



Research report II: General approaches of community response to domestic violence and the L(G)BT community

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Lesbenberatung Berlin e.V.
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1. Definition of “community response”

“The current movement is toward a broader and more coordinated response to domestic violence cases, referred to as coordinated community response (Pence&Shepard, 1999). The objective is to develop an even more comprehensive and certain system of intervention. Battered women’s services, for instance, might maintain contact and support for women whose partners are brought to criminal court. Civil court actions might be added to domestic violence cases to increase protection for women or help with child support. Police and court response to noncompliance might be swifter and more decisive. Specialized probation officers could better manage men in batterer programs. Men with compounding psychological and alcohol problems might be referred to other kinds of treatment as well as batterer counselling.

Much of this coordination is being achieved through domestic violence councils that include representatives from battered women’s services and batterer programs, police and probation departments, court officials and prosecution officers, and other community services. There are still challenges in breaking down “turf”, focusing on the victim’s well-being, and obtaining the time and resources for these councils to meet and act (Gondolf 1994). [...] batterer programs, rather than being singular treatments, are increasingly becoming part of a larger system of intervention.” (Gondolf 2002)

Key aspects are:

- Comprehensive system of intervention
- Networks and collaborations to improve protection of battered women

Since Gondolf (2002) the definition of “community response” has been broadened in including measures of prevention. The main aim of community response activities is to promote a societal atmosphere where domestic violence is stigmatized so that perpetrators do not feel supported by societal silence and victims will be protected.

2. Aim of the research

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Societal silence did protect male perpetrators of domestic violence for a long time. Politicians and the law did react quite late and only with pressure of the women’s movement on domestic violence issues. Nowadays intervention networks are established in every bigger city and in most European countries. Those networks are intersectional and members are representatives of women’s shelter movement, police, state attorneys, women’s counselling services, child care, various departments of administration (youth, women, social affairs, health etc.), policy makers, etc. So, since the problem of



domestic violence is multi-faceted, it is responded to in various ways as well. Nowadays measures are categorized in a system of prevention that is activities of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention.

In LGBT communities we experience a silencing of domestic violence as well. Thus, it might be useful to build as well multi-agency networks (or to use already established ones) either within the LGBT communities or even with mainstream organisations.

We try to find answers for following questions:

- Which networks (within LGBT communities) are useful to raise awareness about domestic violence within those communities?
- Which networks are useful to optimize the protection of the lesbian victims and to support lesbian perpetrators?
- Referring to already existing intervention networks: Which collaborations need to be discussed differently than in heterosexual oriented intervention networks? (Example: collaboration with police, perpetrator programs etc.) Which might be helpful to fight domestic violence addressing the LGBT communities?
- So, how should OUR networks look like in the future? What are special aspects?

3. Methodology

To get the relevant information an online research as well as short telephone-interviews were conducted. Counsellors of women help lines and/or working in organisations dealing with domestic violence and key persons within the communities have been interviewed. To get appropriate interview partners, a snowball selection process was used starting with the largest Berlin-wide intervention network called BIG e.V. (Berliner Initiative gegen Gewalt an Frauen e.V.). The interviews aimed at getting information about if and how victims and perpetrators of women-to-women domestic violence are addressed by existing mainstream intervention system. Furthermore, we aimed at developing a list of contacts to invite key agents to future meetings and to inform them about the findings of the LARS project. They will be invited to co-operate if appropriate. The interview partners were asked about the following topics:

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- Do they actively involve same sex partner violence in their regular work with perpetrators and/or victims of partner violence?
- What methods are they using to include same sex partner violence?
- How are they trying to affect community response?



- Would they like to receive reports of the development and outcome of the LARS project?
- Can they recommend stakeholders of other help lines, institutions etc. who may have more relevant information?

The online search was conducted simultaneously to get information about the existing anti-violence networks and the local intervention system. To achieve better and more relevant results key terminology¹ in many different combinations was used. Besides getting the information mentioned above we headed for evaluation reports showing how successfully the interventions were. Another subject of interest was how success was defined by the organisations.

