

EXPLORING THE CORRELATION BETWEEN CIVIL UNREST AND THE
MOBILIZATION OF HATE IN THE UNITED STATES

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VERA-CLAIR EATON

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Vera-Clair Eaton, Candidate for the Master of Science Degree

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ABSTRACT

The mobilization of hate in the United States has greatly ramped up since 2000. There are a lot of factors that go into why hate crimes continue to persist, but civil unrest seems to be one of the biggest factors. Through correlation analyses and regressions, we see that different types of civil unrest; response to police action, social/economic civil unrest, and politically motivated civil unrest, are significant in different ways to the different dependent mobilization of hate variables. Control variables, such as population, median household income, and race, are also explored to see what outside factors could potentially effect the results of these analyses. This thesis explores the correlation between civil unrest and the mobilization of hate and strives to show a significant correlation between the two.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, have examined a thesis titled "Exploring the Correlation between Civil Unrest and the Mobilization of Hate in the United States," presented by Vera-Clair Eaton, candidate for the Master of Science degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

Supervisory Committee

Lori Sexton, Ph.D., Committee Chair
Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology

Toya Like, Ph.D.
Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology

Misty Campbell, MS, SHRM-CP
Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology

CONTENTS

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| ABSTRACT..... | iii |
| Chapter | |
| 1. INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| 2. LITERATURE REVIEW..... | 3 |
| 1. METHODS..... | 11 |
| 2. FINDINGS..... | 15 |
| 3. DISCUSSION..... | 18 |
| REFERENCES..... | 20 |
| VITA..... | 21 |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Hate crimes are more prevalent than ever in the U.S. and around the world. They're seen all over the news, some resulting in statewide and multi state protests. It is important to study hate crimes in a different way, specifically by measuring the mobilization of hate, in the current moment due to a lack of police reporting and coding. Adding a backdrop of civil unrest allows us to see the correlation between times of civil unrest and the mobilization of hate.

Unfortunately, mobilization of hate is difficult to measure and collect valid data on. The most common and perhaps obvious way to measure the mobilization of hate is through an analysis of hate crimes data. Given that not all jurisdictions collect or share data on hate crimes, and those who do utilize different statutory definitions of hate crime with a wide range of interpretive discretion, these data fall short of painting a full picture of the mobilization of hate in the U.S. To gain a fuller picture, the Southern Poverty Law Center's data collection on hate groups and hate-motivated incidents can be utilized to shed light on this important issue.

This thesis examines the relationship between incidents of civil unrest and the mobilization of hate in the U.S. In this context, civil unrest is being understood as a conflict that affects more than one specific demographic area or something that affects the country as a whole. Civil unrest has been broken down further into three subcategories; politically motivated civil unrest, civil unrest caused by economic/social injustice, and civil unrest as a

response to police action specifically. The mobilization of hate is considered any hateful act against property, society, or specific persons. Registered hate groups are also considered in this context of mobilization.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

A robust theoretical literature exists on the causes of and precursors to hate crimes; this literature has been adapted here to explain the mobilization of hate more broadly. Racial Threat Theory (Minority Threat Theory) can be seen in the perpetration of bias motivated crime through historical evidence of civil unrest and the growing formation of hate groups in the United States. Racial Threat Theory is the racialization that occurs when the “ingroup” uses their disproportionate power to implement state-control over the “outgroup” and, in the face of a growing “outgroup” population, encourage more rigorous, racialized practice in order to protect their existing power and privilege. This theory is a key dynamic in creating an environment that is conducive to hate.

