

Community Interventions Concerning Homophobic Violence and Partner Violence Against Lesbians

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SUMMARY. Homophobic violence and same-sex domestic violence against lesbians are described in this paper based on survey research and hotline calls conducted by a community anti-violence project. A community survey of 229 lesbians indicated that during a one-year period, about fifteen percent had been the target of homophobic violence and twelve percent had been the victim of same-sex partner violence. Violence was defined as including assault with a weapon, physical assault, sexual assault, stalking, and property destruction. The prevalence study was contrasted with actual hotline calls from lesbians during a five-year

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period. Examples illustrate how interventions based on these findings were used to influence police response, victim services, and legislation. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2003 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

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Homophobic hate crime victimization and same-sex partner violence are two types of violence known to affect lesbians that recently have begun to receive attention from researchers, mental health providers, and policy makers. Homophobic violence refers to harassment or assault that is based on prejudice concerning the victim's actual or perceived sexual orientation (Berrill, 1992). Homophobic violence is widespread, with estimates indicating that one in five lesbians have been assaulted in an anti-lesbian incident in their lifetime (e.g., Herek, Gillis, & Cogan, 1999). Less is known about the prevalence of lesbian partner violence, but some research suggests that domestic violence is about as common in lesbian relationships as in heterosexual ones, with one in five lesbians experiencing at least one incident (e.g., West, 2002).

In response to anti-lesbian (as well as anti-gay) victimization, many communities have established anti-violence projects. Across the U.S. during the past decade, 24 to 30 anti-violence projects have operated annually to document hate crimes under the umbrella of the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP, 2001a). A smaller number of these programs also provide domestic violence services (NCAVP, 2001b). These organizations aim to increase general public awareness of violence against and within the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered community, provide services to victims, and advocate for social, legal, and policy reforms that would better protect sexual minorities.

The goals in the present paper are twofold. The first is to describe homophobic violence and same-sex domestic violence against lesbians based on the findings of an urban lesbian and gay anti-violence project. The results of community survey research and hotline calls will be used to describe prevalence and case studies of each type of violence. The second goal is to illustrate how interventions based on these sources were used to influence police response, victim services, and legislation.

THE LESBIAN AND GAY ANTI-VIOLENCE PROJECT

The community organization described here, the St. Louis Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project (AVP),¹ operated from 1992 to 2000. During that time, the St. Louis AVP was a member of the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs and participated in a national tracking project concerning hate crimes and same-sex domestic violence. As cofounder and director of the AVP, the author helped to develop the crisis counseling services and data collection procedures. Over time, the opportunities increased for the AVP to interact with victim service agencies, police and the courts, community boards, and legislators. It quickly became apparent that documenting and responding to hate and same-sex domestic violence could serve a vital function in bringing about social change. Similar to some programs in other cities, the AVP rose to this challenge by conducting community surveys to assess the prevalence of violence as well as by providing direct services to victims through a hotline.

Prevalence of Violence Against Lesbians

A major issue that the AVP confronted continually was the lack of awareness concerning lesbians as victims of violence among both the lesbian and gay community and the larger heterosexual and law enforcement community. The prevailing stereotype was that gay men were the natural and most frequent targets of homophobic hate crime. In addition, a strong belief predominated that lesbians seldom engaged in domestic violence. These stereotypes are common in the U.S. and typically pose problems for effective community intervention (cf., McLaughlin & Rozee, 2001; Ristock, 2001). The stereotype was supported to some extent by prevalence studies indicating that gay men more often than lesbians are the victims of most types of physical violence and intimidation based on sexual orientation (cf., Berrill, 1992; Herek et al., 1999). In addition, because men more often than women are the perpetrators of physical assaults (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000), it is understandable that people might expect men more often than women to be violent in same-sex relationships.