¹ e.g. intervention network, annual reports of municipality, women's shelter, liaison officers, action plan, migrants and domestic violence, partner sexual abuse, same-sex, bisexual women, trans*, crime victim helpline etc.



4. Research results

4.1 Description of local community response activities (mainstream).

The mainstream local community response activities are measures of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention. In the city of Berlin a large association of various anti-violence projects has been established called BIG (Berliner Initiative gegen Gewalt an Frauen e.V.). BIG e.V. did develop a comprehensive concept covering all three levels of prevention and has been able to realize and extend it over the years. The services they provide are policing domestic violence, police networking/collaboration and counselling services so that the cooperation of these institutions was intensified and the position of female victims of domestic violence has been strengthened. In the following, the main measures of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention relevant to Berlin will be presented.

On the level of primary prevention, the government of Germany passed the realization of two action plans towards violence against women. These include for example prevention, amendments of laws, building of networks, qualified work with victims and perpetrators, qualification, research, and collaboration on a European level. Though, because some of these strategies function on a long-term level, measures of tertiary prevention are realized as well.

As a measure of primary prevention, BIG e.V. developed a concept to collaborate with schools and teachers to make the educators more sensitive for the existence of domestic violence and the impact it has on the children in the families concerned. Furthermore, the Netzwerk Frauengesundheit Berlin (Network for Women's Health in Berlin) works on education and public relation about the consequences of violence. The target group is experts working in the public health sector. The network operates on the base that some of these experts are not aware of that a number of women they deal with experiences domestic violence. The idea of the network is to ameliorate the provision of women by the medical system via information about the impact of domestic violence on health.



"HIS language means violence. SHE does not need to stay voiceless."

Large poster campaign by BIG Hotline in 2001, 2002, and 2005.

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Related to the secondary prevention there are many counselling services offering support for women who experienced domestic violence. In Berlin there are five women shelter houses, a telephone hotline (run by BIG e.V. as well which offers counselling and if necessary further steps of case management, and many anti-violence associations which are specialised on domestic and sexual violence against women. For perpetrators of domestic violence offers of intervention are less



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common. Nevertheless, there are two associations offering perpetrator programmes aiming at stopping the violent behaviour and learning new coping-strategies to deal with conflicts and aggression.

On the level of secondary prevention, BIG e.V. provides leaflets and comprehensive brochures in many different languages (e.g. Arab, Italian, Croatian, Polish, and Vietnamese). They inform about women's rights and provide a directory for women who experienced domestic violence. Another measure of secondary prevention aims at children who are suffering from domestic violence. Additionally there has been installed a special webpage with information for children and teenagers suffering from domestic violence (www.gewalt-ist-nie-ok.de).

"I'm a piece of shit. He is right."
If you have this in mind, you should
get in contact with us immediately.
Large poster campaign from the bff with
over 10,000 copies that started in 2009.



Furthermore, different networks have been established to facilitate the support of victims of domestic violence. BIG e.V. runs a telephone hotline including a mobile intervention team² if requested in close collaboration with women shelter houses, the Berliner Krisendienst (a institution that offers support in acute crisis situations), a crisis support for children and youth as well as with and an intercultural initiative. On the level of multi-agency networks the police is closely collaborating with shelter houses, family court, and the youth welfare offices. This so called "proactive approach" will be described further in chapter 4.2 (Description of multi-agency networks). While the above described networks become active in the case of an incident of domestic violence, there are collaborations maintained by professionals heading to improve the work with victims and perpetrators, too. They provide congresses as well as material about how to work adequately with the actors of domestic violence. These networks often work on an intersectional level of medicines, counsellors, administrative employees, and researchers. On a national level, there exists a huge network called Bundesverband Frauenberatungsstellen und Frauennotrufe (bff) with over 140 member organisations that aims at working towards violence against women. As an umbrella organisation the focus of this network of women counselling services focuses on policy and to break the silence about domestic violence against women via public relations, congresses and local action.