Racial Threat Theory is very prominent through out American history, and these incidents of Racial Threat Theory are extremely important to explore when discussing civil unrest in the United States. The literature discusses slavery, lynching, and Pearl Harbor as examples of Racial Threat Theory. Carolyn Petrosino’s *Connecting the Past to the Future: Hate Crime in America* states that the current, legislative definition of hate crime is not applicable to historical hate crimes because in their times, most of these crimes were not illegal. She defines hate crimes as the “victimization of minorities due to their racial and ethnic identity by members of the majority” (Petrosino, 1999). This is the definition that was kept in mind while looking at historical examples of hate. Other examples from the literature include slavery and lynching, which was mostly applied to African Americans, and because

of this distinction, these incidents have bias motive. As another example of Racial Threat Theory, after Pearl Harbor, Executive Order 90066 was issued by President Roosevelt, closing all land borders to “enemy aliens”, and individuals of Japanese ancestry. We can see that there are historical examples of hate crimes, though at the time they weren’t considered to be hate crimes. Racial Threat Theory goes along with Integrated Threat Theory and Group Threat Theory. Analyzing historical examples of hate can show potential motivations for future incidents.

Integrated Threat theory (intergroup threat theory) is a major factor in the perpetration of hate crimes and can be seen through historical evidence of civil unrest and the growing formation of hate groups in the United States. Integrated threat theory (intergroup threat theory) is a theory in psychology and sociology which attempts to describe the components of perceived threat that leads to prejudice between social groups. This theory is another key dynamic in the creation of an environment that is conducive to hate.

Integrated Threat Theory is also relevant when looking at both examples of historical hate crimes and social unrest. Executive Order 90066 closing land borders to “enemy aliens” and individuals of Japanese ancestry, including American citizens, is not only a historical example of Racial Threat Theory, but also Integrated Threat Theory (Petrosino, 1999). In addition to the executive order, there were mass arrests and incarceration of more than 100,000 individuals of Japanese ancestry during this time, and 2/3 of that 100,000 were American citizens. This order and event were based on race, and this action occurred as the result of suspicions and prejudice against these individuals, according to the literature. In addition to Pearl Harbor and Executive Order 90066, support for integrated threat theory can

also be found in post 9/11 America. According to Dish, Cavendish, and King, the outgroup “identifies a minority group’s size as an important determinant of intergroup conflict and prejudice” (Dish, Cavendish, King, 2011). Further support for these theoretical frameworks can be seen in the events of September 11th, as this historical event created an atmosphere conducive to hate, and made Arabs, Muslims, and Middle Eastern presenting individuals into convenient targets for acts of “vicarious retribution.” The literature defines vicarious retribution as being an act that “occurs when a member of a group commits an act of aggression toward members of an outgroup for an assault or provocation that had no personal consequences for him or her, but did harm to a fellow ingroup member” (Dish, Cavendish, King, 2011). These acts of vicarious retribution have been happening for the past 19 years because of the events that occurred in 2001.

Another point of view on post 9/11 America and Integrated Threat Theory is that of Phyllis Gerstenfeld. According to the literature, the 9/11 attack occurred as America was on the edge of a recession (which eventually hit at full force in 2008) and the attack struck America’s financial center. These events concerned a “glum economic outlook” and caused the layoffs of thousands of airline employees. This intergroup hostility, according to the literature, will emerge when two groups are in conflict for scarce resources. These resources may not be physical resources, such as food or water, but these resources can be economic or social vitality. Along with Racial Threat Theory and Integrated Threat Theory, Group Threat Theory is another factor in the explanation for the perpetration of hate crimes.

Group Threat Theory (group position theory) is major factor in the perpetration of hate crimes and can be seen through historical evidence of civil unrest and the growing

formation of hate groups in the United States. Group Threat Theory is a sociological theory which proposes that the larger the size of the “outgroup,” the more the corresponding “ingroup” perceives it to threaten its own interests, resulting in ingroup members having more negative attitudes toward the “outgroup.” This is another key component in creating an environment that is conducive to hate. The literature discusses group size, scapegoat theory, and social learning theory and how they correlate into Group Threat Theory.