Contrary to this perception, research shows that many lesbians are indeed the target of both homophobic violence and domestic violence. From 12% to 19% of lesbians have experienced anti-lesbian hate crime victimization as an adult at least once (von Schultess, 1992; Herek et al., 1999). Among 980 lesbian participants studied recently by Herek and colleagues (1999), property crimes were reported most often (9%), followed by physical assault (7%), attempted physical assault (6%), sexual assault (3%), attempted sexual assault (2%), and robbery (1%). In terms of intimate partner violence, estimates have ranged from 11% to 45% (e.g., Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000; Waldner-Haugrud,

Gratch, & Magruder, 1997). The lower estimate of 11% was based on the percent of women experiencing rape, physical assault or stalking from a cohabiting woman partner reported in a national survey of violence against women (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). The higher estimate of 45% was found by Waldner-Haugrud and colleagues (1997) who examined victimization by a lesbian partner using a broader range of behaviors, including threats, pushing, slapping, punching, being struck with an object, or use of a weapon.

Survey Method and Results

Like other intervention programs, our group faced the need to verify that similar problems existed specifically within our community. Thus, the AVP conducted several community surveys focusing on the prevalence of homophobic and same-sex partner violence and related issues among lesbians and gay men in the St. Louis metropolitan area. A secondary educational goal also was satisfied by providing participants with information about AVP services at the end of the survey. The survey described in the present study was distributed at one gay pride event. A shady rest area was provided for participants to complete the survey.

The AVP developed the Community Needs Assessment Survey to assess the prevalence of homophobic and same-sex violence against lesbians and gay men. Survey questions focused on participants' knowledge about the AVP, as well as extent of harassment and violence in the past year resulting from homophobic and same-sex partner incidents. The findings reported in the present study pertain only to the subset of questions that assessed physical violence aimed at lesbians. Participants were asked if they had experienced assault with a weapon, sexual assault, physical assault, stalking, or property destruction during the past year in the context of either (a) an anti-lesbian/gay incident, or (b) violence from a same-sex partner. Additional questions assessed demographic characteristics, including gender (female, male, transgendered); age, sexual orientation (gay/lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual); and race and education (open-ended). Also assessed was (a) the degree to which the participant was "out" (i.e., "Please indicate the extent to which you are 'out' as a lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered person") using an 8-point Likert scale, not at all out (0) to completely out (7), and (b) the degree of involvement in community organizations (i.e., "How would you describe your level of involvement in lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered community organizations?") using a 4-point scale, not at all active/involved (0), very active/involved (3).

The Community Needs Assessment Survey was completed by 563 participants. Of these, 32 heterosexual, 56 bisexual, and 4 respondents who did not specify their sexual orientation were dropped from the sample. The resulting

final sample was comprised of 229 lesbians and 242 gay men. The results pertaining to five questions concerning physical violence from the 229 lesbian participants are reported below. The lesbian participants were between 16 and 65 years of age, with a mean age of 30 ($SD = 8.01$ years). The majority were White (79%) and most had a minimum of some college education (85%). The participants reported being “somewhat out” to “mostly out” in terms of their sexual orientation ($M = 5.4, SD = .10; 7 =$ completely out) and indicated that on average, they were “somewhat active or involved” ($M = 1.2, SD = .06; 3 =$ very active/involved) in lesbian and gay community organizations.

As shown in Table 1, 15% of participants reported having been the target of at least one act of anti-lesbian bias violence and 12% indicated experiencing at least one act of physical violence in a same-sex relationships during the past year. Because of the way responses were elicited (i.e., using a checklist), it is possible that more than one violent behavior may have occurred during a single incident. Types of violence occurring during bias incidents most often included homophobic stalking (16%) and property destruction (13%). Other violent bias acts included sexual assault (7%), physical assault (5%), and assault with a weapon (2%). In terms of same-sex partner violence, the most often reported behaviors included property destruction (10%), physical assault (9%), and stalking (7%). Sexual assault and assault with a weapon by a partner were reported infrequently (< 3%).