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² This mobile intervention could be requested every day from 9 a.m. till 12 p.m. and provides advice in the apartment of the woman or at another venue if necessary. Often, the counsellors are called in combination with a police operation.





“SOMETIMES YOU NOT SEE IT UNTIL THE SECOND SIGHT. One of four women in Germany becomes victim of domestic violence. Do not close your eyes to it. Help and self-help”: www.hinter-deutschen-waenden.de

On the level of tertiary prevention there have been large poster campaigns that were initialised by anti-violence organisations as well as by the German wide network bff. The campaigns were sometimes combined with local actions, and aimed to break the silence about domestic violence against women and to point out where victims can find help. The current campaign ran by BIG e.V. is called “Hinter deutschen Wänden” (“Behind German Walls”) and consists of large posters and postcards as well as of a cinema spot and an own website (www.hinter-deutschen-waenden.de). The aim of this public relation is to make people more sensitive for the existence of domestic violence and to induce everybody to pay attention and react in cases of domestic violence in his/her environment. At the same time, female victims of domestic violence are addressed to get in contact with the BIG e.V. in terms of receiving support.

On a governmental level of tertiary prevention, there has to be pointed out the homepage of the Federal Ministry of Family, Seniors, Women and Youth. Here, main laws on partner violence are explained. Furthermore, the State of Germany passed a law in 2002 (Gewaltschutzgesetz) that strengthens the rights of the victims of domestic violence.

To prevent the recurrence of domestic violence, perpetrator programs have been installed. Via counselling and the participation in batterer groups perpetrators are supposed to learn alternative and non-violent behaviour patterns. This measure can be seen both as secondary and tertiary prevention.

“When it’s about violence against women, there’s no joking around.”
Standpoints: Large poster campaign in combination with local actions from 2007 till 2009. Initiated by the bff, here you see the feet of Hella von Sinnen (who is a famous German comedian and openly living lesbian).

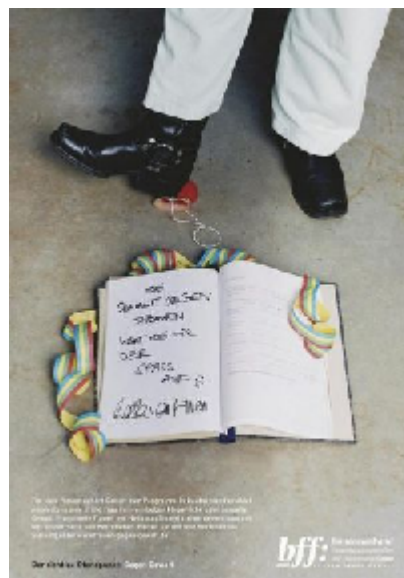


Table 1: Compilation of community response activities (mainstream and LGBT)³.

Primary prevention	Secondary prevention	Tertiary prevention
<p>Institution: BIG Prävention</p> <p>Activity: Information material, lectures, special homepage</p> <p>Target group: Schools, teachers, youth welfare</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p> <p>Evaluation result: none</p>	<p>Institution: Landeskriminal-amt Berlin, Bereich Prävention</p> <p>Activity: Cooperation with shelter houses, family court, and youth welfare office</p> <p>Target group: Experts</p> <p>Evaluation: yes</p> <p>Evaluation result: successfully</p>	<p>Institution: State of Germany</p> <p>Activity: Amendment of the Gewalt-Schutz-Gesetz (now aiming at same-sex-partnerships as well)</p> <p>Target group: All citizens</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p> <p>Evaluation result: none</p>
<p>Institution: BIG Prävention</p> <p>Activity: Exhibition about domestic violence</p> <p>Target group: Scholars</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p> <p>Evaluation result: none</p>	<p>Institution: Bundesverband Frauenberatungsstellen und Frauennotrufe (bff)</p> <p>Activity: Network</p> <p>Target group: Experts, anti-violence organisations</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p> <p>Evaluation result: none</p>	<p>Institution: Government of Germany</p> <p>Activity: Action Plan I and II towards violence against women, includes for example: intervention on the level of building networks, improve qualification, research, appropriate work with victims and perpetrators</p> <p>Target group: Experts</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p> <p>Evaluation result: none</p>
<p>Institution: Netzwerk Frauengesundheit</p> <p>Activity: Education and public relations to health consequences of violence, conference (1/year)</p> <p>Target group: Experts</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p>	<p>Institution: Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Täterarbeit Häusliche Gewalt e.V.</p> <p>Activity: Publication about standards for the work with male perpetrators of domestic violence</p> <p>Target group: Experts</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p>	<p>Institution: Homepage by Federal Ministry of Family, Seniors, Women and Youth</p> <p>Activity: Explaining main laws on partner violence</p> <p>Target group: All citizens</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p>

