

The Relationship Between Hate Groups and Far-Right Ideological Violence

Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice
2014, Vol. 30(3) 310–332
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DOI: 10.1177/1043986214536659
ccj.sagepub.com



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Abstract

This study examines whether the presence of hate groups increases the likelihood of serious ideologically motivated violence committed by far-rightists. While hate crime research has generally focused on a single state or made comparisons across several states, we seek to examine this relationship within the context of U.S. counties. A smaller unit of analysis allows for the simultaneous consideration of several social processes operating at the community level, which might also influence ideologically motivated offending by far-right extremists. We test the relationship using data from the Extremist Crime Database (ECDB) for the dependent measure, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) for the hate groups measure, and various other sources for additional variables. We find that the existence of a hate group in a county is significantly related to the occurrence of far-right ideologically motivated violence.

Keywords

hate group, extremist crime, homicide, open-source data

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There are several reasons to expect that communities home to domestic hate groups should experience relatively more hate crime. For one, intuition would suggest that the mere presence of extremist groups would increase opportunities for hate group members to participate in hate-related activities, including the commission of crimes. Another reason to suspect a positive relationship between hate groups and hate crime is that hate group members commit crimes close to their homes. Examining federally indicted domestic terrorists, Smith, Damphousse, and Roberts (2006) found that offenders operating in the United States tended to commit crimes within a 30-mile radius of their residences. Green and Rich (1998) also provided important insights into the relationship between hate activity (e.g., demonstrations, rallies) and hate crime in the form of cross burnings, finding hate activities to be strongly related to cross burnings in one state. Public activities of domestic extremists not only coincided with hate crime but also may have actually inspired them (Green & Rich, 1998, p. 279). If extremist groups engage in public activities close to home, then, by extension, increases in hate groups may parallel increases in the likelihood of hate crime occurrences.

However, some evidence suggests that the relationship between hate group presence and discriminatory forms of violence may be spurious. While there have been few systematic efforts to count the number of hate and other extremist groups in the United States, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) annually produces a “hate map” that includes a listing of all groups reported to them by their law enforcement, policy, and journalism contacts (SPLC, 2013b). The SPLC estimates that membership in hate groups has been on the rise since 2000, especially since President Barack Obama took office in 2008 (SPLC, 2013a). Interestingly, the overall number of hate crime occurrences in the United States has actually declined over the last decade (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2013). A possible explanation for this inverse relationship is that membership in far-right groups provide adequate channels for political expression through non-violent activities. In effect, it may be that hate crime and other forms of extremist crime are less likely to be committed by members of hate groups as opposed to extremists who remain unaffiliated with organized groups.

It is surprising that there has yet to be a definitive study on this question. In fact, there is relatively little empirical research investigating this issue. Behind the dearth of relevant literature are several methodological obstacles to valid data collection (Green et al., 2001; King, 2013). One such obstacle is the lack of consensus over the meaning of “hate crime.” Definitions of hate crime often vary across police jurisdictions (e.g., states, counties), and academics who devise their own definitions risk clouding an already nebulous concept (see Perry, 2001). Another imposing obstacle is attaining valid data on hate crime and hate groups. Official crime data sources, like the FBI’s Hate Crime Statistics and National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS), attempt to provide national-level data on bias crime but are currently not representative of hate crime offending in the United States. Others have utilized police records directly from police agencies, but attaining representative data on a particular type of rare homicide from agency records would require extensive resources. Still others have utilized information published by advocacy groups (e.g., National Coalition for

the Homeless, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force) who provide annual reports based on a number of sources (e.g., media reports). Drawing an accurate depiction of the extent and nature of hate crime presents its own challenges, as offender motives and circumstances of crimes are often elusive or unknown.

While the relationship between hate groups and hate crime has not been completely overlooked, the present project builds on existing studies in some key ways. Rather than focusing on hate crime reported to police as an outcome of interest, we narrow our focus to fatal acts of ideologically motivated violence committed by far-rightists in the United States. We thus conduct a more direct test of hate group presence on a serious, and clearly defined, manifestation of violence carried out by one particular type of domestic extremist offender. The current study is guided by the following research question:

Research Question 1: Does the presence of hate groups increase the likelihood of serious ideologically motivated violence by far-rightists net the effects of other relevant social factors?

We also examine this relationship over an extended time frame that encases certain historical events, like the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which might briefly alter the nature of hate groups and far-right offending in the United States. Finally, while hate crime research has generally focused on a single state or made comparisons across several states, we seek to examine this relationship within the context of U.S. counties. A smaller unit of analysis allows for the simultaneous consideration of several social processes operating at the community level, which might also influence ideologically motivated offending by far-right extremists.

Review of the Literature

Ecological Factors, and Racial/Ethnic and Religious Conflict

Although our study focuses primarily on the effects of hate group presence on one form of extremist crime, we also examine the potential effects of several demographic, economic, and political factors on ideologically motivated far-right homicide. Therefore, we first review the extant sociological literature on the ecological correlates of hate crime. One ecological factor of particular interest to scholars of racial and ethnic crime has been economic conditions, such as unemployment rates. In one of the most cited studies of hate crime, Levin and McDevitt (1993) propose a relative deprivation framework for explaining hate crime. Racial and ethnic minorities are demonized, as they are viewed as responsible for the strain between culturally prescribed goals and the means to achieve them. Under conditions of economic turmoil or stagnation, this strain leads to frustration and, in some instances, aggression against representative members of minority groups (see Agnew, 1992; Merton, 1938).

