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Hatescape? A relational geography of disability hate crime, exclusion and belonging in the city

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Abstract

Disabled people experience significant social discrimination and spatial exclusion in their everyday lives in the city. In recent years, discriminatory acts have increasingly been labelled as 'hate crimes'. We argue that hate crime's association with harassment and violence has obscured the more common prejudicial attitudes and actions, which create anxiety and fear. Further, the paper seeks to shift the disability hate crime discourse from its present focus on individual victimisation, to the micro and local spaces, social relations and wider socio-political contexts, within which these acts emerge. We set out a critique of hate crime discourse, offering instead a relational interpretation of people's experiences of place, drawing on aspects of non-representational theory. We argue that everyday movements through the city and encounters with others, produce senses of anxiety and precarity, as well as experiences of belonging, in the context of structural disablist attitudes. The paper draws on a collaborative research project in a city centre in Scotland, using a methodology of walking interviews and focus groups. The findings are presented in four themes, illustrated by qualitative GIS mapping: i) recorded and experienced hate crime and harassment in the city; ii) routes into and mobility within the city; iii) spaces of fear and anxiety, and inclusion and welcome; and iv) encounters and relations with others. We conclude by arguing that a relational approach, examining the dynamic unfolding or emergence of people's embodied and emotional

experiences and encounters (both negative and positive), in a range of contexts, is a significant contribution to the hate crime debate.

Keywords: Disability; Learning disability; Hate crime; Relational; Social exclusion; Belonging

Highlights

- Some people with learning disabilities experience harassment, fear and anxiety in cities.
- People move along regular routes and avoid certain areas and people, and seek out sites of inclusion.
- People actions and encounters with others, plus local and wider contexts shape experiences of the city.

1. Introduction

Disabled people experience enduring significant social discrimination and spatial exclusion in their everyday lives in the city (Soldatic et al., 2014). In recent years, discriminatory acts have become increasingly labelled as ‘hate crimes’, to signal the prejudicial motivations of the perpetrator (Roulstone and Mason-Bish, 2013). Following legislation for ‘race’ and religious belief hate crimes in 1998 in the UK, disability was added to the ‘protected characteristics’ in 2003, along with sexuality and transgender (Criminal Justice Act 2003); similar laws are in place in other jurisdictions, including USA, Canada and countries in the EU (Hall, 2013). Reported disability hate crimes, whilst far lower than those related to ‘race’, have increased markedly since data was first recorded (e.g. 7226 in England and Wales 2017/18; 1748, 2011/12; Home Office, 2018).

Whilst disability hate crime includes ‘verbal abuse, intimidation, threats, harassment, assault and bullying, as well as damage to property’ (CPS, 2018), the term has become synonymous,

in the media, policy, and some academic studies, with acts of violence (Mencap, 2000; Scope, 2008; EHRC, 2011; Sherry, 2011). This is perhaps not surprising: hate crime was adopted as a term in the UK in the aftermath of the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence in London in 1993 (Guardian, 2013). Further such events, most notably the deaths of Fiona Pilkington and her disabled daughter, Francessca Hardwick, in 2007, were the drivers for the extension of the legislation to cover other groups (Guardian, 2009). Whilst recognising the significant trauma of violence, we argue that such a focus and discourse can obscure the more common, even 'ordinary', prejudicial attitudes and actions experienced by most disabled people, which combine to engender anxiety and fear (Pain, 1997; McClimens et al., 2014). Further, the paper seeks to shift the disability hate crime discourse from its present focus on individual victimisation, to the micro and local spaces, social relations, and wider socio-political contexts, within and through which these acts emerge (Sin et al., 2009; Hall, 2018).

We examine experiences of harassment and everyday exclusionary spaces and relations, and the seeking of inclusionary sites and welcoming encounters in the city, for people with learning disabilities, understood to be at heightened risk of disability hate crimes (Beadle-Brown et al., 2014). To do this, we report on one element of a collaborative research project in a medium-sized city in Scotland. The project analysed police recorded hate crime data and, using qualitative methods, examined feelings of anxiety and fear, and safety and welcoming, as people moved into and around the city centre. As will be evidenced, very few had experienced what could be described as a hate crime, but all had exclusionary (and inclusionary) encounters in places and with people in their everyday lives.

First, we set out a critique of the dominant discourse of identity-based violence, offering instead a relational interpretation of people's experiences of place, drawing on aspects of non-representational theory (Hall and Wilton, 2017; Andrews, 2018). We argue that everyday

movements through the city and encounters with others, produce senses of anxiety and precarity, as well as experiences of belonging, in the context of structural disablist attitudes. The study's methodology of walking interviews and focus groups, enabled participants to dynamically describe, through words and embodied movement, their everyday lives in the city. The findings are presented in four themes, illustrated by qualitative GIS mapping: i) recorded and experienced hate crime; ii) routes into and mobility within the city; iii) spaces of fear and anxiety, and inclusion and welcome; iv) encounters and relations with others. The conclusion argues how a relational approach, by emphasising the dynamic nature of people's negative and more positive experiences in the city, in a range of contexts, can usefully reorientate the hate crime debate.

2. A relational geography of hate crime

The term 'hate crime' has been readily adopted in the UK and elsewhere in recent years to (re)describe prejudicial acts against minority social groups, including disabled people (Hall, 2013). It has been important to identify the harassment and violence experienced by many disabled people (Victim Support, 2016); and, further, to recognise how fear and anxiety generated by media reports and anecdotal accounts of violent attacks negatively shapes the behaviour of the wider community of disabled people (Pain, 1997; Beadle-Brown et al., 2014). Hollomotz (2013) places all prejudicial acts against disabled people, from 'mundane experiences' and 'subtle oppressions' to physical abuse and attacks, on a 'continuum of violence' (see also Listerborn, 2015). However, the application of the terms 'hate crime' and 'violence' to describe all such actions is contested. For Hall (2013), 'the word hate is distinctly unhelpful' (9), in the generic application of a motivation that explains only a minority of incidents; he prefers 'bias' or 'prejudice', as these terms offer a sense of complexity, and some prospect of social explanation and response (ibid.).

