Everyday hate and affective possibility: disabled people’s negotiations of space, place and identity

Abstract

Although a universal conceptualisation of disability hate crime does not exist, it is widely agreed that hate ‘hurts’ more than other types of crime. This paper explores the diverse affects of hate crime and the various ways that these experiences can harm those who are targeted. Moving beyond this, this article attends to the diverse ways that the affects of hate can come to shape disabled people’s everyday navigations of their surrounding social worlds. In doing so, it opens up a space for recognizing the unique ways that people navigate, negotiate, and resist experiences of hate within their everyday lives. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to introduce a framework for thinking about ‘everyday hate and affective possibility’ within the everyday lives of disabled people. Drawing upon findings from a recently conducted research project, this article suggests that experiences of hate crime can open up particularly informed ways of knowing and being in the world.

Key words: Hate crime; affect; affective capacity; emotions; everyday life; oppression

# Introduction

The relationship between disabled people and space has been fundamental to changing how we think about disability. Central to this, the social model of disability considers the production of disability within its surrounding context (Oliver, 1983). In doing so, it offers alternative ways of thinking about the production of disability within particular spaces, as opposed to residing within an individual (Mallett & Runswick-Cole, 2014). While impairment is understood as an individual attribute of the mind or body, disability refers to the ‘disadvantage or restriction of activity’ (UPIAS, 1976) imposed by the normative and inaccessible organisation of society and social space. And while the ‘organization of society’ refers to a whole host of structural, political, and bureaucratic processes (Oliver, Sapey and Thomas, 2012), the organization of physical space has been fundamentally important. Such barriers ‘prevent disabled people’s ease of access to a range of places, and are implicated in denying disabled people the right to determine where they want to go’ (Imrie, 2004, p. 279) From this understanding, it is clear to see how the physical and symbolic organisation of space can mean that certain bodies become excluded.

The social model of disability challenges the perception of disabled people as individual victims of their own ‘deficits’ and instead as ‘collective victims’ to an oppressive society (Oliver, 1990). Such an approach provides an ‘alternative understanding of the experience and reality of disability which ‘has given disabled people a basis on which to organise themselves collectively’ (Thomas, 2007, p. 58). Indeed, modelling disability in this way has enabled the establishment of unity, political strategy, and collective resistance (Beckett & Campbell, 2015). Collectivity has been fundamental to disrupting traditional conceptualisations of disability as individual deficit. However, the desire to position disability within the confines of society has generated increasing fear when talking about the body (Goodley et al, 2018) and the feelings and injuries that exist beyond the surface of the skin (Morris, 1996). Therefore, calls to ‘bring bodies back into disability studies’ have ‘created opportunities for dialogue between disability studies and the sociology of the body’ (Hughes, 2009, p. 400). While it is imperative to attend to the ways in which some bodies are pushed out of physical spaces, it is equally important to recognise that these exclusions occur beyond the surface of the body. That is, the way in which bodies are able to reside within public space can have much deeper affective impacts.

As spaces are organized in categorical and hierarchical ways, it is important to recognise that these exclusions can affect bodies in different ways. Indeed, bodies are moved by these configurations of space, and aligned to or against one another. In this way, space is not only ‘a passive container of life, but also an active constituent of social relations’ (Kitchin, 1998, p. 344). While there are material consequences of disablement, such as exclusion and marginalization, embodied materialities are also at play. Attending to the way in which the spatial configuration of bodies is lived and felt, psycho-emotional disablism acknowledges these ‘inside’ matters. That is, there is a recursive relationship between disability, identity, and space, whereby the way we come to think about ourselves is shaped by the spaces that we are situated within (Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2015; Imrie and Edwards, 2007). From this perspective, it is not possible to think about the body and space as entirely separate entities, but intimately intertwined with, and in affect of, one another. Key to this is the understanding that the physical and symbolic organisation of space is also felt internally (Reeve, 2020). Carol Thomas (2004, p. 40) argues that:

‘The oppression that disabled people experience operates on the ‘inside’ as well as on the ‘outside’: it is about being made to feel of lesser value, worthless, unattractive, or disgusting as well it is about ‘outside’ matters’

Taking these thoughts and feelings into account is important due to how they shape the ways in which people feel about themselves (Bê, 2019), both as an individual and in relation to their surrounding space.

This paper explores the ways in which disabled people are affected by experiences of hate. I propose that a consideration of the affects of hate can help to understand the way in which hate moves between, and comes to be ‘stuck’ upon particular bodies. I outline the relevance of affect theory to the study of hate crime and in particular, to further our appreciation of the way in which experiences of hate can shape what bodies *do* and can *become.* Indeed, I propose the framework ‘everyday hate and affective possibility’ to consider how experiences of hate can shape individuals’ affective capacity in both limited and enhanced ways. Of importance here, is the need to consider the ways that the affective capacity of bodies is not fixed or determined by experiences of oppression.

# Hate crime ‘hurts’ more than other crimes

Hate crime operates within the process of identity negotiation. Within this process, the movement of hate between bodies constitutes particular relationships between the ‘hater’ and the ‘hated’ by ‘firming up or walling off their boundaries within, between, and around bodies’ (Rinaldi et al, 2020, p. 38-39). Thus, these crimes are violent expressions that do important boundary-work; policing boundaries, and reinforcing power inequalities, between identity groups (Perry, 2001, 2003). Drawing upon the work of Perry, Chakraborti (2015a, p. 15) defines hate crimes as:

‘acts of violence and intimidation directed towards marginalised communities, and are therefore synonymous with the power dynamics present within modern societies that reinforce the “othering” of those who are seen as different’

These structural accounts of hate crime recognise the underlying structural and societal discourses that have caused particular groups to be targeted (Mason-Bish, 2013). Indeed, divisionary constructions are not entirely random, but predicated upon the wider cultural trend to homogenise certain ‘others’ as a threat to the moral or economic social order of society (Burch, 2020). From this perspective, we can understand hate crime as part of a wider process of scapegoating, whereby perceived or real strain is attributed to ‘others’ (Walters, 2011). Such crimes arise as a response to ‘the fear that Others will encroach upon dominant group identity *and* socio-economic security that fuels the climate of prejudice’ (Hall, 2015, p. 77). Imperative in developing this climate of prejudice, is that the relationship between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is firmly established.

