

# Historical Trauma, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder And "Hate Crime Victims: A Review

Kim McGuire\*

University of Central Lancashire, UK

\*Corresponding author: Kim McGuire, University of Central Lancashire, UK.

Received Date: April 11, 2022

Published Date: June 13, 2022

## Abstract

This mini review of literature focuses on intergenerational, community and historical traumas of victims of 'hate crime'. By focusing upon these aspects, the lived experience and psychological harm of such victimization is illuminated. Many query why certain characteristics are 'protected' and offences demonstrating hostility to these are punished more severely. Reviewing research on the harm caused will help to answer these queries. The review will also highlight the need for more than informal methods of help for many of these victims.

## Introduction

A basic definition of 'hate crime' is any criminal offence carried out whilst demonstrating hostility towards, or being motivated by hostility towards, a protected characteristic. In England and Wales, the current five protected characteristics are race, religion, disability, transgender identity and sexual orientation. However, what this basic definition obscures is the significant harm that such offences can cause to victims. Below will discuss trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder, particularly experienced by victims of such offences. It will also highlight the need to consider such effects when considering treatment for individuals, whose 'harm' extends beyond the physical.

## Harm and Trauma

As Craig-Henderson and Sloan state: When individuals are targeted because of their race or ethnicity they are likely to experience a host of negative emotions that are qualitatively distinct from those experienced following nonbiased criminal victimization

[1]." Other research has highlighted that all victims of 'hate crime' experience qualitatively different negative emotions than victims of parallel crimes, (those conducted without the addition of hostility to the victim's characteristic.) Research has investigated the harm caused by different offences, but not always focused upon 'Hate crime'. Shapland and Hall, for example, considered the findings of the British Crime Surveys, now the Crime Survey for England and Wales, (CSEW) carried out between 1996 and 2002/2003 [2] and concluded that among victims of burglary, vehicle-related theft and any type of violent offence, there is little variation in adverse emotional reactions to the victimization, with the most common reaction being anger and shock.

However, this conclusion is not confirmed by victims of offences perceived to have a 'bias' element, even using the same source of data. Indeed, research in England and Wales, again using the large random samples of crime victims from data in the (CSEW, demonstrated that hate crime victims are more likely to report

post-victimization psychological trauma — even when controlling for crime type [3-9]. Work by many academics for example, Paul Iganski confirmed the greater harms caused by such bias offences, justifying longer sentencing [10,11]. As Lawrence argues “The harms most claimed concern the experience of psychological and emotional trauma by victims following a hate crime [12,13] and also trauma vicariously experienced by those who share the same identity as the primary victim. Hence, the trauma can extend beyond the individual victim. Hence, there is a need for a greater recognition of the psychological harms, and the importance of recognizing intergenerational and community trauma.

The above is not to dispute that there may well be individual differences in response to ‘hate crime’ offences. Indeed, Iganski has subsequently written on the ‘... diversity of reactions between victims [14].’ However, Iganski’s focus on diversity is not to detract from potential harm but is used by him to argue that the sentencing of offenders fails to consider variation in the harm caused in individual cases. However, this review focuses not upon the legal consideration of ‘harm’ but upon the vast amount of literature highlighting trauma in a significant number of cases, historically, intergenerationally, and within a wider community. It is argued below that there is evidence that ‘hate crime’ victims display symptoms of post traumatic disorder in many cases. Indeed, even those without first-hand experience may display similar symptoms.

### Intergenerational and intrusive trauma

As noted by JesusJaime-Diaz [15] the origins of intergenerational trauma can be found in the 1966 work of Vivian M Rakoff, whose work related to survivors of the holocaust [16]. The development of ‘hate crime’ legislation in Europe has been partly related to such extreme bias related offences, and the subsequent trauma inflicted.