According to the literature, group size is a major factor in Group Threat Theory. According to Dish, Cavendish, and King, group size may affect behavior differently, especially when considering other factors such as opportunity, risk of retaliation, and risk of law enforcement sanction when discussing the outgroup. The literature also discusses scapegoat theory. According to Gerstenfeld, scapegoat theory suggests that during times of unrest, some people might “lash out” against a convenient outgroup that is linked to the source of their anger. Taking this into account, this may explain why we have hate groups across the world, but specifically in America. In addition to scapegoat theory, the literature also discusses social learning theory. This theory would suggest that people’s attitudes towards the outgroup are influenced by their environment. This part of the literature transitions into a discussion of the elements that aid in creating environments that are conducive to hate.

There are macro level social dynamics that create environments conducive to hate (economic vitality, social disorganization, etc.). Social disorganization and lack of economic vitality are two of the major macro level social dynamics that create an environment that is conducive to hate. Some of the other macro level social dynamics that are conducive to hate include immigration and the legislation that surrounds immigration, as well as gender roles

and how legislation and evolving social norms can affect those roles. The Macro level social dynamics that create environments that are conducive to hate vary greatly, but are apparent when discussing hate crimes as a whole, but specifically hate groups.

The literature discusses social categorization and disorganization as one of the macro level dynamics that create environments conducive to hate. Social categorization is an innate thing. People categorize other people, even when they don't mean to. In addition to that, people tend to separate the world into "us" and "them" categories. People create their own "outgroups," sometimes without even realizing it. In addition to categorization and disorganization, the literature also mentions that there may be a complicated connection between economics and hate crimes. Economic vitality is an important factor into why civil unrest happens, so it only makes sense that it would be a key dynamic in the explanation of hate crimes and hate group's existence. It's also mentioned that there is some indications that bias is associated with economic difficulty.

The literature also discusses significant variables in hate group existence. According to Goetz, Rupasingha, and Loveridge, state membership in the confederacy, population density, resident population size, and local property taxes are significant variables in why hate groups exist in different states. These macro level social dynamics also create environments that allow hate groups to exist. But, the existence of these hate groups may be considered as a macro level dynamic themselves. According to Blazak, the presence of these groups may encourage the perpetration of other hate crimes, but they also create a climate where hate crimes are justified. Hate group membership ebbs and flows, and their

membership is influenced by the shifts in social dynamics, such as the economy, immigration, and changes in gender roles.

Macro level social dynamics have a big hand in creating environments conducive to hate, and these environments in turn promote the formation of hate groups. The Southern Poverty Law Center collects data on active hate groups each year and compiles their information to make an interactive map that shows the states and cities that these groups are located in, along with their ideologies. From this, SPLC provides data that can be measured in order to see spikes in hate groups during certain years. In addition to SPLC, Blazak mentions that there were 537 hate groups active in 1998, and 457 active hate groups in 1999.

- 2000- 599 hate groups across the U.S
- 2005-801 hate groups
- 2010- 1002 hate groups
- 2015- 892 hate groups
- 2018- 1020 hate groups
- 2019- 940 hate groups

There are five key trends in why hate crimes seem to recede in different years. These trends are: consolidation, websites, leaderless resistance, mainstream politics, and recruitment. 4 of these five seem to make more of a difference than mainstream politics. The literature discussed these trends as being “key” in the reduction of hate crimes. There could be other reasons why there is a noticeable decrease when comparing different years, but these trends seem to be the most measurable. According to Blazak, consolidation is the biggest reason is why there can be a noticeable decrease in the number of hate groups. Smaller hate

groups are getting absorbed into larger hate groups. Groups aren't just going away; they're getting more members from smaller groups and becoming more active. Smaller, less active groups are being added to bigger, more serious groups. The literature also discusses websites as being part of the decrease in hate groups. Hate group websites allow these groups to spread their message to individuals who may never actually meet the group. Websites may be a gateway into more established groups. So, websites may be attributed to both the decline and increase in hate groups. Leaderless resistance is also a main trend in the decrease in hate groups. Pete Peters, the Christian Identity leader, launched the idea of the "leaderless resistance." Having no affiliation makes it harder for law enforcement and community groups to monitor and track these faceless groups. Recruitment is another trend. Hate groups have a high turnover rate, and research shows that people stay in hate groups as long as the group meets their needs. As their needs change, they may leave the group for good or move onto a different one. Because hate groups ebb and flow so much with the macro level dynamics that create environments conducive for them to exist, some of these groups may fizzle out as their members leave.