³ This compilation does not claim to reflect the entire prevention sector concerning domestic violence in the cities of Berlin.



Evaluation result: none	Evaluation result: none	Evaluation result: none
<p>Institution: Broken Rainbow e.V.</p> <p>Activity: LGBT- network of anti-violence organisations that is giving information about same-sex domestic violence</p> <p>Target group: LGBT-Communities</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p> <p>Evaluation result: none</p>	<p>Institution: Berliner Zentrum für Gewaltprävention</p> <p>Activity: Perpetrator programmes</p> <p>Target group: Women and men who perpetrate violence against their partners</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p> <p>Evaluation result: none</p>	<p>Institution: Berliner Zentrum für Gewaltprävention</p> <p>Activity: Perpetrator programs</p> <p>Target group: Women and men who perpetrate violence against their partners</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p> <p>Evaluation result: none</p>
<p>Institution: Lesbenberatung Berlin e.V.</p> <p>Activity: Further education and information about domestic violence in women-to-women/trans* relationships</p> <p>Target group: Experts, police</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p> <p>Evaluation result: none</p>	<p>Institution: Volkssolidarität</p> <p>Activity: Counselling and perpetrator programs</p> <p>Target group: Men that perpetrated violence against their partners</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p> <p>Evaluation result: none</p>	<p>Institution: Volkssolidarität</p> <p>Activity: Counselling and perpetrator programs</p> <p>Target group: Men that perpetrated violence against their partners</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p> <p>Evaluation result: none</p>
<p>Institution: Lesbenberatung Berlin e.V.</p> <p>Activity: Leaflets about domestic violence in women-to-women/trans* relationships</p> <p>Target group: LGBT-Communities</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p> <p>Evaluation result: none</p>	<p>Institution: Frauen und Psychiatrie</p> <p>Activity: Network to ameliorate the psychiatric provision of women that experienced violence</p> <p>Target group: Experts</p> <p>Evaluated: no</p> <p>Evaluation result: none</p>	<p>Institution: Bundesverband Frauenberatungsstellen und Frauennotrufe (bff)</p> <p>Activity: Poster campaigns („Standpunkte“ and „Dialog“), local actions</p> <p>Target group: Whole society</p> <p>Evaluation: yes</p> <p>Evaluation result: “The main objective of increasing the awareness of violence against women was fulfilled with great success.” www.bv-fgg.de</p>
Institution: Lesbenberatung	Institution: BIG Prävention	Institution: BIG Hotline

<p>Berlin e.V.</p> <p>Activity: Informative meetings and talks about domestic violence in women-to-women/trans* relationships</p> <p>Target group: LGBT-Communities, broad public</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p> <p>Evaluation result: none</p>	<p>Activity: Leaflets in different languages offering support in case of partner violence</p> <p>Target group: Women who experienced domestic violence</p> <p>Evaluated: no</p> <p>Evaluation result: none</p>	<p>Activity: Poster campaigns, commercials in radio and metro-TVs, www.hinter-deutschen-waenden.de</p> <p>Target group: Whole society; women that experienced domestic violence in particular</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p> <p>Evaluation result: none</p>
	<p>Institution: BIG Prävention</p> <p>Activity: Homepage www.gewalt-ist-nie-ok.de</p> <p>Target group: Children and teenagers affected by domestic violence</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p> <p>Evaluation result: none</p>	<p>Institution: L-Mag (lesbian magazine)</p> <p>Activity: Article, interview</p> <p>Target group: Lesbian and bisexual women</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p> <p>Evaluation result: none</p>
	<p>Institution: BIG Koordinierung</p> <p>Activity: Booklets, leaflets in different languages</p> <p>Target group: women that experienced domestic violence</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p> <p>Evaluation result: none</p>	
	<p>Institution: BIG Hotline</p> <p>Activity: Poster campaign, commercials in radio and metro-TVs</p> <p>Target group: Whole society; women that experienced domestic violence in particular</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p>	