Chakraborti and Garland (2012) argue for a shift from identity-based victimisation to 'perceived vulnerability and difference' (499). They contend that in the majority of incidents disabled people are not targeted because of their impairment, but rather because they are seen as 'easy targets', less able to defend themselves and less likely to report. Whilst research on perpetrators of disability hate crimes is very limited, it is suggested that their actions are motivated in most cases by opportunism, financial gain, 'fun' or a perception of 'special treatment', rather than by hate (Quarmby, 2015). Importantly, perceived vulnerability is, it is argued, contingent upon, and the product of, specific local and micro contexts, what Sin et al. (2009) term 'situational vulnerability'. Evidence suggests a geography of verbal abuse and harassment experienced by disabled people: 'hotspots' on public transport, in local neighbourhoods and on city centre streets. As Chakraborti and Garland (2012) argue, 'It is not someone's identity per se which makes them vulnerable in the eyes of the perpetrator, but rather the way in which that identity intersects with other aspects of their self and situational factors and contexts' (510). This is significant, as it shifts the hate crime discourse away from its sole focus on the victimisation of the individual, towards an emphasis on socio-spatial contexts, and social relations, in the emergence of prejudicial attitudes and acts.

In this paper, we place all the negative (and positive) experiences of the participants in the city, in the micro, local and wider socio-political contexts and relations in which they become, and by which they are in large part produced. Iganski (2008), for example, found a higher incidence of 'race' hate crimes in specific neighbourhoods and certain city centre streets, in London. Macdonald et al. (2017) demonstrated a spatial association with deprivation and the rapid change in composition of communities, at the same time as the withdrawal of support services, in NE England. Whilst some with hateful attitudes and intent will seek out disabled people to victimise

(Mencap, 2000), in the majority of cases it is local circumstances that can (but do not necessarily) generate low-level negative attitudes, and in some cases harassment and violence.

We argue that it is important to study the where, how and who of the emergence and occurrence of prejudicial acts (Sin et al., 2009; Hall, 2018). Further, to examine the ways in which local social and material environments, and wider social, political and cultural discourses, can shape (negative) attitudes and actions towards disabled people. Ettliger (forthcoming, in Petrova, 2018) describes current such discourses as providing ‘the grounds for capriciousness (defined with reference to unethical and unpredictable, deleterious actions at a whim)’ (19) and, in turn, an ‘uncaring form of social relations’ (ibid.). For disabled people, long-standing disablist social attitudes and exclusion, and the present anti-welfare discourse (Garthwaite, 2012), together provide such ‘grounds for capriciousness’ (Ettliger forthcoming, in Petrova, 2018), commonly in the form of ‘mundane’ ‘microaggressions’ (Keller and Galgay, 2010). Further, Ettliger (forthcoming, in Petrova, 2018) argues, uncaring social relations ‘produce precarity over time and space’ in the ‘micro-spaces of the everyday’ (19). For many disabled people, an increased presence in local neighbourhood areas and city centres, as people live independently and services are withdrawn (Power and Hall, 2018), means that they often live in precarious ‘lifeworlds ... inflected with uncertainty and instability’ (Waite, 2009, 416); in some instances, this includes heightened exposure to prejudicial attitudes and actions.

In ‘dislodging’ the individual disabled subject and victimisation ‘from the centre of accounts’ (Duff, 2018, 139), and bringing to the fore local and wider material and socio-political contexts which lead to the emergence of uncertain and precarious lives, of which harassment is one potential feature, this paper contributes to a ‘relational geography of disability’ (Hall and Wilton, 2017). In particular, Hall and Wilton (2017) engage with ‘non-representational theory’: how the ongoing embodied and emotional interaction of people, non-human others and objects, and

environments, in assemblages, generates the emergence or becoming of everyday lives and places. From this, we can argue that all acts on the 'continuum of violence' (Hollomotz, 2013) can be understood not as individual and isolated, nor as inevitable features of particular sites and spaces, but rather as the ongoing outcome of relations and contexts. In sum, citing Duff (2018), we can propose that such acts are 'less an attribute of an individual body, more a function of encounters immanent to a specific assemblage' (140). It is what happens, what plays out, in micro and local spaces, in the encounters between disabled and non-disabled people, and the material, sensory and social environments, that matters (Botterill, 2018). It is non-representational theory's emphasis on the 'significance of seemingly mundane, habitual, non-reflexive practices' (Hall and Wilton, 2017, 729), and how through affectual 'intercorporeality' (Macpherson, 2009) disabled and non-disabled people are 'moved and are moved by another' (Hall and Wilton, 2017, 729), that offers the potential for disabled people to be recast as agentic, albeit within challenging and marginalising contexts. In this interpretation, rather than being vulnerable victims of individualised harassment, disabled people are engaging with, negotiating, making sense of, and contesting, city spaces characterised by discrimination and exclusion, as well as welcoming and inclusion. Importantly, disabled people are – in their actions and relations – driven by a desire to socially connect, to be part of things and to contribute to the making of the city.

The proposed relational geography of disability hate crime offers a significant and insightful reinterpretation. Violent acts, harassment and low-level 'ordinary' discrimination all have a significant impact on disabled people. However, if we can see them not as individual targeted acts of victimisation, but instead as the emergent outcomes of 'individuals negotiat[ing] difference in social diverse societies' (Botterill, 2018, 541), then it: encourages us to study the detail of who, how and why the incident occurred (Hall, 2018); places the disabled person as an active participant in these situations; demands an informed focus on perpetrators, in most cases 'ordinary' people;

and builds a recognition that whilst there is a geography of hate crime incidents (as noted above), it is not inevitable that such incidents will happen to disabled people in these sites, as the assemblage of relations and contexts have 'the capacity to produce both exclusionary and inclusionary arrangements' (Hall and Wilton, 2017, 728).

