

Advancing Police Practice in Bias Crime Identification: Introducing the Bias Crime Indicator Tool (BCIT)

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Abstract

The Bias Crime Indicator Tool (BCIT) is designed, through empirical evidence and theoretical insights to enhance law enforcement's ability to identify and respond to bias-motivated crimes effectively. This tool, presented in this paper, aims to provide a standardised approach for police officers, ensuring consistent evaluation and classification of incidents involving potential bias motivation. The BCIT comprises four key sets of indicators: Victim Characteristics, Offender Behaviour, Nature of the Crime, and Contextual Factors. Each indicator is assigned a specific point value based on its severity and relevance, allowing for a calculated total risk score that classifies the incident as low, medium, or high risk. This classification informs the level of investigative priority and response required by officers. By incorporating the BCIT into policing practices, law enforcement agencies can improve the accuracy and efficiency of their bias crime investigations, ensuring that such crimes are recognised and addressed with the seriousness they warrant. The ultimate objective of the BCIT is to strengthen the ability of police officers to protect vulnerable communities, uphold justice, and foster greater trust between law enforcement and the public.

Keywords: Bias Crime; Bias Indicators; Hate Crime; Investigation; Policing; BCIT.

Introduction

Hate crimes, also known as bias-motivated crimes, represent a unique and particularly harmful category of criminal behaviour that targets individuals or groups based on inherent characteristics such as race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or other similar traits (Birch & Ireland, 2021; Farrell & Lockwood, 2023). These crimes are not only assaults on the individuals directly involved but also attacks on the broader communities that share those characteristics. The ripple effects of hate crimes can erode the social fabric, leading to increased fear, mistrust, and division within society (Pezzella, 2016). As hate crimes have become more prevalent in recent years, there is an increasing recognition of the need for law enforcement agencies to develop specialised tools and methods to address these crimes effectively.

Globally, there has been a rise in hate crimes over recent times, driven by various factors such as growing political polarisation, economic instability, migration, and the spread of extremist ideologies (Cohen & Blanco, 2020; Liebe & Schwitter, 2021). Social media and online platforms have further exacerbated the problem by providing new channels for the dissemination of hate speech and the coordination of bias-motivated attacks (Carlson, 2021), with the digital age making it easier for hate groups to recruit, organise, and spread their messages, often leading to real-world violence. In this context, hate crimes have become more

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complex, diverse, and harder to detect, making the role of law enforcement agencies increasingly challenging (see edited volume by Vecca, 2019).

The need for a specialised approach to identifying and responding to hate crimes is underscored by the unique nature of these offenses. Unlike other types of crimes, hate crimes are defined not just by the act itself but by the underlying motivation of bias or prejudice (Schweppe & Tong, 2021). This makes them inherently more challenging to identify, as the bias motivation is not always immediately apparent. For example, an assault might initially seem to be a random act of violence, but further investigation could reveal that the victim was targeted specifically because of their race or religion. Similarly, vandalism might appear to be an isolated incident until it is discovered that hate symbols were deliberately used to intimidate a particular community. These subtleties often require a more nuanced and informed approach to investigation, one that goes beyond the surface-level details of the crime (Salter & Mcguire, 2020).

Law enforcement agencies worldwide have increasingly recognised the need for specialised training and tools to help officers identify, investigate, and respond to hate crimes effectively. Traditional policing methods, which focus on the immediate facts of a case, may not be sufficient to uncover the bias motivations that characterise hate crimes. In response to this growing need, the Bias Crime Indicator Tool (BCIT) was developed as a standardised approach for police officers to use in order to identify and classify bias-motivated incidents. This tool was developed in line with the following three components of work:

1.) A systematic review of hate crime by Birch et al. (2019), that identified several themes which illustrated the complex and varied nature of hate crime, emphasising the limitations of a one-size-fits-all approach. The themes identified included the diverse nature of hate crime offences, the non-localised occurrence of hate crimes, and the role of race in both perpetration and victimisation. It also highlighted specific characteristics of perpetrators and victims, recognising hate crime as a crime that can involve both single and multiple perpetrators, often with pre-existing relationships between victims and offenders. Repeated victimisation was noted as a prevalent issue, and hate crime was characterised as a multifaceted, motivated event with significant impacts on victims. Additionally, challenges were identified in the reporting and recording of hate crimes and incidents. The insights gained from this review contribute to understanding how to better prevent, disrupt, and reduce hate crime, providing a foundation for the subsequent phases of this study and ultimately informing the creation of a hate crime tool designed to enhance the effectiveness of criminal justice practitioners, especially police officers, in recognising and addressing hate crime incidents.

