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# WHY VICTIMS HATE TO REPORT: FACTORS AFFECTING VICTIM REPORTING IN HATE CRIME CASES IN CHICAGO<sup>1</sup>

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## **ABSTRACT**

*In the wake of increased hate crime legislation and attention to hate crime, there is a growing need to understand the victims of hate crimes. In particular, it is necessary to understand what factors facilitate or hinder victim reporting in these cases. This study examines the factors affecting victim reporting in hate crime cases in Chicago during the year 2000. Grounded theory guides an analysis of interviews with victim advocates as well as police and prosecutors who have handled hate crime cases. Findings suggest that some factors affecting victim reporting are factors that would affect the reporting of crime in general such as distrust of the criminal justice system and fear of revictimization. Other factors affecting reporting are unique to hate crime including personal barriers (language, culture, sexual orientation), knowledge of the hate crime law and the city's response to hate crime victims.*

**Key Words:** hate crime, revictimization, victim

## **INTRODUCTION**

For better or worse, vicious hate crimes have captured media attention in America.

Victim's names such as Matthew Sheppard and James Byrd are forever etched in many minds.

On one hand, these incidents bring public awareness to hate crimes across the United States. On the other hand, these incidents may also serve as a boiler plate for hate crimes against which all ot-

hers will be measured. The net result of this media focus may be that hate crime victims garner more attention and resources but that less violent hate crimes may not be viewed as "real" hate crimes.

There has been limited research regarding how victims respond to hate crimes. The increase in public interest in high profile hate crimes and legislation can overshadow the everyday reactions of hate crime victims and their decision of whether to report. This study seeks to explain the multiple rea-

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