



PREJUDICE AND HATE ON UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES

REPAIRING HARMS THROUGH STUDENT-LED
RESTORATIVE DIALOGUE

PRELIMINARY REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

Recorded hate crimes have almost doubled over the past five years, rising particularly sharply in the aftermath of the EU referendum to a record 80,393 incidents in the year ending 2017 (O’Neill 2017). The university sector has by no means been immune to this socially corrosive phenomenon. Between 2011-2012 the National Union of Students (NUS) published four reports on hate incidents based on a survey of over 9,000 students in higher or further education. Across the four reports they found that 16% of all respondents had experienced at least one form of hate incident (defined below) during their time at their current place of study (NUS 2012: 3). These figures increase significantly when broken down into specific groups. For instance, survey results showed that 31% of lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) students had experienced at least one hate incident related to their sexual orientation some time during their studies (NUS 2011); while an even higher percentage of trans students had experienced such abuse, with 55% reporting experiences of threatening, abusive or insulting words, threatening behaviour or threats of violence (NUS 2011).

More recently there have been a myriad of cases, highlighted by the press, that have epitomised what appears to be a growing social trend across the education sector. Whether it be racist chanting in the college halls at Nottingham Trent University (Busby 2018a), slave auctions at Loughborough University (Weale 2017), racist bigotry over social media platforms at Exeter University (Busby 2018b), or rotten bananas thrown at Black students at Sheffield Hallam University (Busby 2018c), it is clear that prejudice-motivated incidents remain a serious problem within higher education institutions.

This preliminary report is part of a project funded by the HEFCE Student Safeguarding Catalyst Fund, which provided funding grants to establish projects to tackle hate crimes in universities. As part of this grant, the Universities of Sussex and Brighton are in the process of establishing a new restorative programme (called Restore Respect) that aims to provide support to students who have experienced prejudice and hate on campus. The programme is student-led, meaning that the programme itself is informed by the needs and experiences of students, and will involve students as central players in the resolution of their case.

This report draws on data collated from focus groups and interviews. It highlights examples of students’ experiences of prejudice and hate across the two universities, and outlines the barriers, as perceived by participants, to reporting incidents to each university. It concludes by exploring what students want from a restorative programme that aims to use dialogical methods to address the invidious causes and impacts of identity-based prejudice at university, and based on these we outline the next steps for Restore Respect.

Methodology

Four focus groups and 14 interviews were conducted with 31 students from the University of Sussex and 10 students from the University of Brighton between May and June 2018. Participants were recruited via communications posted on university websites and Facebook groups as well as emails distributed among a number of staff and student networks. In addition, a number of participants were recruited with the assistance of well-connected members of the community such as student society presidents, student union officers, or university staff members. Findings in this report are also informed by discussions conducted with numerous academic and professional members of staff at both universities.

The composition of participants included, but was not limited to, self-identified women and non-binary students, Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students, disabled students, students who identified as LGBTQIA+, and students from minority religious backgrounds. A number of these characteristics were intersecting, and we therefore heard from a number of students who felt marginalised as a result of their identification with more than one identity category.

Focus groups and interviews were digitally recorded with the consent of participants and later transcribed. The data was then coded. Thematic analysis was used to draw out common themes and subthemes from the data, enabling us to highlight specific issues that are currently affecting students at both universities.

This project was awarded ethics approval from the Social Sciences & Arts Cross-Schools Research Ethics Committee (SSARTS C-REC).¹ All students participating in this research were provided with information on accessing support services that deal specifically with hate incidents and hate crimes.

DEFINING HATE CRIME, HATE INCIDENTS AND HATE SPEECH

Previous research has shown that many people are unclear about what the terms “hate crime”, “hate incidents” or “hate speech” encompass (Chakraborti et al. 2014). As we will see below, the university sector is likely to be no different in this regard. Though many participants in this study were aware of what a “hate crime” is, fewer were clear on what “hate incidents” and “hate speech” involve. As part of the focus groups and interviews we asked students to discuss what their understandings of these terms were. Before pursuing discussion further, we then outlined a definition of each of these three concepts (in accordance with the definitions provided by the College of Policing), thereby allowing participants to consistently comprehend and discuss their experiences of these phenomena.

1. **Hate crimes** were defined as:

“Any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice.”

2. **Hate incidents** were defined as:

“Any non-crime perceived by the victim or any other person, as being motivated by prejudice or hate.”

3. **Hate speech** was defined as:

“Involv[ing] spoken or written words that are either intended to, or recklessly, send a hate-based message. Hate speech is commonly spread via social media platforms.”

Prejudice and hate are frequently (but not exclusively) directed against individuals based on the following identity characteristics:

- Race and ethnicity
- Religious beliefs
- Sexual orientation (e.g. being lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer)
- Gender (e.g. hostilities against women)
- Gender identity and expression (e.g. prejudice towards people for being trans, non-binary, queer)

¹ Application no. ER/LK320/1.

- Disability (both physical and mental)
- Subcultural identities (e.g. Goths, Emos)
- Social class

STUDENT EXPERIENCES OF IDENTITY-BASED PREJUDICE AND HATE

Once students became aware of the relevance of the terms hate crime, hate speech, and hate incidents to their experiences, they were forthcoming in their responses and keen to share their views during the interviews and focus groups conducted for this project. In many cases, sessions appeared to present participants with a rare opportunity to discuss their feelings on, and experiences of, prejudice and hate. Among one group of students, for example, participants from BAME backgrounds were surprised to hit upon similar aspects of their university experiences across different disciplines and year groups.