2.) A Delphi study with sworn police officers concerning hate crime by Birch et al. (2024) that yielded four main themes: (i) defining hate crime, (ii) examining perpetrators, (iii) examining victims, and (iv) exploring police responses. These areas of focus provided a comprehensive view of the operational and organisational practices of a police force concerning hate crime, revealing police perceptions of hate crime, including how it should be reported, recorded, and responded to effectively. The key conclusions and recommendations from the study included the need for a clearer, standardised definition of hate crime and targeted educational strategies to improve police knowledge and understanding of this crime type. The research also emphasised the importance of developing a standardised approach to reporting, recording, and responding to hate crimes. A critical need identified was for a structured risk assessment tool to help police officers identify hate crime perpetrators and their crimes to ensure victim safety.

3.) A Policing Hate Crime course developed by Birch (2024) as a police training program. This specialised training program was designed to equip law enforcement professionals with the essential knowledge and skills to effectively address and combat hate crimes. By offering a

comprehensive understanding of hate crimes, their impact on individuals and communities, and practical strategies for prevention, investigation, and prosecution, the course aims to enhance the capabilities of officers in managing hate crime cases. The course blends theoretical insights with real-world exercises, centring on 4 modules; 1.) Understanding Hate Crimes; 2.) Legal Framework and Legislation; 3.) Investigating Hate Crimes; and 4.) Combating Hate Crimes and Community Engagement.

Structure of the Bias Crime Indicator Tool (BCIT)²

One of the key challenges in addressing hate crime is the identification of bias indicators—specific signs that suggest a crime was motivated by hatred or prejudice towards the victim’s characteristics (Vergani et al., 2022). The BCIT is designed to systematically evaluate potential bias-motivated crimes by assessing specific indicators across four distinct categories: Victim Characteristics, Offender Behaviour, Nature of the Crime, and Contextual Factors. Each category, drawing on the empirical work of Birch et al. (2019) and Birch et al. (2024), contains key indicators that provide law enforcement officers with a comprehensive framework for identifying and responding to hate crimes, underpinned by a theoretical component.

Set 1: Victim Characteristics

Victim characteristics form the foundation of the BCIT's assessment process, as these characteristics often determine whether an individual or group is targeted in a hate crime. Theoretically, social identity theory and the concept of intersectionality aide in contextualising and understanding the victims of hate crime. Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) posits that individuals categorise themselves and others into social groups (e.g., race, religion, sexual orientation), influencing intergroup dynamics and contributing to prejudice. This theory provides insight into how offenders perceive and devalue victims based on group identity, often viewing them as representations of a disliked or feared group rather than as individuals. Within the BCIT, Social Identity Theory underpins the assessment of victim characteristics, recognizing that bias crimes often occur because offenders target individuals based on their perceived group membership. While intersectionality by Crenshaw (1991) expands this understanding by examining how multiple social identities intersect, creating unique experiences of marginalization and compounded discrimination. This theory highlights how victims may be targeted for bias crimes due to the overlapping aspects of their identities, such as race, gender, and religion. The BCIT’s focus on victim characteristics allows for an assessment of how intersectional identities increase vulnerability, emphasizing the need for law enforcement to consider the multifaceted nature of victimization in hate crimes.