3. Methodology

A relational geography of disability hate crime has methodological implications. Much hate crime research is underpinned by 'victimology' (Gerstenfield, 2013) and, as such, is focused on the experiences of the harassed or assaulted disabled person. Such accounts are vital, to document the nature and extent of such incidents, and their physical, psychological and wider social impact; there are a small number of these in the evidence that follows. However, as the findings also show, for the majority of disabled people for most of the time, exclusion and microaggressions are what are commonly experienced. Hence, a different methodological approach is needed, one that enables the participants to give an account of the embodied, emotional and affective-sensory experiences that constitute everyday life (Andrews, 2018). As Duff (2018) notes, what is required is 'patient empirical work ... tracing how diverse bodies, objects and forces actually come to shape, disrupt and transform experiences ... in place' (142). We need to be asking questions of discriminatory (and inclusionary) experiences such as: 'What is in situ? What is arriving and leaving? What is passive and active? What is interacting with what and how?' (Andrews, 2018, 5).

The study was co-designed with a learning disability advocacy organisation and the local division of Police Scotland; the research presented here is part of a larger project examining a collaborative local response to disability hate crime in the city centre. As such, the focus of the study was on the central area of city; it is acknowledged that the majority of harassment tends to occur in local neighbourhoods where people live (Chakraborti and Garland, 2012). The study took

place between February and June 2016, and was funded by the Scottish Institute for Policing Research. The research was approved by the University of Dundee Research Ethics Committee.

3.1 Police hate crime data

To represent reported hate crimes in the city centre, we requested information from Police Scotland to cover a 12 month period that included the qualitative data collection (August 2015–August 2016). Data was for all hate incidents and those where the victim had been logged as a ‘vulnerable’ person; information was also provided on the time and location of the incident¹. Police Scotland have given permission for the data to be analysed and mapped. To map the data, Kernel Density Estimation (KDE) was used (Chainey and Ratcliffe, 2005). KDE assigns each of the points representing the location of an incident to a grid, a technique which weights the data according to how many incidents have occurred nearby (Fig.1). In so doing it gives a broad indication of the individual streets/buildings where incidents occurred, without providing exact locations. Incidents in the court and police station were not included as participants were not present in these sites. Also excluded were incidents that took place 9pm-8am, when participants reported they were not present in the city centre.

3.2 Walking interviews and focus groups

The study involved fifteen people with learning disabilities; ten were members of an advocacy organisation; the other five were users of a day centre; all were invited to participate by the organisations’ staff. ‘Walking interviews’ (Holton and Riley, 2014) and follow-up focus groups were

¹ It is important to note that police data represent where incidents have been reported to the police and recorded; a record of an incident does not mean that a crime has occurred.

used to gain insight into their everyday presence and encounters in the city centre. 'Mobile methods' are well suited to observing in 'real time' individuals' embodied, sensory and emotional experiences of, responses to, and relationships with, places and people (Hall and Wilton, 2017). Further, for people with learning disabilities, and others who find one-to-one static interviews cannot capture how they feel and what they think, the unstructured, open-ended, and activity-based nature of walking allows conversations to flow and 'prompts' in the landscape to stimulate discussion and memories (Holton and Riley, 2014).

Walks were conducted with the participants from the advocacy organisation (in ones and twos), supported by a member of staff from the organisation; for logistical reasons, walks were not undertaken with the participants from the day centre. Four of the walks were undertaken by a staff member only, as requested by the participant. Given the co-productive nature of walking interviews (Kusenbach, 2003), the role of the person interacting with and gathering data on the participant is crucial. It is acknowledged that there could be some differences in recording and interpretation by the authors and the advocacy organisation staff member, who knew the participants well (as noted in 4.2). The participants were asked to lead us on their everyday routes through (and in some cases into) the city centre. By encouraging the participants to 'lead the way' and be our 'expert guide to the city (Kinney, 2017, 2), there was the potential for empowerment and inclusion (Nind, 2014). They were asked to describe where we were going, how they felt in the spaces we were in, who they usually saw and spoke to, where and who they avoided, and any incidents that had happened (as the findings will show, there were very few; staff members provided support (and in most cases already knew about) when such incidents were described). The walks enabled participants to talk about their emotional and sensory feelings in specific locations; and, when there was no conversation, allowed for observation of their movement and encounters (Huizinga and van Hoven, 2018). The walks lasted about an hour, including a visit to a

café (of the participants' choosing) at the end; these 'post-walk' interviews reflected on the senses of anxiety and welcome experienced in different places and with different people in the city centre (Costa and Coles, 2018, 4). No audio-recordings of the interviews were made, for practical reasons and to generate an informal atmosphere; the staff member assisted people to express themselves when necessary; detailed observation notes were made of the walk and the post-walk discussion (as an outcome there are no direct quotes from the walks).

Two focus groups (FG1 and FG2) took place a couple of weeks after the walks, at the advocacy organisations; all those who went on the walks took part. A third focus group (FG3) was held at the day centre with five participants. Staff from the organisations were present, for support and to facilitate people speaking for themselves. A large-scale map of the city centre was put on the table, and images of the main sites placed as 'flags' on the map, to help people orientate themselves. Over the course of the focus group, the map was annotated with coloured pens, green to indicate places perceived to be 'safe' and/or 'comfortable', and red for 'unsafe' and/or 'uncomfortable'. People agreed in most cases, although some sites were identified by the majority, others by only one – these different views were represented on the maps. The two focus groups at the advocacy organisation were audio-recorded, with permission; the third focus group was not recorded. The audio-recordings were transcribed, and the walk notes written up; all names of and references to specific sites were anonymised. Transcripts from the interviews and focus groups were thematically coded, and qualitative maps produced.

3.3 Qualitative GIS mapping

GIS digitisation and visualisation techniques were used to represent aspects of how specific places and spaces were perceived (Curtis, 2012). Using ArcGIS mapping software, the maps were digitised onto an Ordnance Survey open-source street map. Graduated shading showed 'unsafe'/'anxious'

(shades light to dark red, fewest to most people) (Fig.2) and 'safe'/'welcome' (light to dark blue) (Fig.3).