During discussions, participants frequently responded more readily to the terms “prejudice” and “discrimination” than to “hate”, which may indicate the need for the marketing of schemes or services that address hate incidents to more clearly define and illustrate these concepts. As one student commented:

The definition of hate crime gets misconstrued, and people think that [only] if it's a violent act then it's a hate crime, or someone literally writing the n-word or something else on your door. Like, the extremes rather than the daily micro-aggressions. And I feel like that will be the situation.²

A greater number of University of Sussex students volunteered their participation in interviews and focus groups than University of Brighton students, and a higher number reported instances of hate at university. While Brighton University students did report themselves as having experienced or witnessed hate incidents, these had mostly taken place outside of the university context. In such cases, discussions primarily focused on issues of accessibility, culture, representation, or support service delivery at university in connection with the harms that they or others had suffered from hate incidents. Although the sample cannot be considered representative, the differential volume of responses to focus group call-outs and the contrast seen in the nature of the topics discussed between the two universities was significant and could therefore be reflective of broader trends. These differences may be attributable to a number of factors, with one possible explanation being that the lack of contiguity between the various Brighton University sites results in less time being spent on “campus” and in students having less contact with their peers within a single physical community setting – thereby limiting opportunities for incidents to occur. In contrast, the University of Sussex campus at Falmer comprises schools, libraries, student residences, student union buildings, sports facilities, shops, and services – i.e. a number of the key elements that organise student life – in one location.

A number of students stated that their experiences left them feeling unsafe at university and in the city of Brighton and Hove. One participant, an international student living on campus, described certain hate incidents as leaving her feeling “panicked” and “traumatised”, while another was made to feel like she was “not a person”. Other participants expressed a more general sense of shock, anxiety, depression, exclusion, isolation, alienation, or emotional exhaustion, consistent with the types of heightened impacts that hate crime victims are more likely to suffer than victims of non-hate motivated crimes (Walters 2014: Ch 3; Iganski 2008; Paterson et al. 2018).

² Focus group/Muslim BAME participant.

The specific types of incidents that participants described themselves as having experienced or witnessed at university included (but were not limited to):

- Homophobic verbal attacks
- Racist verbal attacks
- Offensive graffiti
- Misogynistic chants
- Antisemitism within and between student groups
- Transphobic abuse
- Transphobia within student groups
- Islamophobic vandalism of religious spaces
- Perceived exclusion or hostility on the grounds of gender, disability, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, or religion
- Offensive comments relating to religious, racial, or gender identity
- A general lack of appreciation of identity difference and the experiences of minority groups

Four examples of these incidents as experienced by participants are summarised below.

Example cases³

Case study 1: Racist hate speech

P, a Black female international student, recounted several hate incidents and instances of prejudice that she experienced throughout her time at university. Among these, P spoke about an incident in which two students on campus were overheard making offensive comments in relation to her country of origin. P joined the discussion, and was shocked at the racist and threatening nature of their remarks:

So this guy started basically saying that Black people in [my country of origin] are Nazis, Black people in [my country of origin] need to be killed [...] And he said that he had family there and they're taking up arms and they're ready to kill Black [people], and started saying all these horrible things, and I couldn't understand.

P stated that during that week reports had emerged of attacks on Black citizens in her country, and these comments made her even more fearful both for her own safety and the safety of her family in the wake of these reports.

I kept explaining to this guy, like, "Please don't say these things. I'm really feeling emotional." But he's just attacking me. He's threatening things, like how he's going to get rid of all Black [people], and we don't actually come from [my country] - all these horrible things.

Reflecting on the incident, P stated:

Later someone said I should have just walked away, or something like that. And I don't agree. I just felt like, why? Why is this person saying all these things about my people? [...] Like, he's actually attacking me. And I asked him very nicely to stop. And it wasn't just what he said, but it's the way that he said it. He was shouting at me like I was a dog.

³ The initials of participants have been changed.

P reported the incident to a member of the academic staff at her university who told her to prepare a written statement and arranged for her to receive support from professional support services. However, at their second meeting P was told that the staff member was too busy to report the incident until the following week, and appeared reluctant to provide assistance. P stated that she also approached other members of faculty who expressed sympathy, but did not suggest further action. As the individuals responsible were later found not to be students attending the university in question, P was left with the option of pressing charges. However, P stated that she did not end up pursuing this course of action because her experience was compounded shortly after by other forms of racism, which left her feeling further traumatised. After speaking with a number of academic staff members, P stated that she eventually spoke with a university faculty member who made her feel listened to and who directed her to additional sources of support within the university.

Nonetheless, P remained emotionally affected both by the incidents she faced and the difficulty she encountered in reporting the incident to the university. She stated:

It took so long for me to get help. Maybe next time I would like an easy place [...] just an, "Oh this happened, where do I go?"; I go to these people; they explain. [...] One lecturer encouraged me to recount this whole experience, which I was kind of happy to do, hoping that maybe he'll see that I mean it when I say I'm experiencing racial profiling and that stuff. And I think he was trying to gain evidence and then to try and prove that all these things I experienced [...] have to do with bad individuals. And it wasn't about me anymore. [...] It wasn't about my wellbeing. [...] So it's not about what I experienced and how they can make things better. [...] I think a lot of my frustration has been that a lot of people talk and pretend. Like an, "Oh, that's so bad. Next time we'll do better", sort of approach. That's what I've gotten the whole time. As if a next time is going to help.

Case study 2: Homophobic hate speech

S, a British bisexual female university student, was participating in a university sports event when a male student from the same university started yelling "angry d*ke" at her. S retaliated by punching the student. Following the incident, one of S's friends, a male student, pressured her to apologise, which added to her feelings of victimisation. As S stated in response to this pressure, "Yeah, I shouldn't have punched him, I shouldn't have gotten violent. But do you understand why I got violent? Have some respect for my feelings. [...] You're just defending your friend and you're not thinking about the impact that his words have had on me."

