

Psychological Distress, Crime Features, and Help-Seeking Behaviors Related to Homophobic Bias Incidents

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Psychological distress, crime features, and help-seeking behaviors of homophobic bias incidents were explored using a convenience sample of 290 lesbian, gay, and bisexual participants. A majority of the sample (73%) indicated they had been the target of at least one homophobic incident. Participants provided a detailed account of their most serious incident of homophobic victimization. Victims of homophobic sexual assaults reported significantly more posttraumatic stress symptoms than victims of bias threats, victims of other bias acts, or nonvictims. Bias sexual assaults also were more likely to involve a known perpetrator, multiple perpetrators, and previous bias incidents. Bias physical assault victims more often had a history of at least one incident of nonbias violence. Sexual and physical assault victims were more likely to report the incident and to seek other types of help. The results indicate that certain crime types and features result in more psychological distress for bias victims.

Homophobic bias crimes against lesbians and gay men represent a significant social problem that has important psychological consequences for survivors. Bias, or hate, crimes refer to violence that is motivated specifically by the assailant's prejudice against the victim because of his or her group membership (e.g., race, religion, sexual orientation) (Berrill, 1992). Research shows that hate crime victimization is widespread. Estimates based on 24 studies across the nation indicate that about 17% of lesbians and gay men reported having been assaulted during incidents in which the victim's sexual orientation was identified as the specific motive for the attack (Berrill, 1992). A more recent study of lesbians, gay men, and bisexual women and men by Herek, Gillis, and Cogan (1999) found that one in four men and one in five women were the victim of a bias crime since age 16. Furthermore, bias crimes committed against gays and lesbians continue to rise throughout the United States despite reported decreases in crime generally (National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 2001).

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There is a growing body of research on homophobic violence and its psychological consequences, particularly in comparison with nonbias violence (e.g., Herek et al., 1999; Herek, Gillis, Cogan, & Glunt, 1997; Hershberger & D'Augelli, 1995; Otis & Skinner, 1996). This research has established that bias victimization leads to psychological distress and that bias crimes cause more negative outcomes than nonbias crimes.

Hershberger and D'Augelli (1995), when examining the psychological impact of bias crimes, reported that for lesbian and gay youth, distress was moderately related to three different measures of bias-related victimization (representing three escalating levels of violence, i.e., verbal insults, personal property crimes, and physical assault). Similarly, Otis and Skinner (1996) found that victimization (a measure that combined both bias and nonbias incidents) among lesbians and gay men contributed significantly to depression.

Herek and colleagues (Herek, Cogan, & Gillis, 2002; Herek et al., 1999, 1997) were the first to examine the effects of bias crime versus nonbias crime victimization. Bias crime survivors manifested higher levels of depression, anger, and symptoms of posttraumatic stress than did victims of nonbias violence of similar severity. Bias crime survivors also had significantly less efficacy and were more likely to attribute setbacks in their life to societal prejudice, compared with victims of nonbias crimes (Herek et al., 1999, 1997).

Less attention has been given, however, to the effect that specific types of bias incidents may have on the victim. In much of the research to date, different bias crimes were grouped together rather than examined separately. Understanding the specific features and effects of different types of bias violence is important from a mental health standpoint. A descriptive analysis might show what crime types and features place victims most at risk for psychological distress. In addition, service providers would benefit from understanding the help-seeking behavior and outcomes associated with different types of bias crimes.

The purpose of this study was to compare psychological distress, crime features, and help seeking for different types of bias incidents, including sexual assaults, physical assaults, threats of violence, and other bias acts. From the general crime literature, we have learned that crime type is important in understanding responses to victimization. For instance, crime type is known to affect level of psychological distress, with sexual assaults resulting in more severe psychological trauma such as posttraumatic stress and depression than did other types of crime (Kilpatrick, Saunders, Veronen, Best, & Von, 1987; Sorenson & Golding, 1990; Weis, 1989; Wirtz & Harrell, 1987).

Crime features also vary with crime type. Crime features such as sex of victim, perpetrator status (whether the victim knows the perpetrator), number of perpetrators, and victimization history have been found to differ for sexual assaults compared to physical assaults. Specifically, women are more likely than men to be the victim of a sexual assault (Kessler, Sonnega, Bromet, Hughes, & Nelson, 1995). For female sexual assault victims, perpetrators are likely to be male and to be someone the victim knows. Moreover, when a victim knows the

perpetrator, the risk of distress is increased (Katz, 1991; Koss, Dinero, Seibel, & Cox, 1988; Mechanic, Resick, & Griffin, 1998). For male sexual assault victims, perpetrators are likely to be male and strangers to the victim (Kilpatrick et al., 1987). Assault victims also more often have a history of previous victimization than individuals who have not been the victim of a completed assault (Wittebrood & Nieuwbeerta, 2000).