The results of the AVP Community Needs Assessment Survey provided a basis for opening a discussion with community leaders, local media, and police concerning violence against lesbians and gay men. The finding that from twelve to fifteen percent of lesbians experienced serious homophobic or domestic violence in a one-year period was newsworthy. However, we acknowledged that the prevalence of violence obtained from a convenience sample

TABLE 1. Percentage of Lesbians Reporting Crime Victimization from Homophobic and Partner Violence During the Past Year

Type of Victimization	Crime Victimization in Past Year (%) ($N = 229$)	
	Homophobic Violence	Partner Violence
One or more incident	15.4	12.2
Stalking	16.6	7.4
Property destruction	13.1	10.0
Sexual assault	7.4	2.2
Physical assault	5.2	8.7
Assault with a weapon	1.7	2.6

may have been overestimated, since individuals who attend a gay pride event may be more open about their sexual orientation and thus more vulnerable to bias incidents.

We made projections based on the survey that were calculated in the following way. The size of the metropolitan population served by the AVP was about 1,000,000. It was expected that as many as 30,000 women within that population might be lesbians based on a conservative estimate of 3% (Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994). If 12% to 15% of those experienced homophobic or same-sex partner violence annually as suggested by the community survey, the volume of incidents involving lesbians might range from 3,600 to 4,500. We indicated that these projections might be an overestimate and should be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, the projected figures provided a compelling argument for increased community and law enforcement support for unacknowledged or hidden victims. The local print media picked up on the survey results and produced several articles focusing on lesbian and gay hate crimes and domestic violence.

Case Studies of Violence Against Lesbians: Hotline Calls

The AVP hotline operated from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. daily using a paging system. The AVP volunteer on call was paged when a hotline report came in and returned the call immediately. The volunteer then took an extensive report of the incident and provided crisis counseling, referrals, and if possible, intervention. Reports based on hotline calls functioned in two important ways for the AVP. First, in combination with the community survey, they showed that lesbian victims of violence were being underserved. For instance, during the five-year period from 1995-1999, lesbians made a total of 104 calls to the AVP Hotline concerning homophobic violence and same-sex partner violence. Seventy-eight calls were reports of anti-lesbian violence and 26 concerned lesbian partner violence. The low number of hotline calls relative to the estimates of violence projected from survey results indicated that the victimization of lesbians was not being adequately addressed.

A second way that hotline calls had an important impact was in terms of the specific case study examples they provided. Case examples were the most potent way to address the general invisibility of lesbians as victims. They also were particularly useful for working with victim services, the police, and legislators because they demonstrated where services or effective intervention were lacking or showed the need for greater response and legal protection.

Case examples of five types of incidents (assault with a weapon, physical assault, sexual assault, stalking, and vandalism) taken from the 78 hotline calls

concerning homophobic violence against lesbians are presented in Table 2. Likewise, case examples of five types of crimes taken from the 26 domestic violence calls are presented in Table 2.

In most of the case examples reported in Table 2, responses to the victims by police, the legal system, the media, and victim services were hostile, inadequate, or dismissive. For instance, in Case 1 concerning the murder of a lesbian by her partner's ex-husband, the case was sensationalized as a "love triangle." Newspaper accounts of the murder also made reference to a movie, *Heavenly Creatures*, about two lesbians who killed one of the girls' mothers because she tried to keep them apart, notwithstanding the fact that the two lesbians in the incident reported to the AVP were the victims, not the murderers. Police did not report the homicide as a hate crime and it was not prosecuted as a hate crime. At the trial, the defense attorney argued that the murder victim was "not a good person or mother" because she was a lesbian—an argument that was heard by one daughter of the murdered woman, who was present at the trial.