Structural explanations of hate crime help to recast accountability onto perpetrators and their surrounding social context, rather than individuals themselves. Indeed, we are called to question the types of cultural narratives and structures that create ready environments for hostility. By considering the broader structures of oppression that are fundamental to the hierarchical make-up of society, it is possible to consider hate crime as less concerned with individuals as it is the boundaries between groups. Ahmed (2014, p. 49), for example, explains that whilst hate might be directed to a particular figure, ‘it tends to do so by aligning the particular with the general.’ Thus, ‘hate cannot be found in one figure, but works to create the outline of different figures or objects of hate’ (Ahmed, 2014, p. 440). These outlines become impressed upon the bodies of those who are marginalized as hate moves between them. As a result, whilst the violence of hate is felt immediately by the targeted individual, this contact sets off a chain of affects to the wider identity community.

The harms of hate crime are layered. Hate crimes have ‘spatial’ and ‘terroristic’ impacts upon individuals as well as their community (Iganski, 2008). Defined as ‘message crimes,’ hate crimes extend a warning to all members of a targeted community that they are not welcome and are at risk (Perry, 2015). In this way, the circulation of hate is bound to the formation of space, and the way that certain bodies are read within these spaces. The circulation of hate thus comes to shape how space is occupied by ‘organiz[ing] subjects and spaces with the purpose of excluding, expunging, and ending non-normative living’ (Rinaldi et al, 2020, p. 48). Continued examination of the harms of hate and hate crime are crucial to strengthening the case for effective legislative support and wider attitudinal changes. At the same time, it is important to recognise the ways that these harms come to be employed by disabled people within their everyday lives as navigational tools. That is, it is important to consider the affective possibilities of everyday hate. A turn to affect theory explores how bodies are shaped by their surrounding space, as well as shape and distort the make-up of that space.

# 2.2 Affective possibility in the context of everyday life

Affect theory engages with processes of becoming (Wetherell, 2015). While there have been a number of approaches to understanding affect theory, the works of Gorton (2007), Ahmed (2014) and Wetherell (2015) have been particularly influential in this paper. In ‘The Cultural Politics of Emotion,’ Ahmed (2014) describes the ways in which hate moves between, and becomes impressed upon, particular bodies. From this perspective, an emotion is not a feeling that one has, but is a feeling that moves between bodies and creates connections and orientations between them. As emotions move, some bodies surface together, whilst others are surfaced as a distinct ‘other’ (Ahmed, 2004). This movement is not entirely random, but is subject to the time and space that bodies are situated within, or cast outside of. We can therefore understand that feelings, such as hate, are always negotiated in relation to the bodies that they move between, and the spaces within which this movement occurs. Such negotiations are experienced through the body (Gorton, 2007) and constitute a range of affects. For example, we can understand the ways in which the spatial and symbolic positioning of disabled people outside of particular spaces can affect their sense of belonging. From this perspective, hateful encounters are more than their discursive or physical nature; they exist (and are reinforced) through the relationality of bodies as together or against one another (Rinaldi et al, 20120).

Attending to the ‘everyday’ requires an engagement with the way in which ordinary spaces and encounters are shaped by the movement of emotions and signs between bodies. A focus upon space within the public domain asks questions about those bodies that are not perceived to fit in, and what this feels like (Fanghanel, 2020). To ask these questions attends to the affective capacity of bodies; how our capacity to *be* and to *do* is shaped by the spaces that we move within. By understanding encounters of hate as relationally produced, we can also consider how these encounters come to be *lived* and *felt* under the skin of the body. Hate crimes affectively shape the spaces around them, and the way that different bodies are able to *be* within them. Put by Willis and Cromby (2020, p. 5), ‘affects simultaneously involve bodies, things, and the space-times in which they are situated’ and are thus interactional within their unique contexts. In this way, the focus upon experiences of everyday hate calls for an examination of the affective capacity of ‘hated bodies’ (Ahmed, 2014) within the ordinary spaces of our everyday lives. In this paper, I explore the affective possibility of disabled people as they negotiate their surrounding worlds. Such an approach asks questions about what our bodies can *do* (Latour, 2004 cited in Blackman and Venn, 2010) within the times and contexts that they occupy. To do so requires intimate consideration of the relationality of bodies, objects, and spaces as equally disruptive and entangled.

