reference to some things, but when in reference to transgender people the definition betrays the transphobic and transmisogynistic belief that the gender identity of a trans person is not their real gender, and that they are somehow deceiving people in being perceived the way they identify. Click here to hear transgender activist and author Janet Mock explain the complexities around “passing.”

Queer: 1) An umbrella term for the LGBTQIA+ community, as in “the queer community”. Includes those who identify as any sort of deviation from what society has considered normal in terms of gender or sexuality. 2) A personal identifier that one may use to define their gender or sexuality. May be used in conjunction with gender (i.e. genderqueer) or sexuality (i.e. “I identify as queer”). 3) (outdated) a slur against gay/lesbian/transgender people. This term may offend those of an older generation, so be careful who you define as queer unless they've told you they define themselves that way.

Sex: Identifier related to a person's biological sex organs. A person's sex may or may not match their gender identity and/or expression.

Sexuality/sexual orientation: The direction of one’s sexual attraction. It exists on a continuum and not a set of absolute categories; sometimes referred to as affection orientation or sexuality.

Sexual Reassignment Surgery (Sexual/Gender Confirmation Surgery): Any number of physical surgeries a transgender individual might undergo so as to match their physical appearance with the gender they identify with.

Transgender: Transgender people are those whose gender identity differs from the social gender expectations connected to the biological sex they were born with. To understand this, one must understand the separation between biological sex (genitals, chromosomes, secondary sex characteristics, etc.), and social gender, which refers to levels of masculinity and femininity ascribed by society or perceived in the self. Often, society conflates sex and gender, viewing them as the same thing; they are not the same thing, and one does not inherently determine the other. It is also important to recognize that like gender in general, transgender identities operate on a spectrum. Similar to many identities, the way gender operates is exceptionally complex, and every person's experience with their particular gender identity will be specific and unique; there is no one way to necessarily describe someone's experience of being transgender.

Transition: A complicated, multi-step process that can take years as a transgender person aligns their
physical body and/or outward social perception with how they experience their gender identity. This process could include anything from making preferred pronouns known, to hormone replacement therapy, to surgical gender confirmation procedures. Transitioning looks different for every individual; there is no single or correct way to do it. Additionally, the steps one chooses to take or not take does not determine the legitimacy of their gender identity.

**Transphobia:** 1) Discrimination, fear, or hatred of people who blur traditional gender lines that result from the gender/sex binary system. 2) Fear or hatred of transgender people; transphobia can manifest in a number of ways, including violence, harassment, discrimination, or erasure.

**Transsexual:** (outdated) A transgender person who has undergone sexual reassignment surgery and done all the “medical things” (surgery, hormones, etc.), to align their body fully with the gender they identify as. Outdated because it disregards and delegitimizes the identities and experiences of those who choose to identify as transgender and outside the gender binary, and enforces the binary gender options (male and female, man and woman) as the only options.

**Transvestite:** (outdated): A derogatory and outdated term for a cross dresser or drag queen. See also: pre-op transsexual. May be seen in older literature discussing trans* identities, and should not be used unless you are directly referencing something that uses the term.

**Finding Topics and Sources**

**General Non-Scholarly Resources**

These are all background resources that may be a good place to provide context for more academic articles, especially newer scholarly writings, as well as good places for queer specific news and issues. These may or may not be accepted as credible sources, depending on the professor and the type of paper you are writing. However, they make for interesting and informative reading.

- [Everyday Feminism](http://everydayfeminism.com/): A good resource for current articles on feminism and real-life feminist issues, away from the more academic scholarly sources.
- [Autostraddle](http://www.autostraddle.com/): Lesbian/queer culture website. More pop-culture based, but can be a good jumping off point for cultural critiques of modern lesbian society, and lesbian/queer female history. NOTE: this website is sometimes NSFW.
- [Huffington Post Gay Voices](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/gay-voices/): A good starting point for current news and opinions from/about the queer community.
Examples of Potential GSWS Studies Writing Topics and How/Where to Find Sources:

**Women of Color and Reproductive Rights**

**Example Source:** *Beyond Pro-Choice versus Pro-Life: Women of Color and Reproductive Justice*, by Andrea Smith

http://www.jstor.org/stable/4317105

This article was found on JSTOR’s database, which can be found via the UVM Library website. It was found by searching a combination of key terms such as “women of color” “abortion” and “reproductive rights”. What makes this a good topic for something such as a research paper is that it is fairly specific, and lays the groundwork for discussing how women of color are most affected by the reproductive policing of women’s bodies. What makes this a good article is that it discusses one particular political aspect of this, abortion, and specifically in the context of women of color. This source can be deemed reliable, not only because it was found via a database UVM knows, trusts, and actively uses/promotes, but also because it was published by The Johns Hopkins University Press.