The BCIT tool considers various aspects of the victim's identity, including race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability status. Each of these characteristics represents a potential point of vulnerability that may motivate an offender to commit a bias-motivated crime. For instance, a crime targeting an individual because of their race or ethnicity may involve slurs or derogatory comments specifically related to that aspect of their identity. Similarly, attacks on religious individuals or institutions might include symbols or language that denigrate their beliefs. By identifying these characteristics, the BCIT enables officers to recognise the underlying reasons why a particular victim may have been targeted, thereby distinguishing bias-motivated crimes from other forms of criminal activity. The presence of one or more of these characteristics in a victim is a critical indicator of potential bias, guiding further investigation and response.

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Set 2: Offender Behaviour

The actions and behaviours of the offender provide crucial insight into whether a crime is motivated by bias. From theoretical perspective several theories can support set 2 of the BCIT. The work of Perry (2003), through recognising ‘hate crime as a message’, positions hate crime as symbolic acts that communicate exclusion and hostility toward entire communities. Offender behaviour, such as the use of hate speech, symbols, and derogatory language, are central to this theory and are directly assessed in the BCIT. By analysing these behaviours, the BCIT captures how offenders aim to intimidate not just the immediate victim but also broader communities, reinforcing the collective impact of hate crimes. In addition, Strain Theory (Merton, 1959) and the Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis (Dollard et al., 1939) provide insights into why offenders commit bias crimes, often out of frustration with societal pressures or perceived threats to their status. Strain Theory links offender actions to broader social inequalities and perceived grievances, suggesting that offenders may lash out at marginalized groups they perceive as scapegoats. Similarly, the Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis explains how societal or personal frustrations manifest as aggression directed toward vulnerable groups. These theories justify the BCIT’s inclusion of offender behaviour indicators, such as hate speech and group affiliations, as expressions of underlying social and psychological tensions. While Authoritarian Personality Theory (Adorno et al., 1950) adds another layer by examining personality traits associated with rigid thinking, submission to authority, and hostility toward outgroups. This theory supports the BCIT’s focus on offender behaviour, particularly in identifying patterns of bias-motivated actions driven by authoritarian attitudes, which often translate into targeting perceived outgroups.

The BCIT emphasises the importance of identifying specific behaviours that signal prejudice or hatred towards the victim's identity. One of the primary indicators in this category is the use of hate speech or derogatory language aimed at the victim. Such language often reflects the offender's biased views and can be a clear sign that the crime was motivated by prejudice. In addition to verbal expressions of bias, the BCIT also considers the display of hate symbols as a significant indicator. Symbols associated with hate groups, such as swastikas or other extremist insignia, are potent markers of bias motivation. The presence of these symbols during the commission of a crime, whether physically displayed or online, can strongly suggest that the crime was intended to intimidate or harm the victim based on their identity. Furthermore, the BCIT accounts for the offender's history of bias-motivated behaviour. An individual with a known affiliation with hate groups or a history of engaging in bias-related activities is more likely to commit a hate crime. This background information is vital in understanding the offender's motivations and assessing the likelihood that the crime was bias-driven.

Set 3: Nature of the Crime

The specific nature of the crime is another critical factor in the BCIT's assessment process. This category includes a range of criminal activities that are commonly associated with hate crimes, such as verbal threats, physical assaults, vandalism, and cyber harassment. Group Dynamics and Conflict theorising informs Set 3 of the tool. Realistic Conflict Theory (Sherif, et al., 1988) highlights how intergroup hostility emerges when groups compete for resources, leading to prejudice and violence. The BCIT’s assessment of the nature of the crime captures these dynamics, particularly in contexts where offenders perceive competition or threats to their in-group’s social status. While Conflict Theory (see Siegel, 2016) further explains how power imbalances and societal structures perpetuate bias crimes, with offenders acting to assert dominance over marginalized groups. By incorporating these theories, the BCIT addresses how

hate crimes are not isolated incidents but are embedded in broader social conflicts and power struggles.

