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What is This?
Close Cousins or Distant Relatives? The Relationship Between Terrorism and Hate Crime

Kathleen Deloughery¹, Ryan D. King¹, and Victor Asal¹

Abstract

Prior research has frequently drawn parallels between the study of hate crimes and the study of terrorism. Yet, key differences between the two behaviors may be underappreciated in extant work. Terrorism is often an “upward crime,” involving a perpetrator of lower social standing than the targeted group. By contrast, hate crimes are disproportionately “downward crimes,” usually entailing perpetrators belonging to the majority or powerful group in society and minority group victims. The latter difference implies that hate crimes and terrorism are more akin to distant relatives than close cousins. These divergent perspectives provide a backdrop for the present research, which empirically investigates the association between hate crimes and terrorism. In doing so, we contribute to prior work on hate crimes and terrorism by emphasizing the temporal association between these behaviors and by empirically investigating the potential for one kind of violent event to trigger another kind of violence. Time-series analyses of weekly and daily data on terrorism and hate crimes committed in the United States between 1992 and 2008 reveal three primary conclusions. First, we find no evidence to suggest that hate crimes are a precursor to future terrorism. Second, hate crimes are often perpetrated in response to terrorist acts. Third, the

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latter association is particularly strong for hate crimes perpetrated against minority groups after a non-right-wing terrorist attack, particularly attacks on symbols of core American ideals, indicating that some hate crimes may essentially constitute expressions of retaliation.

Keywords
hate crimes, terrorism, various retribution, right-wing violence

Introduction

Can hate crime offending and terrorism be thought of as analogous behaviors? And does knowledge about one increase our understanding of the other? Theory and empirical research over the past two decades indicate that these legally distinct but conceptually overlapping crimes may indeed share similarities, especially with regard to their motivations, objectives, and perpetrator characteristics. Hate crime scholars suggest that these offenses entail a “desire to terrorize a broader social group” (Green, McFalls, & Smith, 2001, p. 483), an argument largely accepted by the U.S. Supreme Court when deciding the constitutionality of hate crime laws (Wisconsin v. Mitchell, 1993). Furthermore, Hamm’s (1993) ethnographic research on neo-Nazi groups explicitly links hate crime and terrorism by explaining active involvement in right-wing organizations through a theory of domestic terrorism. Herek, Cogan, & Gillis (2002) go a step further, arguing that both hate crime and hate speech are essentially forms of terrorism. For these authors, the two types of offending are simply different manifestations of the same underlying phenomenon; they are crimes designed to intimidate an out-group.

The notion that hate crimes and terrorism are analogous behaviors with similar determinants is most directly captured in the work of Krueger and Malečková (2002). Writing on the elusive connection between poverty and terrorism and citing the dearth of empirical literature on terrorism, the authors cite a host of empirical research to conclude that hate crimes can be viewed as a “close cousin” to terrorism because, in each case, “the target of an offense is selected because of his or her group identity, not because of his or her individual behavior, and because the effect of both is to wreak terror on a greater number of people than those directly affected by violence” (Krueger & Malečková, 2002, p. 28). This is certainly a tenable assertion, and one made stronger when considering the similar empirical findings concerning the relationship between economic conditions and both hate crime (Green, Strolovitch, & Wong, 1998; C. J. Lyons, 2007) and terrorism (see Krueger & Malečková, 2002, for a review of studies).
Yet arguments about hate crime–terrorism propinquity can also be scrutinized on conceptual and empirical grounds. Hate crime incidents are frequently perpetrated by young offenders with criminal records and who are oftentimes under the influence of alcohol or drugs at the time of the incident (Dunbar, 2003; Messner, McHugh, & Felson, 2004). Many perpetrators also lack strong political affiliations or ideological commitments and seem to shun formal organizations (Willems, Wurtz, & Eckert, 1993). Terrorist acts, by comparison, are more apt to be planned, part of a sustained effort, and in many cases associated with organized groups that draw attention to a political or social cause through publicity of the terrorist event (LaFree & Dugan, 2004). In addition, terrorism can be conceptually thought of as an “upward crime”—The attacks frequently involve perpetrators of a lower social standing than the victim (Black, 2004, building on Senechal de la Roche, 1996). Hate crimes, by contrast, are disproportionately perpetrated by members of the majority or powerful group in society with the modal victim being a racial, religious, or other minority. Unlike terrorism, hate crimes are more often “downward offenses.”