Despite being aware of certain avenues of reporting at her university, S chose not to report the incident. This was partly due to the fact that she had responded by hitting the student responsible, which S believed complicated the matter by putting them both at fault. However, S explained that the reason she chose to respond in the way that she did (by "taking the situation into [her] own hands") was because she did not believe that she would be properly listened to or that anything would result from her reporting the incident. Further, S explained,

It also doesn't feel big enough. I feel like a lot of the things that happen are hate speech and kind of a lot of micro-aggressions and minor incidents, and so for one person it builds up,

*for a university disciplinary it's [just] one thing. And they're like, "Yeah, he called you a d*ke, but, like, get over it." [...] It's also that the disciplinary process [...] is so kind of big and high up – It feels like something has to be massive to report it to them, because it's a lot to go through. It's a long process. So, to go through all of that just for some hate speech feels like a lot.*

Case study 3: Transphobia

J, an autistic British trans woman, had experienced varied and overlapping forms of hate and prejudice at university. Having come out as a trans woman partway through her degree, J felt particularly shocked at the kinds of comments that she had heard being made within what she considered to be progressive student groups:

So, on the one side you've got the fact that I'm autistic and I used to identify as gay before I came out as trans. And there has been a lot of hate crime [...] which I didn't want to report because I thought ... it's just pointless, and it's just over nothing and, I don't know, kind of this massive procedure. And, there was the fact that I pass off as a cis white man, although I'm not. And because of that I've been in places where certain demographics of people have said stuff about these various groups. And in terms of like, obviously, the fact I've got a privilege of "passing" [in] these groups, and the fact that I'm not personally being attacked ... but on the inside it makes me feel quite upset. And actually some of this was said in spaces where you wouldn't imagine. So: on the left. In groups on the left, actually, stuff has been said which is quite shocking. I've left meetings and left gatherings being quite upset. And [there was] the fact that I felt that I couldn't say anything because I wouldn't be listened to and I'd be shut down.

Case study 4: Hate-based (antisemitic) graffiti

Two participants from the University of Sussex noted the appearance of antisemitic graffiti either on campus or on public transport to and from Brighton and Sussex campuses during their time at university:

I caught the train and I noticed another "I heart" swastika, and I thought, "What is going on? This is so weird." [...] And I don't think it's an increase in Nazis or White superiority. I think it is just this ... I don't know. A joke? They don't really see the seriousness. They think, "Oh we're going to do this, this will be funny. It's offensive." But they don't really understand the gravity of what it means. [...] But that just angered me, I think, when I saw it. [...] Because I was like: a) why would you do this? And, b) it is so offensive. [...]

How does that make you feel about the community that you live in?

Very disappointed. Again, I think it's ignorance. They don't acknowledge what they're doing as hateful. [...] But it made me angry. I just thought, "This is ridiculous." And then when I saw it on the train I was like, "This is beyond just my house [where I initially saw it]; this is obviously something that's happening in society".

In a separate interview, another participant commented:

I think a lot of the time people will see it and be like, "That's disgusting," and move on. But then if my housemate who's of German Jewish heritage saw it, she'd have a panic attack. So, you don't think that there's any kind of way to stop it, but there is. And, if you do stop it, that will be preventing harms that you don't realise occur. Because, it's such a widely recognised symbol - you see it a lot. So you think "Yeah, that's not going to harm anyone." Like, "That's not going to do anything." But, like, it will.

Overall, participant testimonies indicated that minority group students feel increasingly marginalised by their experiences of hate and prejudice at university. Concurrently, there was a perception amongst students who had experienced hate that students from majority identity groups tend to be unaware of the forms of marginalisation experienced by their peers, or how to discuss them and larger issues around identity difference. Research suggests that, among other factors, this situation is aggravated by the limited amount of intercultural interactions that tend to take place at universities in Britain and around the world, particularly between local and international students (Brown 2009; Colvin, Volet & Fozdar 2014). This not only increases the likelihood of prejudice and hate occurring between racial and religious groups, in particular, but also of unreported incidents occurring *within* these groups. One focus group participant, an international student, described the trauma and isolation a friend of hers, who was a member of another international student community, felt first when questioning her own gender identity, and then after experiencing transphobic attacks. Noting the tendency of certain targeted groups to isolate themselves in response to hostility and hate incidents, the participant expressed her concern that this could make it even less likely that victims would seek help:

I think their first response is just to get more and more hermetic, and the less they talk to people the better [...] But I'm concerned about that part of the community. [...] Some stuff can happen among them, and seeing as though they're so hermetic and ... they keep things inside them.⁴

Another participant – one who is active among student groups – voiced similar concerns, claiming that minority student groups often feel that insulating themselves against harm is the best recourse, and that therefore hate incidents take place much more frequently at universities than is generally realised:

But it stays within that community. They're looking after their own and keeping themselves safe, and they don't feel like there's like a safe-space for them to go to above that. [...] So they keep it amongst themselves and kind of heal each other and talk to each other rather than taking it any further. So I don't think we even have any kind of idea of the prevalence of that on campus, because no one reports it.⁵

Research shows that a turn inward, characterised by strategies of avoidance (such as self-imposed restrictions on movement and social interaction), is commonly exhibited by hate crime victims who fear repeat victimisation (Walters 2014: Ch 3). Such responses can be explained by the highly damaging impacts that hate crime, hate incidents, and hate speech can have. As Walters observes, “[t]he enhanced emotional traumas caused by hate crime are intrinsically connected to the fact that

⁴ Focus group/BAME participant.

⁵ Interview/LGBTQIA+ participant.

targeted victimization goes to the very core of the victim's 'self', i.e. incidents tear at the very essence of who a victim is" (Walters 2014: xxiii). As such, when incidents take place on campus or between students, the university, both as a physical space and as an institution, can become a site of trauma. For any student who has been targeted, but particularly for students living in university accommodation (with a high proportion of international students among them) - for whom the university represents not just a place of study, socialising, and recreation, but also of residence - there may be little emotional respite from these traumas.

KEY BARRIERS TO REPORTING

NUS research has previously shown that hate incidents go widely unreported. For instance, their survey on anti-LGBT hate incidents found that just 8–13% of incidents involving prejudice against the victim's sexual orientation were reported to the victim's institution (NUS 2011: 41). Those individuals who did report most frequently chose to do so to academic staff (42%) or student officers (29%), while only 12% reported to non-teaching staff (ibid: 4).

