

Editorial

Kevin Wong, Kris Christmann and Gavin Bailey

The Macpherson report, also known as the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report, was published over 20 years ago in February 1999. The unprovoked racist murder of Stephen Lawrence in a London suburb, and the subsequent failures of the police investigation, led to ‘70 recommendations aimed at “the elimination of racist prejudice and disadvantage and the demonstration of fairness in all aspects of policing” (MacPherson, 1999:375).

Widely regarded as a watershed in race relations in the United Kingdom (UK), the report made recommendations aiming at openness and accountability, a sharpening of focus through defining a racist incident, proposals for reporting, investigating and prosecuting racist crimes, supporting victims and witnesses, and training for police staff in response to institutional racism.

Reflecting on the findings and recommendations of the MacPherson report, this is the first of a two-part special issue which examines the processes of hate crime (the term now used to include all crime motivated or aggravated by prejudice, not just racism) from the perspectives of victims, victim services, the criminal justice system and perpetrators. Its publication is timely, as hate crimes have not dissipated in the two decades since the report. Inevitably, the prominence of their reporting in the media has waxed and waned over this time: in response to civil disturbances, terrorist incidents, Brexit and other socio-political events.

The current COVID-19 pandemic is a salutary case in point. This public health and socio-economic crisis appears to have fuelled hate crimes against Chinese and South East Asian people. In the UK, the number of offences reported in the first three months of 2020 was almost triple those reported in the same period for 2018 and 2019 and included assaults, robberies, harassment and criminal damage (Lovett, 2020). Similar increases in hate crime offences against Asian people have been reported in the United States (US) in the wake of Donald Trump’s labelling of COVID-19 as the ‘China Virus’ (Gerstman, 2020). In the UK, anti-Muslim sentiment has not diminished during the pandemic, with social media stories linking Muslims to the spread of COVID-19, the dissemination of anti-Muslim memes and the sharing of fake news stories (Birmingham City University, 2020).

Most recently, in the US, the killing of George Floyd while he was being restrained by the Minneapolis police, and the subsequent protests and civil unrest, have been sobering

moments (BBC, 2020). They are reminders that the concerns about policing and black and minority ethnic people that were brought to the fore in the UK by the MacPherson report have not disappeared in the US and have wider resonance in the UK and other jurisdictions.

The papers in this issue reflect the plurality of hate crime and societal responses to it in the UK. They have relevance to other jurisdictions internationally and contribute to the ongoing and urgent dialogue about shaping inclusive and effective responses to hate crime: wherever it occurs, and to whomever it is targeted.

Our first paper, by Stevie-Jade Hardy, Neil Chakraborti and Ilda Cuko, argues that the under-reporting of hate crime, widespread victim dissatisfaction with police responses, and inconsistent recording practices could be improved through better police training. At the same time, they acknowledge a range of barriers to success: strategic, economic and cultural.

The next paper, by Kyle Hudson and Craig Paterson, develops this theme by providing a case study examination of policing anti-Muslim hate crime in a northern town in England, considering 'policing' in its widest sense. Their paper highlights the challenges of understanding and responding to victims' needs with limited resources, and the requirement for a response which extends beyond the criminal justice system. They consider the role and function of a range of agencies and identify the need for multi-agency approaches and cooperation.

Our third paper, by Naomi Thompson and David Woodger, examines the growing phenomenon of online hate speech towards Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities: frequently triggered by the media reporting of new camps, with tensions fuelled by the shortage of legitimate sites. This paper too highlights the role of other agencies working with the police in addressing this issue, and the need for local authorities and the government to engage directly with Roma communities.

Sarah Page, the author of our fourth paper, reports on the UK pupil experience of racism and race-hate-related extremism. The paper calls on the government to combine its efforts with local communities and the voices of teachers and pupils to combat race-hate victimisation in schools.

We conclude the first part of this issue with an article by Wendy Laverick and Peter Joyce, which examines the motivation and function of the UK's hate-crime framework within a historical and international context of illiberalism and highlights the framework's limitations and partiality.

References

- BBC. (2020) 'George Floyd death homicide, official post-mortem declares.' *BBC News*. [Online] 2nd June. [Accessed on 2nd June 2020] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-52886593>
- Birmingham City University. (2020) 'COVID-19 sparks online Islamophobia as fake news and racist memes are shared online, new research finds.' Birmingham: Birmingham City University [Online] [Accessed on 20th May 2020] <https://www.bcu.ac.uk/news-events/news/covid-19-sparks-online-islamophobia-as-fake-news-and-racist-memes-are-shared-online-new-research-finds>
- Gerstman, E. (2020) 'Irony: hate crimes surge against Asian Americans while they are on the front lines fighting COVID-19.' *Forbes*. [Online] 4th April. [Accessed on 20th May 2020] <https://www.forbes.com/sites/evangerstmann/2020/04/04/irony-hate-crimes-surge-against-asian-americans-while-they-are-on-the-front-lines-fighting-covid-19/#36614f33b709>
- Lovett, S. (2020) 'Coronavirus: hate crimes against Chinese people almost triple in UK during pandemic, police data shows.' *The Independent*. [Online] 5th May. [Accessed on 20th May 2020] <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/coronavirus-uk-hate-crimes-chinese-people-china-a9499991.html>
- Macpherson, W. (1999) *The Stephen Lawrence inquiry: report of an inquiry by Sir William Macpherson of Cluny*. Cm 4262-I. London: Home Office. [Online] [Accessed on 20th May 2020] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/277111/4262.pdf