The BCIT considers how these crimes are carried out and whether they include elements that indicate bias motivation. For example, verbal threats or harassment may involve explicit statements that target the victim's identity, making it clear that the offense was motivated by prejudice. Physical assaults that are accompanied by hate speech or directed at individuals because of their race, religion, or other characteristics are also strong indicators of bias. Additionally, crimes like vandalism or property destruction may be classified as hate crimes if they involve the use of hate symbols or messages that are intended to intimidate or degrade a particular community. Cyberbullying and online harassment are increasingly recognised as modern forms of hate crime, particularly when they involve targeting individuals based on their identity. The BCIT incorporates these forms of digital aggression, recognising the growing importance of addressing online hate in the context of broader hate crime prevention efforts.

Set 4: Contextual Factors

Contextual factors play a significant role in understanding the environment in which a potential hate crime occurs. Framing this issue theoretically in through the work of Cohen and Felson's routine activities theory (1979) and Cohen's Moral Panic Theory (1972) emphasis is placed on the situational and environmental factors that create opportunities for hate crimes. Routine Activities Theory suggests that crimes occur when there is a motivated offender, a suitable target, and an absence of capable guardianship. The BCIT uses this theory to evaluate contextual factors that heighten the risk of hate crimes, such as specific locations or events associated with marginalized communities. While moral panic theorising further explains how societal reactions to perceived threats, often exaggerated by media and public discourse, can create environments conducive to bias crimes. When communities perceive certain groups as dangerous or threatening, this can lead to heightened tensions and subsequent acts of violence. The BCIT captures these dynamics by assessing how contextual factors, such as cultural or religious events, can amplify social tensions and trigger hate crimes.

The BCIT examines various situational elements that can influence the likelihood of a crime being bias-motivated. These factors include the location of the crime, the timing of the incident, and the history of similar crimes in the area. For example, a crime that occurs in a location known for previous hate activity or in a neighbourhood with a history of targeting specific communities may be more likely to be bias-motivated. The timing of the crime, such as during significant cultural or religious events, can also be an important indicator. Crimes that coincide with such events may be intended to send a message of intimidation or hatred to the broader community. Moreover, the BCIT considers the broader pattern of bias-motivated incidents in the area. If similar crimes have been reported previously, this context can help to establish a pattern of behaviour that suggests a targeted campaign against certain groups or individuals. These contextual factors provide a broader perspective on the incident, helping officers to identify bias motivation even in cases where the direct evidence may not be immediately apparent. The BCIT's structured approach to assessing bias crime indicators across these four categories allows law enforcement officers to conduct thorough and informed investigations into potential hate crimes. By considering the victim's characteristics, the offender's behaviour, the nature of the crime, and the contextual factors, the BCIT ensures a comprehensive analysis that enhances the accuracy and effectiveness of hate crime identification and response.

Scoring System and Risk Classification

The BCIT incorporates a structured scoring system designed to assess the likelihood that a crime is motivated by bias. By assigning points to various indicators based on their severity and relevance, the BCIT provides law enforcement officers with a quantifiable method to evaluate potential hate crimes. This scoring system not only aids in the identification of bias motivation but also guides the appropriate level of response and investigation.

Explanation of the Scoring System

The scoring system within the BCIT assigns points to indicators across four main categories – (i) Victim Characteristics, (ii) Offender Behaviour, (iii) Nature of the Crime, and (iv) Contextual Factors. Each indicator is weighted differently, reflecting its significance in suggesting bias motivation, as outlined below:

- Victim Characteristics: In this category, each identified characteristic of the victim, such as race, religion, or sexual orientation, is assigned 1 point. This is because the victim's identity is a fundamental aspect of bias crimes, though it alone may not be sufficient to determine motivation.
- Offender Behaviour: Indicators in this category are assigned higher points due to their direct link to bias motivation. For example, the use of hate speech or derogatory language towards the victim's identity is assigned 3 points, while the display of hate symbols or a known history of bias-motivated behaviour by the offender is assigned 2 and 5 points, respectively. These behaviours are considered strong evidence that the crime was intended to harm or intimidate the victim based on their identity.
- Nature of the Crime: This category assesses the specific actions taken during the crime, with points assigned based on the severity of the act and its connection to bias. For instance, verbal threats or harassment related to the victim's identity are assigned 2 points, while physical or sexual assault with evidence of bias motivation is assigned 5 points. Vandalism involving hate symbols receives 3 points, and cyberbullying or online harassment is assigned 2 points.
- Contextual Factors: Environmental and situational indicators also contribute to the overall risk score. A crime occurring in a location with a history of hate activity is assigned 2 points, timing that coincides with significant cultural or religious events is given 1 point, and prior reports of bias crimes in the area or against similar victims are assigned 1 point. These factors help contextualise the crime, increasing the likelihood of bias motivation when present.