Our qualitative research replicates these earlier findings by the NUS. Of the types of incidents of hate that research participants described themselves or others as having experienced, the majority were not reported to the university. A small number of incidents were reported to academic staff, a smaller number to student support services, and one to campus security. These reporting patterns are also reflected in the results of a 2010 study of student mental health and wellbeing at the University of Brighton, which found that students will prefer to seek support from those with whom they have already formed relationships. These included friends (29%); family members (21%); academic staff (16%); partners (5%); self-management (5%); peers (4%) and student services (4%) (Morris 2011: 16). For the students who claimed that they received an adequate response, this often came about after several staff or students were approached or several routes were attempted.

NUS research found that the main reasons given by LGBT victims of hate for not reporting incidents to their institution included shame and embarrassment, fear of reprisals and retribution, and concern over having to disclose personal details (NUS 2011: 4). Reasons given by this project's participants from the Universities of Brighton and Sussex for not reporting incidents to their university fell into a number of key themes, characterised by the following responses:

"I don't know where I should go"

A number of participants (at both universities) were unsure about how or where they should report an incident, or what the various forms of support available to them were.

"It's not serious enough"

Among the main reporting barriers identified by students was the common belief that their issues did not seem serious enough to be of concern to the university or to be worth taking through potentially long, official procedures. As one student explained, *"it seems like you either can do nothing or you can go down kind of very formal routes, and there needs to be something in the middle."*⁶

⁶ Focus group/LGBTQIA+, BAME participant.

Indeed, students at Brighton and Sussex Universities perceived reporting processes in both the university and the Student Union to be heavily administrative, as typified by one interviewee's comments:

*If you want to make a complaint or raise an issue you've got to go through a complicated set of guidelines and meet a complicated set of criteria before you say anything. [...] Nowadays there are all these forms and I think it makes it too complicated.*⁷

Regardless of the extent to which these concerns bore any relation to reporting processes in practice, the perception that they did proved pervasive enough to dissuade a significant number of participants from approaching either their university or student union for help.

“It won't be taken seriously”

Related to the above concern was the perception that the impact of hate incidents would not be fully appreciated by university staff members. This especially pertained to “low-level” harassment, abuse or behaviour, all of which may appear minor when viewed in isolation, but often form part of an individual's ongoing experience of victimisation. Indeed, hate-based abuse is often recurrent and accumulative, producing far-reaching harms for victims (Walters 2014: 18-20). One participant illustrated this issue in the following way:

*You're at a cafe and someone won't give you something, or gives you a certain attitude ... If you said this to someone they'd be like, “Ok, so someone had an attitude.” But if it happens to you everywhere you go, every single time, for no specific reason, things like that are going to affect you. They're going to make you not even want to go out sometimes. And when you're at uni you should be able to enjoy your life.*⁸

Given the perceived difficulty of trying to make their feelings understood, students were also fearful that the experience of reporting an incident could re-traumatise. As one student remarked:

*I think maybe I'd know that reporting [an incident] is the right thing to do, but I would never suggest it to anyone, because it could make things worse, like if you don't get the reaction you were expecting or people don't take you seriously, I think it would make it even worse.*⁹

Further, a few students from BAME backgrounds who had previously sought counselling from the university also pointed to a lack of specialist counselling services available to them, particularly in contrast to those available to other groups, and the perception that the counselling staff were not equipped to deal with race-related experiences of hate and discrimination:

So I went to the [university] counselling service and I spoke about racial stuff, and she was just looking at me like, “You should go to town and speak to the Black person in town.” And I was like, “Okay ...” And, she was like, “Oh, it's going to be 27 pounds an hour”, and I was like, “But I don't have 27 pounds an hour to spend to tell you what my problem is!”¹⁰

A lack of diversity among faculty and staff at both universities also lowered student confidence in reporting incidents. In turn, this was viewed as reducing the ability of each university to meaningfully address problems relating to privilege and exclusion.

⁷ Interview/Disabled participant.

⁸ Interview/LGBTQIA+, BAME participant.

⁹ Focus group/BAME participant.

¹⁰ Focus group/BAME participant.

In addition, a very common perception at the University of Sussex, in particular, was that while the university has been reactive to issues associated with gender or sexuality, they were less responsive to issues associated with race or religion. One participant explained:

I think we're a very, very White university. If someone came up to me and said something homophobic, within seconds it'd be dealt with, but I feel like, we're like, "Right, we're all White, and there's a few people from different countries, and we're all good and we all get together." And unless you're not White, and you experience it, that's the only people that get to know.¹¹

Another student remarked:

Sussex is a very liberal environment, but I've noticed in the Union and in the University there's kind of a lot more support for sexual orientation and gender identity than there is for anything else, and a lot more representation. [...] I don't know how to address that, but I think there are student groups that feel more listened to and student groups that feel less listened to and less supported.¹²

The perceived disparity between the levels of support offered to different identity groups formed a clear and compelling barrier to reporting for some students. For instance, two focus group participants stated that while they would report a hate incident that they perceived to be motivated by their gender or sexual orientation, they would not if it were related to their race or religion:

Student A: I know I'd report something to do with sex or sexuality because I've had someone before make a comment about rape, and then I thought, "Maybe I should report it." But it isn't the same with racism.¹³

Student B: But I think it's something that I would tell friends. You can state it so people can be aware but, honestly, like, in terms of someone being hateful to me it will be one of two things really: it will be either my race or my religion. So I don't think either of those would be taken very seriously here. I don't really know the Student Life Centre in general but I just feel like in terms of the entire education system I think it would be taken a lot more seriously if it was someone being really sexist to me. Or about my sexuality. I think those two would be taken seriously. [...] So you can be empathetic, but I'm not going to go and report something to someone who is trying to understand me but doesn't get it.¹⁴

"I don't know what the process is like or what will happen to my information"

A perceived lack of transparency surrounding reporting routes and procedures was an additional concern for students, as exemplified by this comment made by a focus group participant:

Certain people are also scared of going there. Because, my friend: he hasn't explicitly told me what he's going through, but he messaged me and was like, "Oh, you're an RA¹⁵; what does the Student Life Centre do, what's the process?" And he was kind of wary of going to them

¹¹ Focus group/Female participant.