Asking what the body can do ‘shifts our focus to consider how bodies are always thoroughly entangled processes, and importantly defined by their capacities to affect and be affected.’ (Blackman & Venn, 2010, p. 9). This question attends to the emotionality and materiality of uncertain, unfixed, and spontaneous encounters within everyday lives. It is concerned with our ‘margin of manoeuvrability’ (Massumi, 2015) whereby our bodies are subject to affecting and shaping others, whilst simultaneously opening ourselves up to being affected. Emotions move between bodies through the spoken word, body language and surrounding affective atmosphere, which changes the ‘becoming’ of bodies in a myriad of ways (Appuhamilage, 2020). Importantly then, paying attention to affective capacity opens up a space to recognise the ways that the navigation of everyday space represents a unique and embodied way of knowing and being in the world – that is, affective possibility. Attending to what Wetherall et al (2020) term as ‘acts of quiet resistance,’ it is possible to consider the different ways that disabled people come to negotiate the spaces around them. This has informed my theoretical framework for this paper, and in particular, my call to pay close attention to ‘everyday hate and affective possibility.’ That is, how disabled people shape, and are shaped by, their encounters of everyday hate within the ordinary spaces that they occupy. This framework continues a focus upon the harms of hate and oppression more generally, whilst opening exploring the educational opportunities that such encounters provoke (Bê, 2019). Such an approach invites us to think about affective possibility as an opportunity for sharing disabled people’s unique knowledge of the world as a means of shaping future encounters.

# The Research Project

The research findings presented in this paper are based upon a research project that was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, [grant number] at [institution withheld for peer review]. The author received funding between 2017 and 2020, and all fieldwork took place between September 2018-August 2019. Following ethical approval granted by [\*], a total of 69 disabled people took part in this research, participating in group workshops and/or semi-structured interviews. Participants were recruited through six disability organizations located in the Midlands and North-West of England and included disabled people’s organizations (DPOs), peer-support groups, and a disability charity. These organizations were selected based upon their interest in disability-related issues and/or the provision of hate crime reporting services. The sample universe between these organizations was broad, and included members who identified as having a learning disability (which was the language adopted by participants), and/or a physical impairment. Participants were aged between 26 and ‘56 and over.’ 37 participants identified as male, 30 as female, one trans-masculine and one non-binary. Most participants identified as White British, yet some identified as British Asian, Mixed-Race, White Irish, Pakistani and Mixed-White. 43 participants identified as Heterosexual, four as bisexual, seven as ‘gay’ or ‘lesbian’, one as asexual and 14 did not disclose their sexual orientation.

During early conversations with gatekeepers, I was keen to present my credibility as a researcher able to work in a flexible and open way. Building and maintaining a collaborative relationship with gatekeepers was therefore crucial to ensuring that the flow of research upheld this (Turner & Almack, 2017). Having briefed staff members and gatekeepers about the project, they provided support to participants when completing informed consent. While, in doing so, it helped to ensure that participants understood the parameters of, and their responsibilities to the research, it similarly helped staff members to understand the nature of conversations that would be taking place. This understanding was important in order to work together to create a safe and open research space. Following initial interest, I met with members during one of their weekly meetings. This gave me the opportunity to explain the research project, answer questions, and get to know members on a more personal level. I was able to *be* in their space as an active participant rather than strictly researcher. The boundaries between ‘researcher’ and ‘researched’ became more fluid (Schubotz, 2020; Watson, 2012) and I felt more comfortable being led by participants. This preliminary meeting also allowed me to gain a sense of the group dynamics and consider the most appropriate ways of incorporating fieldwork into the general practice of the group.

Research took place within the usual meeting spaces of the organisations to ensure familiarity, accessibility, and a strong support network if required. Fieldwork was comprised of three stages: arts-based workshops, semi-structured interviews, and reflective workshops. During the first stage, I asked participants to create ‘mood-boards’ about their experiences and understandings of hate crime. The first workshop was guided by the very crafting of these mood-boards, and the accompanying dialogue between participants (Clark-Ibanez 2007). Participants were able to use this activity as an opportunity to generate knowledge together as experts of their own experiences (Wang et al 2017). Following this, I held another workshop where participants were asked to share these mood-boards with the rest of the group and reflect upon their meaning. In doing so, these workshops encouraged participants to author their own stories and trouble normative misconceptions about their lives (Richards et al 2019). Moreover, the conversational nature of workshops meant that participants could take breaks, and/or change the topic of conversation at any time.

During stage two, semi-structured interviews provided an opportunity to build upon this in a more intimate setting. Moving away from an approach that objectifies participants as ‘epistemologically passive and mere vessels of data’ (Elliott, 2005, p. 22), I consciously opened up the interview to flow in the directions and avenues defined by participants (Shah, 2006). At the same time, individual interviews allowed me to negotiate the research space sensitively so that participants could ‘express, address, or manage their emotions and, in doing so, regain a sense of personal control’ (Mitchell & Irvine, 2008, p. 36). Unlike the workshop setting, I was able to allow for extended periods of silence where needed, and move to the rhythm set by each participant. Finally, stage three involved a final workshop to collectively reflect upon the preliminary research findings. Following my own initial coding of data, I created six concept maps on the following themes: understandings of hate; types of hate encounters; consequences of hate; locations of hate; explanations of why hate exists; and, approaches to challenging hate. These concept maps provided a basis for the final workshop by facilitating discussion around some of the identified themes and questions. During workshops, I was able to add to these concept maps based upon the discussions between participants which informed the next stages of data processing and analysis.

* 1. Data Analysis

Workshops and interviews were audio recorded and transcribed following ‘true verbatim’ style which documented ‘word-for-word’ reproduction of verbal data (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006). Data coding and transcribing was conducted simultaneously. Once I had conducted and transcribed the first set of workshops, I familiarized myself with the data. Through literal reading, I broadly considered the dataset and recognized particular words and themes relating to the research questions (Mason, 1996). I produced a loose and flexible coding framework that I applied and developed according to the remaining dataset. Following this, I transcribed interviews as they were conducted and established preliminary codes that reflected both my own reading and prominent discussion points within the data. In this sense, coding categories were both inductively and thematically constructed (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Once all data from stage one and two had been transcribed, I re-read data and established a range of parent and child nodes using the software analysis system, Nvivo. Based upon these, I defined six key questions to further explore in stage three, and constructed concept maps for the final workshop according to these, as described above.