These divergent assessments of the comparability of hate crime and terrorism directly bear on a set of research questions investigated in this study. We are primarily interested in two issues. First, to what extent does hate crime against a minority group essentially constitute a “poor man’s terrorist attack” and thereby serve as a warning that future, more serious terrorism by right-wing groups is in the offing? Stated more succinctly, does hate crime serve as a precursor to terrorism, particularly for right-wing attacks? Second, we flip the variables to opposite sides of the equation and examine whether terrorist attacks serve as triggers for future hate crime offending. There is some precedent for expecting the incidence of hate crimes to increase in the days or weeks following a terrorist attack. For instance, Disha, Cavendish, and King (2010) show a sizable increase in anti-Arab and anti-Islamic hate crimes in the weeks following 9/11. In addition, prior sociological work on conflict management (Black, 1993) and violence (Papachristos, 2009; Phillips, 2003) suggests that many crimes are acts of vengeance and that violence often begets more violence—for instance, when gangs look to retaliate. Yet no prior work to date has examined the full range of available data on hate crimes to assess whether gradual, cyclical changes in these crimes are interrupted by periodic spikes and whether sizable but fleeting spikes in hate crime tend to follow terrorist attacks on U.S. soil. At a more abstract level, we investigate whether terrorism instills a sense of vicarious retribution (Lickel, Miller, Stenstrom, Denson, & Schmader, 2006) in the populous that manifests in the commission of hate crimes.
The answers to the above questions speak to the debate about the hate crime–terrorism nexus. If we find that hate crimes against minorities—used here as a proxy for hate crimes perpetrated by offenders with a right-wing motive—serve as a significant predictor of right-wing terrorism, then such an association would add an empirical basis to the notion of hate crime–terrorism propinquity. That is, the two behaviors may indeed be birds of the same feather. However, the absence of an association or an inverse association would imply that hate crimes and terrorism are conceptually distinct. In addition, we explore the possibility that the two types of crime may differ in kind but be causally associated—for instance, if terrorism against the majority group is associated with subsequent hate crimes against minorities.

In the following pages, we first touch on the larger theoretical concepts that guide our inquiry. We then discuss the nature of our data, which includes all hate crimes recorded by police and all known acts of terrorism on U.S. soil between 1992 and 2008 organized by week. Finally, we present our methods and findings before discussing the theoretical and policy implications of our work.

The Terrorism–Hate Crime Connection in Theoretical Context

Two days following the September 11 attacks, it was written in chalk on Union Square in New York that “Hate breeds hate/Love breeds love” (Gerstenfeld, Grant, & Chiang, 2003). Although written as a work of art, these words also constitute a working thesis for social scientists: Do expressions of hatred (e.g., hate crimes) in fact lead to further expressions of animus, for instance as expressed through terrorist attacks? Both hate crimes and terrorism constitute violent expressions of anger or hatred, often in the context of venting a grievance, and research identifies grievance as a prime reason for resorting to political violence. Those who are aggrieved because of discrimination or what they see as unfair advantages conferred upon other groups are more apt to become violent, at least if they have the resources (Gurr, 2000). Although some have challenged this argument (Fearon & Laitin, 2003; Laitin, 2002), there is growing empirical evidence, at least within the context of ethnic conflict, that such feelings of grievance increase the likelihood that groups will turn to violence (Gurr, 2000; Regan & Norton, 2005; Wimmer, Cederman, & Min, 2009; Wimmer & Min, 2006). This link of oppression and violence to more violence suggests that the key motivation linking hate crimes to terrorism may be as biblical as an “eye for an eye.” In line with this assessment, time-series analyses find a strong relationship
between government violence and insurgent violence (Fielding & Shortland, 2010).

Extant theory and research thus imply an association between different forms of intergroup conflict, although we think this area of inquiry could benefit from greater specificity. “Hate breeds hate” and “an eye for an eye” are nice catchphrases to summarize a general idea, but a more developed and coherent model of grievance and aggression is in high demand, particularly with respect to terrorism. We thus draw on extant theory and research to suggest two distinct ways in which different expressions of hatred can be causally connected.