Scoring Examples

To illustrate how the scoring system works in practice, consider the following example:

- Victim Characteristics: The victim is targeted because of their race (1 point) and religion (1 point), resulting in 2 points in this category.
- Offender Behaviour: The offender uses hate speech directed at the victim's religion (3 points) and has a previous history of bias-motivated behaviour (5 points), totalling 8 points.
- Nature of the Crime: The crime involves verbal threats (2 points) and vandalism with hate symbols (3 points), adding up to 5 points.

- **Contextual Factors:** The crime takes place in a location known for previous hate activity (2 points) during a significant religious event (1 point), contributing an additional 3 points.
- In this scenario, the total risk score is 18 points (2 + 8 + 5 + 3), which falls within the medium-risk classification.

Risk Classifications

The BCIT's scoring system is designed to classify crimes into three risk levels: Low Risk, Medium Risk, and High Risk. These classifications seek to help the police prioritise their responses and allocate resources appropriately.

- **Low Risk (0 - 10 points):** Crimes that fall into this category are considered to have a low likelihood of being bias-motivated. The indicators present are either few in number or not particularly severe. In low-risk cases, it is recommended that officers conduct a standard investigation, but with a focus on confirming the absence of bias. Further monitoring may be necessary, especially if new evidence emerges or similar incidents occur.
- **Medium Risk (11 - 20 points):** A medium-risk score suggests a moderate likelihood of bias motivation. Several indicators are present, indicating that the crime may be motivated by prejudice, but it is not conclusively a hate crime. For medium-risk cases, officers should conduct a thorough investigation, gathering additional evidence to determine the motive behind the crime. This may include interviewing witnesses, reviewing any history of similar incidents, and considering the broader context of the crime. The investigation should be more detailed than in low-risk cases, with a focus on uncovering any underlying bias.
- **High Risk (21 points or higher):** High-risk classifications indicate a strong likelihood that the crime is bias-motivated. Multiple indicators, including severe ones like hate speech, physical or sexual assault, or vandalism with hate symbols, suggest that the crime was driven by prejudice. In these cases, immediate and comprehensive action is required. Officers should prioritise the investigation, ensuring that all aspects of the crime are thoroughly examined. Additionally, victim support should be enhanced, recognising the significant impact that bias-motivated crimes can have on the victim and the broader community. The high-risk classification necessitates a coordinated response involving specialised units if necessary, and a focus on holding the offender accountable for the hate crime.

Professional Assessment Commentary in the BCIT

An essential feature of the Bias Crime Incident Tool (BCIT) is its Professional Assessment Commentary section, which provides users of the tool the opportunity to include their professional judgment and nuanced insights when evaluating a potential bias-motivated crime. While the BCIT's structured scoring system allows for a consistent and objective assessment, not all cases fit neatly within predefined indicators. The Professional Assessment Commentary section addresses this limitation by offering officers the flexibility to capture critical details that may not be reflected in the numerical score alone. The importance of the Professional Assessment Commentary lies in its ability to enhance the BCIT's functionality by allowing those using the tool to document subjective insights while maintaining an objective framework. This ensures that critical nuances—such as the victim's vulnerability, the subtle but escalating nature of bias, or emerging trends in hate activity—are not overlooked. In complex or ambiguous cases, this commentary can serve as a valuable addition to the formal assessment, ensuring that the full spectrum of relevant factors is considered.