In another study, Medoff (1999) has examined the relationship between several socioeconomic indicators and hate crime, finding that the unemployment rate was

positively related to hate crime in 1995. At the same time, hate crime was negatively related to the full-time hourly wage rate. Medoff concluded that increases in wages and reductions in unemployment should lead to reductions in hateful activity. Gale, Heath, and Ressler (2002) also conducted an analysis of economic and socioeconomic factors that may be related to hate crime. Rather than focusing on a single year, their study spans across all states in which hate crimes were consistently reported by the FBI from 1992 to 1995. They found that income disparity between Blacks and Whites was a significant predictor of hate crime and suggested that increased levels of social "envy" may be partly responsible for increases in hate crimes (see Becker, 1968). Similar to Medoff, they also found that higher unemployment rates were associated with higher rates of hate crime.

Conversely, other research has questioned the relationship between economic conditions and hate crime. In one key study, Green, Glaser, and Rich (1998) examined the relationship between unemployment and hate crime incidents in several New York City boroughs over the span of 9 years (1987-1995). Focusing on a single city, hate crime data were provided by the New York Police Department's Bias Incident Investigative Unit, while monthly unemployment rates were gathered from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Countering the frustration-aggression hypothesis (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939; Hovland & Sears, 1940; Miller, 1941), Green, Glaser, and Rich (1998) found no evidence that as hate crimes perpetrated by Whites against racial and ethnic minorities increased, economic conditions declined. In another study by Green and his colleagues, the authors relied on the same New York City hate crime data to study the effects of demographic and macroeconomic variables on racially motivated crime (Green, Strolovitch, & Wong, 1998). They found that racial hate crime was most common in predominately White areas, especially those that experienced an in-migration of minorities. Importantly, they find no significant relationship between economic conditions and racial violence.

Another ecological factor of interest to scholars seeking to explain discriminatory forms of violence is racial heterogeneity. Drawing from social disorganization theory (Shaw & McKay, 1942), criminologists have long considered racial heterogeneity to be an impediment to the development of informal social controls within communities. As a result, low levels of informal social controls give way to increasing rates of crime. To date there are two conflicting hypotheses regarding the expected relationships between size of racial minority group populations and rates of discriminatory violence. The first is known as the power-threat hypothesis, which suggests that the size of a racial or ethnic minority group population is inversely related to discriminatory acts by Whites against minorities (Blalock, 1967). As the size of the racial minority group increases, so too does the threat to the social and economic standing (and power) of the White majority. In response, threats to power may consequently be met with discriminatory forms of crime. In support of the power-threat hypothesis, scholars have found that the size of the Black population is positively associated with Black lynchings (Beck & Tolnay, 1990; Corzine, Creech, & Huff-Corzine, 1983; Corzine, Huff-Corzine, & Creech, 1988). The second hypothesis, referred to as the defended neighborhoods perspective, suggests something very different about the relationship

between the racial minority population and discriminatory forms of violence. Defended neighborhoods maintains that areas where Whites have long been the predominant majority are more likely to want to hold onto and defend their community's racial homogeneity (see Suttles, 1972). Therefore, increases in minority populations are more likely to lead to discriminatory forms of crime in areas where racial and ethnic populations are relatively small. Drawing from the defended neighborhoods' perspective, Green, Strolovitch, and Wong (1998) examined racially motivated crimes in New York City from 1987 to 1995. They found that racially motivated crimes were more common in White strongholds that had experienced influxes of racial minorities. Also finding no relationship between racially motivated crime and unemployment, they concluded that, as opposed to economic frustration, it is the desire of Whites to protect their "territory" from encroaching minority populations that drives racial hate crime. More recent research examining racial hate crime in Chicago neighborhoods also supports the defended neighborhoods' perspective. Indeed, Lyons (2007) found that anti-Black crime was more likely in organized communities, or communities with high levels of informal social control, which were experiencing a rapid influx of Black residents.

Finally, the political threat hypothesis suggests that it is the perceived relative loss in political power or clout by Whites that leads to resentment and retaliatory violence against racial and ethnic minorities. Threats to Whites' political power may come in the form of urbanization and upward mobility of Blacks, as well as the increased political mobilization of Blacks. Examining discriminatory violence at the turn of the 20th century, Olzak (1990) found that lynchings and urban violence against Blacks by Whites increased with political (Populist) challenges to White supremacy in the South. In other words, racial and ethnic conflict increased when the status quo of White political power was challenged. Olzak also found that labor market changes affecting low-skilled workers and rising competition for resources from immigration resulted in increased discriminatory violence against racial and ethnic minorities. In a more recent study, Beck (2003) also found that public activities by White supremacists in the South also increased with rapid urbanization. Beck's study suggests that population change largely along racial and ethnic lines were perceived as a threat to the traditional social and political order. Likewise, the study found little evidence that other forms of competition (demographic and employment) affected White supremacist activities.

In addition to racial conflict, it is possible that the presence of non-Christian religious groups may shape the likelihood of a county experiencing an attack through some of the same processes discussed above. Especially since 9/11, the far-right movement has expressed irritation with immigrant groups, including non-Christians, arguing that increased religious and ethnic diversity poses a threat to White Christian dominance (Ezekiel, 1995; Hamm, 1993). The vast majority of Americans is Protestant or Catholic, and Muslims and Jews constitute less than 3% of the population. Far-rightists may see counties with Muslims or Jews as particularly threatening. In addition, counties with Muslim and Jewish congregations are likely to have religious symbols and buildings, including synagogues and mosques, which provide visual indicators of group presence and clear targets for attack. The 2012 Sikh temple attack in

Wisconsin offers some support for the increased likelihood of counties with non-Christian congregations becoming visible targets for far-right extremist violence.