Hate Crime as a Precursor to Terrorism

We first suggest a channel through which the frequency of hate crimes may serve as a precursor to more extreme and potentially violent terrorist activity. To this end, the first aspect of our research posits that hate crimes, particularly those evidencing a right-wing motivation, should act as an indicator of radicalization among right-wing groups and thus serve as a prologue to more violent and expressive forms of right-wing terrorism. This hypothesis is largely exploratory in nature, as the study of radicalization has only recently gained traction among social scientists. As such, extant theoretical and empirical work on hate crime as a prelude to terrorism is noticeably thin and rarely entails systematic data analysis. We focus on right-wing groups in this section because victimology may give us some insight into radicalization and the forms it takes.

As mentioned, the notion that a spike in hate crimes may foreshadow future terrorist acts is premised on the idea of “radicalization.” Although a rather nebulous concept, we follow McCauley and Moskalenko (2008) and view radicalization as a change in belief, feeling, or behavior toward increased support for intergroup conflict. To date, most work on this topic has consisted of case studies or has speculated about the association between attitudinal and behavioral measures of extremist behavior. Yet as stated in a recent report on indicators of radicalization, “attempts to use archival or official data to forecast or anticipate terrorist or radical activity has yet to be undertaken in the academic world” (National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism [START], 2010, p. 14). One of our objectives is to undertake precisely this task and examine whether hate crimes essentially serve as an indicator of radicalization that assists in the prediction of terrorist attacks.

Even if the literature on this topic is scant, there is some precedent for hypothesizing that hate crimes with a right-wing motivation may indicate a
buildup of antiminority sentiment that ultimately graduates to right-wing terrorism. Turk (2004) implies as much when noting that “once underway, campaigns of terrorism and related political violence tend to gain momentum.” He draws on the work of Hamm (1997) to illustrate this point for the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995. In the years leading up to the bombing, Timothy McVeigh increasingly read the work of White separatist leader William Luther Pierce about “how brave heroes resist the imminent threat to the white race and America posed by Jews, blacks, and other minorities” (Turk, 2004, p. 279). He later attended gun shows, distributing copies of Pierce’s work and visited places considered sanctified by the radical right. Hence, the bombing was the culmination of a radicalization process. Many questions remain about this process, and a single case study of an extreme act of terror can hardly be generalized, although it is useful for developing hypotheses and propelling the knowledge base forward. The Oklahoma City case is suggestive of a graduation from low-level actions to fatal terrorism. An analog at the macro level is that hate crimes against minorities would constitute a yellow flag indicating that right-wing groups are increasingly expressing grievances against minorities and may “upgrade” to more lethal actions. This remains an empirical question, one that we address in the present research.

**Terrorism as an Antecedent to Hate Crime Offending**

Prior research on the determinants of hate crime offending have largely been cross-sectional in nature and have emphasized the ecological factors associated with higher rates of offending. For instance, C. J. Lyons’ (2007) research on Chicago neighborhoods and Green et al.’s (1998) work on New York communities each find that demographic change is a key explanatory factor when assessing why some neighborhoods have more racially motivated hate crime than others. These studies, which demonstrate remarkable consistency in their findings, further suggest that many hate crimes result from majority group concerns about minority group encroachment. The crimes are characterized as acts of defensive posturing to protect what is viewed by offenders as “their turf.”

Cross-sectional work of this nature has been invaluable for assessing the macro-level correlates of hate crime offending, and for revealing correlations that suggest hate crimes are often reactionary and even retaliatory in nature (see also Levin & McDevitt, 1993). At the same time, the cross-sectional nature of the data used in prior work has precluded a systematic analysis of the timing of hate crimes relative to other temporally proximate events that might serve as triggers. This is a notable omission in the extant literature for
at least two reasons. First, time-series research on behavior akin to hate crimes, such as violence against Jews in pre–World War II (WWII) Germany, suggests that violence targeting minority groups is often a reaction to changes in the political environment (King & Brustein, 2006; see Jacobs & Wood, 1999, on interracial homicide). The latter finding is corroborated by ethnographic studies of racial animus and political change. As a subject in Pinderhughes’ (1993) research on prejudice lamented, “My father told me that [as a result of the new black mayor] they are going to fire all the white construction workers in the city and hire all black guys” (p. 489). The key notion for our purposes is that an abrupt change in society that is perceived as adversely affecting a group can incite emotions of anger and perhaps calls for revenge. Second, scholarship on hate crime offending theorizes that many hate crimes are prompted by an antecedent event (McDevitt, Levin, & Bennett, 2002) and hence constitute a form of retaliation. This proposition aligns with two theoretical pillars that guide the present research—Black’s (1983) theory of crime as social control and Lickel et al.’s (2006) discussion of vicarious retribution.