Thematic analysis guided my analytical framework by asking about how data spoke to the initial research questions. Moreover, thematic analysis asked new questions of the research, focusing upon the codes that had gained significance throughout the research process. Thematic analysis was chosen due to the ‘theoretical freedom’ that it enabled by providing a ‘flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 78). Indeed, following this final workshop, I re-read much of the data and re-thought many thematic categories as a result. My engagement with the data in this way, moving within and between coding categories and themes, reflected the organic nature of thematic analysis.

In this paper, I focus upon the affective possibilities that were described by participants throughout the research process. I include direct quotes and reflections offered by a small number of participants under a pseudonym that they chose for themselves. Attending to affective possibility entails an engagement with the ways that participants’ affective capacity was seen to be both enhanced and limited. Specifically, I consider the ways in which hate crime is suggested to ‘hurt’ more than other types of crimes by calling attention to how these experiences shape people’s sense of identity and self-confidence. Next, I explore the impacts upon how participants’ felt navigating social spaces, and in particular, how experiences of hate informed their sense of belonging. Finally, I draw attention to the unique ways that people negotiate their experiences of hate, and in turn, develop a range of resistive strategies that are employed within their everyday lives.

# 4. Research Findings

## 4.1 ‘You used to be proud of who you are, now you’re more in yourself’: self-identity and confidence

Many participants described their experiences of hate crime as impeding their sense of identity and self-confidence, particularly due to the accumulation of ‘everyday’ hate. Indeed, for a number of participants, hate crime was not an out of the ordinary experience, but ‘part of the package’ (Francis Emerson). Lynn described the accumulative impact of hate as ‘a kind of battering’ and Pete as ‘an endless spiral’ which could ‘drag you down’ (Elvis), ‘knock you back’ (Betty), and increase one’s ‘self-hatred’ (Harry). Such descriptions signify a process of internalisation which is sustained by their repeated exposure to hateful incidents. We can read these reflections as examples of psycho-emotional disablism, whereby the accumulation of disablist encounters are internalised by those targeted (Thomas, 1999). Such encounters shape ‘what people can *be,* as well as affecting what they can *do* as a consequence’ (Thomas, 2004, p. 38). Indeed, the internalisation of oppression shaped participants’ sense of self and belonging within the spaces around them. Lynn noted her lack of self-worth, describing that, if ‘people treat you as if you’re not worth it, well of course, after a while you start to think they may be right.’ Similarly, Alex reflected upon the ‘degrading’ nature of hate incidents which ‘make you feel bad about yourself and very small.’ According to Francis Emerson, these impacts were long-lasting:

Words can stick around and they can stay in your mind. Eat away at your self-confidence, they can give you anxiety, they can cause mental health problems … Words are powerful, words can manipulate people, words can change people.

These reflections illustrate the long-lasting violence of oppression as the internalisation of hate comes to shape one’s sense of self identity, worth and behaviour in present and future encounters. According to Pete, negative attitudes towards disability, and expectations of him as a wheelchair user, had impeded his self-confidence:

they’re telling you what you can’t do, so you do start looking at yourself thinking oh I can’t do that, then you start thinking, why should I bother doing anything?

Similarly, Harry described the accumulation of ‘throwaway comments’ which ‘drilled’ into his mind that he was unable to have and maintain sexual relationships with others. While the labelling of these comments as ‘throwaway’ presents a degree of insignificance, the internalisation of these and shaping of his own aspirations suggests otherwise. Indeed, characterised by the somewhat aggressive and repetitive act of ‘drilling,’ such comments were described to have become ‘stuck’ or ‘lodged’ within his own sense of self. Like many other participants, then, the internalisation of hate ‘leads to the enclosure or sealing of the other’s body within a figure of hate’ (Ahmed, 2014, p. 57). That is, identity risks becoming felt and lived through the negative assumptions of others.

Other participants made sense of these beliefs as ‘markers (Sapphire) and ‘scars’ (Robbie) that imprint upon the surface of the skin. Such descriptions demonstrate how experiences of hate can come to impress upon particular bodies. They present how our bodies are shaped by the injuries of our experiences and how ‘scars are traces of those injuries that persist in the healing or stitching of the present’ (Ahmed, 2014, p. 202). These ‘scars’ and ‘markers’ operate in relational ways, and can change according to how we feel, where we are, and who we are with. As our minds and bodies respond to *being* within different spaces and at different times, these scars might become particularly marked and distinct, or less pronounced. As Ahmed (2014, p. 57) suggests, ‘the “doing” of hate is not simply “done” in the moment of its articulation’ but continues to circulate and take shape relational to the temporal and spatial context that bodies are located within. We can thus envision the ‘doing’ of hate as an ongoing circulation of emotion which moves within the mind and body as a chain of affects (Ahmed, 2014). The internalisation of hate described by participants, is therefore a relational process whereby the worlds of the other figure are made and unmade according to their spatial and temporal location. For participants, this ‘undoing’ of identity occurred as they made sense of how they felt about themselves and their sense of belonging within different spaces.

## 4.2 ‘What are you doing here?’ being and belonging in different spaces

A number of participants reflected upon how they felt occupying different spaces. Indeed, the organization of space ‘constructs bodies and offers bodily possibilities and constraints’ (Freund, 2001 p. 694). Thus, the movement of bodies within social spaces is not simply a matter of materiality, but symbolically shaped by how this residence *feels.* For many participants in this research, spatiality became a particular issue where their very presence was marked out as problematic . In the following section, I explore the way in which a variety of accessible spaces came to be experienced as a place of conflict for many disabled people. In doing so, I ask questions about the way in which the physical and symbolic make-up of accessible spaces marks boundaries around those bodies who do, and do not, belong there.