Hate Groups and Hate Crime

Mulholland (2011) concluded that only a few studies have examined “the determinants of hate crimes and all but one fail to include a measure of hate group activity” (p. 2; see also Green & Rich, 1998; Ryan & Leeson, 2011). We concur, as we were able to identify only two studies that empirically examine the relationship between hate groups and hate crime, or other far-right ideologically motivated violence (Mulholland, 2011; Ryan & Leeson, 2011). Although both studies relied on FBI data for the number of hate crimes and SPLC data for U.S. hate group presence, the results are inconsistent. Mulholland (2011) found a positive relationship between hate groups and hate crime, while Ryan and Leeson (2011) found no effects. Controlling for similar factors, the study by Mulholland examined the hate groups–hate crime relationship across U.S. counties, whereas Ryan and Leeson utilized a state-level unit of analysis. Both studies and other relevant research are discussed in more detail below.

Ryan and Leeson (2011) collected hate crime statistics and hate group numbers for 2002 to 2008 from the FBI and SPLC reports, respectively. Other key variables tested include economic indicators, such as the state unemployment rate, gross state product per capita, and poverty levels, as well as demographic variables, including the percentage of Blacks, Jews, children younger than 18 years, and children who were victims of abuse or neglect. In addition, they used state-level police expenditures and the percentage of population covered by hate crime statistics as control variables. They found no relationship between the number of hate groups in a state and hate crime. Interestingly, most of the other variables had little impact on the number of hate crimes. The authors concluded, “Our findings leave the question of what factors may drive hate crime in America unresolved. But they cast doubt on the possibility that one of the popularly conceived leading candidates is responsible: hate groups” (p. 262).

Mulholland (2011) also examined the relationship between hate groups and hate crime. He created a county-level panel data set that included hate group and hate crime data, as well as various controls, including unemployment, income, poverty, percentage Black and Hispanic, population density, and crime rates for 1999 to 2007. Like Ryan and Leeson (2011), the number of hate groups per county was derived from reports published by the SPLC. The dependent measure was calculated from the FBI’s reports on hate crime statistics. He found that about one quarter of the counties had at least one White supremacist hate group present during the study period (Mulholland, 2011, p. 9). There were additional interesting findings from this study. First, after controlling for county fixed effects, the presence of a White supremacist hate group was associated with more hate crimes. Mulholland explained that

[u]sing the full sample, the presence of an active White supremacist chapter is associated with 286 more hate crimes per 10,000 residents. With an average number of hate crimes per 10,000 residents of 1,494, the presence of an active White supremacist chapter is associated with an 18.7 percent higher hate crime rate. (p. 10)

An additional and more restricted analysis including only counties with one or more hate crimes found that having a White supremacist group in a county results in 335 more hate crimes per 10,000 residents—an increase of 14% (Mulholland, 2011, p. 10). In addition, percentage Hispanic, income level, population density, and crime rate also seemed to influence hate crimes in at least one of the fixed or dynamic models presented. Finally, he found that the presence of White supremacist groups does not increase anti-White hate crimes, and hate groups do not form to protect against expected future hate crimes committed by non-Whites (Mulholland, 2011, p. 15).

Another recent study asks a slightly different question from the studies reviewed above, but nonetheless examines factors related to hate crime occurrences. Deloughery, King, and Asal (2012) questioned whether hate crime serves as a precursor to terrorism attacks in the United States. The authors relied on the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) hate crime data from 1992 to 2008 and terrorism data from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) for the same time period. Based on a time series analysis, they found that hate crime did not serve as prologue to terrorist attacks. Instead, terrorist attacks, like the September 11 hijackings, served as precursors to some forms of hate crime (e.g., “right-wing” hate crime). Deloughery et al. concluded that hate crime and terrorism should not be considered analogous forms of extremist crime. While the authors’ study did not look directly at hate group presence and hate crime, their research demonstrates the value of examining far-right wing extremist crimes separately from other extremist crimes over extended time intervals.

The Current Study

The results across the only two studies that tested the relationship between hate groups and hate crime reached conflicting conclusions (Mulholland, 2011; Ryan & Leeson, 2011). This study thus builds on the extant research by providing an additional assessment of this relationship, while controlling for many other possible explanations. It is possible that hate groups encourage violence by explicitly advocating for it (Freilich, Pichardo-Almanzar, & Rivera, 1999), so that crimes are carried out by their followers and other supporters. Alternatively, in the absence of direct calls for violence by hate group organizations, individuals unaffiliated with any organization may respond to implicit messages that promote violence, increasing the likelihood that counties with higher proportions of hate groups would be more likely to experience crime. While our data do not allow us to determine the exact process, our study will determine whether or not there is a relationship between hate group presence and extremist attacks in the county. We contribute to the extant research in three specific ways.

First, prior studies have focused solely on exploring the relationship between hate groups, using the SPLC’s annual reports for group counts, and hate crime occurrences, using the FBI’s UCR hate crime statistics. Our study also uses the SPLC’s reports to measure hate group presence, as it is the only known source that identifies hate groups over a significant period of time. However, the dependent measure of the current study focuses on one of the most serious manifestations of hate violence, homicide incidents committed by far-right extremists against their ideological enemies in the United

States between 1990 and 2012. Importantly, instead of relying on the FBI's hate crime counts, we used open-source data collection strategies to identify all ideologically motivated homicides committed by far-right extremists during the time period.¹

Utilizing far-right homicide as a proxy for hate violence in the United States is an appropriate way to investigate the hate group–hate crime relationship, as most general hate crimes captured by official statistics are not committed by those associated with hate movements. Indeed, this is the first study we know of to empirically examine the influence of hate groups specifically on violence perpetrated by those affiliated with far-right movements in the United States. Using far-right ideological homicide occurrences as a single outcome measure also avoids the questionable assumption that the nature of non-fatal and non-violent forms of hate crime is homogeneous with hate homicides. Hate homicide continues to be underreported in the FBI's official reports. Therefore, relying on open-source data allows us to circumvent such shortcomings and other documented biases in police hate crime data that might deleteriously affect official measures of violent hate crime (see also Boyd, Berk, & Hamner, 1996; McDevitt et al., 2000; Nolan & Akiyama, 1999).