Black’s (1983) theory of crime as social control posits that many offenses are ostensibly forms of “self help,” defined as “the expression of a grievance by unilateral aggression such as personal violence or property destruction” (p. 34). Black sees many crimes as fulfilling a desire for justice, particularly among those who cannot easily turn to law enforcement agencies, such as bookies looking to get paid or a drug dealer whose supply was stolen. They may “take the law into their own hands” to fulfill a sense of retribution. A key point extending from Black’s theory is that people will rely on crime to vent a grievance when the law is less accessible to them. A small proportion of the population is willing to “take the law into their own hands” to achieve a sense of justice or otherwise attain a feeling of catharsis. Relative to the present case, members of victimized groups may crave retaliation in the wake of a domestic terrorist attack, although in some cases (e.g., suicide attacks) the perpetrators cannot be punished, legally or otherwise. This scenario is minimally discussed in work stemming from Black’s theory, although theory and research of a more psychological bent offers a related (and we think useful) concept for thinking about reactions to terrorist attacks—vicarious retribution.

In their theoretical model for explaining intergroup aggression, Lickel et al. (2006) point to the role of vicarious retribution. This form of aggression transpires 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 a fellow ingroup member” (Lickel et al., 2006, p. 372-373). The behavior is retributive because it
expresses a grievance for a perceived wrong, and it is vicarious because “ nei-
ther the agent of retaliation nor the target of retribution were directly involved
in the original event that precipitated the intergroup conflict” (Lickel et al.,
2006, p. 373). According to their model, an initial event (e.g., a terrorist
attack) can spur feelings of in-group identification among the aggrieved party
(e.g., Americans after 9/11). When the out-group (e.g., Muslims after 9/11)
is viewed as a closely knit or pure entity—what Lickel et al. (2006) label
“entitativity”—and few moderating factors are present (pp. 381-382), then
conditions are ripe for majority group members to attack innocent members
of the group viewed as responsible for the initial, instigating action.

Returning to the example of hate crimes against Muslims in September
2001, some descriptive statistics align with this notion of vicarious retribu-
tion. For instance, we thought it telling that anti-Muslim hate crimes increased
dramatically in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks (see above). Yet
we think it is equally noteworthy that the distribution of anti-Muslim hate
crimes reported by police changed very little across states, further indicating
that a high-profile attack can incite a backlash among those not directly
affected by the attack. An anecdotal example of this would be the hate crime
perpetrated against Balbir Singh Sodhi after the 9/11 attacks. Sodhi was a
Sikh in Mesa, Arizona, working at his store on September 15 when he was
killed by Frank Roque, who mistakenly thought he was a Muslim (Gerstenfeld,
2010). After being arrested, Roque proclaimed, “I stand for America all the
way! I’m an American” (P. A. Lyons, Kenworthy, & Popan, 2010). We believe
this case of violent hatred spurred by other violent hatred to be indicative of
a larger phenomenon.

The aftermath of the 9/11 attack appears to be an exemplar of hate crimes
as vengeance and vicarious retribution. Yet we must also acknowledge that
9/11 was unprecedented in its magnitude, scope, and political ramifications.
To what extent can we make a more general statement about the association
between terrorism and subsequent hate crimes? And does the association
hold up when looking at the gamut of domestic terrorist attacks? We next
empirically address these questions.

Data and Method

Our data on hate crime incidents are taken from the annual Federal Bureau
of Investigation (FBI) incident-level hate crime files. With the passage of
the Hate Crime Statistics Act of 1990 (HCSA), the U.S. attorney general
was charged with collecting data “about crimes that manifest evidence of
prejudice based on race, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnicity” (FBI,
This data collection program was later integrated into the Uniform Crime Reports, and since 1992, law enforcement agencies throughout the United States have been asked to submit counts of hate crime incidents in their respective jurisdictions, and to the extent possible record information on the crimes reported, the characteristics of the victim (e.g., person, business), offenders (e.g., race, if known), and location, among other data pertinent to the offense. Fewer than 3.5% of all incidents entailed multiple offenses, and a fraction of a percentage of all cases involved more than one type of bias. Given this extremely small number of crimes entailing more than one bias motivation, we focus on incidents rather than offenses and look at the type of bias present in the first offense if there was more than one reported. Our data file for the years 1992 to 2008 includes information on 131,286 hate crime incidents, which we organize by week and by day (see the appendix for the latter) for our time-series analysis.