¹² Interview/LGBTQIA+ participant

¹³ Focus group/Muslim BAME participant.

¹⁴ Focus group/Muslim BAME participant.

¹⁵ Residential Advisor.

*because he didn't know what they were going to say to him, what they were going to make him do, what forms he was going to have to fill out. And if I wasn't his friend I don't think he would've contacted his RA.*¹⁶

International students – particularly those with a background that caused them to be suspicious of authority and official institutions – were notable in expressing a lack of trust in institutional responses, and felt that any information they provided might be used for monitoring and surveillance purposes rather than to support their welfare.

RESPONDING RESTORATIVELY TO HATE AND PREJUDICE: WHAT IS A “RESTORATIVE” PROGRAMME?

A key aim in exploring students' experiences of prejudice and hate and the barriers to reporting incidents was to ensure that any new programme would help to properly address these experiences and increase student confidence in the reporting process. Our first step in this regard has been to draw upon the theory and practice of restorative justice and Walters' work on the use of restorative practices for hate crimes (Walters 2014). Restorative justice (RJ) is “primarily concerned with the *engagement* of those affected by wrongdoing in a dialogic process which aims to achieve *reparation*—be it emotional, material, or to relationships.” (Walters 2014: 32). The theory of RJ is guided by several key principles including “encounter”, “repair” and “transformation” (Johnstone & Van Ness 2007). There are now a wide number of practices that draw upon these principles and that are used to address conflict beyond criminal wrongdoing. Collectively, these practices are referred to as “restorative practices”. The aim of restorative practices is to engage individuals affected by an incident in discussions about what has happened, why it happened, the harms that have resulted, and what should be done to repair these harms. Restorative practices should aim to empower people affected by an incident through inclusive forms of discussion that are guided by the principles of equality, respect and non-domination. The person responsible for causing harm, having listened to the harms that they have caused, is asked to make amends. Emphasis is often placed not just on emotional or material reparation but on transforming relationships. Common forms of reparation include oral or written apologies, repairing or replacing damaged property, and community or charity-based work. Stigmatising perpetrators as “haters” and punitive sanctions are discouraged as these limit opportunities for healing and behavioural and relational transformations.

Research suggests that RJ is more likely to alleviate the emotional traumas caused by crime and anti-social behaviour than punitive processes (Strang 2002). Several studies have also reported that perpetrators are less likely to reoffend having participated in RJ (Shapland et al. 2008). The *potential* of restorative justice for hate incidents, then, is that it may help to repair the harms of prejudice, while simultaneously reducing the likelihood of incidents (re)occurring. Walters' (2014) qualitative study on the use of restorative justice for hate crime in England found that restorative processes frequently improved participants' emotional well-being. For example, the majority of victims interviewed in that study stated that their feelings of anger, anxiety, and fear reduced significantly after the restorative process. Victims explained that this was because they had played an active role in the resolution of their case, during which they felt facilitators and other participants had *listened* to them. This was especially important to participants who felt that the agencies they had previously reported to had been apathetic towards them. It was also of utmost importance to victims that the

¹⁶ Focus group/BAME participant.

perpetrator signed an agreement promising to desist from further hate incidents. In terms of desistance, 11 out of 19 separate cases of ongoing hate crime incidents researched at one practice in London ceased directly after the restorative process had taken place. In a further six cases incidents stopped after the facilitator included other local organisation representatives within meetings, including from schools, social services, and community police teams.

WHAT STUDENTS WOULD LIKE FROM A RESTORATIVE PROGRAMME

The aim of restorative practices were fully outlined during focus groups and interviews. The researcher then asked students to discuss their perceptions of such an approach, including their fears and expectations. Participants generally appeared enthusiastic about the prospect of a restorative programme being established at their university and believed that it would encourage higher rates of reporting. Among the aspects highlighted by participants, the emphasis on informality within restorative processes, as well as on empowering those affected by hate, held considerable appeal. In this vein, a restorative programme represented the opportunity for students to play an active role in shaping the outcomes of university-directed interventions, therefore allowing them to claim greater ownership over their experiences.

Another notable point of interest for participants was what many viewed to be the potential for restorative approaches to result in more enduring outcomes with wider impacts than standard disciplinary approaches. More specifically, dialogic processes offered participants the possibility of furthering understanding, and therefore of preventing future hate incidents from happening to themselves and other students. The two following separate participant responses illustrate this assessment:

I think when you speak to students, if you gave them the choice between the perpetrator is disciplined or the perpetrator is taught that whatever it is is wrong and the perpetrator doesn't do it again, they'd choose the perpetrator doesn't do it again. Like, discipline is important but only to a point. I think especially students - and students at Sussex who are very politically active - understand that sanctions don't often do much, and so that kind of response aspect is quite important.¹⁷

I think it would work really well. I think talking is ... If you can get both parties, hopefully, in the same room without killing each other, I think talking, getting both people in the same room, is the best thing. Because I think within universities and higher education most of it is just down to a complete and total lack of understanding. I know I've spoken to thousands of students over the years about mental health and being in a wheelchair and being disabled and having OCD, and the ones that got it understand it, which is a minority, and the ones that haven't got it you have to explain to them, because they just don't understand it. So they're sailing around on a little boat of life without too many problems.¹⁸

Further, as noted above, participants highlighted the need for a programme that deals with the types of issues and incidents that students may not view as warranting a potentially lengthy and "official" disciplinary process. Indeed, this was seen as vital by certain participants, who anticipated the risk of proliferation and escalation with incidents that go unaddressed. Discussing the appearance of graffiti featuring swastikas on public transport to and from university campuses in

¹⁷ Interview/LGBTQIA+ participant.

¹⁸ Interview/Disabled participant.

Brighton and Hove (see case study 4, above), two focus group participants made the following comments:

Student A: *You could say it's [just] symbolic, but then it can easily transfer into physical acts of hate, and that's how it grows. It's not like suddenly someone wakes up and they're going to commit hate crime. It's these little warning signs that we need to be aware of.*¹⁹

[...]