Pickering notes how trauma continues, and can be intergenerational, as experiences are transmitted via memories and metaphors [17]. Trauma can continue as these past experiences and memories become a lens through which the present is interpreted. in common with work on ‘chosen trauma’ ‘hate crime’ experiences can link groups together in a sense of shared identity [18]. Perry and Alvi [19] argue that “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) individuals who simply know someone who has been a victim of a hate crime or have heard about a hate crime through the media [20], report similar responses as the direct victims (e.g., vulnerability, anger, anxiety). Research by Ehlich argued that the “trauma took its toll on interpersonal relations as well: the loss of friends, anger with family members, and difficulties with significant others” [21]. 52% of Ehlich’s respondents in his research “Thought over and over again about the same problem or incident.” The American Psychological Association (APA) states that “this kind of attack takes place on two levels; not only is it an attack on one’s physical self, but it is also an attack on one’s very identity” [22]. The APA

highlighted that the psychological and emotional damage illustrates symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder: ‘intense feelings of fear, vulnerability, anger, and depression, physical ailments and learning problems, and difficult interpersonal relations [23].’

Others suggest that the role of memory can differ for victims of trauma. Ehlers, for example states that “unlike the convention in DSM-IV [24], which classifies ruminative thoughts about the trauma such as “Why did it happen to me” or “If only I had ...” as a part of reexperiencing, the author distinguishes between intrusive memories and rumination about the trauma [25].” Moreover, that “Evidence is accumulating that these cognitions are phenomenologically and functionally distinct [26].”

Ehlers argues that “A central question for understanding and treating patients with PTSD is therefore what maintains distressing intrusive reexperiencing in these people. Three factors appear to be important: (1) memory processes responsible for the easy triggering of intrusive memories, (2) the individuals’ interpretations of their trauma memories, and (3) their cognitive and behavioral responses to trauma memories [27].”

Ehlers and Clark cite several differences between intrusive memories and rumination. They argue that “people with PTSD may also show affect without recollection [28], that is, emotions and behavior from the trauma without having a conscious memory of the trauma (e.g., collapsing in a fetal position when seeing someone who resembles the assailant). Thus, some of the reexperiencing symptoms lack the auto-noetic awareness which is a defining feature of episodic memories [29]. “Victims of hate crime both ruminate on the offence, but also display unconscious symptoms such as those above.

### Conclusion

Despite the inevitable differences that can occur between victims of hate crime, as with victims of all crimes, there is sufficient evidence to suggest trauma and post-traumatic stress disorders are more common in victims of the former. Legal academic work has questioned the extent of harm only in the context of considering if an increase in sentencing for perpetrators is just, or in the public interest. However, this mini review has utilized a victim centered focus and highlights the need for scholars to be mindful of the effects upon not only individuals, but upon their families and communities.

Whilst there are some practical steps that can be taken to help victims of hate crimes, none will take place unless the extent of such harms is recognized. Krupnik argues that following the victimization experience, crime victims have both psychological, physical, and legal needs. One common response among victims is to turn to others for support. Krupnik feels that friends and family members can be especially helpful to victims by providing them

with positive social support. Only when hate crime victims lack informal sources of support, mental health practitioners can play an especially important role [29].

However, as has been shown above, recognizing that post-traumatic stress disorder can occur following a 'hate crime', and the devastating effect this can have on an individual's family relations, and interpersonal relations in a wider context, suggests that informal methods of support may be insufficient or inaccessible.

## Acknowledgements.

None.

## Conflict of interest

The author has no conflict of interest.

