Hate Crime Victims and Hate Crime Reporting: Some Impertinent Questions


Abstract

Much of the academic, practitioner and voluntary sector interest in victims of hate crime have focused upon the impacts of hate crime and the practical and emotional support needs and services for victims. Our own work has been somewhat divergent from this. We were commissioned to identify how hate crime reporting could be improved in a northern town, and made inclusive across different equality groups. We undertook a small scale study that examined individual decision making by hate crime victims in whether or not to report incidents, and how the available reporting arrangements and associated publicity materials affected these decisions (Wong & Christmann, 2008). Somewhat to our surprise, what appeared to be a critical issue in terms of whether or not hate crime policies were likely to succeed was also a much under researched area.

Whilst our own research findings cannot be generalised beyond the study site, it did allow us to test out and consider more thoroughly some of the assumptions implicit in policy developments around hate crime reporting, specifically the policy goal of full reporting. We want to reflect back on these findings and the broader research literature to pose some questions on the adequacy and utility of the current reporting agencies approaches and the general policy direction to hate crime victims.

We believe this has merit because the statutory criminal justice agencies and the voluntary sector are grappling with the challenges of adopting hate crime in its broadest sense, and providing a responsive, effective and victim centred service across markedly different vulnerable groups. Pertinent questions can be asked about what the current policies on hate crime can be expected to achieve given the nature of victim decision making on the critical issue of whether to report their victimisation. We will draw out some implications that the legacy of the Lawrence Inquiry has had for strategic thinking, policy making and make some tentative suggestions on how these might be improved.

We argue something that may be considered heresy among hate crime victimology circles and victim campaigning groups; that the current policy message concerning victim reporting does not reflect reality, and risks being discredited. What is required, some 10 years post Lawrence is more nuanced responses and ones which acknowledge: the distance travelled by criminal justice agencies in the intervening years; that the majority of hate crime is manifested as single incidents of harassment (which may not necessarily constitute crimes); and the unlikelihood of full reporting by the public, which realistically fits where the public are in terms of their expectations. In doing so we do not pretend to have any authoritative answers to these issues, but believe the questions are worth posing to prompt a debate between efficacy of response versus a largely unchallenged view of hate crime victimology.
National Criminal Victimization Survey and Uniform Crime Reporting. Hate Crime Reported by Victims. and Police. By Caroline Wolf Harlow, Ph.D. BJS Statistician. An annual average of 210,000 hate crime victimizations occurred from July 2000 through December 2003. As defined here, an ordinary crime becomes a hate crime when offenders choose a victim because of some characteristic — for example, race, ethnicity, or religion — and provide evidence that hate prompted them to commit the crime. Bias crime is another term for hate crime. Hate crimes that respondents report in the NCVS are based on victims' perceptions of why they became crime victims. National data on hate crimes come from two primary sources: Hate crime defined and explained with examples. A crime of violence that is motivated by prejudice or intolerance against an individual or group of people. If the victim sustains bodily injury as a result of the crime, or if the crime involves the use of a firearm, explosives, or fire, the perpetrator may be sentenced to a prison term of up to 10 years. Hate crimes involving sexual assault, kidnapping, or murder are punishable by life in prison, or even the death penalty. Each year, the FBI releases its Hate Crime Statistics Report to demonstrate the prevalence of hate crimes throughout the United States. The latest Hate Crime Statistics report was released in December 2014, and it provides some surprising numbers. Hate crimes are criminal acts motivated by bias or prejudice towards particular groups of people. To be considered a hate crime, the offense must meet two criteria. The first is that the act constitutes an offense under criminal law. Secondly, the act must have been motivated by bias. This website presents information from OSCE participating States, civil society and inter-governmental organizations about hate crime. Information is categorized by the bias motivations OSCE/ODIHR has been mandated to report on by participating States.