Second, it is important to consider the relationship between hate group presence and ideologically motivated violence over a long period of time. Previous research has examined the relationship for relatively short time frames (between 6 and 10 years). Because hate group membership may fluctuate over time, such as during the early 1990s and following the 2008 election of President Barack Obama, focusing on short time intervals may lead to results biased by historical events. In this study, we account for historical fluctuations by exploring this relationship across a 22-year time span. To control for the effects of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, we also examine the influence of hate groups on hate violence perpetrated by those affiliated with far-right hate movements before and after 2001.

Third, we examine the relationship between hate groups and violence at the county level across all contiguous states, controlling for a large number of theoretically important variables. We know of only one other study that examined the effects by county (Mulholland, 2011), and this research did not control for several of the potentially important macro-social variables included in the current study.

Data and Method

Dependent Variable

Our key outcome variable assesses whether or not a far-right ideologically motivated homicide attack occurred in the county. This measure was obtained from the U.S. Extremist Crime Database (ECDB), which tracks violent and financial crimes committed by political extremists in the United States (Freilich, Chermak, Belli, Gruenewald, & Parkin, 2014). For an incident to be included in the ECDB, a homicide must have been committed in the United States and, at the time of the incident, at least one of the perpetrators must have adhered to an extremist belief system (Freilich et al., 2014).

A multistage process is used to determine whether or not an incident should be included in the ECDB (Freilich et al., 2014). First, open-source databases, online newspaper articles, and publications, such as the SPLC's Intelligence Report, are used to identify cases that could potentially fit the inclusion criteria. Once identified, researchers search several open-source search engines and databases to collect all publicly available information on the homicide events. Additional researchers verify that the incident meets appropriate inclusion criteria and conduct additional open-source searches. The ECDB is considered one of the most valid data sources of fatal ideologically motivated attacks committed by far-rightists in the United States (Chermak, Freilich, Parkin, & Lynch, 2012). Recent studies (Freilich & Chermak, 2009; Gruenewald & Pridemore, 2012; Suttmoeller, Gruenewald, Chermak, & Freilich, 2013) have relied on the ECDB to examine a range of issues, including the evolution of domestic extremist groups (Freilich, Chermak, & Caspi, 2009) and differences between violent and non-violent extremist groups (Chermak, Freilich, & Suttmoeller, 2013).

Our dependent variable was created by extracting all of the ideologically motivated homicides that were committed by far-rightists in the contiguous (48 of the 50) United States between 1990 and 2012. We then located the county where the incident occurred. Between 1990 and 2012, there were 150 incidences clustered within 105 counties. Since 96% of counties did not have any incident and only 30 counties (i.e., less than 1%) had more than one incident, we created a dichotomous dependent variable where 0 = *county did not have an incident* and 1 = *county had an incident*. Our measure of incidences occurred over a 22-year period, but because of the rarity of the outcome we are not able to set up a panel analysis. To ascertain that the dependent and independent variables occurred within a similar time period, we conduct separate analyses for attacks that occurred between 1990-2000, when 70 counties experienced an incident, and 2001-2012, when 48 counties had an incident. Descriptive statistics can be found in Table 1.

Independent Variables

Based on the discussion above and other research on this topic (Medoff, 1999; Mulholland, 2011; Ryan & Leeson, 2011), we selected variables thought to be related to whether or not a county experienced an incident. These are the number of hate groups in a county, the presence of Jewish or Muslim congregations, racial and ethnic diversity, the percentage of divorced people, the percentage that voted in the presidential election, percentage below the poverty level, housing stability, index crime rate, and the percentage of mainline Protestant and Catholic adherents.

Our measure of hate groups is taken from the SPLC's Annual Hate Crime Listing Report. The compilation of the groups listed in this report was cumbersome. For each issue, we recorded every group listed in the report organized by state, and then searched for the county where the group maintained chapters and was headquartered. We followed this procedure for each successive year (1990-2012), adding groups that were not previously identified or adding their presence for another year if that had appeared

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Variables Included in the Analysis.

	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Key outcome variables				
County with incident (1990-2000)	0.022	0.147	0	1
County with incident (2001-2012)	0.016	0.124	0	1
Predictor variables from 1990 ^a				
Population density	166.513	877.525	0.300	32,618.900
Population (thousands)	77.927	260.138	0.354	8,863.164
Percentage below poverty level (1989)	16.252	7.695	2.184	61.284
Racial/ethnic diversity	0.200	0.178	0.003	0.677
Jewish congregation (at least one)	0.187	0.390	0	1
Percentage of people in county divorced	5.832	1.450	1.503	12.086
Housing stability: Percentage in same house as in the previous 5 years	54.556	7.930	12.242	78.328
Index crime rate per 10,000 (excluding arson)	285.502	218.406	0.000	2,090.676
Percentage of adherents mainline Protestant	27.546	16.123	0.000	100.000
Percentage of adherents Catholic	26.844	24.885	0.000	100.000
Percentage that voted in presidential election (1992)	43.269	7.612	7.519	93.333
Number of hate groups per 10,000 people (1990-2001)	0.213	0.864	0	21.116
Predictor variables from 2000 ^b				
Population density	182.499	922.131	0.300	34,916.600
Population (thousands)	88.25	288.21	0.356	9,519.34
Percentage below poverty level (1999)	13.723	6.290	2.275	56.415
Racial/ethnic diversity	0.245	0.182	0.008	0.734
Jewish congregation (at least one)	0.194	0.400	0	1
Muslim congregation (at least one)	0.134	0.340	0	1
Percentage of people in county divorced	7.519	1.586	1.685	16.487
Housing stability: Percentage in same house as in the previous 5 years	55.327	7.063	14.145	78.012
Index crime rate per 10,000 (excluding arson)	234.941	179.306	0	2,200.893
Percentage of adherents mainline Protestant	24.085	14.960	0	1
Percentage of adherents Catholic	29.721	25.931	0	1
Percentage that voted in presidential election (2000)	39.897	7.206	8.052	77.996
Number of hate groups per 10,000 people (2002-2012)	0.347	1.573	0	43.375

Note. N = 3,065.