We are mindful that the hate crime data are imperfect. Underreporting of incidents has been a persistent problem since the onset of the data collection endeavor, even if participation by local law enforcement agencies has steadily improved over the life of the program. In addition, noncompliance with the HCSA is not random; compliance is associated with demographic characteristics of cities (King, 2007), along with social movement mobilization and the political environment of counties (McVeigh, Welch, & Bjarnason, 2003), among other factors. Although the problematic nature of the data warrants caution and consideration in any analysis, these issues do not render the data unusable. For instance, the data limitations would present a particularly thorny issue for a cross-sectional analysis of states because of the highly variable compliance rates across states, particularly in the early years. In a similar fashion, the data would present problems if our time-series unit was “year” and we sought to make definitive statements about long-term trends in rates of hate crime offending because reporting rates have increased over time. Yet our data files are organized at the weekly and even the daily level, and our objective is to assess the temporal proximity of hate crimes in relation to terrorist acts. As such, reporting bias across states and over the long term is less of an issue. We use national data, and hence cross-sectional differences in compliance with the HCSA are a minimal problem. In addition, our time-series units (days and weeks) are smaller than the reporting periods (quarters), and thus it is untenable to suppose that increases in hate crimes in the days after a terrorist attack could be attributable to a sudden onset of compliance with the HCSA by many law enforcement agencies. In short, we are mindful of the limitations of the data, yet we see the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) hate crime data as suitable for an inquiry of this nature. Also, some of our analyses...
focus on attacks against select minority groups, which we use as a proxy measure of attacks with an ostensible right-wing motive.\textsuperscript{4}

Data on terrorism come from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD). The GTD is an open-source database of terrorist attacks from around the globe (see LaFree & Dugan, 2007 for a detailed description). We restrict our analytic sample to terror attacks that take place on U.S. soil between 1992 and 2008 to correspond with the available information on hate crimes. The GTD contains information on both domestic and international attacks, which allows us to obtain a more complete picture of the amount of terrorism taking place in the United States. Attacks against U.S. interests abroad are not included in the present analysis. Because the information in the GTD was collected entirely from public sources, bias could be introduced to the model if attacks are not reported. Attacks that are stopped in the planning stages and not reported to the media are also not included. For each attack, GTD contains information on the date, location, and type of attack. In addition, when possible, the perpetrating group and the motivation for the attack are also provided.

From 1992 to 2008, a total of 505 terror attacks occurred in the United States.\textsuperscript{5} Terror attacks occurred on fewer than 7\% of the days of our sample; by contrast at least one hate crime was reported for every day of our 17-year sample. Typically, either no attacks or a single terror attack occurred on a given day, although there are cases of multiple attacks occurring on the same day, with the maximum of nine attacks. This difference can be seen in Figure 1.

In addition to examining terrorism in the aggregate, we focused solely on right-wing terrorism for parts of the analysis. GTD does not code attacks by the ideology of the perpetrating group, but the data contain other information pertinent to the group’s motivation. To determine the motivation of the terror attack, we examined Terrorist Organization Profiles (TOPS) originally collected by the Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT; START, 2011). TOPS codes and organizes groups by ideology. An attack was determined to have a right-wing motivation if it was carried out by a group that was categorized as right-wing conservative or right-wing reactionary. In addition, groups categorized as racist, religious, or nationalist/separatist were examined closely for right-wing ideological beliefs. Attacks carried out by groups with these beliefs were classified as right wing. Antiabortion attacks were consistently carried out by individuals or groups that align themselves with beliefs held by the religious right, and these attacks constitute reactions to government policies seen as liberal. As such, they were coded as “right wing” for our purposes. Attacks perpetrated by groups with an environmental, animal rights, or other leftist ideologies were coded as having a leftist motivation. We also coded attacks that appeared to target core social,
religious, or economic institutions that symbolize quintessentially American ideals as a distinct category. These attacks are mostly carried out by international groups and jihadist groups, which we label “attacks on symbols of core American ideals” in the present research. In addition, there were some attacks that did not fit neatly into any of the categories and were labeled as “other.” These attacks mostly consisted of anticommunist groups and groups protesting the current regime in Vietnam. Finally, some attacks lacked sufficient information on both the group perpetrating the attack and the motivation of the attack. These groups were unable to be classified into any of the categories listed above and were lumped into their own category, which was labeled “unknown.” Of the 505 attacks in our data set, 29% had a right-wing motivation, 33% had a leftist motivation, 2% were attacks on symbols of core American ideals, 34% had unknown motivation, and the remaining 2% of attacks were listed as other.