Inadequate or hostile police response was an issue in many cases. Victims reported being fearful of calling the police either because they feared police homophobia or because they feared retaliation from the perpetrator for reporting the incident. In Case 3, a hate crime incident, a lesbian who was sexually fondled by a male coworker was harassed by the police when she reported the incident. Although an arrest was made and the perpetrator was charged, the victim was fearful that the perpetrator might retaliate by physically assaulting her at some point. Her negative experience with the police added to her feelings of vulnerability, because she did not believe they would help her. In Case 7, a domestic violence incident, police who responded to the victim's 911 call concerning domestic violence made a decision to arrest both women. This is a common response among police when faced with same-sex domestic violence and one that causes considerable emotional and legal problems for the victim (NCAVP, 2001b). Moreover, the police taunted the victim about her sexuality when she was in jail and continued to harass her after her release.

In some instances, the police were not called and therefore did not intervene. For example, in Case 5, a lesbian was verbally harassed and her car was vandalized, but the victim, witnesses and security officers did not call the police. Similarly, in Case 6, involving a lesbian who had been seriously abused by her partner, the victim was afraid to call the police because she did not believe they would be able to stop her ex-partner from killing her. In Case 8, another domestic violence case, the victim expressed fear that reporting the violence or car theft to the police would escalate the violence. She also feared harassment from the police.

Victim services constituted another area where response to violence against lesbians was unavailable or inadequate. In two lesbian domestic violence

TABLE 2. Case Examples of Lesbian Hate Crime and Domestic Violence Hotline Calls

Hate Crimes
Case 1: Assault with a Weapon/Murder

A White, 34-year-old lesbian reported that her ex-husband had shot and killed her woman partner, a White woman, age 35. The ex-husband had confronted the two women in their home with a gun and shot the partner once in the face, then fired several more shots into her body. The ex-husband forced the client to take her partner's pulse so she would know her lover was dead. The ex-husband then reloaded the gun and handed it to the client and told her to kill herself. When the client refused, the ex-husband lunged at her and she shot and wounded him.

Case 2: Physical Assault

A 17-year-old, White lesbian and her girlfriend reported being attacked in a lesbian-bashing incident at their high school as they were walking into the school. Two young males jumped one of the women, threw her to the ground, and punched her six or seven times in the face. The assailants yelled homophobic insults, such as "Hey, you dykes." The client's girlfriend escaped, ran to the car, and pressed on the horn until the perpetrators ran away. The victim sustained a black eye and facial bruises and was robbed.

Case 3: Sexual Assault

An African American lesbian in her 30s reported being sexually assaulted at her workplace by a male coworker. He put his hands under her clothes, fondled her, and pressed up against her while making such comments as, "You're too pretty to be gay." The perpetrator was arrested and charged with a misdemeanor sexual offense. The client reported harassment from the police, with one police officer saying, "Why are you doing this to this man? He just patted you on the butt. What were you wearing? What did you do to encourage him?" Coworkers made similar comments. The perpetrator was fired, and the client quit her job after the incident. She reported feeling "dirty, disillusioned, and afraid." She was also concerned that the assailant might "jump me in a parking lot. He beats his girlfriend. Who knows how far he's willing to go?"

Case 4: Stalking

Two White lesbians in their 40s reported being harassed repeatedly for more than two years by a woman who sent anti-lesbian letters to the victims' home, workplaces, and neighbors. The messages named the victims, revealed their sexual orientation, claimed they were a danger to the community, and demanded that they be fired from their jobs. One of the victims was a schoolteacher whose job was jeopardized by these actions. Although the women moved to a new neighborhood and took new jobs recently, the perpetrator had begun a rash of letters and phone calls to both the new neighbors and jobs.

Case 5: Property Destruction

A White lesbian in her 40s was harassed by a man at a local medical clinic. The harasser called her a "Lezzie" in a loud and hostile manner. The victim ignored the man, but he continued to harass her, saying, "You must want to be treated like a man, because you want women and you dress like a man. Then I'll treat you like a man." He screamed "Lezzie" several times and yelled that he was going to "kick her ass." The clinic staff came out and Security was called, but took no action. In the following week, the client's car tires were slit and the man continued to harass her. Clinic staff told the victim to ignore the vandalism and harassment. A nurse who witnessed the initial incident told the victim that she'd asked for it [the violence] by being "out."