**The Connection between Queer Identities and Poverty:**

**Example Source:** *The Queerly Disadvantaged and the Making of San Francisco's War on Poverty, 1964–1967*, by Martin Meeker


This article was found on JSTOR’s database, which can be found via the UVM Library website. It was found by searching a combination of key terms such as “queer” “homosexual” “poverty” “unemployment” and “epidemic”. What makes this a good topic is that it touches upon a very specific issue related to sexual identity, which is a growing problem as well as subfield within what is colloquially known as Women’s Studies. This is a good article, as it covers the topic in a more historical than emotionally driven framework, and thus provides a more objective viewpoint from which to build. This source can be deemed reliable, not only because it was found via a database UVM
knows, trusts, and actively uses/promotes, but also because it was published by The University of California Press.

The Role of Iranian Women in Government Post Iranian Revolution

Example Source: *Iranian Women from Private Sphere to Public Sphere, With Focus on Parliament*, by Elaheh Koolaee

http://web.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.uvm.edu/ehost/detail?vid=3&sid=9194a09a-48e7-49048c8bf69d93fd81ad%40sessionmgr114&hid=128&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#

This article was found on the database Academic Search Premier - a branch of EBSCO Host. It was found by searching a combination of key terms such as “Iranian Women” “government” “activism” and “post revolution”. This would be a good topic for a research paper focusing on the role of women in government, or in general, in non-Western countries, especially as it hones in on a specific region, country, and culture. What makes this a good source is that it discusses the influence women have both directly and indirectly, rather than only discussing the concrete roles they hold, which can be rather limiting. This source can be deemed reliable, not only because it was found via a database UVM knows, trusts, and actively uses/promotes, but also because it was published in a fairly well known academic journal which focuses primarily on topics in Iran.

Systematic Racism: The Imprisonment of African American Women


Call Number: HV9468 .J65 2003

This book was found using CatQuest – this is a database navigated via the UVM Library website, which allows one to search through the virtual entirety of UVM libraries. It was found by searching a combination of terms such as “African American Women” “imprisonment” and “racism”. This would be a good topic for a paper as it draws upon the intersectionalities of race, class, and gender, which is a hugely important topic in the realm of GSWS. What makes this a good source is
that it can be used as a primary source, thanks to the interviews it possesses of current as well as former imprisoned African American women. This book can be deemed reliable because it was published by New York University Press, and the author is a well-known professor at Syracuse University College of Law, who has done much academic work and research in this field.

**Malala Yousafzai as a Modern Feminist Hero**

*Example Source: Malala Yousafzai’s Most Significant Messages by Gada Mahrouse*

N3PK&csi=397229&hl=t&hv=t&hnsd=f&hns=t&hgn=t&oc=00240&perma=true

This article was found using LexisNexis’ Academic database, and specifically the search bar which searches all prominent news articles since 1980 – this database can be found via the UVM Library website. It was found by searching Malala’s full name as well as putting a restriction that only articles written in the past few years be searched. This would be a good topic for a paper as it is hyper-relevant to current events and shows an awareness beyond textbooks of what is going on in the world, specifically in the realm of women and Feminism. What makes this a good source is that it efficiently summarizes what exactly Malala stands for, and what she is best known for. This source can be deemed reliable, not only because it was found via a database UVM knows, trusts, and actively uses/promotes, but also because it was published in a well-known newspaper – Montreal’s *The Gazette*. 
Samples papers: Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies

As previously mentioned, the experience of writing in GSWS can vary greatly depending on the context you are coming from. There are some baseline characteristics of all GSWS papers, such as the kind of critical theory that is often expected, but differences between disciplines are important to be aware of as well. Below are two sample papers from different disciplines to illustrate some of the similarities and differences that can be found.