## References

- Craig-Henderson K, Sloan L R (2003) After the hate: Helping psychologists help victims of racist hate crime. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice* 10(4): 481-490.
- Shapland J, Hall M (2007) 'What do we know about the effects of crime on victims?' *International Review of Victimology* 14: 175-217.
- Iganski P (2008) *Hate Crime and the City*. Bristol UK: Policy Press.
- Iganski P, Lagou S (2009) 'How hate crimes hurt more: Evidence from the British Crime Survey', in P. Iganski (ed.) *The Consequences of Hate Crime*, Westport CT: Praeger Pg No: 1-13.
- Botcherby S Glen, F Iganski P, Jochelson K, Lagou S (2011) Equality groups' perceptions and experience of crime. *Analysis of the British Crime Survey 2007-08, 2008-09 and 2009-10. Briefing Paper 4*, Manchester: Equality and Human Rights Commission.
- Nocon A, Iganski P, Lagou S (2011) *Disabled people's experiences and concerns about crime*, Manchester: Equality and Human Rights Commission.
- Smith K, Lader D, Hoare J, Lau I (2012) *Hate crime, cyber security and the experience of crime among children: Findings from the 2010/11 British Crime Survey. Supplementary Volume 3 to Crime in England and Wales 2010/11*, London, UK: Home Office.
- Iganski P, Lagou S (2014) 'The personal injuries of "hate crime"', in Hall N, Corb A, Giannasi P, Grieve J G D (eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook on Hate Crime* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014) Pg No: 34-46.
- Iganski P (2001) Hate Crimes Hurt more. *American Behavioral Scientist* 45(4): 626-638.
- Lawrence F M (1999) *Punishing Hate. Bias Crimes under American Law*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lawrence F M (2006) *The hate crime project and its limitations: evaluating the societal gains and risk in bias crime law enforcement. Working Paper no. 216*, Washington, DC: The George Washington University Law School.
- Iganski P (2015) Hate crimes hurt some more than others: implications for the just sentencing of offenders. *J Interpers Violence* 30(10): 1696-1718.
- Jesus Jaime-Diaz (March 2021) *Considering Intergenerational, Historical & Chosen Traumas in Schooling: A Review*. *Open Access Journal of Addiction and Psychology* 4(3): 1-3.
- Connolly A (2011) Healing the wounds of our fathers: Intergenerational trauma, symbolization, narrative. *J Anal Psychol* 56(5): 607-626.
- Pickering J (2012) Bearing the unbearable: ancestral transmission through dreams and moving metaphors in the analytic field. *J Anal Psychol* 57 (5): 576-596.
- Perry B, Alvi S (2012) 'We are all vulnerable': The 'in terrorem' effects of hate crimes. *International Review of Victimology* 18: 57-71.
- Noelle M (2002) The ripple effect of the Matthew Shephard murder: impact on the assumptive worlds of members of the targeted group. *American Behavioral Scientist* 46: 27-50.
- Ehrlich H Larcom, B E K, Purvis R D (1994) 'The traumatic effects of ethnoviolence', reprinted in Perry, B. (ed.) *Hate and Bias Crime. A Reader*, New York, NY: Routledge Pg No: 16.
- American Psychological Association (1998) *Hate crimes today: An age-old foe in modern dress*. APA Online: 9.
- American Psychiatric Association (1994) *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (4th ed.) (DSM-IV)*, Washington DC: American Psychiatric Association. Psychiatry: 2.
- Ehlers A, Clark D M (2000) A cognitive model of posttraumatic stress disorder. *Behaviour Research and Therapy* 38: 319-345.
- Ehlers A, Steil R (1995) Maintenance of intrusive memories in posttraumatic stress disorder: A cognitive approach. *Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy* 23: 217-249.
- Evans C, Ehlers A, Mezey G, Clark D M (2007b) Intrusive memories and ruminations related to violent crime among young offenders: Phenomenological characteristics. *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 20: 183-196.
- Speckens A, Ehlers A, Hackmann A, Ruths F, Clark D M (2007) Intrusions and rumination in patients with posttraumatic stress disorder: A phenomenological study. *Memory* 15: 249-257.
- Ehlers A (2010) Understanding and Treating Unwanted Trauma Memories in Posttraumatic Stress Disorder *Z Psychol* 218(2): 141-145.
- Ehlers A, Clark D M (2000) A cognitive model of posttraumatic stress disorder. *Behaviour Research and Therapy* 38: 319-345.
- Tulving E (2002) Episodic memory. *Annual Review of Psychology* 53: 1-25.
- Krupnick J (1980) Brief psychotherapy with victims of violent crime. *Victimology* 5: 347-354.
- Craig-Henderson K, Sloan L R (2003) After the hate: Helping psychologists help victims of racist hate crime. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice* 10(4): 481-490.