^aUnless otherwise specified, all measures are from 1990.

^bUnless otherwise specified, all measures are from 2000.

in another report. Based on this information, we calculated the number of hate groups in a county for every 10,000 people for 1990-2001 and 2002-2012. Our measure of the presence of Muslims and Jews is taken from the Association of Religion Data Archive's (ARDA) 1990 and 2000 Religious Congregations and Membership Study's county files. Jews account for less than 2% of the U.S. population, and Muslims account for less than 1%. While these non-Christian groups are rare, we thought that they might be particularly important for understanding variation in extremist violence across counties. The ARDA provides a measure of whether or not a county has a Jewish or Muslim congregation. These counties should not only have a higher presence of members from these groups, but many will also have a synagogue or mosque, and other visible non-Christian religious buildings, and indicators of the group's presence. Much like the 2012 Wisconsin attack on a Sikh temple, we suspect that counties with Jewish and Muslim congregations will be particularly appealing targets for far-right extremists, whose ideology is likely unsupportive of non-Christian faiths.

As most counties do not have any Jewish or Muslim congregations, and few counties have more than one, we use a dichotomous measure for congregational presence where 1 = *at least one congregation* and 0 = *no congregation*. While we have a measure of Jewish congregational presence for 1990 and 2000, we only have a measure of Muslim congregational presence for 2000.² In a separate analysis, we found that there was a high level of overlap in our religion measures between the two decades, suggesting that counties that had a Muslim congregation in the 2000s likely had one in the 1990s. So that we can have a measure of Muslim congregational presence during both time periods, we use the 2000 Muslim congregation variable for both time periods. This is the only variable where we did not have the appropriate measures for both time periods (i.e., 1990 and 2000).

Our measure of racial and ethnic diversity is taken from an index provided by the U.S. Census Bureau (2001). The diversity index³ reports the percentage of times two randomly selected people will differ by race/ethnicity. Our measure of the percentage divorced and population turnover are also taken from the U.S. Census Bureau. For our 2000 measure of population, the U.S. Census Bureau provided a measure of the percentage of people older than 5 years who were in the same house that they were in 1995. Likewise, for 1990, the U.S. Census Bureau provides a measure of the percentage of people older than 5 years who were in the same house as they were in 1985. Our measure of crime rates is taken from the Uniform Crime Report's county-level file (U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1990, 2000) and indicates the number of index crimes (excluding arson) per 10,000 people. The percentage of households in the county that are below the poverty level was calculated using 1989 and 1999 estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau (U.S. Census Bureau, 1990b, 2000d).

The percentage mainline Protestant and Catholic are also taken from the ARDA's 1990 and 2000 Religious Congregations and Membership Study's county files. There were some differences between the mainline Protestant religious groups (i.e., Episcopal Church) included in the 1990 and 2000 data files. We wanted to make sure that any influence of percentage mainline Protestant in our analysis was the result of real effects, rather than changes to the categories that comprise the mainline Protestant

groups during the two different periods. We, therefore, created a measure of mainline Protestants that only includes groups⁴ that appear in both the 1990 and 2000 data files. Our measure of voting is taken from the U.S. Census Bureau's (1992, 2000b) county data file downloads on elections. Our measure indicates the percentage of people in the county who voted in either the 1992 or 2000 presidential elections.

Control Variables

Previous research (Webb & Cutter, 2009) has found that terrorist incidences are more likely to occur in places with larger populations and in densely populated areas. To ensure that any county-level effects are not the result of population differences, we controlled for county population density and population size. Our measures are taken from the U.S. Census Bureau. Population is measured as the number per 1,000 people (U.S. Census Bureau, 1990a, 2000c), and population density is the population per square mile (U.S. Census Bureau, 1996, 2000a).

There were several other variables that we considered examining. These included percentage White and Black, census response rate, level of social capital, percentage foreign-born, level of economic inequality (i.e., Gini index), per capita number of police, and police payroll. A separate analysis revealed that none of these variables were significant in any of our models, and as they were not as theoretically rich or empirically useful as the variables described above, we do not focus on them in this study.

Method

As mentioned above, between 1990 and 2012, less than 4% of counties in the contiguous United States experienced an incident. The rarity of incidences presented some challenges to our analysis. We initially considered developing a panel model that matched 1990 predictor variables to attacks occurring between 1990 and 2000, and 2000 predictor variables matched to attacks occurring between 2001 and 2012. However, because incidences were so rare, we could not fit a panel model for two separate periods. We opted instead to present our results for each decade separately. To account for the rarity of the dependent variable, we conduct our analysis using a procedure suggested by King and Zeng (2001) for generating approximately unbiased and lower variance estimates of logit coefficients and their variance-covariance matrix.

We begin our analysis by first presenting crosstabs of the percentage of counties with each characteristic (i.e., low poverty) that experienced a far-right incident in the 1990s and 2000s. We then present logistic regression models that use independent and control variables from the 1990s to examine whether or not a county experienced an incident between 1990 and 2000. We first enter population and population density, followed by the remaining variables, except for the number of hate groups. We then include the number of hate groups. Using these same steps, we then present our analyses for independent and dependent variables from 2000. Most of the independent and control variables from the 1990s and 2000s are highly correlated at .90 and above. County characteristics tend

to remain stable, even over a 22-year time period. However, there were a few societal changes that we thought were empirically and theoretically important for understanding differences between the 1990s and 2000s in far-right incidences. Divorce, for example, has become much more common and may not indicate the same level of county disruption or disorganization that it previously did. Likewise, with the events of September 11, 2001, America's understanding of and responses to terrorism have changed. Finally, between 1990 and 2000, crime rates decreased substantially.