Sample Paper I: GSWS and Classics

[EXCERPT]

Constructions of Gender in Classical Athens

One of the most significant issues in reading Classical Greek texts is in the fact that so little diversity is represented through the authors and story tellers\(^1\). That is to say, although there are many different races and genders and classes of people present in the writings we have looked at, very few authentic voices are allowed to actually show through. Women's characters are present in the texts, but their voices have men's ideas about women inscribed upon them and therefore are not true representations of the ideas, beliefs, and feelings of women at the time. Although authentic female voices aren't heard, male writing of female characters and figures does seem to provide some insight into how men viewed and related to women. A broad range of male writings of the time seemed indicative of a pervasive fear and hatred of women, and sought to subjugate women through reductive tropes and caricaturistic representations\(^2\).

One of the ways we see these inscriptions of negative male ideas about women present in female characters in the way female characters are written as the “other.” In just about every context, women are portrayed as animalistic, insane, or childlike, but perhaps no other text degrades women

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\(^1\) Similar to papers in the English/Literature discipline, opening up with a somewhat broad statement pertaining to the argument that will be addressed in the paper can be a helpful way to get started. Avoid clichés like “since the dawn of time humans have been doing [blank]”, but do think of the introduction as a kind of funnel where you are trying to lead the reader to your eventual focus, probably in some sort of thesis at the end of the introductory paragraph.

\(^2\) Thesis/focus statement. Mine happens to be residing in the traditional spot of last sentence of first paragraph, but this doesn't necessarily need to be the case. Somewhere within the introduction is usually preferred and is the most natural place. Mine also happens to be just one sentence, but this also isn't necessarily required (contrary to what you probably learned in high school...). Keep it concise, but don't radically limit your ideas because of a perceived spacial limitation.
with the same degree of misogyny as Semonides in his *Essay on Women*. The purpose of this particular piece, as one might imagine, is to outline the various types of women that exist, what kind of wives they make, and why men should avoid them. He categorizes them as a range of different animals, including a sow, a weasel, a monkey, a donkey, and, not surprisingly, a bitch. The worst type of woman, though, according to Semonides, is the monkey. Of this kind of women, he writes:

> One was a monkey; and this was the very worst, most exquisite disaster Zeus has wished on men. Hers is the ugliest face of all. When such a woman walks through the village, everybody turns to laugh. Her neck’s so short she can scarcely turn her head. Slab-sided, skinny-legged. Oh, unhappy man who has to take such a disaster in his arms! Yet she has understanding of all tricks and turns, just like a monkey. If they laugh, she doesn’t mind. Don’t expect any good work done by her. She thinks of only one thing, plans for one thing, all day long: how she can do somebody else the biggest harm. (Sem. Ch. 1)

This passage isn’t in any way subtle, and it reveals more than a generally dismissive attitude of women, but it is useful insofar as it names tropes that are present in other more subtle representations of women. As a fairly regular rule, we see male writers degrading women for being “tricksters,” and trying to cause problems for their husbands, for being excessively obsessed with sex, and for being lazy and disagreeable housewives. This piece goes to extremes, though, in the way he calls this kind of woman a “disaster” a man becomes stuck with. It is problematic to be discussing women in such rigid categories to begin with, but the specific language in this piece goes above and beyond everyday sexism; it is utterly dehumanizing. There isn’t really any argument to be made for this essay by Semonides, as it is so straightforwardly violent and degrading, but the various representations of women give us a solid base for dehumanizing tropes strewn more subtly through other pieces of writing and how to contextualize them. Specifically, they give us a way to understand the degree to which there was no “right” way to be a woman in Athens. Beautiful, ugly, fat, thin, sexual, non-sexual—all of

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3 One really important part of writing in most disciplines, Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies included, is the ability to integrate sources seamlessly into the body of text you are constructing. It is usually helpful to do so in the way I did it in this paragraph, by introducing the author/title/source, discussing it briefly and it's relevance, quoting the actual source properly, and then discussing the quoted passage in more detail.

4 In MLA citation, which is what most professors will ask for in GSWS, there are specific citation guidelines depending on the length of the selection. The general rule of thumb is to indent and single space excerpted passages longer than 3-5 lines. Quotation marks around the text are not required, with the author and page number in parenthesis at the end. Because this Gender Studies paper was written for a Classics class, and the source I used was an Ancient Greek text, I used a citation method specifically requested by my professor.
these were coded as bad in one way or another in the essay, and the contradictions therein betray the fact that there is no logical basis for any of the points made or analogies drawn, and problematize nearly all representations of women.