Help seeking varies by crime type as well. Criminal assaults by a known perpetrator, as frequently occurs for sexual assaults, tend to be severely underreported (e.g., Koss et al., 1988; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000b).

If bias crime patterns reflect those for nonbias crimes, a prototypical homophobic sexual assault might be expected to include the following: significant psychological distress, a woman victim, a male perpetrator whom the victim knows, more likelihood of previous victimization, and less likelihood of reporting to police compared to other crime types. In homophobic assaults involving a male victim, parallel to nonbias crimes, the perpetrator would most likely be male and a stranger to the victim.

For physical assaults, a prototypical nonbias assault might involve one male victim, a sole male perpetrator, and a history of one or more previous victimizations (e.g., Garofalo, 1997; Wittebrood & Nieuwbeerta, 2000). However, bias physical assaults may not parallel nonbias assaults in at least one regard. Bias crime research indicates that homophobic physical assaults more often involve multiple perpetrators than do nonbias assaults (National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 2001). Multiple perpetrators increase the risk of injury or life threat to the victim, which in turn is known to increase psychological distress (Kilpatrick & Resnick, 1993). Thus, unlike nonbias crimes, homophobic physical assaults might include more psychological distress partly due to the presence of multiple perpetrators.

In this study, lesbian, gay, and bisexual participants from a community sample were asked to describe the most serious homophobic incident they had ever experienced. The decision to elicit descriptions of the most serious event was made to focus on the event that individuals regarded as having had the most significant effect. Five categories were used to classify these critical incidents, including sexual assaults, physical assaults, threats of violence, other bias acts, and no bias violence.

The objective was to obtain profiles of the psychological outcomes, crime features, and help seeking that was associated with the four types of homophobic incidents. Several predictions derived from nonbias crime research were made. First, in terms of psychological distress, sexual assaults were expected to result in significantly higher levels of posttraumatic stress and depression than other crime types. Physical assaults, in turn, were predicted to result in more distress than threats of violence and other bias acts. Second, in terms of crime features, more women than men were expected to be in the sexual assault category. Perpetrators of sexual assaults were more often expected to be someone the

victim knew than for other crime types. Also, both sexual and physical assault victims were expected more often to have a history of previous victimization than did victims of threats of violence and other bias acts. In addition, perpetrator status was expected to vary by victim sex, with women sexual assault victims being more likely to know the perpetrator than men victims. Third, in terms of help seeking, it was hypothesized that sexual assault victims would be least likely to report the crime to the police and that physical assault victims would be more likely to seek medical help than victims of other bias crimes. Last, the relationship between psychological distress, crime features, and help seeking was examined. It was hypothesized that help seeking would be associated with higher levels of psychological distress and incidents in which victims had a history of previous victimization.

METHOD

SAMPLE

A convenience sample of 306 participants was recruited at an annual gay pride rally in a large Midwestern city. Sixteen surveys were discarded because the participants identified themselves as heterosexual and indicated the questions concerning homophobic violence did not apply to them. The final sample was composed of 290 participants (123 lesbians, 149 gay men, 9 bisexual women, 9 bisexual men). Age ranged from 17 to 58, with women ($M = 33.4$ years, $SD = 9.1$) being several years older than men ($M = 30.5$, $SD = 10.9$), $F(1, 288) = 6.26$, $p < .02$. No other demographic differences were observed between women and men. The sample was predominantly White (89.7%) and middle class. Most participants had at least some college education (89%), and the majority (55%) worked in professional-level jobs.

MEASURES

The following instruments were used in this research.

