

**Iganski, P. (2008) *Hate Crime' and the city Bristol: Policy Press***

The primary aim of the book is to understand the dynamics of 'hate crime', through a victim centred approach. Iganski focuses on social circumstances to explore why some offend and others don't, using the city of London as a case study. Literature and existing theories in the UK are limited and problematic and it's these analytical gaps that the author, successfully tries to fill. Iganski addresses the conceptual issues around the term 'hate crime' which leads to the interesting and appealing alternative of 'hate crime' as a policy domain which encapsulates previously disparate fields to create a synergy between different forms of oppression and discriminatory violence.

The first chapter sets the scene for placing the victim's experience at the centre of conceptualisations of 'hate crime,' the main premise being that 'hate crime' inflicts greater harm on victims than parallel crimes. Iganski uses the British crime survey to evidence his approach and this raises a number of interesting points, which are explored in the subsequent chapters. A crucial finding central to Iganski's understanding of 'hate crime' contradicts the widely held view, largely fuelled by media depictions, that 'hate crime' offenders are severely bigoted individuals, engaging in extreme acts of violence and that this violence is organised and pre-mediated. In actuality these extreme acts are in the minority and mask the thousands of everyday, low level 'hate crime' incidents, carried out by ordinary people.

Chapter two builds on existing literature and argues that understanding situational foreground will shed light on the background structural contexts that inform the actions of offenders. In particular, Iganski wants to understand why some individuals, in particular circumstances, will express their prejudices against others. A worthy question when arguably all individuals have prejudices. Utilising both quantitative and qualitative evidence, and the core characteristics of 'structuration theory,' Iganski discusses the relationships between offenders and their communities. Ideologies generally held within communities and embedded in racist notions of difference provide a context for the offender, with the offender serving their community and the community shaping and legitimising the offender. 'Hate crime' offenders do not engineer incidents but are ordinary people who offend in the context of ordinary lives, as a result of frictions in day to day life. Offenders are acting out values and attitudes that are integral to the structural fabric of society.

Iganski develops his analysis further in chapter three through a case study approach. The diversity of London's population and the problem of 'race-hate' crime in London are outlined. Drawing on census and British crime survey figures and data from the metropolitan police service the spatial dynamics of 'race-hate crime' are mapped. A number of different hypotheses are also explored from existing literature and Iganski demonstrates how the geography of space and place mediates the background

structural contexts for acts of ‘hate crime’ and the foreground situational context of incidents. ‘Race hate crime is not evenly distributed across the capital and greater rates of victimisation of minority ethnic communities are positively correlated with localities in which white people form the majority.

In the next chapter, Iganski enriches his contribution to the ‘hate crime’ arena by entering the debate on ‘rights’ generated by legislation relating to ‘hate crime’. The right to freedom of expression is the most contested area of criminal law and raises the conflict of the rights of offenders to freedom of expression against the rights of victims to protection against discrimination. Hate crime laws in the UK seek harsher penalties for offences based on the offender’s expressed values. This is opposed to a parallel crime where no hostility on the basis of race, religion, disability, or sexual orientation was expressed. Therefore do ‘hate crime’ laws contravene fundamental rights of freedom of expression – is this a criminalisation of the expression of thoughts, opinions and values? In contrast, counter arguments focus on the greater punishment reflecting the greater harm that is inflicted on victims by ‘hate crime’. In the light of Iganski’s analysis ‘hate crime’ does inflict greater harm and by digging deeper has ascertained that it’s the values expressed by the offender that cause so much hurt. Iganski states that ‘hate crime’ laws in the UK are an explicit attack on the background structure that provides context for acts of ‘hate crime’ and outlaws the expression of particular attitudes, sentiments and opinions because they violates the fundamental equality principle.

In the final chapter he returns to the central role of the victim, in particular the inclusion of victims as actors in the criminal justice policy process and evaluates The London-wide Race Hate Crime Forum. This is an innovative, multi agency forum attempting to include victims in the process. The inclusion of victims was to highlight shortcomings in the response of statutory agencies to ‘race-hate crime’. It is the only comprehensive provision against ‘race-hate crime’ in the UK, and when considering multi agency working is the accepted and conventional forum for dealing with crime, it provides an example of good ethical practise. It signifies the important role of the victim’s perspective but also draws attention to it being the perspective that can be the most challenging and sensitive element of multi agency working. Iganski’s evaluation highlights an alternative way of involving the victim, as opposed to involvement predominantly being in the progress of their own case. Both the merits and challenges are addressed and lessons to be learned are clear, with the potential to impact on not only multi agency work with ‘hate crime’ in the UK but much further afield.

Iganski’s concluding chapter ties his victim centred approach together nicely. He displays a good theoretical and methodological balance, and as he clearly states he has drawn his conclusions from empirical observations and primary data. Despite some methodological limitations, using a case study approach of one city for the analysis of ‘hate crime’, it’s the demonstration of a potentially wider understanding that can be utilised. It provides a different way of viewing ‘hate crime’ which poses a great deal of scope for further investigation not only in the UK but internationally. The suggested policy domain, prompting scholars to communicate across once disparate fields, again has significant impacts internationally. The potential power of shared learning for the increasing number of diversity strands that are susceptible to ‘hate crime’ is evident here. Iganski has made an enlightening contribution and the

impact of this book comes from the knowledge that the vast majority of ‘hate crime’ offenders are not abhorrently different, pathological, pre-mediated bigots capable of extreme violence, but everyday ordinary people that are presented with opportunities in the context of their everyday lives. A concerning, yet invaluable insight demanding further attention to better meet the needs of victims, offenders and communities in tackling ‘hate crime’.

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