	Evaluation result: none	
	<p>Institution: BIG Hotline</p> <p>Activity: Networking, cooperation, counselling and case management</p> <p>Target group: Cooperation → women shelter houses, police, various counselling services; counselling and case management → women (hetero, bi, lesbian) that experienced domestic violence</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p> <p>Evaluation result: none</p>	
	<p>Institution: www.taeterinnen.org</p> <p>Activity: Homepage; CD about the work with lesbian perpetrators of same-sex domestic violence</p> <p>Target group: Experts</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p> <p>Evaluation result: none</p>	
	<p>Institution: Broken Rainbow e.V.</p> <p>Activity: LGBT- network of anti-violence organisations</p> <p>Target group: LGBT victims and perpetrators</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p> <p>Evaluation result: none</p>	
	<p>Institution: Lesbenberatung Berlin e.V.</p> <p>Activity: Further education and information about domestic violence in women-to-women/trans* relationships</p>	



	<p>Target group: Experts, police</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p> <p>Evaluation result: none</p>	
	<p>Institution: Arbeitsgruppe Unterstützungsangebote für lesbische Frauen die von Gewalt betroffen sind</p> <p>Activity: Network; publication of standards for the work with lesbian women that experienced domestic violence</p> <p>Target group: Experts</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p> <p>Evaluation result: none</p>	



4.2 Description of multi agency network

In Berlin as in other German states and municipalities there exists an intervention chain between police and shelter houses, the family court, and youth welfare offices. This so called “proactive approach” becomes active when the police is called because of an incident of domestic violence. Subsequent to the police operation a selected counselling service (in Berlin this is the BIG Hotline) receives the data of the affected woman – and/or man – to get in contact and offer support and crisis intervention. In Berlin, this data transfer is possible only when the person concerned agrees. If there are children, the youth welfare services get informed as well. Beyond that, in Berlin is a strong collaboration between police and the family court. If there has been a conviction because of the incident of domestic violence, members of the family court report the results to the police so that they are informed in case of another police operation in this family. This last aspect of communication is quite uncommon in comparison to other German states and municipalities but reported to be very helpful.

The Lesbenberatung Berlin is not directly involved in the above described multi-agency network, but is occasionally inquired by the BIG Hotline to intervene in a case of women-to-women domestic violence. Beside this intervention, the Lesbenberatung is member of a network called Frauen und Psychiatrie (Women and Psychiatry). The main focus of this network lies in the amelioration of the psychiatric provision for women that experienced violence. Other members are universities, hospitals, counselling services, districts, and senate departments. Furthermore, Lesbenberatung Berlin e.V. is part of a working group called Netzwerk Frauengesundheit Berlin (Network for Women’s Health in Berlin) aiming to the education and public relation about the consequences of violence. The main focus lies in improving the psychotherapeutically and medical provision of women in Berlin that experienced domestic violence. Beside these networks, the Lesbenberatung Berlin also contributes to collaboration with other counselling services to provide a guide about how to work with lesbian women that suffered from violence. On the national level, the Lesbenberatung is member in two umbrella organisations of women help lines and counselling services working against violence. First, there is the Bundesverband Frauenberatungsstellen und Frauennotrufe (bff) working mainly towards domestic violence in heterosexual relationships and second there is Broken Rainbow e.V., a network of LGBT anti-violence organisations.