[EXCERPT] What these negative tropes and contradictions seem to illustrate is the way in which a group of people (in this case, men) is able to manipulate reality to enforce an already-existing collection of beliefs and desires about women. That is to say, much like modern-day conceptions about gender (and even sex, although that's a separate issue), the vast majority of existing beliefs are not actually grounded in reality or essential truth, but are phenomenons that are observable because of social conditions. Unfortunately, this is an easily enforced loop because these observed traits of inferiority are then used to continually enforce the status quo. This can be seen in a Classical Greek context through the ways in which women are denied human rights and political privileges. According to Blundell in her chapter “Women in Athenian Law and Society,” not only were women “legally incapable of arranging their own marriages” (Blundell, 114) but there exists “scarcely any evidence to show that a woman was allowed any say in the matter.” Furthermore, women had “no independent existence.” (114). Because they were only permitted in the realm of the oikos, and the oikos was seen as the property of the man, the women, by way of logic, was also seen solely as the property of her male guardian (114). These laws were not created because women were biologically or socially inferior, but rather the opposite: women were allowed to be oppressed to the degree they were because of rules, laws, and truths created by the men in power. Another interesting example of this brought up in Blundell's chapter is the curious fact of girls being married off so young. In relation to other social and cultural practices, this doesn't make too much sense, since Athenians didn't tend to have huge families. As a counter suggestion, Blundell offers the possibility that having a much younger wife and a relatively older husband “would have helped foster the notion of intellectual inferiority of the female, and would have reinforced patriarchal attitudes towards women.” (120). There is nothing accidental or

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5 GSWS writing is most often argument-based. That is to say, assignments don't ask you to simply report on information, but to actually take a position and argue a particular viewpoint. Your thesis is a place to establish an argument, and this argument should be carried through the entire paper. Each new point I make—including this one about how contradictions in negative tropes of women illustrate the degree to which these tropes are in fact constructed, rather than essential—is another argument crafted to reinforce my overarching thesis. I'm not just reporting on my sources, I'm making original arguments about them.

6 In-text citations of passages less than 3-5 lines are fairly simple to cite in MLA format. Put the passage in quotes, and then put the author's name and the page number (separated by a comma) in parenthesis following the cited passages. If this citation is coming at the end of a sentence, place the period after the parenthesis containing the author’s name and page number. Using this kind of brief in-text citation is important both when citing directly and also when paraphrasing closely enough that credit needs to be given to the author.
coincidental about this male desire for power and subsequent degradation of women. This is a perfect example of someone or a group of someones intentionally constructing a social practice that actively reinforces a norm that the dominant group benefits from. This is a fairly arbitrary custom to normalize, since Athenians didn't actively desire or produce huge families, but through looking at who might benefit from it, or any other custom, we can get a clearer look at the real motives behind its development.
Transgender Movements and Activism in the 1960s and 70s

As with all social justice movements, there are many vehicles of activism and awareness through which oppressed groups are able to reach the mainstream; it was no different with the transgender rights movement. There were an exceptional number of actors involved, all of whom were involved on a variety of levels. One thing that shows clearly at every level of activism is the fact that transgender and transsexual individuals themselves (particularly transgender and transsexual women) were at the forefront of the movement, and doing the brunt of the work. We see activism carried out in three distinct ways—through individual means, through organization formation, and through public demonstration and activism—but all three of these methods worked to reinforce, inspire, and drive one another.

In a similar but slightly larger-scale incident at Compton's Cafeteria (another eating establishment, not so coincidentally), drag queens and other gender-non-conforming people in the restaurant were targeted by police and ended up staging another resistance. According to one telling of the story, someone at the restaurant who was annoyed at a “noisy young crowd of Queens” (Stryker, 64) called the police to take care of them, and when the police attempted to violently physically handle

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7 An informative title that gives context to the text that is about to follow. This is a necessity in just about any Humanities discipline. Because this is a paper written for a history class, it has a more analytical historical tone.

8 This is my thesis/focus statement. Although it makes an argument, it is a fairly weak one. This paper did not get an “A,” and the main reason, according to the professor, was that it did not make a deep enough argument about greater trends in gender theory of the time within transgender activism. A stronger thesis might have had something to do with a broader definition of gender identity and expression that was simultaneously developing at the time within multiple movements in such a way that these new ideologies reinforced, supported, and encouraged one another to deepen their activism efforts.