To be clear, we would have preferred running a panel model with both time periods, but because the outcome is so rare, a panel model would not converge. Across all of the variables, a tiny (1.4%) amount of data are missing, and we, therefore, rely on the method of listwise deletion, resulting in a final count of 3,065 counties.

Results

Table 2 presents a modified crosstab of the relationships between county characteristics and the percentage of counties that experienced an incident in the 1990s and 2000s. Between 1990 and 2000, 68 attacks occurred in 3,065 U.S. counties, and from 2001 to 2012, this number decreased to 48 attacks. Aside from the presence of Jewish and Muslim congregations and hate groups, all the county characteristics were dichotomized into the top and bottom 50% (i.e., "higher" and "lower"). All of the differences between county characteristics (e.g., lower vs. higher poverty) within a given decade are significant. Counties with a Muslim or Jewish congregation, any hate groups, and higher crime rates experienced the highest percentage of incidences. Whereas counties that had a Jewish congregation in the 1990s experienced more than 8% of the far-right extremist attacks that occurred, counties without a Jewish congregation experienced just 0.80% of the attacks. A similar relationship can be found for the presence of a Jewish congregation in the 2000s. Likewise, counties that had at least one hate group in the 1990s experienced 6.15% of the far-right extremist attacks that occurred, but counties without any hate groups experienced just 0.64% of the attacks. In the 2000s, counties with a hate group experienced about 4% of the attacks, and counties without a hate group had just 0.56% of the attacks.

Our multivariate analysis is presented in Table 3. The first three models focus on independent and control variables from the 1990s with the outcome occurring between 1990 and 2000. Model 1 includes only the population measures. Population per 1,000 people⁵ is significant and positively associated with the odds of a county experiencing an incident. The second model includes all of the remaining variables aside from the number of hate groups. The presence of a Muslim congregation and the percentage of a county that is divorced are positively associated with the odds of a far-right incident occurring in the county. The third model includes the per capita number of hate groups,⁶ which is significant and positive. For every increase in the number of hate groups⁷ per 10,000 people, the odds of an attack occurring increase by 23%.

Models 4, 5, and 6 draw on data from the 2000s when the percentage of counties that experienced an attack decreased from 2.2% to 1.6%. In Model 4, neither of the two population variables is significant. Model 5 shows that consistent with previous

Table 2. Percentage of Counties with Key Characteristics that Experienced a Far-right Incident in the 1990s and 2000s.

1990s		2000s	
Lower ^a poverty 1.26**	Higher poverty 2.90	Lower poverty 1.40	Higher poverty 1.69
Lower diversity 1.25***	Higher diversity 3.63	Lower diversity 0.68***	Higher diversity 2.75
No Jewish congregation 0.80***	Jewish congregation 8.39	No Jewish congregation 0.40***	Jewish congregation 6.40
No Muslim congregation 0.79***	Muslim congregation 11.46	No Muslim congregation 0.53***	Muslim congregation 8.29
Lower divorce rate 0.90***	Higher divorce rate 3.54	Lower divorce rate 0.86**	Higher divorce rate 2.25
Lower stable housing 4.01***	Higher stable housing 0.81	Lower stable housing 2.52***	Higher stable housing 0.73
Lower crime rate 0.56***	Higher crime rate 4.49	Lower crime rate 0.47***	Higher crime rate 2.97
Lower mainline Protestants 2.65*	Higher mainline Protestants 1.59	Lower mainline Protestants 2.11**	Higher mainline Protestants 0.74
Lower Catholics 1.45**	Higher Catholics 3.22	Lower Catholics 0.70***	Higher Catholics 2.63
Lower voters 2.82*	Higher voters 1.62	Lower voters 2.07*	Higher voters 1.05
No hate groups 0.64***	Any hate groups 6.15	No hate groups 0.56***	Any hate groups 3.96

Note. N = 3,065. The t tests indicate significant differences between the “higher” and “lower” groups for the same variable within the same time period.

^aAll county characteristics that are indicated as “higher” or “lower” were calculated as being in the top and bottom 50% of the sample.

†p < .10. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

models the presence of a Muslim congregation and the percentage of the county that is divorced are positively and significantly related to the odds of an attack. In addition, the presence of a Jewish congregation⁸ and the percentage of residents who voted in the presidential election are also significant. Specifically, counties that had a Jewish congregation in the 2000s had over three times the odds of experiencing an attack as counties that did not have any Jews. Likewise, a 1% increase in the number of people in a county who voted in the presidential election was associated with a 7.9% decrease in the odds of a county having a far-right incident. The final model includes the number of hate groups, which, like previous models, is positive and significant. For every additional hate group per 10,000 people in the 2000s, the odds of a county having a far-right attack increased by 23%.

Table 3. Logistic Regression^a of the Influence of County-Level Variables on Odds of a County Experiencing an Incident.