Intervention coming from/aiming at the LGBT-communities

The intervention system described until here is mainly focused on women as victims and men as perpetrators. However, there is violence in same-sex/trans* relationships, too. Since the last ten to twenty years the examination of violence in women-to-women relationships increased. In consequence, there have been built networks and measures on all three levels of intervention. These differ in the way of who the initiator is: There are interventions aiming at same-sex partnerships but coming from mainstream organisation and interventions provided by associations of the LGBT-communities aiming at the community members as well as at the mainstream intervention system. Both will be described in terms of the structure and effectiveness in the following passages.



Concerning to interventions operated by the mainstream counselling services there have to be named case studies about women experiencing domestic violence by their female partners. These case studies are published in booklets about domestic violence which aim to reach women who became victims. Furthermore, the majority of counselling services did a lot to improve their offers for women that experienced violence by female partners. The interest in further education and collaboration with LGBT counselling services could be seen as a proof for this. It might be a consequence of this effort that the numbers of bisexual and lesbian women searching for help from the mainstream anti-violence projects increased in the last years. Finally, the introduction of the Gewaltschutzgesetz (basically translated: law of protection in case of violence) in 2002 made it much easier for the police to intervene in cases of same-sex domestic violence.

Beside the interventions from mainstream organisations aiming at the LGBT communities there is a great interest of LGBT counselling services to hold up a networking process with the mainstream intervention system. Because the possibilities of support for victims and perpetrators offered by LGBT counselling services are restricted due to a lack of money, it is necessary to make sure, that LGBTs get appropriate support in the existing mainstream organisations as well. Therefore a manual about how to work with women that experienced same-sex domestic violence was developed. Additionally, further education has been offered for people (like counsellors, police officers, and people of the medical system) who come across incidents of women-to-women domestic violence. Furthermore and as a result of a former European project, a homepage was uploaded that informs experts about how to work with female perpetrators of same-sex domestic violence (www.taeterinnen.org).

Finally, there are interventions from LGBT organisations aiming at the communities and/or a networking process. First, the above described lectures about the peculiarities in the work with victims and perpetrators of same-sex domestic violence are relevant for counsellors who are LGBT themselves. To have the same sexual identity does not mean at the same time, that one is prepared for incidents of domestic violence in same-sex/trans* relationships. So the further education offers as well as the manual and homepage aim to experts with an LGBT-identity likewise. On a level of secondary prevention, the Lesbenberatung Berlin offers counselling for victims and perpetrators of women-to-women/trans* domestic violence and provides case management if necessary. In terms of public relations, the Lesbenberatung printed leaflets to inform about the existence of domestic violence in women-to-women/trans* relationships. A further booklet illuminates the offers given to bisexual/lesbian women and trans* that are affected by domestic violence. As result of a former European project a leaflet has been developed that has been spread in different German states as well as in Vienna and highlighted the existence of violence in women-to-women relationships. Finally, a German wide lesbian magazine published in spring 2010 a six paged report about domestic violence in lesbian relationships. Beside a theoretical input, there have been short stories of women that survived violence by their partner. Because this report has been published recently, the impact on the L(G)BT communities can not be estimated till now.



4.3 Reflection of community response and multi-agency networks

Via internet research was tried to get information about how successfully the above described interventions had been referring to community response. It became obvious that there is a lack of appropriate evaluation programs so that it is difficult to assess the effects of the described measures. Furthermore, and on a more abstract level, it is not easy to define “success” in respect of domestic violence. A lot of intersectional networks have been built aiming at ameliorating the support services for victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. Nevertheless, the meaning of success is open: Is success when violent men are barred from their home easier than before or when men are convicted to take part at perpetrator programmes? Can it be named success if men finish those programmes or is it named success if they are not violent with next six months? Or is it success when a women’s shelter is celebrating its 20th birthday and was able to grow over the years?

