

BOOK REVIEW:
HATE CRIME, IMPACT, CAUSES AND RESPONSES

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Neil Chakraborti and Jon Garland, *Hate crime, Impact, Causes and Responses* (Sage, Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore and Washington DC, 2009) £22.99, 9-781412-945684 (paperback) pp.185

Hate Crime, Impact, Causes and Responses by Neil Chakraborti and Jon Garland is a book which achieves exactly what the title suggests. Each chapter clearly indicates what is to come, beginning with definitions/conceptualisations of hate crime, and then followed by discussions of a range of hate crimes. In particular the focus is directed towards the sort of incidents/crimes identified by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), being currently around race, sexual orientation; faith and disability. However, the authors increase the remit by considering whether other types of crime, for example domestic violence, could/should also be considered under the widening umbrella of 'hate'. The authors then turn to the policing of hate crime and, interestingly, to a discussion of 'who' perpetrates this type of crime.

The material is therefore well thought out, well organised and is accessible to both new students as well as to those who have a knowledge of the subject. This book has wider appeal also for practitioners and policy makers working within the field of criminal justice. This is an important point to make considering the extent to which those who have the responsibility for policing and prosecuting hate crime are guided by tools that may be conceptually less well developed than academic considerations of the area.

In relaying definitions of hate crime the authors undertake clear explanation of the continuing refinement of our understanding of this topic. Hate crime is explained for its reliance on prejudice and discrimination, rather than being bound necessarily to 'hate'. Furthermore its status as a 'signal crime' is discussed, such that it sends out a message to minority groups as a form of power, control and subordination utilised by

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the hegemonic majority. Throughout the book case studies are used as powerful examples of the way in which such power is played out, and in this way real life examples draw the reader into the area of study.

A number of areas of particular interest emerge. The authors confirm that a good deal of progress has been made in offering victims of hate crime protection, particularly following the Macpherson report wherein 'perceptions' lead the reporting process. However, such perceptions must at times reach a higher benchmark of being 'threatening' in order to be 'crimed'. The reader's perception is that lower level abuse may then, while attaining 'incident' status, have more chance of falling by the wayside in the run up to a crime being committed. This is important inasmuch as low level incidents may over time develop into crime. The often serial nature of hate 'incidents/crimes' may not then neatly fit the way in which crime reporting/recording is currently organised, such that it is more likely to respond to incidents/crimes as discrete events.

The authors state that hate crime is a 'slippery concept', such that despite the progress following Macpherson, the criminal justice system may still fail to recognise occasions where a hate crime is a hate crime. Within policing, the authors point still to the high prioritisation of hate crime at senior officer level, whereas at street level officers may still view such incidents/crimes through the lens of police occupational culture. There may also be the conflation of certain types of hate crime, for example race and religion and sexuality and gender.

Some very interesting discussion is made of the perpetrators of hate crime, in terms of the message that is being sent out by the majority to minority groups. Where race and faith are concerned this is explained in terms of the scramble for scarce resources or the desire to hold onto 'white' culture. In other words economic and cultural resources are being 'protected'. On the other hand where sexuality and transgender groups are concerned, perpetrators act to conserve 'white male heterosexuality' by targeting gay men for their non compliance with hegemonic masculinity, and lesbian women for equally deviating from heterosexual feminine norms and presumably from sexual availability. Transgender groups are equally targeted for such deviance from gender norms.

Hate crime is analysed along its constituent parts, being perceived as 'stranger to stranger conflicts' in the main, and without doubt containing messages about who is

in control. However, in considering disablist hate crime, the authors acknowledge that often perpetrators and victims are known to one another. While this deviates from the more typical model of hate crime, a further twist is highlighted. Particular forms of hate crime, those committed against people with disabilities for example, tend to attract more vicious and serious offending. And indeed where disablist crime is concerned, the latter two points may converge, that is the victim may be known to the offender, and the offence may be severe.

The authors consider a wider remit to hate crime, considering incidents/crimes involving domestic violence; older people; attacks on youth and sectarianism. But when the typical model of hate crime is applied such groups cannot be included. It is conceded that such offences may be driven by the sorts of feelings which drive the hate crimes currently identified by ACPO. It is also conceded that there may be a message of control, for example from one spouse to another within domestic violence, or that victims and perpetrators may be known or unknown to one another. However the main principle of hate crime is that this takes place between a majority and a minority, and that the message that is being passed via such crime is one that is intended for the wider membership of the minority, rather than it being confined to the individual victim him or herself. The authors conclude therefore that such crimes lie at the borders of the 'hate' debate.

The penultimate chapter discusses hate crime extremists and 'organised hatred'. Again the point is made that for the most part hate crime is not carried out by the stereotypical shaven headed neo Nazi, nor is it 'organised' in the formal sense of the word. Thus the influence of such groups as the British National Party or the break away neo Nazi strand, 'Combat 18', cannot be discounted. Worryingly then, hate crime is undertaken by 'ordinary people', and potentially more worryingly it is not confined to cases where perpetrators and victims are unknown to each other.

This book therefore highlights many unexpected twists and turns on the issue of hate crime, providing a nuanced and critical exploration of the topic.