Domestic Violence

Case 6: Assault with a Weapon

An African American lesbian in her thirties was being threatened by her ex-partner, an African American woman also in her thirties, who had violently abused her during their relationship of one year (her first lesbian relationship). The partner was threatening to kill the client, who had moved out the day of the call. The perpetrator previously had beaten the client in the face and arms, had burned and cut her with a knife, and had broken her pelvis. She had been hospitalized for these injuries in the past. The perpetrator was a drug dealer and the client believed that no one would be able to stop the partner from killing her. The client's partner also had called her at work and threatened her.

Case 7: Physical Assault

The client, a White lesbian (age unknown), reported domestic violence and harassment from her white, female partner (age unknown). During the most recent incident, the partner pinned the client down and punched her very hard in the back of the neck. The client called the police, but when they arrived, they arrested both her and her partner. The police did not check for any prior police record or they would have learned that the partner had a prior felony conviction. The perpetrator later claimed that she was the victim and obtained a restraining order against the client. When the perpetrator came to the house to remove her belongings, the police officers accompanying her harassed the client, asking, "How did you like the inside of our jail?"

Case 8: Sexual Assault

A White lesbian (age unknown) reported that her current woman partner (age, race unknown) of two years was emotionally and physically abusive. She reported more than 10 previous incidents resulting in minor injury. The abuser would slap the client and pinch her breasts when coercing her to have sex. The abuser had also taken possession of the client's car. The client wanted to end the relationship but wasn't sure how to do it, because her partner had keys to her apartment. She was afraid to change the locks or report the car theft to the police.

Case 9: Stalking

A White lesbian (age 45-64) reported that her former White woman partner (age 45-64) had been stalking her since the client left their 10-year relationship. The client reported repeated abuse by her ex-partner, including being set on fire by her. The client had a restraining order against her ex-partner, but was feeling drawn towards her since a recent phone conversation.

Case 10: Property Destruction

A White lesbian (age 35) called to report that her partner, a White lesbian (age 30-44), was being emotionally, verbally, and physically abusive to her and verbally abusive to her 4-year-old son. The relationship always was difficult but had gotten worse since the client was accepted into nursing school and was due to begin in 3 weeks. Recently, the client went out and didn't come home all night. When she returned, she found that her partner had broken her 4-year-old son's rifle gun and racetrack and had verbally abused the boy. The partner was drinking more and was becoming more unpredictable. Both the client and partner used cocaine occasionally.

cases, Case 9 and Case 10, victims were unable to find established shelters or agencies where the staff were able to provide lesbians with safety and sensitive help. The lesbian in Case 9 who had been abused and stalked by her ex-partner and was feeling drawn into the relationship again had called two local women's shelters and asked if they had a lesbian counselor on staff, but was told they did not. This client wanted to talk to someone who understood les-

bian relationships. In Case 10, the lesbian whose partner had broken her son's toys was seeking shelter but wanted to know if any shelters "specialized" in lesbians, because she didn't want to have to deal with the homophobia of other shelter clients. None of the shelters in the region had any specialized services for lesbians, however.

A lack of protective legislation concerning hate crimes based on sexual orientation was a limiting factor in responding to other cases. For example, police could not intervene in Case 4, involving the homophobic mail and telephone stalking of a lesbian couple, because the perpetrator had not threatened any violence or physical harm to the victims. However, since the perpetrator lived in another state, the victims reported it as a hate crime to the civil right bureau of the FBI, which has jurisdiction over hate crimes that cross state lines. Unfortunately, the FBI agent was not able to investigate because hate crimes based on sexual orientation were not covered by federal hate crime legislation; thus, the incident was outside his sphere of authority.