Domestic violence is a multi-caused problem, so the intensified cooperation of different agencies like police, women’s shelter, local municipality and the medical system could be stated as an effort in the intervention work against domestic violence. Large poster campaigns and local actions have been realized to break the silence about violence against women. Many experts, politicians and common people are supposed to be more sensitive now. The bff invoked people to send their own picture of “Standpoints” since 2007 (see chapter 4.1) and has received over 4,000 copies until today showing people or institutions presenting their opinion about violence against women. Furthermore, on the level of legislation there has been made progress relating to violence in same-sex partnerships. The introduction of the Gewaltschutzgesetz in 2002 improved the situation of victims of domestic violence⁴ and included via sex-neutral language same-sex partnerships as well.

⁴ Not relevant if man or woman.



5. Discussion

Heterosexual women that are affected by domestic violence can resort to a variety of mainstream organisations and networks offering support. In comparison with these conditions, the infrastructure regarding LGBT-networks referring to partner violence in women-to-women/trans* relationships is suboptimal. Beside the umbrella organisation Broken Rainbow e.V. there exist no anti-violence network consisting of LGBT-organisations exclusively. In Berlin, most of the networking process operates between mainstream and LGBT-organisation. That means, LGBT counselling services, especially the *Lesbenberatung Berlin e.V.*, are involved in large networks (like *BIG e.V.* and *bff*) or funded in collaboration with other organisations new networks (e.g. *Arbeitsgruppe Unterstützungsangebote für lesbische Frauen die von Gewalt betroffen sind*). The participation in these networks basically aims to ameliorate the provision of lesbian/bisexual women and trans* in the existing institutions of the mainstream intervention system. As well as employees working in the mainstream institutions, members of LGBT-counselling services have to be trained in the work with victims and perpetrators of women-to-women/trans* domestic violence, too. These skill enhancements should be strengthened in future because it is not the sexual identity that someone (dis)qualifies to work with people affected by same-sex/trans* domestic violence.

As the explanations in the previous chapters tried to line out it is difficult to define success of prevention measures. Related to primary and tertiary prevention this weighs even more, because it is not possible to say what would have happened without these measures. Intervention that focuses on preventing domestic violence via information and large poster campaigns, for example, can hardly be assessed in terms of how successfully they have been to prevent cases of domestic violence. On the level of intervention (that means secondary prevention) it seems to be easier to decide if a measure has been successfully or not. But is it really a success when someone does not batter the current partner anymore, but the next one? Is it success, when the aggressor is not exerting violence for six months? Is it success when someone does not extend physical violence anymore, but emotional one? All these questions are only some examples to show how difficult it is to define success in general. On a more specific view, success could be defined as stopping the violence and offering support for the victims that makes it easier to go through the system of counselling-services, police and justice more smoothly.

At the same time, intervention measures that are stated to be successfully in the field of domestic violence in heterosexual relationships not have to be adequate for partner violence in women-to-women/trans* relationships as well. For example, there are still retentions toward police and the justice in terms of being homophobic. So, a strong collaboration between LGBT-counselling services and police could be worthwhile but does not have to be successful mandatorily. Furthermore, the foundation of shelter houses⁵ for lesbian/bisexual women and trans* that have experienced violence by their female/trans* partner can hardly realise feelings of protection at the side of the victim. Originally, shelter houses have been established with the goal to provide a place free of man. Background was the need that women who experienced violence by their male partners in

⁵ Which have been doubtlessly important and needful for female victims of male domestic violence.



heterosexual relationships could find harbourage at a place where they would not be confronted with men (and therefore potential perpetrators). In consequence, they were expected to have better possibilities to handle their violent experiences. To confer this concept to lesbians and bisexual women and trans* who experienced violence by their female/trans* partners would mean to confront the victims with other LBT-people, and though with potential perpetrators. The original concept of a place free of men is not necessary anymore here.

Furthermore, as Ohms (2008⁶) showed, domestic violence in women-to-women relationships often can not only be described as a dualism of victim and perpetrator but is characterized as an interaction of both actors. That means that violence is reciprocal: both partners are exerting violence in the course of the relationship. In those cases the violence mainly is confined to a specific situation, nevertheless characterising the relationship. Consequently, the concept of shelter houses for women that became victim of domestic violence by their male partners cannot be transferred to women-to-women domestic violence since both women could try to get shelter. Beyond that Ohms (2008) revealed that the majority of women being perpetrator in an abusive partnership claim to be the victim. Though, if these perpetrators would be sheltered as well this would endanger the victims living there.