Bias Crime Type Screening Instrument. A screening instrument composed of 56 violent behaviors was used to categorize the most serious incidents described by participants into the categories described below. Participants were asked to indicate all behaviors that had occurred during their most serious bias victimization (yes or no). Of the behavior items, 46 were taken from the Violence Against Women/Men Scales developed by Marshall (1992a, 1992b). The Marshall scales were developed to assess eight different levels of threatened, attempted, and completed behaviors that may cause injury or pain during an episode of violence. The first level, sexual violence, was assessed using six items (e.g., used an

object on you in a sexual way). Actual physical violence measures included 20 items representing four levels of violence, including mild (e.g., pushed or shoved you), minor (e.g., twisted your arm), moderate (e.g., punched you), and serious (e.g., choked you). Threats of violence included 20 items that ranged from mild threats (e.g., made obscene gestures at you), to moderate threats (e.g., destroyed something belonging to you), to serious threats (e.g., threatened to kill you). Marshall obtained the violence levels through factor analysis of adult ratings of the physical harm each behavior represented. Behaviors grouped within a level were highly related, with alpha coefficients for the eight levels ranging from .93 to .95 (Marshall, 1992a, 1992b). In addition, in this study, 10 items were included to assess other bias acts that had been used previously in bias victimization research (e.g., verbal harassment, vandalism, discrimination) (e.g., Dean, Wu, & Martin, 1992).

Incidents were classified into one of five mutually exclusive categories based on responses to the Bias Crime Type Screening Instrument, including (a) sexual assaults (any incident involving one or more of the six sexual violence items, with or without physical violence); (b) physical assaults (any incident involving one or more of the physical violence items but no sexual violence items); (c) threats of violence only (any incident involving the threats of violence but no sexual or physical violence); (d) other bias acts (any incident involving one or more of the other bias acts items but no sexual or physical violence and no threats of violence); and (e) no bias violence.

Psychological distress measures. Posttraumatic stress symptoms were assessed using two measures. The first was a modified 17-item version of the Civilian Mississippi Scale (Keane, Caddell, & Taylor, 1988), consisting of each symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual III-R* (e.g., "It seems as if I have no feelings," "I try to stay away from anything that will remind me of things which happened in the past") (American Psychiatric Association, 1987). Each item was rated on a Likert-type 5-point scale, from 1 (*not at all true*) to 5 (*extremely true*). The instrument had high internal consistency for the present sample ($\alpha = .84$). The second measure assessed depressive symptoms using the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), a self-report instrument consisting of 21 items describing behavioral manifestations of depression (e.g., Beck, Ward, Mendelson, Mock, & Erbaugh, 1961). Participants ranked each item from 0 to 4, with higher ranking indicating greater symptom severity, from 0 (*I do not feel sad*) to 4 (*I am so sad or unhappy that I can't stand it*).

Crime features. Measures of crime features included questions concerning the following: (a) victim sex, (b) perpetrator traits, including sex of perpetrator, relationship to the victim (i.e., someone known to the victim vs. a stranger), and number of perpetrators (i.e., one, two to five, or six or more), and (c) victimization history, including recency of most serious bias incident (i.e., less than 2

years ago vs. 2 years ago or more), number of other bias incidents (i.e., one, 2-10, and more than 10), previous nonbias assault (yes/no).

Help-seeking. Five help-seeking behaviors were assessed using yes or no responses, including if the victim: (a) reported the incident to the police, (b) told family, partner, or friends about the incident or sought help from (c) medical, (d) psychological, or (e) legal sources.

PROCEDURE

Participants were approached at an annual gay pride event and asked to participate in a survey on lesbian and gay issues. The survey was anonymous and took about 20 minutes to complete. No remuneration was provided. Participants were invited to sign a mailing list if they wished to receive the results of the survey.

RESULTS

PATTERNS OF VICTIMIZATION

A majority of participants (73%, $N = 213$) indicated having been the target of at least one homophobic incident. Participants' descriptions of their most serious homophobic incident fell into one of the five mutually exclusive categories as follows: (a) 7.2% ($n = 21$) sexual assault; (b) 4.1% ($n = 12$) physical assault; (c) 49.7% ($n = 144$) threats of violence; (d) 12.4% ($n = 36$) other bias acts; and (e) 26.6% ($n = 77$) no bias violence.

PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS

The prediction that sexual assaults would be associated with greater post-traumatic stress symptoms than other crime types was tested using a $5 \times 2 \times 2$ (crime type \times gender \times recency) analysis of variance. A main effect of crime type was found for PTSD, $F(3, 204) = 3.83, p < .02$. As predicted, post hoc comparisons indicated that victims of homophobic sexual assaults reported significantly more PTSD symptoms ($M = 44.2, SD = 12.7$) than did victims of threats of violence ($M = 39.3, SD = 10.5$), other bias acts ($M = 35.8, SD = 10.6$), or nonvictims ($M = 37.4, SD = 9.0$), Duncan's multiple range test, $p < .05$. Post-traumatic stress scores for physical assaults ($M = 39.0, SD = 12.7$) did not differ significantly from other crime types, however. No gender or recency effects (fewer than 2 years ago vs. 2 years ago or more) or interaction effects were found for PTSD scores.