The internet has become a great tool in creating a space conducive for "leaderless resistance" groups to form. An example of one of these "leaderless" groups are the self-proclaimed "incels." This group consists of faceless men who blame women for their lack of romantic success via online forums and chat rooms. These men spew hate online, making misogynistic comments about women and to women, but are not necessarily associated with an organized hate group. Until recently, the hate that comes from this group was mainly online in the dark corners of the internet, but some individuals have taken their hate to the

real world. In February 2020, a Toronto teen was charged with carrying out an “incel” - inspired terror attack (BBC). This act of violence is allegedly inspired by the ideologies of Elliot Rodger, who killed six people in a spree killing in Isla Vista, CA in 2014. Elliot Rodger is regarded as an “incel hero.”

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Research Question and Hypothesis

This thesis answers the following research question: What is the relationship between civil unrest and mobilization of hate in the U.S.? To answer this question, secondary data from numerous sources, including the Southern Poverty Law Center, the U.S. census, and Wikipedia (used for a chronological source of civil unrest incidents in the U.S.), were analyzed to examine the relationship between civil unrest and mobilization of hate state by state. It is hypothesized, in accordance with integrated threat theory, that incidents of civil unrest will be associated with increased mobilization of hate.

Data

Data on the mobilization of hate were retrieved from the Southern Poverty Law Center for the years 2000-2021. The SPLC is a non-profit organization that focuses on racial justice in the United States. The SPLC partners with communities to advance human rights of all people (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2020). SPLC collects data on hate and bias incidents across the nation, as well as documenting known, active hate groups in the country. SPLC gathers their data from public records, and in some cases requests to obtain public records from different states. Some of their information is also gathered using police data, however this data has to be supplemented because not all police jurisdictions collect data on hate crimes specifically, or they don't record a hate crime as such (rather coding an incident just as assault, making their records show that there was no hate motivation in the crime).

SPLC's data is probably the most robust available, as everything they collect is focused on hate and bias crime, as well as hate groups, and their data goes back roughly to 2000. SPLC data are available by state, and include the following forms of mobilization of hate: Arson, assault, bombing, cross burning, harassment, intelligence, intimidation, leafleting, legal development, murder, rally, threat, and vandalism. State-level SPLC data are supplemented with 2010 Census data on: population density, racial demographic data, average level of education, poverty percentage, and household income.

Incidents of unrest were pulled from Wikipedia from 2000-2021, and are broken down by state, region, population of the state at the time of the incident and the type of incident in order to categorize them into three types of incidents: economic/social injustice, politically motivated civil unrest, and incidents specifically in response to police action. Response to police action was separated specifically as this country has seen numerous incidents of unrest specifically around police related action, especially in the last few years with the Floyd riots, which affected the entire United States.

These analyses have been conducted with all 50 states, with the exclusion of D.C. After running exploratory analyses, D.C. was excluded as it creates outlier results in all of the analyses that were run. Qualitatively, D.C. is reasonable to exclude because it is the nation's capital, and many civil unrest incidents that take place there may be national in scope rather than local.

Analysis

In order to examine the nature of and relationship between civil unrest and mobilization of hate in the post George Floyd era, bivariate and multivariate analyses were

conducted. Specifically, analyses were conducted to understand the contours of civil unrest and mobilization of hate, and to determine the relationship between these two phenomena.