4. Findings

4.1 Hate crime incidents in the city centre

City centres have been identified as spaces with an increased likelihood of hate incidents (Iganski, 2008). Police Scotland data indicates that there were fewer than five disability hate incidents reported in the city centre, and 40 hate incidents related to all 'protected characteristics' or involving a 'vulnerable person' (e.g. with a mental health condition or elderly) in the 12 month period (it is acknowledged that there is significant underreporting of disability hate crime; CPS, 2018). Fig.1 shows a small number of areas where incidents occurred in the city centre in the day time or early evening (darker shading), all in main streets and public spaces. There *is* a geography of reported hate incidents, including those related to disability, but, as will be evidenced later, such data and mapping, whilst a useful indicator of the challenges people encounter, cannot represent the complex and dynamic experiences of anxiety and fear in the city centre.

The walks and focus groups highlighted a small number of what could potentially be termed hate incidents. All were 'low-level', in most cases negative encounters which may or may not have a direct connection to the person's disability. Minor events can still be significant for the person involved, and affect their future behaviour, and potentially others who they tell (Innes, 2014). For example, when John² was asked if he ever gets harassed when he is in the city centre, it was noted:

² All names have been changed.

Some comments from young people. If he sees young people in a group, he says he feels uncertain (Walk, John)

John further commented that he would avoid groups of young people. For Andrew, a single negative encounter had a significant impact on his emotions and confidence:

He said a drunk man was cheeky to him and a group of friends He said the man thought the group were bullying Andrew, and Andrew said the man was cheeky and Andrew told him to 'move on pal' and other similar things. As Andrew is quite loud and fast when he speaks, I could imagine he could escalate a situation without realising. Andrew thinks drunks are not safe. The incident made him feel upset and annoyed (Walk, Andrew, AO³)

In another incident, shouted abuse had a serious and lasting impact on Graeme:

When we reach [street name] he points out where the incident happened. It was near [shop name]; he was walking to the charity shop where he works, when a man going in the other direction started shouting at him, saying something about 'decking [hitting] him'. Graeme picked up his speed, and thought he might be attacked, and the man shouted 'You better start running'; this is what led Graeme to believe it was directed at him. He did not know the man, but thought he (Graeme) may have been squinting

³ 'AO' denotes that the walk was undertaken by a staff member from the advocacy organisation (see Section 3.2).

in the sun, and maybe the man had thought he was giving him a dirty look. Graeme went straight to the charity shop and told the staff; he stayed there later in the day as he wanted to make sure the man wasn't there. Graeme avoided the area for a while after that in case he saw the man again (Walk, Graeme, AO)

A final example (the only incident spoken of in the day centre focus group) shows how a disabled person can be affected by negative actions seemingly directed at them because of their impairment:

Jane mentioned that someone (an older woman) had bumped into her once; she thought it was done on purpose because of who she was, but she just ignored it (FG3)

The above encounters in the city centre may be more accurately described as microaggressions, rather than disability hate incidents (Keller and Galgay, 2010). However, this is arguably immaterial. These are powerful embodied and emotional experiences, all with a strong sense of feeling vulnerable, different and disliked.

Disability hate incidents and crimes – reported and anecdotal – are very low in the city centre; however, this does not mean that people do not experience anxiety and fear (Pain, 1997; McClimens et al., 2014), and a broader sense of uncertainty and instability (Waite, 2009). As the following sections show, people with learning disabilities have a complex relationship with the city, a set of spaces they desire to be in, but which they carefully navigate, physically and relationally, aware of potential discrimination and indifference.

4.2 'I just take a wander': routes into and through the city

Mobility is core to relational understandings and, in particular, the 'unfolding of encounters' (Wilson, 2016, 14, in Botterill, 2018, 543), who one meets and engages with or not, in the course of daily life. For disabled people, now spending more time in the city, encounters are common; the study highlighted the tensions for many between wishing to be present and the significant attitudinal and material challenges; and the further tension of wanting to be in the midst of the city with others, whilst at other times needing moments and spaces of solitude and stillness. Negotiating the complex and often challenging physical and affective landscape is a daily concern.

Travelling independently is an integral part of community-based arrangements for many people with learning disabilities, with the need to be mobile to 'stitch together' different activities at a range of sites (Power, 2013). All of the participants travel mostly independently by bus, on foot, in taxis, plus some lifts from family members, on their frequent visits from their home neighbourhoods into the city centre. Studies have shown how public transport and, in particular, buses and bus stops, are spaces where disabled people experience or are in fear of harassment (Beadle-Brown et al., 2014). Some had experienced negative encounters with other passengers, in one instance a driver, and another at a bus stop:

John and his friends had some hassle on the bus from a group of kids, but not recently.

He doesn't like it when it gets dark in winter, but still goes on buses into town and other places (Walk, John)

John: They'll [young people] bang on the bus shelter, when you're waiting on the bus

Int: Do you think they are doing it because you're there, or just doing it?

John: A bit of a mix (Focus Group (FG) 2)

All were aware of the possibility of being harassed or feeling uncomfortable, adopting strategies to avoid such encounters:

Graeme has no trouble on the bus, but doesn't like it when 'junkies' [drug users] sit near him. At night he likes to sit at the front of the bus (Walk, Graeme, AO)

Angela always sits at the front of the bus whenever she travels. She has been shouted at a bus stop, but ignored it (Walk, Angela)

Several said they sit in particular seats, near the driver (in case help is needed), and keep to themselves on the bus: 'I just sit' (FG2, Andrew); 'Look out of the window' (FG2, Michael); she doesn't like to sit near anyone (FG3, Jane). Some travel occasionally by taxi, commonly in the evenings and after dark in winter. Bus frequency is lower after 6pm, and they, and their families, are less confident about them travelling alone, including having to wait at bus stops. Those who used taxis said that they felt safe doing so, but again adopted tactics to reassure themselves (and their families and friends), such as using a regular company, requesting the same driver, and texting people when they left and arrived home. It is common for people to not be present in the city beyond 6pm, and after dark in the winter.

People travel independently and frequently, driven by a desire to go to activities, see friends and be in the city (Milner and Kelly, 2009; McClimens et al., 2014). Importantly, while there were very few actual experiences of harassment, participants had a powerful sense of uncertainty and potential targeting, and adopted proactive tactics to protect themselves from perceived risk.

