

Assessment and Treatment of Victims of Bias Motivated Crimes: Socio-demographic and Clinical Considerations

Diagnostik und Behandlung von Opfern von vorurteilsmotivierten Verbrechen^{*)}: Soziodemografische und klinische Überlegungen

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^{*)} Als „hate crime“ (deutsch „Hassverbrechen“) werden in den USA Straftaten bezeichnet, bei denen das Opfer des Delikts vom Täter ausschließlich oder überwiegend nach dem Kriterium der Zugehörigkeit zu einer gesellschaftlichen Gruppe gewählt wird und sich das Verbrechen in erster Linie gegen die gewählte Gruppe als Ganze richtet. So können beispielsweise antisemitisch oder ausländerfeindlich motivierte Straftaten unter den Begriff fallen, ebenso Straftaten gegen Obdachlose oder Behinderte. Der Begriff „hate crime“ hat juristische Relevanz im Strafrecht der USA (Wikipedia).

Abstract

The establishment approximately 15 years ago of hate crimes as a unique criminal infraction in the US has resulted in a healthy debate as to what constitutes bias and criminal intent (Sullaway, 2004). The question of how to effectively address the psychological needs of victims of “hate” or bias motivated violence has been of concern to the mental health community. This paper will briefly summarize some of the challenges in working with hate crime victims in a clinical-forensic context and propose a model of treatment.

Zusammenfassung

Hassverbrechen, die es seit ca. 15 in der USA gibt und als eigene kriminelle Kategorie gelten, haben eine intensive Debatte über Vorurteile und kriminelle Intention ausgelöst (Sullaway, 2004). Die PsychologInnenschaft befasst sich mit der Frage, wie den Opfern von „hass-“ oder vorurteilsmotivierter Gewalt am effektivsten psychologische Hilfe angeboten werden kann. Dieser Artikel fasst einige der Herausforderungen der Arbeit mit Opfern von Hassverbrechen in einem klinisch-forensischen Kontext kurz zusammen und stellt ein Behandlungsmodell vor.

As a legal construct, hate crimes are defined as offenses where there is a reasonable cause to believe the crime was motivated in part by the victim's race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin or

physical or mental disability (<http://ag.ca.gov/cjsc>). The scope and language of these laws vary in western countries, but all seek to enforce the goals of public safety and tolerance as proposed by a civil society perspective.

In many western countries the emphasis upon individual rights has been in conflict with historically entrenched forms of institutional discrimination against minority groups and women (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1998). The inherent conflict between the social norms of egalitarianism and deep-seated xenophobia poses several challenges for hate crime victims in western societies. These include (1) cultural and gender differences in help-seeking by hate crime victims, (2) law enforcement attitudes about vulnerable groups who are targeted by hate crime offenders, and (3) addressing psychological injury and offender bias motivation as addressed in the criminal courts:

Victim Help-Seeking

An important psychological dynamic subsequent to the commission of a criminal offense concerns the victim's help seeking behaviors. By help seeking I mean the victim's motivation, competence, and capacity to seek legal, medical, social, and economic relief for problems experienced due to the criminal offense. In modern multicultural societies, frequent adverse intergroup contact, concerns about international terrorism, and concerns about immigrant group encroachment upon the economic welfare of the host country citizens are significant moderators upon seeking legal, social, and medical assistance in the wake of the commission of a hate crime.

In a study I conducted in that examined reportage to law enforcement by gay and lesbian hate crime victims, victim differences for both race and gender were significant predictors in the probability of victims reporting their crimes to the police (Dunbar, 2005). Gay white men were almost twice as likely as lesbians of color to report