The main independent variable measures the number of civil unrest incidents by state. In addition to this variable, civil unrest was broken down into three types: response to police action (RPA), economic and social civil unrest (ES), and politically motivated civil unrest (PMCU). Finally, response to police action (RPA) and economic and social (ES) civil unrest were also combined to create a fourth subtype, economic and social – inclusive (ESI).¹

The main dependent variables are mobilizations of hate, and number of hate groups. Variables were also created to capture subtypes of mobilization of hate, including violent and nonviolent mobilizations. Finally, a combined outcome variable was created that encapsulates both mobilizations of hate and number of hate groups to measure both the potential for and actualization of mobilized hate.

Bivariate statistics, including correlations and linear regression, were utilized to understand the contours of, and associations between, civil unrest and mobilization of hate. All analyses were assessed for significance at the $p < .01$ threshold. The bivariate analyses were used to examine the following variables: violent mobilization, violent and nonviolent mobilization, and violent, nonviolent, and hate groups (mobilization plus hate groups). Key independent and dependent variables are summarized in Table 1.

¹ This is a more robust measurement of economic/social unrest. Having two different versions allows for the possibilities that response to police action is unique from other incidents of economic and social unrest, but also that the incidents are one and the same.

Table 1: Descriptives of Variables

| | N | Min | Max | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------------------------|----|-----|-----|-------|----------------|
| Number of civil unrest incidents | | | | | |
| # Response to police action | 50 | 0 | 8 | 1.46 | 1.199 |
| # Economic/social unrest | 50 | 0 | 4 | .28 | .671 |
| # Politically motivated civil unrest | 50 | 0 | 5 | .18 | .2 |
| # Economic/social inclusive | 50 | 0 | 9 | 1.74 | 1.62644 |
| Unrest minus George Floyd | 50 | 0 | 12 | .96 | 2.135 |
| Violent Mobilization | 50 | 0 | 200 | 14.78 | 28.10 |
| Mobilization + hate groups | 50 | 0 | 600 | 96.75 | 124.759 |
| Violent + nonviolent mobilization | 50 | 0 | 581 | 75.22 | 108.61264 |

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Focusing on violent mobilizations of hate: The correlation between violent mobilization and the total unrest minus George Floyd² is significant ($r=.868, p<.01$). This means that states with high amounts of civil unrest tend to have higher levels of violent mobilization of hate. When breaking this down into social unrest types, the correlation between the number of response to police action and violent mobilization was determined significant ($r=.697, p<.01$). This means that a state's number of civil unrest incidents in response to police action was significantly associated with violent mobilization of hate in that state. The correlation between the number of economic and social unrest incidents and violent mobilization was determined significant ($r=.759, p<.01$). This means that economic and social unrest was significantly associated with violent mobilization of hate. The correlation between the number of politically motivated civil unrest and violent mobilization was determined significant ($r=.811, p<.01$). This means that the number of politically motivated civil unrest incidents in a state was significantly associated with violent mobilization of hate in that state.

When shifting focus from violent mobilizations of hate to total potential for organized hate (my compound dependent variable that captures both hate groups and mobilizations of hate), different patterns are seen. The relationship between the number of unrest incidents

² The George Floyd protest were excluded from the data as this incident involved the entire United States and caused there to be an outlier in every data point that was analyzed.

response to police action and total potential for organized hate was deemed significant ($r=.682$, $p<.01$). The correlation between the total potential for organized hate and the number of economic and social unrest incidents was also determined as significant ($r=.736$, $p<.01$). The relationship between the total potential for organized hate and the number of politically motivated civil unrest is significant as well ($r=.777$, $p<.01$).

Regressions were also run with each variable in order to assess the simultaneous impact of multiple independent variables on a given dependent variable. Looking at violent mobilization as the dependent variable, R squared for this model was .812, meaning that 81% of the variation in the outcome (violent mobilization) could be explained by predictors built into the model. The model included the following independent variables : number of unrest incidents in response to police action (beta = .186, $p<.045$); number of economic/social unrest incidents (beta = .424, $p<.001$); number of politically motivated unrest incidents (beta=.445, $p<.001$). The control variables for this model included population (beta= .403, $p<.001$); white alone (beta= .002, $p<.966$); and Median Household Income (beta= .035, $p<.521$). In total, results for this model show that all types of civil unrest had a significant effect on violent mobilization of hate, while the control variables related to race and median household income were not significant. In every instance, population was deemed significant.