However, such spatial and temporal self-isolation can further limit opportunities for social encounters and can heighten perceived vulnerability.

When participants arrived in the city centre for the walks, they did so in the central pedestrianised area (Fig.3). As they guided us along the streets, it soon became clear that they tended to negotiate the city by following regular routes.

Sophie is very happy about being in town alone, she knows where she is intending to be and when, she is not distracted or side-tracked from this at all. She seems to follow certain routes and does not give the impression she leaves these routes often (Walk, Sophie, AO)

Angela always walks the same way ... and doesn't usually linger (Walk, Angela)

For most, their routes were straightforward: traversing the city centre, first to the indoor 'Thistle' shopping centre, then along the edge of the main square to Laing Street, into Balfour Street, and finally to the 'Bluebell' shopping centre, and then commonly back along the same route to the bus stops, to return home (Fig.3). For some, there were detours along the way to specific shops, places of work, cafés and other sites, such as the museum. Their routes were characterised by well-defined paths through the city, significantly almost wholly within the pedestrianised area; Cresswell (2014, in Botterill, 2018) suggests that people feel social and embodied 'friction' as they move, and choose routes to reduce or avoid such constraints.

Their time in the city was defined by mobility. During the walks the participants were always on the move, for some a fast walking pace, for others slower. Being on the move was very much the form and content of the conversations during and after the walks, and in the focus groups. As

we accompanied them, they spoke of walking: along streets, through shopping centres, in and out of shops, and not lingering, wanting to be on the way somewhere to specific destinations, where there would be the opportunity to stop and rest.

Brian is very confident, walks fast, knows where he is going and why, same route every day ... doesn't like to wait around ... just walks on. Walks the same way every time, has a routine (Walk, Brian)

Supporter suggested that most tended to get off the bus, quickly go to the centre [pedestrianised area], and then to go and get the bus home again, no time for wandering to different parts of the city (FG3)

The constant mobility seemed to be not only about getting to a destination, but also about moving through the city as quickly as possible, avoiding spaces and encounters of perceived anxiety and uncertainty, the well-worn routes providing familiarity and predictability. In defining these routes the participants were exerting agency – they knew where they going and how best to do this.

As noted above, there is a tension between the desire for constant movement and the need for immobility. Whilst most head directly to specific sites, some had periods in the day when they were in the city centre between activities, for example a time-slot at a support group. On the walk with Sophie, her look around a favourite shop was a way of 'killing time' before she was due at a disability group (Walk, Sophie, AO). Others sit on benches and browse in shops:

She likes sitting on the benches and watching people [in the Thistle shopping centre].

Sometimes in the summer she'll sit in the main square. Later, at the end of the walk,

when we leave her (she wasn't due at the disability support group for another two hours) she went to sit down on one of the benches outside, to have a rest (Walk, Angela)

The 'walkability' of cities is commonly assessed in relation to the degree of smoothness of flow, with the need to be *immobile* not considered (Andrews et al., 2012). However, being able to rest is important for many disabled people. As will be discussed below (4.3), 'safe havens' are important for many people with learning disabilities and autism (Power and Bartlett, 2018), but can be hard to find in city centres. Such sites have been termed 'moorings', spaces where people can be still and ready themselves to be mobile once more (Hannam et al., 2016, in Botterill, 2018, 543). However, many 'havens' or 'moorings' are outside, in squares and parks; those inside (and so protected from the weather and with access to toilets) are usually part of private spaces of consumption, where lingering is not encouraged. These local physical environment contexts, shaped by broader socio-economic forces, are integral to shaping people's everyday engagement with the city.

The ways in which people relate to others in the city is central to their emerging sense of discrimination and exclusion, or acceptance and inclusion (Valentine, 2008). Whilst walking, some of the participants were confident, with their heads up, looking around, but were seemingly always aware, indeed very conscious, of the presence of other people as they passed.

We walked along [street name]; John walked confidently, very aware of other people but in a positive way, saying 'sorry' if he brushed past them (Walk, John)

Others were less confident, keeping their heads down and their eyes averted:

Angela keeps her head down a lot when she walks around; however, AO noticed that she is always looking around, not anxious but wary (Walk, Angela)

He mentioned keeping to the side of the street, like he was in the shadows unnoticed (Walk, Graeme, AO)

Whether walking with their head up or down (as noted in the Methodology, the insight and knowledge of the AO staff member produced a slightly different interpretation of the walking interviews), there was an ever-present sense of uncertainty and anxiety, seemingly wanting to leave as little impression as possible on the city – either by moving swiftly or by avoiding eye or physical contact with others. It is important to recognise that many manage and understand their usually momentary encounters with others in relation to felt anxiety and fear, previous experience or knowledge of harassment, or a broader feeling of not belonging. Isolation, self-exclusion and absence, and feelings of vulnerability and precarity, can be the outcome. Sustained and meaningful encounters can generate more positive outcomes (see 4.4 below) (Wilson, 2016).

The quality of the urban physical environment also shapes the routes people follow and the areas of the city they spend time in, and senses of safety and risk; an issue not addressed in hate crime studies. Several of the participants had mobility impairments, and felt unsafe on some surfaces.

AO asked Angela if she ever goes down [alleyway name]. She said yes, and we went down there. Does she feel safe? No, but this is mostly to do with the cobbles which she finds unsafe underfoot (the alleyway also slopes downwards). She sometimes goes

down here to get her bus ... We walk towards [street name]; the pavement is very uneven which Angela finds difficult (Walk, Angela)

Angela: The wee alley there. Walk down there. Be careful. They've got bumpy cobbles. Be careful, in case anyone behind us. Might fall over (FG2)

Here, cobbles and the alleyway, together with uneven pavements and traffic, made Angela feel physically uncertain, both because she was afraid of falling over and because she was concerned about presence of others (Fig.2). Urban environments are replete with physical barriers (Imrie, 1996; see also Philips et al., 2013). The very accessible central area – pedestrianised, flat and smooth surfaces, and absence of traffic – presents few obstacles. However, it defines an area where people can be physically present and spatially included; for most of the participants, the streets and areas beyond the centre were infrequently visited.