⁶ C. Ohms, 2006. Das Fremde in mir: Gewaltdynamiken in Liebesbeziehungen zwischen Frauen. Soziologische Perspektiven auf ein Tabuthema. Bielefeld: Transcript.



6. Conclusions

Finally, conclusions about useful response strategies concerning domestic violence in women-to-women/trans* relationships will be drawn.

Large poster-campaigns as initialised by BIG e.V. and bff might be helpful to increase the awareness of partner-violence in women-to-women/trans* relationships. This kind of public relation could attract even more interest when combined with local actions like asking people to make their own picture expressing how they think about domestic violence (as happened in the Standpunkte campaign by the bff, see chapter 4.1). Furthermore, through a stronger collaboration with the media and LGBT-celebrities it could be realized to reach a broader target group.

On the level of community response it seems to be helpful to involve the LGBT-communities to strengthen their sensitivity for domestic violence and to empower the competences required for moral courage. As the case study (see chapter 7) exemplarily shows there still is a great insecurity about how to react when one becomes involved in a case of same-sex domestic violence.

The existing measures concerning secondary prevention could be supplemented by the expansion of case management as well as by special offers for female/trans* perpetrators to facilitate the termination of violence. Mobile intervention that already has been arranged in serious cases could be extended to reach more women/trans* affected by domestic violence. To carry the proactive approach realised by police and mainstream counselling services to violent incidences in same-sex partnerships effectively, the awareness of police and advise centres for the existence and peculiarities of domestic violence in women-to-women/trans* relationships should be raised.



7. Appendix: Case Study

Anne was celebrating the birthday of her friend Julia with a circle of friends. They have met in a famous gay and lesbian bar in city centre. After about half an hour, Anne's partner Susan came in. With enquiring eyes she was searching for Anne. After having found her she headed for the group of friends singing a birthday song. Vociferously she tried to interrupt the song and realising that she was not succeeding, Susan pushed some of the participants aside while yanking Anne outside of the group. Susan was arguing heatedly against her partner: She would have been out enough and to spare, she should have been at home since half an hour though her party with the friends would end right now. Anne just looked puzzled and said after a while that this is the birthday of her friend and that she is going to stay. So Susan started yelling and gesticulating. She demanded to come home from her instantly. The bystanders just were in a mist and remain silent.

Then, Mary, who is the best friend of Anne, started to talk at Susan, tried to explain the situation. As reply, Susan just hit her and hauled help seeking Anne off. Anne could hardly stop her for trying to get out of her partners grasp but Susan started shaking her. A skirmish began while Susan tried to drag Anne out of the bar and Anne meanwhile tried to free herself. Susan cursed at Anne and called her a bitch. Suddenly, she started Anne beating in body and face. Anne's nose began bleeding and finally she stops to defend herself and left the bar with her partner, talking at her pacifying.

After both had left the bar, a heavy discussion started in the group of friends as well as between the guests. Some of Anne's friends wanted to follow her and make sure that everything is fine. Others argued that this is a private matter and that they do not have the "right" to intervene. Furthermore, they have been unsure if something has had happened before which might have "provoked" Susan's aggressive behaviour. It could have been that Anne missed an appointment with Susan. Other guests in the bar complained about the circumstance that they had to witness "something like that". In order to make sure that "something like that" will not happen again and to make sure that "their" bar stays a place where they can spend their leisure time in a "cultivated" ambience, some asked the bar holder to bar the two women.

The scenario drew above shows how members of the LGBT-communities often deal with the topic of violence in women-to-women relationships. Most of the reactions reveal some kind of tabooization. Mechanism could be for example: Denial of the severeness, making domestic violence a private affair, and victim-blaming (by friends as well as by bystanders).