Looking at mobilization plus hate groups as the dependent variable, R squared for this model was .759, meaning that 75% of the variation in the outcome (mobilization plus hate groups) could be explained by predictors built into the model. The model included the following independent variables : number of unrest incidents in response to police action (beta = .203, $p<.054$); number of economic/social unrest incidents (beta = .417, $p<.001$);

number of politically motivated unrest incidents (beta=.404, $p<.001$). The control variables for this model included population (beta= .540, $p<.001$); white alone (beta= -.023, $p<.660$); and Median Household Income (beta= .082, $p<.123$). In total, results for this model show that all types of civil unrest had a significant effect on mobilization plus hate groups, while the control variables related to race and median household income were not significant. In every instance, population was deemed significant.

Looking at violent and nonviolent mobilization as the final dependent variable, R squared for this model was .749, meaning that 74% of the variation in the outcome (violent and nonviolent mobilization) could be explained by predictors built into the model. The model included the following independent variables: number of unrest incidents in response to police action (beta = .236, $p<.028$); number of economic/social unrest incidents (beta =.412, $p<.001$); number of politically motivated unrest incidents (beta=.373, $p<.002$). The control variables for this model included population (beta= .485, $p<.001$); white alone (beta= -.018, $p<.763$); and Median Household Income (beta= .110, $p<.068$). In total, results for this model show that all types of civil unrest had a significant effect on violent and nonviolent mobilization, while the control variables related to race and median household income were not significant. In every instance, population was deemed significant.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

There are remarkably consistent results that shows a strong pattern of association between civil unrest and the mobilization of hate. All correlation coefficients ran in the .6 through .8 range, showing strong correlations between all forms of unrest and mobilization of hate. In the regressions, the majority of the independent variables were regarded as highly significant when ran against the dependent variables. Population, as expected, was deemed significant when looking at every dependent variable, which is why it was chosen as a constant. The other two constant variables, median household income and race (white alone) were deemed insignificant when analyzed with all of the dependent variables. The one variable that didn't show as being highly significant, due to it being excluded from the regressions, in most cases was the economic/social inclusive variable, however, response to police action and economic/social were regarded as significant on their own.

Why does this matter? Hate crimes need to be studied differently than other types of crime. Hate crimes and "regular crime" are one in the same with the distinction of motivation. Assault is just assault until you look at the motivation behind the crime. Assault, for example, against someone solely due to their race is different than just a regular assault. This major distinction is also important when discussing hate crimes within the frame of law enforcement. With the way the current world is and the events that have happened within the last few years, putting a civil unrest lens on hate crimes adds a new perspective to the hate

crime studies that have already been done, and the data shows that the two are highly correlated with each other.

There are limitations with this study, as there are limitations with most studies. The biggest limitation comes from having a lack of data, as all of the hate crime statistics came from one place. This is not only a big limitation for this specific study, but it's also a big limitation for studying hate crimes in general. Police jurisdictions aren't held to a consistent standard when it comes to collecting and reporting hate crime data. Hawaii has very limited data, almost nonexistent data, therefore, any hate crimes committed in Hawaii weren't included in this study, as an example. These limitations, however, do not downgrade the significant correlations found between hate and civil unrest.

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VITA

Clair Eaton earned a dual degree in Psychology and Criminal Justice and Criminology from the University of Missouri-Kansas City in 2020 and continued her education at UMKC. Following the approval of her thesis, Clair will begin searching for a position that allows her to help people and her community. Clair has a loving husband that has supported her through her entire graduate school journey (including getting married right before graduation)! Aside from school and work, Clair enjoys spending her free time watching trash television and reading. Clair currently works as a Sales Manager at David's Bridal and loves getting to be apart of the wedding planning journey for her brides and sharing in their excitement when they "say yes to the dress!"