In sum, the survey indicated that both homophobic hate crimes and domestic violence incidents were prevalent among lesbians in the metropolitan area served by the AVP. Types of incidents included assault with a weapon, physical assault, sexual assault, stalking, and property destruction. In addition, hotline calls added depth to the nature of such incidents and revealed specific areas in which community intervention might improve police response, victim services, and legislation.

COMMUNITY INTERVENTIONS

In response to the limitations in responding to violence against lesbians described above, the AVP successfully implemented three community interventions. The first intervention was aimed at increasing police responsiveness to violence against lesbians and involved working closely with key officials within the police department. A major improvement in relations between the police and the lesbian and gay community occurred after several meetings between police captains and the AVP, when one captain² agreed to serve as a liaison to the lesbian and gay community. Having a liaison made it possible for the AVP to mediate between victims and the police. For instance, in incidents similar to Case 5, in which police harassment of a lesbian victim of vandalism occurred, the AVP would contact the police liaison, who in turn would investigate the responding officer's treatment of the victim and, if necessary, bring the unprofessional conduct to the attention of the officer's superior.

Another important improvement occurred when the police liaison proposed a system of "soft reporting" of crimes against lesbians and gay men via AVP

intervention. In soft reporting, the AVP would respond to calls concerning assaults by informing the police liaison, who would then call the victim, take a report, and take appropriate police action. Thus, lesbian victims did not have to call 911 and possibly face unsympathetic or homophobic police officers. This allowed for immediate response to some domestic violence calls that were made to the hotline while the abuse was in progress. In those cases, the police liaison dispatched hand-selected officers to the site who were able to apprehend the perpetrator.

Another type of soft reporting that was helpful to domestic violence victims involved the Domestic Violence Assault Team (DART). The police liaison had paved the way for the AVP to conduct a training session with DART concerning how to respond to lesbian and gay domestic violence incidents. Issues that were covered included: (a) how to identify whether an incident was intimate partner violence versus “roommate” violence (e.g., look at photographs to see if a same-sex couple relationship was evident; notice if the home had only one bedroom) and (b) how to avoid stereotyping when determining who was the aggressor (e.g., do not assume that the larger or stronger individual is the aggressor; do not resort to mutual arrest just because the incident involves individuals of the same-sex). This training led to stronger connections with DART officers who were very supportive of soft reporting by the AVP. For example, in Case 6, involving domestic violence with a weapon and physical assault, the AVP called DART and reported the incident. The responding DART officer then called the victim, took a report, and helped the victim obtain a restraining order. The DART officer also called the perpetrator and warned her that the police would respond to further threats or assaults immediately.

The second community intervention undertaken by the AVP involved working with victim service agencies to make them more aware of lesbian and gay issues. This intervention was facilitated when the AVP director (and author) was appointed to the St. Louis County Family and Domestic Violence Council³ by St. Louis County Commissioners. The FDVC was an umbrella organization comprised of judges, lawyers, and victim service representatives whose mission was to improve law enforcement response to domestic violence in St. Louis County. Through the FDVC, the AVP became involved in training victim service volunteers and staff that led to two improvements. The first concerned intakes and treatment at victim service agencies. Volunteers and staff were sensitized concerning how to be alert to possible lesbian domestic violence victims (e.g., be alert when callers refer to a gender-unspecified “partner”; do not automatically insert “he” or assume that the perpetrator is male when speaking to callers). In addition, the AVP was able to work with selected agencies to identify staff who could serve as specialists in lesbian domestic vi-

olence. Agencies that did not have this capability were encouraged to refer lesbian clients to the AVP for supportive counseling.