Joe, Alex and Arjun, all wheelchair users, shared experiences of being confronted by other members of the public when asserting their right to use the accessible space on a bus. For Joe, numerous experiences of being shouted at by people who didn’t want to ‘give up their seats’ meant he now avoided this form of public transport. These experiences, for Hall (2018), reflect a socio-spatial relationship within which competition over space and resources has been exacerbated. Moreover, the contestation of these spaces was suggested to be heightened for those not immediately recognised as having an impairment.

Assumptions about who does and does not deserve to occupy accessible spaces are based upon a cultural imagination of disability that attempts to distinguish those who are ‘disabled enough’ to be granted access to accessible spaces (Kattari et al, 2018; Lightman et al, 2009). Put by Titchkosky (2011, p. 3), access ‘is an interpretive relation between bodies’ and a construct that is, therefore, made and re-made according to the meaning we impose upon it. Thus, in the same way that the category of disability is continually re-interpreted, so too is the notion of access. For example, Brandon and Taylor, both individuals who identified as having a learning disability, expressed significant anxieties about travelling on the bus. In particular, they noted their lack of trust that bus drivers would support them if they were challenged by other travellers. Similarly, Francis Emerson, who self-identified as bisexual, transmasculine, Autistic and of a mixed-white British ethnic origin, reflected upon his experiences of using accessible seating on the bus:

being young and disabled, sometimes if you sit down in a disability seat and someone old gets on, and people will be pretty nasty and biting sometimes if you don’t move.

The reading of Francis Emerson’s body as both young and not ‘visibly’ disabled marks him as less-deserving. He also believed that his weight contributed to such a reading:

People notice the stick, and the walking and my weight, and they connect those. Basically they’re just like, you need to lose weight, you’re fat

Here, Francis Emerson highlights the assumptions that people make based upon the different characteristics of his appearance. Such assumptions similarly signify what is left out. That is, body size and age are immediately read, while impairment remains invisible. This reflection demonstrates the way in which the normative gaze comes to sit heavily on the surface of ‘fat bodies’ (Rothblum & Solovay, 2009). During these moments, the social pairing of fatness and disability is interpreted as a sign of moral failings (Mollow, 2015) predicated upon the assumption that fatness is an inherently bad choice that leads to ‘disability.’ Indeed, we can relate these reflections to the recent work of Rinaldi et al (2020) on ‘mapping’ fat hatred. In this work, the authors employ Ahmed’s theory of affect to explore ‘how fat hatred circulates as an affective economy: how it flows across, attaches to, and comes to define or value different bodies.’ From this understanding, a perceived to be ‘disabled’ body will evoke a different judgment and narrative than a body that is perceived to be both ‘disabled’ and ‘fat.’ Here, the circulation of hate is informed by the physicality of space, and how it both allows and prevents bodies to be, and move in, different ways.

These simplistic readings of the body were also described by Doria Skadinski, who commented upon her anxiety when occupying accessible spaces on the bus due to her weight, mental health difficulties, and ‘invisible’ impairment:

everyday things for me that are really stressful are getting on a bus. So when I get on the bus I sit at the front, I sit in the disabled seat and people are looking at me like why is she there? There’s nothing wrong with you.

While Doria Skadinski identifies as having a number of impairments, the statement ‘there’s nothing wrong with you,’ articulates an assumption that is predicated upon the culturally symbolic understanding of disability as a physical impairment. According to Pritchard (2020), such interactions are underpinned by a hierarchy of impairments which constitutes a level of need and deservingness.

Another space where participants’ sense of belonging had been challenged by simplistic readings of their bodies were toilet facilities. For example, Francis Emerson shared his anxiety when using public bathrooms due to the ‘paranoia’ and ‘paralysing fear’ of being questioned. In order to avoid these interactions, Francis Emerson described significant attempts at self-regulating his bodily functions, an experience similarly noted by Doria Skadinski. For her, toilet facilities were anxiety-inducing due to her invisible impairments and fear of using shared cubicle spaces. Such concerns have again received increasing attention in recent years in relation to discussions about who should, and should not, occupy them. Concerns of confrontation thus add another barrier to the difficulty that many disabled people face when finding and using accessible toilet facilities that are readily available and fit for purpose (Jones et al, 2020). Indeed, these experience resonate with Slater and Jones’ (2018) findings that the policing of gender and disability within toilet settings adds fuel to both transphobia and disablism in the lives of trans and/or disabled people. These symbolic exclusions inform how people come to experience and navigate their surrounding world.

The avoidance of mundane facilities, such as the toilet, can contribute to feelings of worthlessness and exclusion (Slater & Jones, 2018) and are felt beyond the immediate context of an incident, impacting many more members of the ‘victims’ social group (Craig, 2003). Evident in the reflections of Francis Emerson and Doria Skadinski, risk of confrontation and abuse sends the message that these spaces are not for *them.* Emotions thus move within these spaces to surface collective bodies as excluded and unwelcome, producing what Perry & Alvi (2011) call, ‘distal victims.’ What ‘sticks’ comes to shape how we anticipate social encounters within particular spaces, and therefore, how we do, or do not, situate ourselves within them.Whether this fear is based upon prior experience or the stories of others, it demonstrates a clear impressionwhereby bodies come to be felt as out-of-place. As Ahmed (2014, p.11) describes, ‘what moves us, what makes us feel, is also that which holds us in place, or gives us a dwelling.’ That is, our feelings associated with specific spaces, such as toilets, determine how we come to be held within this and other spaces, both in the present and in the future.