The participants are present in, mobile within, and engaging with, the city, driven by a desire to be involved and recognised. However, their presence and mobility is constrained by a challenging physical environment, and sometimes difficult embodied and emotional social encounters. What emerges are negotiated 'low-friction' pathways through the city, and a dynamic geography of experienced and avoided indifference and potential harassment. As will be discussed below, sites or 'moorings' where movement can be stilled, and friction ceased, if only temporarily, are highly valued, but increasingly rare.

4.3 'Danger' and 'comfort' zones: spaces of anxiety and belonging

Participants' careful negotiation of the city is not solely related to fear of potential harassment. Some commented on the large numbers of people in the Thistle shopping centre, and the stress and panic this can generate.

Michael: Hoaching [very busy] in the Thistle, too crowded for me (FG2)

We went into the Thistle, some shops were closed, some cafés open (it was 5.30pm).

Emma says she likes it like this; she held out her arms and said this is a 'comfort zone' for her – when it is busy it is a possible 'danger zone', she will get anxious; it is not about particular people being around, just that there are lots of people (Walk, Emma)

Sensory experiences of noise, lights, signs and people, are integral to the making of everyday lives in the city (Hall and Wilton, 2017). For some, in particular those on the autism spectrum, these sensory features can result in overloading and hence discomfort. In response, many seek out 'moorings' of quiet spaces and times (Hannam et al., 2016, in Botterill, 2018). The Bluebell shopping centre is one site that offers relative quiet and places to sit.

He said he prefers the Bluebell because it's less busy, compared to the Thistle ... He also says that he doesn't like crowds, and prefers being in places in the city where there are fewer people (Walk, Michael)

The Bluebell has several empty shops on the upstairs levels, and as a result there are fewer people around; there are also a couple of low-cost cafes and some seating. Emma spoke of how she liked spending time here where it was quiet, reducing her sensory load.

Emma: Tend to go upstairs and sit on the seats and talk to my partner (FG1)

Emma: Have time to myself

Nina: Happy [to sit on a bench] when it is quiet. No one is telling you to move on (FG1)

Engaging in consumption is understood as a key marker of social inclusion (Simplican et al., 2015). As Wilton et al. (2017) note, for many people with learning disabilities, commonly on low incomes, being present and active in shopping centres – pseudo-public spaces in the city – can be difficult. Although all of the walks visited the Thistle, we moved through fairly swiftly; most said they browsed the window displays, not spending much time in the shops (this was echoed by the day centre focus group). People tended to spend more time in the lower cost Bluebell, reserving their money for small items in ‘bargain shops’ and for food. Visiting eating places was a regular and important activity for the participants in their time spent in the city (Emerson and Hatton, 2008) (Fig 3).

Emma: Sometimes we go to [café names]

Int: Feel happy in there?

Emma: Yes (FG1)

Wilton et al. (2017) found spending time in cafes is for people with learning disabilities a low-cost way of being in, and feeling part of, the city. However, participants were very aware of, and had strong opinions about, the cost of some, more popular, eating places:

Andrew: You see in the Thistle, there's [café name]. It's too dear, honestly. The prices on the boards is too dear for me. Can't afford it, can't afford the place anymore.

John: You'll have to be a millionaire to go in there

Int: It does seem busy

Andrew: They can afford it, but we can't, know what I mean? (FG2)

Some cafés can offer a 'mooring', stillness and belonging, spending time with friends and amongst others doing the same thing (Warner et al., 2013). However, awareness of how such presence is limited to certain sites by low incomes can heighten the sense of exclusion within the city. Botterill (2018) rightly cautions that the relational approach can sometimes result in a perception of openness and possibility in the city, in many instances centred on consumption. It is crucial to recognise how experiences and encounters in the city are shaped by wider structures and processes (Andrews, 2018); for people with learning disabilities, this often means low incomes and economic exclusion (and a keen awareness of this).

The walks revealed a geography of sites and spaces where participants had discovered, through trial and error and recommendations from others, senses of welcome and potential for inclusion. These included, as noted above, some cafés, and the quiet area of a shopping centre. Nina's comment (above) that 'no one is telling you to move on' is also significant. From direct experience or anecdotally, people can feel that some places are not for spending time in, in particular if they are not consuming. Other spaces, where people reported they could freely be

present with no requests to move on or no expectation to spend, were the library and museum (Fig.3).

Int: Where is your favourite place in the city centre?

Brian: The museum, 'cos everyone's really friendly

Nina: And you go in, you don't have to pay to get in ... wander in, have a look around

(FG1)

The free-access museum and library provide a form of social support for people with learning disabilities and others, where their presence is not questioned (Morse and Munro, 2015). A disability support group is one of the few care sites in the city centre; some of the participants go several times a week for collective activities and support. Other services have progressively moved out of the centre to more peripheral areas, for reasons of rental costs and access; one site is a regenerated former industrial area, a ten-minute walk from the city centre (DeVerteuil, 2015) (Fig.2). However, even this short distance meant that most of the participants would only travel there by car, or by minibus as a group (FG3); the area itself is relatively quiet, with few people around.

Emma: It's fine, it's quiet and there's hardly anyone around

Int: How did you feel about there?

Brian: Bit creepy, bit quiet, echoey. The shops don't really open ... I wouldn't have gone there by myself (FG1)

The meaning associated with a particular space can shape the experience of it. The map of reported hate crimes (Fig.1) suggests 'hotspot areas'; however, two of participants took us to streets where they do voluntary work, both hotspots on the map. The regular visits for work, the sustained encounters with staff there, and the enjoyment of and value placed upon their jobs, make them feel confident and safe.