Contrary to prediction, depression scores were not affected by bias crime type.

CRIME FEATURES

The hypotheses that sexual assaults would differ significantly from physical assaults, threats of violence, and other bias acts in terms of victim sex, perpetrator traits, and victimization history were tested using chi-square analyses. The hypothesis that more women would describe sexual assaults and more men would describe physical assaults was not supported. Women and men were found to be equally represented across all crime types (44% and 56%, respectively; see Table 1).

The prediction that a known perpetrator would more often commit sexual assaults than a stranger was supported. Sexual assaults more often than other crime types were committed by a family member (29% vs. 8% for physical assaults, 6% for threats of violence, and 9% for other bias acts, $\chi^2(6) = 14.7, p < .03$).

In addition, although not predicted, the number of perpetrators was found to vary by crime type. More sexual assault victims (32%) indicated they were assaulted by six or more perpetrators than did victims of physical assaults (8%), threats of violence (7%), or other bias acts (13%), $\chi^2(9) = 22.8, p < .007$.

The hypothesis concerning victimization history was upheld for two measures. Specifically, more sexual assault victims (33%) reported being the target of 10 or more previous bias incidents than did victims of physical assaults (17%), threats of violence (12%), or other bias acts (3%), $\chi^2(6) = 13.7, p < .04$. Also, physical assault victims (75%) more often reported a previous nonbias physical assault than was reported by victims of sexual assault (33%), threats of violence (31%), or other bias acts (25%), $\chi^2(3) = 11.1, p < .02$.

Three crime features did not vary by crime type, including perpetrator sex, perpetrator status, and recency of incident. Across crime type, for a majority of incidents, the perpetrators were male (91%) and were strangers to the victim (58%). In addition, about half of the incidents (57%) had occurred within the past 2 years.

The last hypothesis concerning crime features focused on the relationship between gender and bias sexual assaults patterns. It was expected that within sexual assaults ($n = 21$), perpetrator status would vary by sex of the victim. This hypothesis was supported. Significantly more women sexual assault victims than men (55.6% vs. 8.3%, respectively) were assaulted by a family member than by an acquaintance (33% of women; 42% of men) or a stranger (11% of women; 50% of men), $\chi^2(2) = 6.4, p < .04$.

HELP SEEKING

Five categories of help seeking were examined, including (a) reporting to the police, and seeking help from (b) family, partner, or friends, or (c) psychological, (d) legal, or (e) medical sources. The hypothesis that sexual assaults would less often be reported to the police was not supported. Both sexual and physical

TABLE 1: Comparisons of Crime Features by Bias Crime Type (in percentages)

<i>Crime Feature</i>	<i>Bias Crime Type</i>				<i>Total (N = 213)</i>
	<i>Sexual Assault (n = 21)</i>	<i>Physical Assault (n = 12)</i>	<i>Threats of Violence (n = 144)</i>	<i>Other Bias Acts (n = 36)</i>	
Victim gender					
Female	42.9	41.7	39.6	61.1	43.7
Male	57.1	58.3	60.4	38.9	56.3
Perpetrator traits					
Perpetrator gender					
Male	95.2	83.4	92.1	87.1	91.3
Female	—	8.3	5.0	9.7	5.3
Both	4.8	8.3	2.9	3.2	3.4
Relation to victim					
Stranger	33.3	50.0	63.1	54.5	58.0
Acquaintance	38.1	41.7	31.2	36.4	33.3
Family member	28.6*	8.3	5.7	9.1	8.7
Number of perpetrators					
One	36.8	16.7	39.7	45.3	38.9
Two to five	31.6	75.0	53.7	42.0	51.0
Six or more	31.6*	8.3	6.6	12.9	10.1
Victimization history					
Recency of bias incident					
Less than 2 years ago	57.1	41.7	56.4	62.9	56.7
2 years ago or more	42.9	58.3	43.6	37.1	43.3
Previous bias incidents					
One (reported here)	14.3	33.3	23.0	37.5	27.0
2 to 10 times	52.4	50.0	65.1	59.4	56.9
More than 10 times	33.3*	16.7	11.9	3.1	16.1
Nonbias assault (ever)					
Yes	33.3	75.0*	30.6	25.0	32.0
No	66.7	25.0	69.4	75.0	68.0

NOTE: * = crime category differs significantly from others, χ^2 statistic, $p < .05$.

assault victims (38% and 50%, respectively) were significantly more likely to report the incident to the police than victims of threats of violence (13%) or other bias acts (14%), $\chi^2(3) = 16.8, p < .001$ (see Table 2).