Another improvement related to victim service agencies focused on increasing the accuracy of reporting concerning lesbian domestic violence. The victim service organizations affiliated with the FDVC were receiving calls from lesbian clients but not documenting them separately. The AVP, as a member of the NCAVP national tracking program for lesbian and gay domestic violence, was invested in reporting such incidents but received relatively few calls from domestic violence victims. Thus, an arrangement was made between the AVP and two agencies for each agency to record and forward the information concerning lesbian domestic violence cases to the AVP on a monthly basis.

The third community intervention by the AVP was aimed at legislators. As reported in Case 4, the absence of protective hate crime legislation encompassing sexual orientation was a barrier to effective police and criminal justice intervention at the federal level. A lack of protection at the state level was equally a problem. In response, the AVP worked closely with two organizations to have sexual orientation included in the Missouri hate crimes law. The first organization was the Privacy Rights Education Project (PREP), a lobby group whose mission was to pass legislation that would prevent discrimination based on sexual orientation and to repeal laws already on the books that were discriminatory. PREP⁴ had been working with key legislators in Missouri⁵ to propose a new hate crime bill. The second organization was the U.S. Attorney Generals' Hate Crimes Task Force for Missouri-Illinois. The Hate Crimes Task Force was comprised of the two U.S. Attorney Generals for Eastern Missouri and Southern Illinois, as well as representatives from police departments, the FBI, and appointed members of various advocacy groups, including the AVP, Urban League, Anti-Defamation League, National Alliance of Christians and Jews, Paraquad (an advocacy group for persons with disabilities), and others.

A presentation by the AVP using cases of hate crime victimization against lesbians and gay men in St. Louis helped to persuade the Hate Crimes Task Force to endorse a proposed change in the former Missouri Ethnic Intimidation Act. The proposed change would add sexual orientation, sex, and disability to the protected categories. The Hate Crimes Task Force was perceived to be an important ally because it was comprised of law enforcement groups that supported the new bill. In addition, the AVP identified lesbian and gay hate crime victims who went to the state capitol to provide victim testimony to the legislature. The AVP also provided survey results concerning hate crime prevalence that was used by PREP in its lobbying efforts.

Our joint effort to pass a new Hate Crime Bill was successful on May 14, 1999. The new law passed by the Missouri legislature represented a major victory for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered civil rights. The bill added sexual orientation, sex, and disability to the categories covered by the former Ethnic Intimidation Act and allowed extra penalties to be applied to hate crimes. Governor Carnahan later signed the bill into law. Of the 22 states that introduced similar bills in 1999, Missouri's hate crime bill was the only one to have passed. At the time, only 20 other states included sexual orientation in their hate crime laws.

In sum, community interventions undertaken by the AVP were successful due to several factors. First, the prevalence findings concerning homophobic and partner violence against lesbians provided evidence that was useful in convincing the police, victim services agencies, and legislators that a serious problem existed. Next, case studies enabled the AVP to personalize these events and elicit sympathy and sometimes outrage about injustices that were helpful in mobilizing people to action. Last, the survey and hotline results legitimized the activities of the AVP and enabled its representatives to become spokespersons of the lesbian and gay community within important institutions.

CONCLUSION

Homophobic and partner violence against lesbians continue to be relatively "low profile" events in both the lesbian and gay community and society at large. However, the lack of awareness can be addressed effectively by collecting evidence concerning both the extent of the problem and the details of individual cases. The efforts of the AVP described here illustrate that a combination of traditional survey research and case examples are strong educational tools for raising awareness about violence against lesbians. Community interventions based on these sources of information can be used successfully to influence police, victim services, and legislation.

Research on hate crimes and same-sex partner violence is in its early stages and has focused primarily on prevalence. However, future research should aim to determine the features and psychological consequences of these incidents. Recent research by Herek and colleagues (1999; 2002) and Rose and Mechanic (2002) have begun to provide more systematic descriptions of bias crimes. However, more evidence is needed concerning the crime features, psychological consequences, and help-seeking behaviors involved in both hate crimes and same-sex domestic violence.

NOTES

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