Lack of belonging was similarly experienced by many participants in social spaces, such as pubs and clubs. While these spaces offer an opportunity to meet new people (Hubbard, 2007), their navigation can require additional labour in order to move successfully. In particular, these spaces can carry additional risks due to their typical night-time temporality. Not simply a case of visibility, a variety of emotions and practices gain traction during the night, which may not be as prominent during the day (Williams, 2008 cited in Liempt et al, 2014). In the context of nightlife, and specifically, spaces such as pubs and clubs, we can consider the way in which consumption of alcohol might influence behaviour. Typically defined as ‘drinkscapes’ these specific sites of urban night-life can become rooted in inequalities (Wilkinson, 2017). Spatially and temporally, clubs and pubs can be tricky terrains to navigate: they are replete with ‘dangerous and unpleasant experiences’ as well as ‘pleasurable and playful ones’ (Hubbard, 2007). For example, Francis Emerson and Richard Jackson discussed the exclusion of disabled people from LGBTQ+ spaces due to the architectural design of meeting spaces and ableism assumptions about people with learning difficulties. Similarly, Harry noted the relationship between alcohol consumption and unfavourable behaviour and comments. This concern was shared by Amanda Depp, who avoided these spaces due to the relationship between alcohol consumption and hostility.

Crucially, Harry reflected upon the ‘throwaway lines’ he often endured whilst using these spaces as a wheelchair-user. He recalled being asked why he was in a club, and told that he should instead be in bed. Further to this, he discussed his experiences of being out with his girlfriend, who was regularly assumed to be his carer. In turn, he described being ‘driven out’ of those spaces:

It’s like every time we go out then it would be like, we’re probably gonna have to deal with it so somethings you don’t want to bother with it … It drives you out of those spaces

Pubs and bars are suggested to offer an important source of contact and belonging for many young adults (Liempt et al, 2015). While as a young adult, Harry recognised these social opportunities that pubs and clubs can offer, (Demand and Østergaard, 2007), this sense of liberty is in constant tension with the anticipation of ‘throwaway comments.’ According to Ahmed (2017, p. 122), the questioning of certain bodies in this way can ‘dislodge you from a body that you yourself feel you reside in’ which in turn, changes your relation to surrounding space. The challenge, therefore, is ‘to negotiate these pleasures and dangers, using practical knowledge of the city to avoid situations that they would rather not deal with while seeking out forms of pleasure and stimulation’ (Hubbard, 2007, p. 120). While these acts of negotiation can further enforce oppression and exclusion, we can also recognise such acts demonstrative agency. In these final sections of analysis, I move to explore the diverse ways that disabled people individually and collectively employ resistive strategies within their everyday lives. Such an approach calls for greater appreciation of the way in which experiences of hate and disablement more generally can constitute unique ways of knowing and being in the world. Moreover, it attends to the affective possibilities that can arise through the experience of everyday hate.

## 4.3 *‘*I can’t just spontaneously just go do something’: navigating spaces of hate

In her writing on the posthuman, Braidotti (2013) emphasises the humanness of mutual and unfixed becoming’s. That is, we are continually changing relations with those and the world around us. Furthering this, Goodley et al (2018, p. 203) describe how ‘our affects – and what we desire – are enacted through our mutual interdependencies and assemblages rather than as manifestations of inherent humanist emotions’. The way in which we are affected creates the possibility for different ways of being and becoming, as well as new ways of shaping the spaces around us. By applying this thinking to experiences of hate crime, it is possible to explore their affective possibility in terms of knowledge generation and the use of this knowledge to inform future interactions. This is not to dismiss the additional labour that many disabled people report, but to offer an alternative reading of them as a unique way of knowing the social world. For example, a number of participants described planning as an important strategy for avoiding hateful encounters and ensuring their wellbeing. For many, this involved navigating the ways in which, and when, they moved within different social spaces. Taylor, Doria Skadinski, and Amanda Depp avoided public transport during ‘peak’ times, where they expected services to be busier. Tone also noted that bus drivers were often less helpful during these busier periods of time. Similarly, Robbie explained his decision to go to a cinema that is both further away from his home and more expensive due to his nearby cinema attracting teenagers. And while he acknowledged that even this location was not risk-free, attending the cinema was an important part of his and his partner’s routine. Thus, Robbie’s affective possibility is enhanced due to his knowledge of social world, which he draws upon to navigate the spaces around him and engage with the activities that he enjoys.

These experiences present the unique knowledge that is generated by those who are positioned on the peripheries of society. Indeed, they call for a consideration of the diverse ways of being in, and navigating, the world around us. For many participants in this research, these past experiences have enabled them to develop a more calculated approach to navigating particular spaces, or engaging with certain encounters. Being able to choose how, where, and when to occupy different spaces shows the relationality of encounters that risk being read as solely oppressive and pre-determined. A consideration of our bodies and space as relational calls attention to understanding these navigational strategies as insightful resources that are crucial to widening our understanding of humanity (Siebers, 2015). Due to the requirement of many disabled people in navigating an inaccessible social world, disability is considered to be a body of knowledge (Siebers, 2014), within which disabled people ‘embrace complex embodiment as a means to take on unsuspected forms and to hold them in memory for the possession and use of the disability community (Siebers, 2015, p. 244). That is, through their unique navigation of, and movement within, society (physically and symbolically), disabled people generate deep understandings of their surrounding world, which can come to critically inform future encounters. In this sense, affective knowledge provides the necessary conditions for affective learning, within which, we come to make new meanings of our experiences (Semetsky, 2009).