Student B: *I think as [Student A] says, it's something that's growing. I didn't notice the swastikas, but the people that do them, they do notice that they haven't been told anything. Or they think that no one is noticing it, so they're just like "What else can we [do]?" Because I think that even though they might not be realising the level of the symbolism of what they're doing, I'm sure they're doing it to get people's attention. And when they don't receive this attention, whether it's good or bad, they increase the level of their actions. And that's where cursing, insulting people, or going to physical engagement grows and grows.*²⁰

In a similar way, university support services were perceived, on the whole, as essential but unsatisfactory avenues for meeting the needs of harmed students:

*[The problem is that] there's nothing to be done with the person that did that to you. That person is going to be out there doing the same. And even though you're getting, I don't know, let's call it treatment - because they're not allowed to give you medication - the thing might be happening again and again, because people live on campus. So it's not like you can just escape.*²¹

No clear consensus emerged among participants about where in each university they believed a restorative programme should be housed, or whether they preferred facilitators to be drawn from fellow students or professional staff. For example, certain participants expressed a preference for the Student's Union on the basis that they believed it would be more relational than a university's more institutional response. On the other hand, a number of participants argued that staff/faculty members would possess greater authority, and would therefore be more effective in ensuring students' active engagement in the restorative process. Indeed, opinions on both these points varied, which therefore suggests the need to present students with the option to state any preferences they may have with regard to a facilitator's identity grouping or professional status at the university.

Aside from these points, the key elements that students hoped to see in a restorative programme addressing hate crime, hate incidents, and hate speech at university are summarised below.

Ease of access

Many students at Brighton and Sussex were aware of such services as counselling available on campus and the important role they served. However, research participants from both cohorts commonly described these services as being "under-resourced" or "understaffed", and this was

¹⁹ Focus group/Female participant.

²⁰ Focus group/BAME participant.

²¹ Focus group/BAME participant.

claimed to result in long waiting periods before appointments. A danger in such cases is that among the students that have made the (physical and/or psychological) journey to seek support from these services, a number will “lose steam” if they are referred between too many people without much action or follow-up, or if their issue is not dealt with quickly. Thus, ease of access was identified by participants as a vital feature of any programme addressing hate. One student remarked:

I think it needs to be as open and as easy to access as possible so that people really can just go okay, here's a problem, this is what I'm doing – this is where I'm going. Because the longer that people dwell on the issue, the more time they have to kind of convince themselves that, “Oh maybe it's not that much of a problem. Maybe I haven't got to worry about it.”²²

Two participants suggested the use of an online tool through which students could speak with either a first responder or a facilitator over webchat. This facility would allow students who are hesitant or fearful about seeking out the appropriate responder to make initial contact in a less intimidating way.

Overall, the setting up of numerous and varied reporting pathways and ensuring consistent signposting represent important methods of capturing students who may not easily be able to access the support they need:

[It needs to be] a very inclusive space that people can fall into, essentially, because that's what you want. Because the people seeking help, they're probably ok. It's the people that don't quite know what they're doing that need to somehow fall into it, through being turned down by [student services] or rocking up at the wrong place, that they actually then tumble into somewhere.²³

Concerted education campaigning and awareness raising

A number of participants asserted that, ideally, part of the functioning of a successful restorative programme would be the carrying out of a concerted education campaign that aimed to build a movement around using restorative approaches to address the harms caused by hate crime, hate incidents, and hate speech. In agreement with the objectives identified by the project team, a key goal would be to capture as many students as possible in campaign targeting, particularly during induction week and the start of the academic year. A few students separately suggested that rather than holding information seminars or workshops, students could either be shown a brief video or be spoken to by a representative of the programme during their lectures. This would raise awareness about identity-based prejudice and the kind of help available to students among a captive audience that might not otherwise come across such information. Moreover, a number of participants believed that such a campaign, in itself, would impact positively on minority group students by acknowledging their often invisibilised struggles with hate and prejudice at university.

Greater transparency and procedural simplicity

Students sought assurances that they would be clearly made aware of what would happen to their information, and what options were available to them to pursue. However, in addition to this, a number of participants believed that transparency in regard to the project's progress would also encourage involvement and convince students of the seriousness of the effort. The chance to be

²² Focus group/BAME participant.

²³ Interview/Female participant.

afforded a certain amount of informality, including options surrounding safe/preferred places to meet facilitators and to reduce the layers of procedure/bureaucracy that often serve to obscure processes (despite their intended purposes), was also viewed positively, and believed likely to improve reporting rates.

Better linkages between different parts of the university

There was also a great deal of uncertainty about how services fit together at the University of Sussex, which created the sense that there is little in the way of an institutional effort, with different parts of the university pulling in the same direction.

*There are some really amazing people in the union, there are amazing people in all different places, but there's no ... there doesn't seem to be a working network. And obviously hate speech is part of that. Like, if there's a climate that that can thrive in it's one where there is bad communication.*²⁴

In a recent study of Sussex University's institutional culture, staff members identified a "silo" mentality at the university arising from a fragmented structure with rigid operational divisions (Phipps et. al. 2018: 30). It is interesting to note the extent to which this was also perceived among students with little to no knowledge of the university's internal workings on the other side of service provision. Students with experience of accessing help from academic staff members or a particular division of professional services were often unaware of the existence of other sources of support, let alone the full range of support services available. Meanwhile, students in a position to have better understanding of university structures and services, such as Residential Advisors (RAs), were nonetheless often confused about the precise differences between various services and the nature of their links. One focus group participant attributed this general confusion to what she characterised as the lack of collaboration and referral links between support service units, stating, "*The Student Union don't promote Student Life, and Student Life don't promote Residential – everyone is separate; no one is unified.*"²⁵

The call for a stronger collaborative and communicative framework appears to stand somewhat at odds with concerns certain participants held about confidentiality and data sharing, outlined above. However, this appeared to pertain less to data sharing than it did to knowledge exchange and collaboration at the level of cross-promotion and referral (with properly obtained consent).