This section also promotes a more holistic approach to hate crime investigations, recognizing that no tool can fully substitute for the expertise and contextual knowledge that law enforcement professionals bring to their work. By integrating this commentary into the BCIT, officers are empowered to supplement their analysis with real-world experience, ensuring a more comprehensive and informed investigation. As a result, the BCIT remains both a flexible and robust tool, adaptable to the unique circumstances of each case, while still grounded in a rigorous scoring system.

In sum, the BCIT's scoring system and risk classifications provide a structured approach to evaluating potential bias crimes. By assigning points to specific indicators and categorising the overall risk, the tool helps law enforcement officers make informed decisions about the level of investigation and intervention required, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of their response to hate crimes.

Case Study Example: Application to Real-World Scenario³

The case study presented in Figure 1 presents a hypothetical scenario involving the vandalism of a synagogue, illustrating how the BCIT can be applied in a real-world context. The case highlights the importance of a structured approach in investigating potential hate crimes and demonstrates how the BCIT can enhance the effectiveness and accuracy of police work. Through this analysis, readers will gain a deeper understanding of how the BCIT functions and the critical role it plays in combating hate crimes, ensuring that justice is served, and communities are protected.

Figure 1.

Case Study: Vandalism of a Synagogue

A synagogue in a suburban neighbourhood is defaced with graffiti, including swastikas and slurs targeting the Jewish community. The incident occurs on the eve of a major Jewish holiday, and the local police are called to investigate. Using the Bias Crime Indicator Tool (BCIT), officers begin by assessing the incident through the four indicator sets, as illustrated below:

Victim Characteristics: The crime targets a religious institution, specifically Jewish (1 point).

Offender Behaviour: The offenders used hate symbols (swastikas) and derogatory language (3 points for hate speech and 2 points for hate symbols). There is also evidence that one of the suspects was previously involved in a similar incident at a different location (5 points for previous bias-motivated behaviour).

Nature of the Crime: The crime involves vandalism with hate symbols (3 points).

Contextual Factors: The timing coincides with a significant religious holiday (1 point), and the area has a history of antisemitic activity (2 points).

Total Risk Score: 17 points (1 + 10 + 3 + 3)

This score places the incident in the medium-risk category. The officers, guided by the BCIT, recognise that there is a strong likelihood of bias motivation. They decide to conduct a thorough investigation, including interviews with community members, a review of security footage, and coordination with hate crime specialists.

Lessons Learned

This case study illustrates the practical application of the BCIT in real-world scenarios. The tool provided officers with a structured approach to assess bias motivation, leading to a more

³ This case study has been created and developed by the author for the purpose of this article.

targeted and effective investigation. The case also highlights the importance of considering multiple indicators, such as the nature of the crime and contextual factors, in determining bias motivation. By using the BCIT, the officers were able to identify the bias elements early in the investigation, ensuring that the crime was appropriately classified and addressed. This demonstrates the effectiveness of the BCIT in enhancing the accuracy and efficiency of police responses to hate crimes, ultimately contributing to a more informed and equitable approach to law enforcement.

The Implementation and Integration of the BCIT

The primary users of the BCIT are law enforcement officers who are on the front line of investigating and responding to criminal incidents. This includes officers in police forces, and other law enforcement agencies globally. The BCIT is designed to be adaptable to different jurisdictions and legal frameworks, making it a valuable tool for law enforcement agencies globally. In addition to police officers, the BCIT is also relevant to a broader range of stakeholders involved in the criminal justice system and community safety. This includes prosecutors, who may use the tool's findings to inform their decisions on charging and prosecuting hate crimes; victim support services, who can use the BCIT to better understand the nature of the crimes their clients have experienced; and policymakers, who can draw on the data generated by the BCIT to inform legislative and policy decisions related to hate crimes. Community organisations and advocacy groups are also key stakeholders in the implementation of the BCIT. These groups often work closely with victims of hate crimes and can provide valuable insights into the impact of these crimes on individuals and communities. By collaborating with law enforcement agencies in the use of the BCIT, these organisations can help ensure that hate crimes are accurately identified and that victims receive the support and justice they deserve.