As expected, physical assault victims (33%) were more likely to seek medical help than victims of sexual assaults (19%), threats of violence (2%), or other bias acts (3%), $\chi^2(3) = 28.4, p < .001$. Two additional significant findings were observed. Sexual assault victims more often sought psychological help (29%) than other crime types (physical assault, 0%; threats, 3%; other bias acts, 6%), $\chi^2(3) = 23.7, p < .001$. They also more often sought legal help (20%) than victims of physical assaults (0%), threats (1%), and other bias acts (6%), $\chi^2(3) = 20.4, p < .001$.

TABLE 2: Help Seeking by Bias Crime Type

<i>Type of Help</i>	<i>Percentage Responding by Bias Crime Type</i>				<i>Total</i> (N = 213)
	<i>Sexual</i> <i>Assault</i> (n = 21)	<i>Physical</i> <i>Assault</i> (n = 12)	<i>Threats</i> <i>Alone</i> (n = 144)	<i>Other</i> <i>Bias</i> (n = 36)	
Reported to police	38.1*	50.0*	13.0	13.9	17.8
Told family	42.9*	33.3*	14.6	13.9	18.3
Psychological	28.6*	—	2.8	5.6	5.6
Legal	19.0*	—	0.7	5.6	3.3
Medical	19.0	33.3*	2.1	2.8	5.6

NOTE: * = crime type differs significantly from others for that measure, χ^2 statistic, $p < .005$.

As predicted, help seeking was significantly related to level of psychological distress. Victims who sought professional help (medical, psychological, or legal) had significantly higher PTSD scores ($M = 45.5$, $SD = 13.2$) than victims who did not seek professional help ($M = 38.4$, $SD = 10.4$), $t(208) = 3.0$, $p < .003$. They also had significantly higher depression scores than non-help-seekers ($M = 16.3$, $SD = 14.0$ vs. $M = 8.1$, $SD = 7.3$), $t(198) = 4.41$, $p < .0001$. Also as predicted, help seeking was found to be related to previous bias victimization. Victims who had experienced 10 or more bias incidents were more likely to seek professional help (30.0%) than victims who had experienced only one incident (12.0%) or those reporting two to five (8.9%) or 6 to 10 previous incidents (0%), $\chi^2(3) = 13.2$, $p < .005$.

DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to compare psychological distress, crime features, and help seeking across types of bias crimes. As hypothesized, crime type was found to vary along a number of the dimensions studied, particularly for bias sexual assaults as compared to physical assaults, threats of violence, and other bias acts. Homophobic sexual assaults were unique in that they resulted in significantly more PTSD than other types of bias crimes. This effect was long term, lasting even for assaults occurring more than 2 years ago. Although lesbians and gay men are virtually absent from the body of research on sexual assault, this finding is consistent with research on the physical and psychological aftermath of rape indicating that sexual violence changes a victim's life forever (Koss et al., 1994).

Contrary to prediction, depression measures were not higher for sexual assaults. Previous research has indicated that depression is most pronounced during the first 3 months after a sexual assault (e.g., Resick, 1987). In this study, the recency measure that was used (2 years or less vs. more than 2 years) was too

broad to differentiate the immediate consequences of victimization. However, depression scores might be a useful measure to include in future research examining the immediate effects of bias victimization.

The crime features associated with sexual assaults were also distinctive. Sexual assault survivors were disproportionately more likely to have multiple perpetrators. They were the most likely to be attacked by six or more assailants. In addition, sexual assault victims were twice as likely as physical assault victims to report more than 10 prior bias incidents. Both of these crime features lead to elevated risk for negative mental health consequences (e.g., Kessler et al., 1995).

Although sexual assaults were more likely than all other categories to be perpetrated by a family member, this finding no longer held true when analyses were disaggregated by gender. Women sexual assault victims were more likely to be attacked by family members or intimates. This is consistent with research on violence against women that clearly identifies current or former intimate partners as the most likely aggressors (e.g., Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000a). Sexual assault by a family member or intimate partner has also been shown to carry the highest risk of symptoms for women (e.g., Koss et al., 1994). This finding is indirectly supported by our research as well. Victims who sought professional help had significantly higher levels of psychological distress than nonhelp seekers and sexual assault victims were among those most likely to seek help.