We suggest going up [street name], as Emma had told us she works there. She says that it is a place where she feels safe and welcome, and where she can get help with her anxiety and panic attacks (Walk, Emma)

He really likes [street name] as this is where he volunteers at the charity shop, this is his safest place (Walk, Graeme, AO)

Once we left the central pedestrianised area, and ventured into adjacent streets, there were fewer people around and the participants were more wary of their surroundings. People walked to these streets for particular reasons – to go to specific shops or to the bus station – but did not linger. The relative absence of people, the presence of traffic, and the uneven and often narrow pavements, made people feel uncertain (Philips et al, 2013).

Int: Any places you wouldn't go to?

John: You wouldn't want to go places too far away

Int: Too far away from where?

John: Too far away from the Thistle, Bluebell etc. You'll probably get kind of lost anyway

Michael: Places you're not familiar with

John: Stick to the main ones (FG2)

Significantly, there was a café mentioned by many of the participants that was located in one of the alleyways. Despite some feelings of anxiety and 'knowing' that alleyways, like underpasses and parks, were spaces of potential harassment and risk (Fig.2), many visited the café because the staff were friendly, it was low-cost, and they would usually meet people they knew. Here, a particular form of positive encounters makes a site that is assumed to be exclusionary, inclusionary (Hall and Wilton, 2017).

Through their everyday presence, repeated traverses and encounters in the city, the participants 'work out' where to avoid and where to be, and when. Sensory feelings, perceptions of anxiety and potential harassment, the need for quiet and stillness, where friends are likely to be, and cost, all shape the spaces they move through swiftly and those where they pause and 'moor' for a while. Broader contexts of privatised public spaces, welfare cuts and social care restructuring, all seep 'translocally' in to the city (Andrews, 2018), making people feel anxious and uncertain. People are fearful, but a discourse of hate crime should not dominate the account.

4.4 'Sometimes you bump into people you know': encounters in the city

Encounters are the way we build an understanding of, in this case, the city, our place within it, and the make-up of the city itself. There has been much geographical work on everyday encounters in increasingly diverse societies (e.g. Valentine, 2008). Relational approaches place a heavy emphasis on encounters, and their embodied and emotional nature, what Hall and Wilton (2017) describe as how people 'move and are moved by another' (729). Who participants saw, spoke to, and avoided in the city centre, was key in shaping their experience, their senses of anxiety and

comfortableness with being present, and their engagement with the city. For some, as noted above, it was the number of people, with too many and too few causing anxiety.

She spoke of her anxiety and panic attacks. She did seem quite stressed and looked around as we walked along [street name] ... Emma doesn't like to be in crowds, prefers being in places in the city where there are fewer people (Walk, Emma)

For the participants, who they might meet as they moved through the city was an issue of interest and concern. Most travel into and across the city on their own, and those that do not attend a disability support group tend to spend a lot of time alone (Power, 2013). Occasionally, they would meet or see by chance someone they know, and welcome this.

John: Sometimes you bump into people you know

Int: Is that nice?

John: Yes (FG2)

Most of the time, however, there were few direct encounters with others. People did report interactions with shop and café workers – generally reported to be 'nice' and 'okay' (FG1). It has been argued that such brief or fleeting encounters can, if repeated, be significant for disabled people, as they build familiarity and trust (Bigby and Wiesel, 2011). Others have contested this, emphasising the importance of ongoing, meaningful connections (Valentine and Sadgrove, 2012, in Botterill, 2018).

The more common non-direct encounters were often characterised by a sense of uneasiness. As noted above, several participants were anxious about the presence of young people, even though many had never been harassed by them.

Some young lads walk by us. Angela ignores them, although AO later says she was looking at everyone warily. I ask Angela about groups of young people, and how she feels when they pass by. She says she finds them a bit scary, but has never been shouted at by them (Walk, Angela)

In addition, echoing the findings of McClimens et al. (2014), participants avoided other groups: people begging for money, drug/alcohol users (or those perceived to be), and those asking for company, charity and religious groups 'sign-ups'.

Asked Michael if there are people he avoids in the city centre. He said people asking for money, beggars and others. He didn't like this, and avoided them or said 'no, thanks' (Walk, Michael)

She doesn't like it when people ask her for money (she referred to beggars and 'Big Issue' magazine sellers) or try and stop her to sell gas or electricity; she just walks by and ignores them. ... When asked if she felt safe, she mentioned 'druggies' and people 'asking you for stuff' (Walk, Angela)

Interacting with groups of young people and those asking for money made people feel uneasy, and in some cases anxious and threatened. These 'frictions' constrain people's movement through

public spaces in the city (Cresswell, 2014, in Botterill, 2018), and in some cases lead to self-exclusion: if John sees people who for him are a 'sign of trouble', he will immediately get the bus back home (Walk, John).

On the walks, much time was spent discussing and avoiding those (noted above) who they understood as posing an embodied or emotional threat. However, there was also much talk of people they knew and, crucially, who knew *them*, at the destinations they frequented – the library, the disability support group, and workplaces. Such regular, positive encounters were very important for people's experience of and sense of place in the city.

Sophie knows the staff at the library ... She enjoys spending time there (Walk, Sophie, AO)

Andrew feels safe at [disability support group] and waves at the man on the desk as we pass (Walk, Andrew, AO)

Many spoke of how the staff at the museum and the swimming pool were very welcoming and nice to them (FG1). Wilson (2016) emphasises the value of 'active meaning-making' encounters, where people get to know each other through an activity rather than simply occupying the same space (Botterill, 2018). More informally, several commented how they had got to know the cleaners in the shopping centres, and the newspaper sellers at their temporary stands on the street.

Emma mentioned the newspaper sellers, who she has got to know; she sees them as a place of safety if ever she felt unsafe ... a friendly face, people she can talk to and trust (Walk, Emma)

Becoming known is a potential positive outcome of spending time in the city (Wiesel and Bigby, 2014). A person's place and status – the feeling of what it means to be them and their sense of belonging – in the city emerges out of repeated encounters, sometimes in unexpected places and with unexpected allies. Andrew has a favourite café he always visits.