Integration into Policing Practice

Integrating the BCIT into routine police operations requires careful planning and coordination and involves case management, the need for reporting procedures and co-ordination between various divisions/units within a police force. In regard to case management, the BCIT should be seamlessly incorporated into existing case management systems. Officers should be trained on how to use the tool to record and track bias-related incidents, ensuring that the information is accurately captured and easily accessible for follow-up actions. For reporting procedures, the BCIT's reporting capabilities should be integrated into standard reporting protocols. This includes ensuring that bias crime data is included in regular crime reports and that relevant information is shared with appropriate stakeholders, such as community groups and policymakers. Whilst the co-ordination across a police force is also an important aspect to ensure the integration of the BCIT into everyday police practice. The implementation of the BCIT should involve coordination between all police divisions/units, such as investigative teams and community-orientated outreach work e.g. youth command. This ensures that bias crime data is used effectively across different areas of policing and contributes to a comprehensive approach to addressing these incidents. Thus, reflecting how the BCIT can inform practice more broadly than just in the identification of a hate crime.

Further to the integration of the BCIT into police practice, training in using the tool, as well as evaluating its use is important. To ensure the effective use of the BCIT by police officers, a comprehensive training program must be developed. This training should encompass several key components. First, *Introduction to Hate Crime and the BCIT* - Officers need to understand the fundamental concepts of bias/hate crimes, including their definition, impact on communities, and the importance of accurately identifying and recording these incidents. The BCIT should be introduced as a specialised tool designed to assist in this process. Second, *Tool*

Functionality - Training should cover the BCIT's features, including data entry, case classification, and reporting functionalities. Officers must be familiar with how to input data accurately, how to use the tool's interface, and how to generate reports that reflect bias crime indicators. Third, *Scenario-Based Training* - Practical exercises and simulations should be incorporated to allow officers to practice using the BCIT in realistic scenarios. This hands-on approach helps in reinforcing the theoretical knowledge gained and ensures that officers are comfortable using the tool in the field. Fourth, *Legal and Ethical Considerations* - Officers need to be aware of the legal implications of documenting bias crimes, including privacy concerns and the handling of sensitive information. Training should also address the ethical aspects of working with victims from diverse backgrounds. The fifth and final component is that of *Cultural Competency* - As the BCIT is designed to address crimes motivated by bias, it is essential that officers receive training in cultural competency (see Birch (2024) for a further consideration of the importance of cultural competency training for the police). This includes understanding the diverse communities they serve and how to approach victims with sensitivity and respect.

Ongoing assessment and evaluation of the BCIT is also important for determining its effectiveness and ensuring it meets its objectives. This involves a comprehensive approach that includes several key elements. First, establishing performance metrics is essential for assessing the BCIT's impact. Specific metrics should be developed to measure factors such as the accuracy of bias crime identification, the number of bias crimes reported, and the effectiveness of follow-up actions taken. By regularly reviewing these metrics, it is possible to gauge how well the tool is performing and identify areas for improvement. In addition to performance metrics, field assessments are necessary to observe the BCIT's practical application. This involves conducting periodic assessments where officers use the tool in real-world scenarios. These assessments may include interviews with officers to gather their feedback, reviewing case files to ensure accurate data entry and reporting, and analysing the reporting data generated by the BCIT. Such field assessments provide valuable insights into how the tool is utilised in practice and highlight any challenges or issues that may arise. Finally, outcome analysis is critical for understanding the broader impact of the BCIT. This analysis involves examining the outcomes of cases where the tool has been used, focusing on factors such as victim satisfaction, case resolution rates, and the overall impact on the community. By evaluating these outcomes, it is possible to determine whether the BCIT is achieving its intended objectives and making a positive difference in addressing bias crimes. Together, these components of ongoing assessment help ensure that the BCIT remains effective and continuously improves in its role of supporting bias crime management.

