**Everyday hate and affective possibility: disabled people’s negotiations of space, place and identity**

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**Source:** [**The International Journal of Disability and Social Justice, November 2021, Vol. 1, No. 1 (November 2021), pp. 73-94.**](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.13169/intljofdissocjus.1.1.0073)

**Plain English Summary**

**1. Introduction**

This summary discusses some of the ways that disability hate crime can change how disabled people think about themselves. I explore how hate crime can ‘hurt’ and the diverse ways that disabled people negotiate this within their everyday lives. The impacts of hate crime are diverse. People who spoke to me reported avoiding certain spaces to the fear of being targeted, lacking self-confidence and feeling out of place. In addition, they described having to plan in advance how they could occupy social spaces in order to reduce the risk of experiencing a hate crime. More positively, it is important to recognise the unique strategies developed by disabled people to navigate social barriers and challenge experiences of hate crime.

Throughout this article, I argue that we need to think about the ‘affective possibilities’ of hate crime, which I describe to be the diverse ways that disabled people shape and are shaped by, their experiences of hate crime.

**2. Summary of the research**

This article is based upon a PhD project conducted at the University of Leeds, UK and funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. During the research I worked with six organizations in England, including disabled people’s organizations (DPOs), peer-support groups and disability charities. I conducted arts-based workshops and interviews with disabled people. These diverse methods helped to create a safe space to explore participants’ experiences of hate crime sensitively.

**3. Summary of the main findings**

Here I share some of the ‘affective possibilities’ of hate crime that were reported by my research participants. I draw attention to the ways that hate crime ‘hurts’ disabled people, as well as the ways in which these experiences provide disabled people with unique and informed ways of knowing and being in the world.

3.1 Self-identity and belonging

Hate crime shaped participants’ sense of self-identity and belonging by leaving negative ‘markers’ on their identity that ate away at their self-confidence. This could make participants feel unworthy which often prevented them from doing certain activities, or going to places that they liked, because they didn’t feel like they belonged there. In this way, experiences of hate crime can negatively shape how disabled people feel about themselves and what they think they can ‘do’ and ‘become’ in the future.

Participants described changing their routines and avoiding certain places (such as public transport) to reduce the risk of experiencing hate crimes. Joe, Alex and Arjun are all wheelchair users and they reported being denied accessible spaces on public transport by other members of the public, who refused to move out of the way for them. In addition, Francis Emerson and Doria Skadinski, who described having ‘invisible impairments’, reflected upon being challenged by other passengers because they do not look disabled.

3.2 Extra planning

Participants had to make difficult decisions and spend extra time planning in order to access public spaces safely. For example, many participants avoided public transport during rush hour and Francis Emerson told me that she avoided using gender-specific toilet facilities. Robbie discussed the importance of going to the cinema with his partner, but did so with caution, travelling to a cinema further away and more expensive in order to avoid the presence of teenagers. This ‘extra planning’ can become time-consuming and costly. Doria Skadinski, Betty and Lynn commented upon the additional cost of taxi services, the time spent planning their journeys and the emotional labour involved with ensuring that they are not in risky spaces at the wrong time.

3.3 Affective possibility

Experiences of hate crime enabled many participants to develop more calculated approaches to navigating social space and engaging with others. Being able to choose how, where, and when to occupy space shows the relationality of encounters and the potential of participants to shape their experiences. For example, Doria Skadinski had developed an ‘accessibility plan’ based upon her own experiences to help other disabled people navigate her local city. In addition, many participants had developed strategies to help them stay calm and relaxed in order to support their mental wellbeing.

Participants involved with organisations and peer-support groups emphasised using their knowledge to support other disabled people within the community. According to Robbie, his organization had given him the confidence ‘to put a stop to it for the next victim not to be.’ Similarly, Harry recognised the potential of DPOs by bringing together disabled people’s experiences as shared accounts of oppression. Such spaces gave members a sense of purpose and self-confidence that helped to foster friendships and work together to challenge disabling attitudes and practices.

**4. Summary of the main implications**

Recognising disabled people’s uniquely situated knowledge of the social world highlights the affective possibilities of everyday hate. By considering affective possibility within hate crime research, it is possible to shift from a focus upon ‘victims,’ and towards an appreciation of disabled people as active, knowledgeable and self-empowering social actors. Moreover, by sharing some of the unique ways that disabled people both encounter and challenge hate within their everyday lives, we can learn more about how to support one another. For many participants in this research, sharing their experiences of both oppression and resistance was informative; not only did this develop shared understandings of everyday hate, it opened participants up to new ways of managing these experiences. As researchers, we have the responsibility to recognise these acts and harness a space where moments of resistance are shared and celebrated amongst disabled people.

**5. More information**

Dr Leah Burch is a lecturer at Liverpool Hope University, UK, in the School of Social Sciences. Leah is part of the British Society of Criminology Hate Crime Steering Committee and lead coordinator of the Disability Hate Crime Network. Her PhD was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. During this project, she worked with disabled people to explore their meanings and experiences of everyday hate.

She would like to say a huge thank you to all participants who shared their stories and experiences with her throughout the research project.