A prompt and empathic response

Certain participants were wary of what they described as a "bureaucratic" or "checkbox approach" displayed by professional student support staff. While many were sympathetic to issues affecting capacity and resourcing, students felt that they could sense the difference between people who "actually care", and those who respond "because of mandatory training" with particular policies and procedures at front of mind. Similarly, certain students were sensitive to being "managed" by faculty members who they believed viewed them as "nuisances", rather than students in need of compassion and care. This points to the pressure that may be felt by frontliners to respond appropriately and in accordance with policy standards, and highlights the need to encourage first responders (in whatever capacity they work) to employ empathy, primarily by empowering them with the scope to do so. Despite the fact that first responders may only be equipped to signpost, in

²⁴ Interview/Female participant.

²⁵ Focus group/BAME participant.

many cases these encounters appeared to determine the likelihood that the reporting student would continue to pursue the reporting process or the process of seeking assistance where it was needed. The importance of empathy at all stages of the reporting process was highlighted by one focus group participant thus:

You have to feel like that person is empathising, is giving a level of importance to your issue. Because sometimes you tend to minimise your own issues, like, 'This is not that big'. And if the person that is dealing with it, or is helping to deal with it, makes it even more small, you'll be like, "Why am I here?"²⁶

In this respect, the value of diversity among faculty, support staff, and facilitators arose once again, as certain participants trusted more fully in the capacity of individuals from similar identity groups to empathise with their experiences:

I'd feel like that's a barrier gone already. It's sad that it has to be that way, or that it is that way, but it's just being human and feeling comfortable, just knowing you can relate. Because you may say something, and someone else hears you say it, and they might not understand how much of an issue that is.²⁷

The following participant exchange echoes this sentiment:

Student A: *I hate it when you report things, or even talk to someone about something and they have the pity, rather than the understanding.²⁸*

Student B: *Especially sometimes when you can't even name what it is that you're feeling. And this can be even for miniscule things, it doesn't have to be such a big thing, but even other things that you go through. It's really hard to sometimes name feelings and name things, and a person who's had a similar experience can kind of help you through it.²⁹*

Above all, participants indicated that they would feel comfortable participating in a programme that demonstrated respect and consideration for the wellbeing of students who have been harmed by hate crime and hate incidents.

I know that even when I've assisted people in reporting things to the police, there's so much trauma that you have to relive again when you say it, especially if there's any form of threat or violence that was involved, even if it was just language and it wasn't physical. And I just think sometimes they deal with the situation like, "Hey if you need any help, call this." But there's not much support really provided. And that's one thing, you know, going to a police station. And being interviewed – you're not even face to face with the attacker. Now restorative justice ... Time can heal, but as soon as you see the person, you're reliving that experience again. So for me the first thing that comes to mind is [looking after] the mental health of that person.³⁰

²⁶ Focus group/BAME participant.

²⁷ Interview/LGBTQIA+ BAME participant.

²⁸ Focus group/Muslim BAME participant.

²⁹ Focus group/Muslim BAME participant.

³⁰ Focus group/Muslim BAME participant.

The opportunity to meaningfully challenge identity-based prejudice

For almost all participants, the prospect of a restorative programme at their university represented a valuable opportunity to address deep-rooted issues surrounding hate and prejudice and to help bring about a transformation of behaviours and attitudes. Of the restorative practices discussed, listening circles (where harmed students can share their experiences in a supportive environment with other student community members who listen, and who in turn share their thoughts) appeared to generate particular interest, opening up the chance for students to learn from and inform their peers. For others, the opportunity to participate in an inclusive dialogical process that brought together harmed individuals directly with those responsible for expressing prejudice and hate was seen as a meaningful way of challenging such behaviour. One focus group participant explained:

I think it would help. I think kind of being actually confronted in a quiet environment, not in a bar or something, and being shown the harms that they have caused, and having it as a group explained and understood, and it not just being like, "You're racist!" or "You're homophobic!", but more like, "This is my experience throughout my life, and this is what I face every single day, and you've added to that and you've hurt me."³¹

The value of a restorative process specifically tailored to addressing the harms caused by hate speech was made clear by one interview participant who believed that her own attempts at confronting her university peers about their homophobic and misogynistic language had achieved little. Commenting on the likelihood of a restorative programme making a difference in such cases, she stated:

I think it definitely would have an impact on the way that they think about it. And so then, hopefully, if there were enough students that could get involved with that, or that could help address these harms, then it would make an impact on, like, thinking before they speak, or, like, speaking up against someone else. Like, one of the other guys says something, [and] rather than just letting it slide because it's just one of the guys – it's just "bro" talk – actually [saying], "I know now that what you just said is actually really harmful".³²

In this view, the kinds of restorative practices proposed by the project have a greater chance at bringing about positive outcomes than standard interactions between peers for a number of reasons. These include: the opportunity to involve several students who have been similarly affected, and therefore add greater weight to claims of harm; and also the fact that it would be harder to dismiss the kinds of issues and concerns raised in a restorative process than it would be when being confronted or corrected in a social context, surrounded by likeminded peers.

Students were also keen to see cases in which the restorative dialogue that takes place is "bigger than the victim and perpetrator". By one student's reckoning, such cases could have profound impacts on the wider student community in terms of increasing awareness around identity-based prejudice as well as around restorative practices:

I think you need to have certain cases that will set a precedent. Because I can read about it or have you telling me about restorative justice, and then if I see it in play [I'll think], "Ok, hold on. You know what? Ok. Hopefully the people who have ended up being a perpetrator can, I

³¹ Focus group/BAME participant.