	1990 IV and DV			2000 IV and DV		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 1
Population density	1.000 (0.000)	1.000 (0.000)	1.000 (0.000)	1.000 (0.000)	1.000 (0.000)	1.000 (0.000)
Population per 1,000 people	1.003** (0.001)	1.001** (0.000)	1.001** (0.000)	1.001 (0.001)	1.000 (0.000)	1.000 (0.000)
Percentage below poverty level		0.958 (0.026)	0.958 (0.026)		0.963 (0.032)	0.962 (0.033)
Racial/ethnic diversity		1.996 (2.521)	2.068 (2.611)		0.419 (0.404)	0.449 (0.433)
Jewish congregation present		1.583 (0.748)	1.579 (0.744)		3.745** (1.900)	3.791** (1.938)
Muslim congregation present, 2000 ^b		2.756* (1.369)	2.734* (1.359)		3.576** (1.657)	3.608** (1.683)
Percentage of county divorced		1.303* (0.136)	1.299* (0.136)		1.332** (0.113)	1.327** (0.114)
Housing stability: Percentage in same housing		0.971 (0.025)	0.971 (0.025)		0.976 (0.028)	0.975 (0.028)
Index crime rate per 10,000 (excluding arson)		1.001 (0.001)	1.001 (0.001)		1.000 (0.001)	1.000 (0.001)
Percentage of adherents Mainline Protestant		1.002 (0.014)	1.003 (0.014)		0.953* (0.019)	0.955* (0.019)
Percentage of adherents Catholic		0.999 (0.007)	0.999 (0.007)		1.011 (0.008)	1.013 (0.008)
Percentage that voted in presidential election		0.993 (0.025)	0.993 (0.026)		0.921* (0.030)	0.919* (0.031)
Number of hate groups per 10,000 people			1.226* (0.102)			1.233** (0.068)
Constant	0.013***	0.013*	0.013*	0.013***	0.142	0.139
Observations	3,065	3,065	3,065	3,065	3,065	3,065

Note. Standard errors in parentheses. IV = independent variable; DV = dependent variable.

^aBecause of the rarity of the outcome, our logistic regression analysis is adjusted using a procedure that generates approximately unbiased and lower variance estimates of logit coefficients and their variance-covariance matrix (King & Zeng, 1999), which tends to occur with rare event data. In Stata, this procedure can be run using the user-written command "relogit."

^bA 1990 measure for Muslim congregation presence was never collected. We use the 2000 estimate in all of our analyses because the same religion variables (i.e., Jewish presence) tend to be moderately to highly correlated between 1990 and 2000, suggesting that the Muslim congregational estimate for 1990 and 2000 are likely similar.

†p < .10. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001. (two-tailed significance test).

Discussion and Conclusion

This study added to the literature by focusing on the relationship between the presence of hate groups and fatal ideologically motivated violence committed by far-rightists. While hate crime research has generally focused on a single state or made comparisons across several states, we examined this association at the county level, making it possible to assess key social processes operating at the community level. Importantly, our findings strongly supported the notion that counties with a far-right hate group presence are the same counties where far-right ideologically motivated homicides are more likely to occur. Indeed, this relationship was statistically significant for both the 1990-2000 and the 2001-2012 periods.

This is an important finding with implications for law enforcement. While of course constitutional rights must be protected and individual liberties never infringed upon, the police and others could take these findings into consideration. The police could seek to establish dialogue with hate groups in their community to build a rapport and send a message that everybody's rights will be protected while illegal acts, including violent crimes, are never acceptable. Similarly, the police could raise awareness among both their own officers and the general community about the negative effects of hate crimes and anti-government violence, as well as publicizing measures that individuals and communities could take to protect themselves (Freilich & Chermak, 2009, 2013; Freilich et al., 2009).

The police, aided by scholars, watch-groups, and others, also need to further unpack this relationship to further refine their responses. As Green and Rich (1998) noted about their findings (concerning the relationship between hate-group activity and cross burnings), the exact causal processes linking hate groups to bias crime or far-right violence is uncertain. Do hate groups encourage violence by explicitly advocating for it (Freilich et al., 1999), so that crimes are carried out by their followers and other supporters? Or, in the absence of such direct calls for violence, do individuals unaffiliated with the organization respond to implicit messages that promote violence and travel to the hate group's county to carry out their crimes? The answers to these questions will determine whether greater attention is needed only in the county where the hate group is located, or in surrounding areas as well. Findings would also indicate whether the focus should mostly be on the hate group in the area or on the larger social movement including those unaffiliated with the group who may also pose a danger (Gruenewald, Chermak, & Freilich, 2013).

Our study also found that the divorce rate and the presence of a Muslim congregation were consistently associated with fatal far-right violence. Counties with higher rates of divorce and the presence of a Muslim congregation were more likely to have a far-right ideologically homicide incident. It is possible that counties with higher divorce rates, a frequent measure of social cohesion, had lower levels of communal solidarity that allowed far-rightists to strike in these locations. Meanwhile, the far-right, especially since 9/11, has spoken out against immigration, especially minority and non-Christian migration and argued that increased diversity posed a threat to White Christian dominance in the United States. Thus, counties with a Muslim presence might be perceived by the far-right as the most "threatening" counties and those

for which ideologically motivated violence was necessary. This reasoning is supported somewhat by the finding that the presence of Jews in a county in 2000 was associated with far-right fatal attacks between 2001 and 2012. Similar to Muslims and racial minorities, Jews have always been viewed by the far-right as their ideological enemies. Some racist far-right leaders, in fact, have long argued that of all minorities, Jews posed the greatest threat (Ezekiel, 1995; Hamm, 1993).

We also found that while the percentage voting in the 1992 presidential election was unrelated to a far-right incident, in the 2000s, a higher percentage of voting was associated with lower odds of an attack. The percentage voting can indicate the extent to which county residents are politically and civically engaged and the level of cohesiveness within their communities (Lee, 2008; Rosenfeld, Messner, & Baumer, 2001). Between the 1992 and 2000 presidential elections, the percentage voting decreased slightly (i.e., 43% to 40%), as did the number of counties that experienced an attack. Since 9-11, counties with a high level of invested residents (i.e., the ones most committed to regularly voting) may have become even more engaged, limiting the likelihood of a far-right incident. It is also possible that between the two decades what voting suggested for a county's level of engagement and connectedness may have changed, and between 2002 and 2012 voting may have become a stronger indicator of engagement and connectedness.