9 As is very often the case in GSWS classes that are cross-listed with other departments, the professor for this class gave students the option of using whatever method of citations they were most comfortable with. I most frequently use MLA.
one of the queens, they threw their coffee into the police officer's face, causing a full-blown conflict to erupt in the restaurant. Police were beating patrons, patrons were fighting back, and amidst the extended chaos, a newsstand was burned completely to the ground, and a police car was vandalized. Stryker\textsuperscript{10} does a very good job giving context to this riot, relating it the specific neighborhood location, the time period, and the culture of the area in which the riot took place. Two of these things, the time period/cultural consciousness of the time, and the location, are particularly crucial to understanding what brought this conflict into being and made it so significant. With regards to the first of those two, a large element of this conflict and others like it was the prevalence of social rights movements in general at the time. The civil rights movement and other connected movements were both the result of a more public consciousness, but in turn they fueled movements further, and each had the effect of reinforcing others.

More significant even than the consciousness of the time period, though, was the area in which this occurred: the Tenderloin district in San Francisco\textsuperscript{11}. At the time, the Tenderloin was known to be one of the “seedier” neighborhoods in the city, and was home to many illicit social behaviors such as prostitution, drugs, and gambling. In spite the existence of these activities being public knowledge, police would often turn a blind eye to these sort of things in exchange for a cut of these various businesses (Stryker, 66). Transgender people, gender-non-conforming people, and drag queens\textsuperscript{12} were

\textsuperscript{10}Just for the sake of giving context to the assignment, this was a short paper assignment for a History of Sex class in which we were asked to discuss one of four questions pertaining to a book we read and discussed in class, Susan Stryker’s Transgender History. The question that this paper was answering had to do with different types of activism that were occurring during the time period. We were allowed to draw upon other sources if we wished, but were only required to draw upon and cite Stryker’s book.

\textsuperscript{11}This entire passage goes into a fairly detailed historical context for the events that I go on to discuss in greater detail. This is a signifier of this being a specifically historically-based paper, as opposed to a gender-studies paper centered in another discipline, because of the clear emphasis on historical context. Some gender-related papers will be much more heavy on the theory and/or personal development of opinions, but this paper is intended to have a strong focus on capturing a particular time period in history and formulating an argument about it.

\textsuperscript{12}Even though this is a historically-based paper, it is still necessary to have the tools and terminology to effectively and inclusively discuss the topics at hand. Examining gender and sexuality identity throughout history can be a tricky thing, since there have not always been names for the categories we understand in the present day, or the names have changed to mean different things or become more or less acceptable, so it is necessary to be really conscious of the language you are using and whether or not it accurately reflects what you are trying to talk about.
particularly targeted and vulnerable in this area, and were often victims of police profiling and brutality. According to Stryker, transgender women potentially engaged in sex work were more likely to be treated with viciousness and brutality by the police. Even if they weren't actively engaging in sex work, they would often be picked up by police and either raped by the officers or brought into prison where they were humiliated or raped and assaulted. The visible and visceral oppression and violence these people faced was immense. As a side note, Stryker notes that this is an explanatory factor for why the transgender rights movement was predominantly driven by trans women: they were predominantly affected by discrimination and violence and thus had the greatest stake in changing the culture.

While the culture of violence against transgender folks and trans* sex workers in the Tenderloin explain the police response to the situation, what is truly interesting is to think about are the social and political forces that were motivating people to fight back on such a genuine and significant scale. One suggestion that Stryker offers is with regards to increasing medical access becoming available to transgender people wishing to biologically or medically transition. Stryker writes, very aptly: “When people struggling against an injustice have no hope things will ever change, they use their strength to survive; when they think that their actions matter, that same strength becomes a force for positive change.” (Stryker, 74). Increasing medical access validated many transgender people's existence and identity, and increasing research and support for this medical access illustrated that transexuality was a legitimate and valid space to inhabit in the world. This belief in themselves, their identities, and their community explains, at least in some part, what gave this community of people the strength to actually fight back against the oppression they were facing.¹³

¹³ This is another place that is directly drawing an argument from historical context, as is going to be the objective in most history-based papers.