Recognising disabled people’s uniquely situated knowledge of the social world highlights the affective possibilities of everyday hate. Indeed, ‘the emotional pain, the frustrations and humiliations’ of hate can prompt activism and agency (Davidson and Milligan, 2004 p. 524) in order to shape future encounters within our surrounding world. This affective possibility was illustrated by Doria Skadinski, who had developed an ‘accessibility plan’ which she intended to share with other disabled people:

Me and my friend spend all our time considering well where can wo go to have a drink, where can we go to eat, where do we know that people have been that are really good. So in the city we’re developing a bit of an accessibility plan around this … a plan of the city and what spaces are accessible, based on users

Based upon her own experiences, Doria Skadinski proposed an ‘accessibility plan’ as a useful tool when exploring new spaces. In doing so, an accessibility plan has the potential to disrupt an over-coded space, such as the town centre, in order to make room for bodies that have typically been marked out as other (Fanghanel, 2019). Indeed, through the sharing of knowledge, the affective possibility of other disabled people can also be imagined.

In the final section of analysis, I explore affective possibility through collective resistance by discussing the ways that participants have shared their knowledge and experiences with one another. In doing so, affective possibility becomes a collective achievement as well as something that can be enacted within the individual, everyday lives of disabled people.

## 4.4 ‘We have the knowledge, we have the experience’: Collective resistance

Despite collective organisation being part of the foundations of disability studies, little work in hate studies has explored this. However, for participants, being part of a collective organisation opened up opportunities for understanding and challenging disability hate crime. While the specificities of these different spaces offered a variety of services and opportunities, they are brought together by the possibility of enabling people to *be* and interact within, spaces outside of their own home. These social networks, whether they are established through DPOs or alternative support groups, are vital in helping disabled people to overcome isolation and exclusion from society (Disability Rights UK, 2014; Walmsley and Downer, 1997).

Identifying as part of a collective group can foster a sense of belonging and community. This mutual sense of community transcends typical identity boundaries and brings people together predicated upon the shared desire for friendship and opportunity to voice their experiences. For example, while organization three included members of a variety of ages, Sapphire explained the close connection between members due to shared understandings of disability. The emergence of greater intergenerational communication is a particular strength of DPOs and peer-support groups, who bring individuals together based upon shared experiences of impairment and/or interest, rather than age. In this way, organizations offer a space where friendships can be fostered, and supportive networks established. Indeed, the friendships that have emerged through these organizations were highly valued. For example, Sally reflected upon the ‘lovely people’ she had met within organisation five who had helped her to feel less ‘stuck’ within her own home. Lionel and Lisa expressed their enjoyment in attending organization three because it allowed them to see their friends and John recognised the therapeutic benefit of being able to talk to other people. Similarly, Fifi referred to members of organization five as her ‘family’ and Robbie described members at organization three as being part of a ‘team.’ Both of these descriptions present the strong sense of connection, intimacy and familiarity felt between members:

If we’re spending time in a disabled peer group, yeah we’ll always have talks about disability rights, always gonna happen, but sometimes we talk about what we’ve seen on TV, where we’ve been to eat and it’s nice, just ordinary conversations (Doria Skadinski)

The friendships established within peer-support groups can therefore be seen to both create new affective possibilities as well as sustain them. By creating a supportive network, these organizations and support groups harness friendships and help to create a safe community, which places experience and interest at the forefront.

Through their engagement with organizations, participants reflected upon their ability to share experiences of hate and oppression with their friends. In doing so, notions of shared oppression harnessed the strength of collective identity and community. Indeed, the closeness felt between members of DPOs and peer-support groups was not limited to group affiliation, but instead, to one another. During our workshops, there was an infectious sense of alliance, commitment, and unconditional support. In her work on the feminist manifesto, Ahmed recognises this interdependency in her belief that ‘we need each other to survive; we need to be part of each other’s survival’ (Ahmed, 2017, p. 235). The bringing together of these experiences offers the opportunity to reflect, learn, and resist in more explicit ways. For example, Shirley attributed her ability to overcome suicidal thoughts due to her friendships within organization five. In this way, these connections enhanced Shirley’s affective possibility where this had previously been restricted. Similarly, whilst both Robbie and Michael P shared difficult childhood experiences within institutional settings, their alliance with organization three had provided them with a sense of community and confidence which they were keen to pass onto others. According to Robbie, being part of organization three had changed his life, and given him the confidence ‘to put a stop to it for the next victim not to be.’ In contrast to the oppressive systems inherent within the institutions that he had previously lived within, Robbie like many others, had established a purpose within the organizational setting.

While it is important not to reduce identity to disability, the experiences of participants show that this is one of many ways to access support and develop meaningful relationships. Put by Harry:

There’s so much power in what you would call a DPO because it’s like we’re so different in so many ways but what we have is this shared experience of oppression

Indeed, being able to support one another and work together constitutes a shared ‘political identity’ which remains fundamental to the disabled people’s movement (Shakespeare, 1993). Therefore, although experiences of hate are uniquely situated, experienced, and felt, it remains that these can be brought together within an underlying focus upon wider systems of oppression. ‘These moments of recognition are precious’ (Ahmed, 2017, p. 260) as they allow for the interweaving of experiences together. They are impactful because they support the creation of a safe space where the sharing of difficult stories is cherished rather than avoided. For example, JD recalled the ‘openness’ of other members within organization five, which gave him the confidence to voice his opinions ‘with no judgement.’ Similarly, Alex explained that being a member of organization one had helped him to come to terms with his own experiences and given him the courage to speak out. Thus, by sharing these difficult experiences as a collective, it becomes possible to both support and be supported. In this way, engagement with DPOs and other organizations/support groups can provide a safe space to make sense of the subtleties and intricacies of individual experiences, whilst also organizing collectively against them.