³² Interview/LGBTQIA+ participant.

don't know, have their eyes a little bit more opened." But I think then people can see how the system works and be like, "Ok, am I comfortable with it or am I not comfortable with it?"³³

Almost all participants were appreciative of the liberal and progressive culture fostered in Brighton and Hove and at the University of Sussex, in particular, but also indicated that this same culture occasionally inhibited the expression of diverse opinions, and therefore prevented the critical examination of opposing views:

I think our uni's really great with like, opening things up and you can say what you believe in, but there's certain things where you can believe in this, but you can't believe in that. So, you can say what you want, everyone's like free-speech, but "Oh no – don't say that, and don't say that". So, it's like, as long as it falls into what Sussex believes, then it's fine.³⁴

By participant accounts, this culture can be characterised as “enforced tolerance”, rather than enhanced understanding and respect for minority group students. A frustration on the part of several participants who had been targeted by hate, was that this did not appear to lead to either attitudinal or behavioural transformation:

There's a lot of people who jump down peoples' throats and, it's like, actually first we have to take a step back. So [...] there was a student [...] and they were saying lots of homophobic things, but it was because of where they were from and because of what they'd been brought up in and because that's the world that they understood. And then from someone else there was no understanding of the fact that that person's experience is very different from their own. And so, yes, they're saying homophobic things, but the way we deal with that is what we need to change. It's like, "Okay, actually what you've just said is a problem because of x, y and z," not, "You're homophobic! Get out!"³⁵

One important facet of the university experience is the way it can prefigure students' entry into wider society. Many students come to university from communities and schools where there is little ethnic, religious or cultural diversity. They enter into a new microcosm of a wide mix of British and non-British people. As noted by participants, it can therefore present as a valuable learning experience for individuals who may not previously have encountered a great deal of diversity and identity difference. Among some of the hate incidents that participants had witnessed, experienced, or heard about, a number were attributed by these same participants to the relative lack of exposure that certain students had previously had to diverse identity groups, as illustrated by one such scenario involving hate speech between students:

It was a White student and an Asian student. And his parents [...] were very much of the belief that White people were going to inherit the Earth and everyone else followed around behind them and did exactly what they say. And he'd not had any interaction with anyone other than White people before because he'd been to a White boarding school. It was simply the first time he'd met any people from another race and been free to interact with them. And he had basically no concept that by telling them that he was a superior person, they'd be upset by it.³⁶

Such incidents were said to commonly take place in university accommodation, which often involves the grouping together of students from quite diverse areas to live in close proximity.

³³ Focus group/BAME participant.

³⁴ Focus group/Female participant.

³⁵ Focus group/BAME participant.

³⁶ Interview/Disabled participant.

When people get drunk, they say certain things about – just like, words that would never cross our lips, and they’re just flinging them everywhere. And I think that’s also part of it: like, you have no idea because you’ve never actually met someone who looks like me. [...] But it’s a big jump to be here with these people from all over the world, all over the country that have a completely different understanding of what’s ok and what’s not – it’s a big shock to your system. At the same time, it’s good preparation for what’s going to happen after university. Because it’s always bound to happen. That’s why I think it’s always important to let people know that it’s ok to have the conversation.³⁷

Importantly, “having the conversation”, was viewed as a more effective and less exhausting way for minority students to explain their perspective than having to act as “the voice” of their particular identity group (as many felt they were frequently called upon to do) or to respond to every harmful or inappropriate comment or incident as they occurred. As stated by one focus group participant:

It’s being able to have dialogue. Because I think people think you’re going to just shut them down, and it’s like, I’m only shutting you down because this is the seventeenth thing I’ve had today where someone mentioned about my hair or about what food I eat, or all of that.³⁸

Follow-up

Conducting an appropriate amount of follow-up with students who seek help was identified by participants as an important way of acknowledging the often long-term ripple effects that hate can have. Indeed, following-up on students who choose to participate in a restorative process can be seen as one part of the construction of a holistic “culture of support” that was seen to be lacking in higher education:

I think [it’s] true of any problem. Like, they might do an immediate fix, whether it’s for mental health, whether it’s for anything. All of these different services, what they have in common is they’re doing very short-term fixes. Yeah, it speaks to a larger problem. Whereas this is interesting, because it’s a long-term programme.³⁹

CONCLUSION

Preliminary research for this project was conducted among students at the University of Brighton and the University of Sussex in order to ensure that a new restorative programme would be established in a way that directly responds to student needs and experiences. This was also done in recognition of the fact that these may be distinct between students of different universities, who also often have differing ways of engaging with their respective institutions. What our discussions revealed was that a much higher incidence of hate crime, hate incidents and hate speech was taking place at both universities than had been reported. While a number of students affected by hate were simply unaware of the type of support that their university could offer them, the majority did not believe that standard university responses would adequately address their needs and the harms they had suffered. Despite a general prior lack of familiarity with restorative concepts, participants viewed a restorative programme as offering a valuable “third way” to respond to hate that did not remove their sense of agency or their sense of ownership over the process and its outcome.

³⁷ Focus group/BAME participant.

³⁸ Focus group/BAME participant.

³⁹ Interview/Female participant.

STEPS TAKEN

- In light of our preliminary findings, 82 staff members from across Brighton and Sussex Universities were trained in responding restoratively to hate and prejudice.
- From this first stage of training a group of 11 individuals from student support services and the student union at both universities were selected to undertake three-day advanced practitioner training in restorative practice. This training was specifically designed by the project's Restorative Justice Coordinator, Bonita Holland, with Professor Mark Walters and Tim Read.
- Pathways to reporting incidents to Student Services and the Student Union (the latter at Sussex only) have been developed based on the needs as identified by students.
- A website for reporting incidents into the project has been developed at both universities based on the needs as identified by students.
- Marketing materials, including leaflets and posters, have been produced and are ready for dissemination.

NEXT STEPS

- The official launch of the Restore Respect programme will take place during National Hate Crime Awareness Week (13-20 October 2018).
- Restore Respect facilitators will meet with individuals who report cases to discuss and listen to their experiences, with the supervision and assistance of the Restorative Justice Coordinator. Individuals will be fully prepared for any direct meetings and a risk assessment will be carried out.
- Restorative meetings (indirect and direct) will be arranged and facilitated by facilitators and supervised by the RJ Coordinator.
- The project team will evaluate the programme's implementation and impact.

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