Significantly less is known about men who are sexually assaulted by other men, particularly in the context of homophobic aggression. Epidemiological research identifies sexual assault as the traumatic event that is the least prevalent among men (0.6% lifetime prevalence) (Kessler et al., 1995), yet carries with it the highest risk of symptomatic responding among men. Our findings indicated that approximately equal proportions of men and women reported sexual assault as their most serious bias incident. Additional risk factors experienced by men sexual assault victims included multiple assailants and repeated exposure to bias incidents. Thus, homophobic sexual assaults appear to represent extremely severe events for both women and men victims.

Physical assaults did not result in significantly more posttraumatic stress than threats of violence or other bias acts as was hypothesized. Previous research has shown that the actual violence of an attack is less important in predicting psychological outcomes than the amount of threat to one's life that is perceived by the victim (Kilpatrick et al., 1987). However, perceived life threat was not assessed in the current research. It may be that the physical assaults described by the participants in this study either did not involve high levels of perceived life threat or varied substantially in terms of the amount of injury that was sustained. Only 4 of the physical assault victims sought medical help, implying that the level of actual physical harm may have been low for this group.

The only crime feature that distinguished physical assault from other crime types was that more physical assault victims had been involved in a previous nonbias assault. This raises an interesting question to be investigated in future research concerning the extent to which some bias assault victims might inhabit

a more violent environment generally. It may be that one risk factor for homophobic physical assault is a more general history of victimization.

Victims of threats of violence composed the largest victim group (49%). Threatened violence without actual violence often generates less concern for victims than committed acts of violence. However, subjective perception of life threat, as noted above, consistently has been identified as a risk factor for posttraumatic stress reactions (e.g., Resnick, Kilpatrick, Dansky, Saunders, & Best, 1993). Furthermore, cognitive appraisal of the danger posed by acts of threatened violence is shaped by both the immediate circumstances of the crime and by previous experiences of victimization. A previous history of one or more bias incidents provides the victim with personal knowledge about the possibility or even probability that threatened violence can quickly escalate from potential violence to actual violence. Because of the greater psychological and physical health risks associated with perceptions of life threat and cumulative exposure to traumatic events (Nishith, Mechanic, & Resick, 2000; Norris, 1992), it is important that future research more systematically investigate these features of bias crimes. Thus, under some circumstances, even threats of assault could be quite distressing for victims.

One troubling finding that applied across crime types was the disproportionate number of homophobic crime incidents involving multiple perpetrators. Involvement of multiple perpetrators was found to predominate across all four categories of the most serious bias crime reported by respondents. This is unusual compared to nonbias incidents, in which multiple perpetrator events tend to be the exception, not the rule (e.g., Garofalo, 1997). Any incident involving multiple perpetrators takes on a more menacing quality when the victim is confronted by a group of assailants. The meaning of threatened violence is magnified when threats emanate from a group of assailants rather than a single individual, even when no acts of violence are committed. This suggests, as noted before, that perceived life threat might be a particularly important variable to include in future bias crime research.

There are three limitations of this research. First, the sample was not representative of all lesbians, gay men, and bisexual women and men. It may be that the extent and severity of homophobic aggression was overrepresented in a convenience sample such as the one used here. It is possible that this subgroup of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual population—individuals who attended a gay pride event—is the group with the most elevated risk of being the target of a bias assault. Second, only one bias incident per individual was studied in this research. Although this permitted a fuller assessment of one incident than most previous research on bias crimes, it did not allow the prevalence of homophobic violence for this sample to be compared with previous results. Third, only a small number of individuals were included in the sexual and physical assault categories. Larger samples within these crime categories would be necessary to draw firm conclusions concerning how crime features affect distress.

In conclusion, across bias crime types, the crime features in this study that were found to be most typical (e.g., known perpetrator, multiple perpetrators within a single incident, and repeated victimization) were those that consistently have been identified in the trauma literature as resulting in more negative psychological outcomes and less help seeking (Kessler et al., 1995; Resnick et al., 1993). Obtaining detailed bias crime profiles may help guide efforts to develop tailored intervention strategies for victims who face the greatest mental health risk or help to identify individuals who might be at more risk for bias crime exposure.

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