An increased sense of purpose is crucial to establishing an identity for oneself (Walmsley & Downer, 1997) that disrupts those typically allocated by normative cultural codes. Joe reflected upon the shift in his own identity and in particular, his increasing self-confidence since becoming a member of organization one. Similarly, Sabrina described her pride in being responsible for leading community projects within organization two. DPOs are considered to be well-placed to help tackle issues such as hate crime due to the way in which they are organized. Such organizations are led by disabled people, and often foster important relationships with their wider community (DWP, 2012). These organizations are built upon the value of ‘self-advocacy’ (Sabrina) wherein ‘people with learning difficulties as a group gaining power to fight for their rights, rather than, as in the past, being passive recipients of the charity, or otherwise, of others’ (Walmsley and Downer, 1997, p. 36). Self-advocacy was evident upon providing members with the opportunity to speak out (Jenny), vote on important decisions (Maisie), and spread the word about disability (Robbie). Some organizations, for example, had established close and positive relationships with the police, local workplaces, and community forums. As a result, members were confident that through the sharing of their own experiences within these potentially isolating ‘professional’ spaces; they were able to influence important decisions (Maisie). In response to some of the reflections shared above, collaboration between DPOs and other community and professional organisations can support affective possibilities.

# 5. Conclusion: Towards a framework of ‘everyday hate and affective possibility’

In this article, I have shared some of the ways that disabled people come to make sense of and negotiate experiences of hate within the context of their everyday lives. Such an approach has sought to challenge the silencing that can often accompany oppression and instead place lived experience at the forefront. As Ahmed (2014, p. 57) describes:

‘the destruction of the bodies of the hated is, of course, what is often sought in hate crime itself. To allow such bodies to disappear in our own analysis would be to repeat the crime rather than to redress its injustice’

Further to this, I have considered the way in which disabled people’s affective capacity is both enhanced and impeded following experiences of everyday hate. By attending to the affects of these experiences, I have challenged the rigid distinction between our interior and exterior worlds (Goodley et al, 2018) and called attention to the way in which our experiences are affectively embodied and lived out. Contributing to previous research (Iganski, 2008; Wilkin, 2020), I have explored a range of ways that people can be harmed by their experiences of hate. In addition, these findings align to existing literature within disability studies such as psycho-emotional disablism and internalized oppression.

The reflections offered by participants in this article demonstrate the ways in which border lines between ‘us’ and ‘them’ are felt under the skin, shaping the way in which participants feel free to move through and between different spaces. In this sense, these experiences sustain a symbolic wall that limits one’s sense of security and self-confidence within particular spaces. Indeed, these feelings of being ‘out of place’ signify the violence that can be enacted upon the self when precarity is encountered within our temporal and spatial surroundings. Raising awareness of these harms has important implications for policy development. While the basis of hate crime legislation recognises hostility towards particular identities, an understanding of how such crimes hurt differently, and perhaps more intimately, places more pressure upon policy-makers to develop a stronger and more cohesive policy framework. Moreover, greater understanding of the different ways that harms of hate can manifest is important for allies, those working in the community, and disabled people themselves, in order to make sense of hate crime. That is, upon recognising the harms of hate, it is possible to trace back to the hate incidents that have caused these.

Importantly, I have shown that, while there are a diverse range of harms that disabled people can experience, it is equally important to make room for how such experiences constitute unique knowledge of the social world. By making space for the variety of affective possibilities that can be attributed to experiences of everyday hate, I have offered a framework for thinking about experiences of hate crime in less restrictive ways. Considering the affective possibilities of everyday hate, we can draw attention towards the range of ways that such experiences are accompanied by moments of negotiation and resistance. Thus, the harms of hate described above do not begin and end as such, but are continuously negotiated and navigated. It is through these experiences of hate and of oppression that ‘we gain the energy to rebel’ or ‘snap’ (Ahmed, 2017, p. 255) and, I would argue, gain a deeper understanding of the world that enables us to do so. This understanding conceptualises the human as a ‘collection of multiple elements, constantly in a process of becoming, rather than a ‘mediated, passive entity’ (Appuhamilage, 2020, p. 68). From this perspective, affective capacity is not predetermined, but subject to the relationality of individuals within the past, present, and future. As I have shown in this article, this relationality is not only enacted between individuals and their surrounding space, but between the bodies that are brought together within those spaces. That is, I have shared moments of collective resistance and collaboration between disabled people. One way that participants had enabled this sense of collectivity was through the forging of inclusive spaces within their online and offline community. Hall and Bates (2019) describe these as ‘alternative cities’ that welcome the opportunity for diverse forms of inclusion and belonging. Such spaces gave members a sense of purpose, and self-confidence that helped to foster friendships, share experiences, and work together to challenge disabling attitudes and practices.

In this article, I have explored the diverse ways that affective possibilities are enacted within the everyday lives of disabled people both as individuals, as well as within their collective organisations. These moments of ‘bouncing back’ as Alex described them, are full of affective possibility. However minor, these acts of refusal and resistance demonstrate a unique way of *being* and *knowing* the world around us, informed by the experience of occupying particularly precarious positions. By considering affective possibility within hate crime research, it is possible to shift from a focus upon ‘victims,’ and towards an appreciation of disabled people as active, knowledgeable and self-empowering social actors. Moreover, by sharing some of the unique ways that disabled people both encounter and challenge hate within their everyday lives, we can learn more about how to support one another. For many participants in this research, sharing their experiences of both oppression and resistance was informative; not only did this develop shared understandings of everyday hate, it opened up participants to new ways of managing these experiences. As researchers, we have the responsibility to recognise these acts and harness a space where moments of resistance are shared and celebrated amongst disabled people.

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