Challenges and Solutions

Implementing the BCIT, does however, present several challenges that must be effectively managed to ensure its successful adoption and utilisation by police officers. One significant challenge is resistance to change (see Birch, 2024) for a further consideration of resistance to change in police forces). Some officers may be hesitant to adopt new tools or procedures, viewing them as additional burdens rather than improvements. To address this resistance, it is essential to involve operational police officers in the development process from the beginning. By actively engaging them in discussions about the tool's design and functionality, they can provide valuable insights and feel a sense of ownership over the new system. Clear and transparent communication about the benefits of the BCIT—such as improved case management and enhanced ability to address bias crimes—can also help in overcoming resistance. Providing continuous support and training is equally important; officers should feel confident in their ability to use the tool effectively and know that help is available if they

encounter difficulties. Currently the author of this article is delivering a Policing Hate Crime course with officers across three countries and is testing the BCIT with this cohort.

Another challenge is ensuring data quality and consistency, a common problem within the area of hate crime (Christmann & Wong, 2010; McDevitt & Iwama, 2016; Wong et al., 2020). Accurate and consistent data entry is crucial for the BCIT to function effectively, but it can be difficult to achieve. To address this issue, implementing regular audits to review the data and provide feedback on its quality can help maintain high standards. Additionally, simplifying the tool's interface and offering clear guidelines for data entry can reduce the likelihood of errors. Ensuring that officers understand the importance of accurate data entry and are equipped with user-friendly tools can significantly enhance the reliability of the information captured. Technical issues, such as software glitches or integration problems, may also arise during the implementation of the BCIT. To mitigate these problems, it is vital to establish a robust IT support system. This system should include a clear plan for addressing technical issues promptly to minimise disruptions. By having dedicated IT support in place, any technical difficulties can be resolved quickly, ensuring that the tool remains functional and effective. Resource constraints present another significant challenge. Limited resources can hinder the effective implementation of the BCIT, impacting both the training and support available to officers. To overcome this, it is important to prioritise investment in training and support to ensure that officers are well-prepared to use the tool. Additionally, seeking additional funding or forming partnerships with external organisations can provide the necessary resources to support the BCIT's successful integration into police operations. By addressing these challenges proactively and strategically, the BCIT can be effectively implemented, leading to better management and response to hate crime.

Conclusion

The BCIT represents a pivotal advancement in the field of law enforcement, specifically tailored to address the complexities of bias-motivated crimes. Through theoretical insights and empirical findings being brought together to inform practice, a structured and standardised approach emerges, the BCIT equips police officers with an essential, yet easy to use, tool for identifying, categorising, and responding to hate crime incidents. Its design incorporates comprehensive bias crime indicators, a nuanced scoring system, and risk classifications, ensuring that officers can assess cases with a high degree of accuracy and consistency. Additionally, the BCIT serves not only as a tool for identifying hate crimes but can also assist in guiding officers through post-identification processes, including informing interview questions with perpetrators, victims and witnesses as well as the coordination with victim support services, and considerations for hate crime prosecution.

The significance of the BCIT lies in its ability to transform the handling of bias crimes from a reactive to a proactive process. Through its structured indicators—ranging from victim characteristics to offender behaviour and contextual factors—the BCIT offers a clear framework for understanding and addressing the underlying motives of hate crimes. The scoring system and risk assessment components further enhance its utility, guiding officers in prioritising cases and determining appropriate responses based on the severity of the crime.

Effective implementation of the BCIT necessitates thorough training and integration into existing policing practices. By addressing potential challenges and providing solutions, the tool's adoption can be streamlined, ensuring that it becomes an integral part of police operations. The incorporation of real-life scenarios and continuous evaluation underscores the BCIT's adaptability and responsiveness to emerging trends. While the BCIT's design is embedded in both empirical research and a set of theoretical frameworks that provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of hate crimes. This grounding

enhances the BCIT's evidence base, making it a robust tool for law enforcement and other relevant stakeholders to identify, understand, and respond to hate crimes more effectively.

In conclusion, the BCIT stands as an important instrument in advancing the justice system's response to bias-motivated crimes. Its adoption across police forces, not only promises enhanced operational effectiveness but also support the fostering of greater trust with the community. The BCIT supports the strengthening of efforts to address hate crimes and uphold the principles of equity and justice, reinforcing the commitment by law enforcement to serving and protecting all members of society.

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