Finally, it is important to note the mostly null effects of our other predictor variables. As our choice of predictors was based upon prior empirical work and well-established theoretical frameworks, the lack of support is interesting. The effect of economic deprivation, for example, on hate crimes and related phenomenon like terrorism has long been researched and contested by scholars. Unlike other studies, we did not find an association between poverty and the far-right ideologically motivated fatal violence on the county level. These findings converge with Green and colleagues work on the neighborhood level that also cast doubt on this association. Instead, it is possible that this effect only exists on larger units of analysis like the state level (see, for example, Gale et al., 2002; Medoff, 1999).

In conclusion, this is one of the first studies to comprehensively examine the role of hate groups in shaping the likelihood of a far-right attack within counties. Net the effects of variables that previous research has indicated should be related to attacks, the per capita number of hate groups has emerged as a robust, consistent, and unique indicator. More work is needed to unravel the processes through which they have an effect, but this study makes clear the important influence of hate groups for understanding ideologically motivated far-right attacks.

Authors' Note

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations presented here are solely the authors and are not representative of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) or the U.S. government.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This research was supported by the Science and Technology Directorate, U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) through START.

Notes

1. We define the American far-right as individuals or groups that subscribe to aspects of the following ideals: They are fiercely nationalistic (as opposed to universal and international in orientation), anti-global, suspicious of centralized federal authority, and reverent of individual liberty (especially their right to own guns, be free of taxes), and they believe in conspiracy theories that involve a grave threat to national sovereignty and/or personal liberty, that one's personal and/or national "way of life" is under attack and is either already lost or that the threat is imminent (sometimes such beliefs are amorphous and vague, but for some the threat is from a specific ethnic, racial, or religious group), and in the need to be prepared for an attack by participating in paramilitary preparations and training, and survivalism (Freilich, Chermak, Belli, Gruenewald, & Parkin, 2014; Freilich, Chermak, & Caspi, 2009).
2. We contacted the Association of Religion Data Archive (ARDA) and the Glenmary Research Center to find out whether or not a 1990 Muslim congregation measure exists, and everyone we spoke to told us that it was never collected.
3. As the U.S. Census Bureau's documentation (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001) on the diversity index explains, the index, which uses percentages expressed as ratios, is calculated by first squaring the percent for each group, then summing the squares, and then subtracting the sum from 1.00. Eight racial/ethnic groups were used to compute the index: (a) White, not Hispanic; (b) Black or African American; (c) American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN); (d) Asian; (e) Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (NHOPI); (f) two or more races, not Hispanic; (g) another race, not Hispanic; and (h) Hispanic or Latino.
4. The mainline Protestant groups that were included in both the 1990 and 2000 data collections were American Baptist Churches in the United States, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Congregational Christian Churches, Episcopal Church, Moravian Church in America, National Association of Congregational Christian Churches, Presbyterian Church (USA), Reformed Church in America, United Church of Christ, and United Methodist Church.
5. Several of the predictor variables were standardized using population size. In a separate analysis, we looked at whether or not any relationships in our multivariate analyses changed when population size was removed. We found that only one of our variables changed in any meaningful way. When population size was excluded in the 1990 analysis, the 1989 measure of percentage below poverty becomes significant. However, it remains in the same direction as it was when population per 1,000 people was included. As more populous counties are more likely to have an incident and they have less poverty than more rural areas, removing population makes proportion below the poverty level significant.
6. In a separate analysis, we considered the effect of a county having any hate groups versus no hate groups. We found that for the 1990 analysis, the relationship between the dichotomized hate group predictor and the outcome are very similar (same direction and significant = $p < .05$). However, the dichotomous predictor of hate group presence for 2000 was not significant at the .05 level. This suggests that for both 1990 and 2000 analyses, an increase in the number of hate groups per 10,000 people is related to increased odds of a

county experiencing an attack. While any hate group presence is related to increased odds of an attack in the 1990s, any hate group presence is not related to increased odds of an attack in the 2000s. We initially dichotomized the outcome because only 3% of counties experienced an incident during the 22-year time period. Conversely, more than 30% of counties had at least one hate group present. Because of the variables' different distribution and the partially significant relationship between the dichotomous measure of hate group presence and the outcome for 2000, we present our models using the number of hate groups per 10,000 people, which is significant for 1990 and 2000.

7. We considered the idea that in counties that had a higher proportion of residents who were White in 1990 and experienced a rapid increase in the proportion of non-White residents between 1990 and 2000 might be more likely to have an incident. In a separate analysis, we found that the main effects of percentage White and change in percentage non-White between 1990 and 2000 were not significant. When we added the interaction, it too was not significant. In addition, in a separate analysis we also looked at whether or not hate group presence and percentage non-White were related to higher odds of an incident. The main effect of percentage non-White was not significant, and we did not find a significant interaction between the number of hate groups per 10,000 and percentage non-White.
8. In a separate analysis, we also examined the influence of the number of Jews and Muslims per 10,000 people and whether or not a county had any Jewish or Muslim presence. Both sets of variables were significant for explaining the odds of a county having an incident in the 2000s. However, for the 1990s, neither the dichotomous nor the per capita measure of Jews was significant. Finally, we found that the 2000 dichotomous measure of Muslim presence was significant for explaining incidents in 1990, but the 2000 per capita measure of Muslims was not significant. As we were primarily interested in the visibility of these groups for evoking feelings of threat, we thought that whether or not a county had a religious congregation (and likely a mosque or synagogue) best captured our key concept of interest.

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