He says he doesn't go to [café names], but does go to the [café name] that sells coffee and food. He says he knows the man there. When we reach [café name], the man inside spots Andrew and gives him a wave. I ask Andrew if it is nice to be remembered by the man, he says it is, he likes going there (Walk, Andrew, AO)

In another example, those who attend the day centre got to know a busker who plays the guitar near an underpass they often use to access the city centre. They said he is friendly and doesn't ask them for money (FG3); his presence and the social interaction helps many of them to feel confident to use the underpass. Such sites are normally seen as risky with the potential for harassment (Fig.2), but as this example shows, it is not necessarily the case. How people feel and the nature of social relations are always emergent, 'onflowing' as people encounter and respond to one another, and, if repeated, become embedded (Andrews, 2018). Gardner (2011), in a study of older people's neighbourhood networks, argues for the value of 'natural' interactions in 'third places' (such as cafés) and 'transitory zones' (like underpasses), in providing senses of belonging, especially if they are repeated and become a 'normal' part of everyday life.

The participants spend a lot of time on their own, and many experience anxiety when moving around the city; uncertain about encountering certain groups of people, they often avoid contact with others (Bates and Davies, 2004; McClimens et al., 2014). Those they do know in more formal spaces – the library and the disability support group – and those they get to know informally

– café staff, newspaper sellers and buskers – provide a set of relations to support them as they spend time in the city. However, these valued informal supports, increasingly important as care and support services are closed or scaled back (Power and Hall, 2017), are thin in coverage, temporary and fragile, and often not appropriately resourced to support people with learning disabilities.

In their encounters in the city centre, the negative social relations participants experienced would not be placed on the 'continuum of violence' (Hollomotz, 2013). Often it was about being looked at in a way that made one feel uncomfortable, in many cases it was simply being ignored. Crucially, however, this was not the whole story. There were also relations and places in which people felt comfortable and safe, and became known and got to know others. An alternative city of welcoming spaces and people, and of opportunities for inclusion and belonging, is being forged by everyday pro-active engagement and determination.

5. Conclusion

In this paper we have sought to develop a critique of the dominant discourse of disability and, by extension, other hate crimes, drawing on a relational interpretation. Disabled people do experience harassment and violence, and fear of potential targeting causes fear and anxiety. However, as the evidence has shown, far more commonly people are subject to low-level microaggressions, and often ignoring and indifference, as they navigate the city. The paper has demonstrated these experiences are in the majority of cases not individually-targeted acts, but rather the emergent product of the mobility, presence and encounters of, in this study, people with learning disabilities in the city. There is a geography of hate incidents and fear (as the mapping illustrated); however, it is a dynamic geography, as disabled and non-disabled people, and micro, local and wider contexts, come together in assemblages of bodies, emotions, and spaces. For hate

incidents and microaggressions, in relation to disability and other 'protected characteristics', to be better understood, studies need to examine in detail the who, what, where, and how, of these assemblages (Hall, 2018). Certain forms of assemblage may make incidents more likely, but crucially it is not inevitable that they will occur (Hall and Wilton, 2017). This shift from a discourse of individual targeting and a geography of hate, to a dynamic unfolding or emergence of encounters and experiences, is a significant contribution to the hate crime debate.

Disabled people in their everyday lives are moving through the city, and as they do so are negotiating physical, emotional and sensory, and socio-political contexts. Through their repeated traverses and many hours spent in the city, participants developed a nuanced sense of the contours of 'friction' and 'ease' for their presence and movement (Cresswell, 2014, in Botterill, 2018). Such a perspective is important, as it challenges the victim-centred focus of hate crime studies, emphasising instead the agency and desire of disabled people to be included in the city. The empowering method of walking interviews adopted also recognised how many disabled people are increasingly determining their own lives, as independent living is encouraged and services are cut. A relational approach also highlights how disabled people, in their actions and encounters, contribute to the ongoing making of the city; for example, their presence in quiet spaces highlights the importance of such sites for others in the city.

A relational interpretation of hate crime does, however, recognise how attitudes and actions towards disabled people in local spaces are shaped by wider contexts. The notion of assemblage can suggest an even and equal space of possibility, yet (of course) social landscapes are commonly striated by discrimination (Botterill, 2018). The study has shown that the city remains a difficult place for disabled people to be present within. The design, management and commodification of city spaces, means that constant mobility, stimulation and consumption are prioritised over accessibility, stillness, and public spaces. This is exacerbated by welfare benefit

reductions, cuts to support services, and broader ‘uncaring social relations’ (Ettlinger forthcoming, in Petrova, 2018). Disabled people are often now in precarious positions – more present in city spaces, but at the same time increasingly exposed to hostile attitudes. That their experiences of this hostility are commonly microaggressions of comments and indifference, rather than harassment and violence, can mean that these experiences are understood to be ‘ordinary’, even condoned.

Being safe in the city and feeling confident to report hate incidents are the markers of success for the victim-centred strategy of the police and criminal justice system in the UK (CPS, 2018), and other countries where similar legislation exists (Hall, 2013). Whilst empowering people to recognise and report harassment, and addressing people’s safety is vital, the emphasis on individual acts and the broader prominence of the term ‘hate’ has, it can be argued, distracted us from enduring and very damaging, yet tacitly accepted, structural discrimination and exclusion. Further, whilst disabled people need to be safe from harassment and violence, a discourse of protection can mean that proactive and preventative responses do not receive the same attention. As the study has shown, people with learning disabilities want to feel a sense of belonging in the city. In searching for inclusionary spaces, such as the museum and library, and welcoming encounters, with café owners and buskers, the participants were seeking to make the city a landscape of positive experiences and spaces. Their creative acts of determined inclusion are evidence of people ‘insisting on their continuing ‘thereness’ ... and so exemplifying the principles of equal treatment they are demanding of public institutions’ (Butler, 2012, 167). In an era of austerity and negative attitudes towards disability, such actions can, as Hall and Wilton (2017) argue, ‘shape and reshape the character of specific settings’ (733), altering the dynamic of spaces in the city, to challenge prejudicial attitudes and generate welcoming environments. The evident value of ‘safe havens’ and ‘moorings’, and meaningful and sustained encounters with others, for

people with learning disabilities, can be referenced in relation to other marginalised groups in the city.

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