**Modeling**

The focal variables are counts of hate crimes and terrorism, respectively. The total number of each type of attack is aggregated to the day and the week for
analysis and robustness checks. In addition, the number of hate crimes and terrorist attacks in the previous several weeks are also considered. The analysis presented in this article will deal with weekly aggregation of hate crime and terrorism; however, results aggregated to the day can be found in the appendix. In addition to counts of current and lagged hate crimes and terrorism, in some analyses we also disaggregate our data by type of terrorist motivation (see Tables 2 and 3).

Due to concerns that the attacks of September 11 may have fundamentally changed the level of animus toward specific groups (namely, Muslims and Arabs), which could influence the frequency of hate crimes and terrorism, a post-9/11 dummy variable is included in all models. In addition, compliance with the HCSA has generally improved over time. As such, an indicator of time (week) is included to account for trending in the data on hate crimes.

We use two basic modeling strategies in this research. First, hate crimes at one time point are modeled as a function of past terrorism and other control variables:

$$HateCrime_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{terrorism}_{t-1} + \beta_2 \text{terrorism}_{t-2} + \beta_3 \text{terrorism}_{t-3} + \beta_4 Z_t + \epsilon_t,$$

where $Z_t$ denotes other control variables. This equation allows us to determine the time horizon over which hate crimes are used in response to terror attacks. We also examine variations of this model using different types of terrorism—for example, right wing, leftist, attacks targeting symbols of core American ideals—and different types of hate crimes, namely, a proxy measure of hate crimes with a right-wing motivation. The latter are measured as count data. In an average week, 148 hate crimes were reported in the United States. Due to overdispersion in the data, a negative binomial regression is used to assess the above relationship.

The second model setup determines whether terrorism today is a function of past hate crime and other control variables:

$$Terrorism_t = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 HateCrime_{t-1} + \alpha_2 HateCrime_{t-2} + \alpha_3 HateCrime_{t-3} + \alpha_4 X_t + \nu_t,$$

where $X_t$ denotes other control variables. This equation allows us to determine the time horizon over which terrorism is used to respond to hate crimes. Again, iterations of this model examining subgroups of attacks (e.g., right-wing attacks) are used. Terrorism is also count data, with an average of .56 attacks each week and more than half of the observations registering no attacks. Given this distribution and the overdispersion present in the data, we again rely on a
series of negative binomial regression models. In addition, robustness checks were run using a logit analysis, where the variable of interest was whether or not any terrorist attacks had occurred in that week. The results maintained their sign and significance across each of these specifications.

**Results**

We begin with an analysis of aggregate counts of hate crime and terrorism in the United States (see Table 1). Looking first at hate crimes regressed on terrorism in Model 1, we note that the time trend measure and a dummy indicator denoting the post-9/11 years are statistically significant. The time trend indicates that more hate crimes are committed, or reported, over time, whereas the post-9/11 indicator implies that fewer hate crimes per week have occurred since September 11, 2001. More importantly for the present argument, we find a strong relationship between lagged terror attacks and current hate crimes ($b = .021$). Hate crimes appear to spike in the initial week after a terror attack.\(^9\) Specifically, our estimates suggest that in the week after a terror attack, we can expect a 2.1% increase in the number of hate crimes.\(^{10}\)

### Table 1. Negative Binomial Regression Coefficients: Hate Crime and Terrorism ($n = 832$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hate crime incidents</td>
<td>Terrorist attacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Terrorism</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lag 1 week</td>
<td>.021*** (.007)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lag 2 weeks</td>
<td>.003 (.007)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lag 3 weeks</td>
<td>.003 (.007)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hate crimes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lag 1 week</td>
<td></td>
<td>−.001 (.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lag 2 weeks</td>
<td>−.001 (.003)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lag 3 weeks</td>
<td></td>
<td>.003 (.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-9/11 period</td>
<td>−.139*** (.029)</td>
<td>−.814*** (.126)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>.000*** (.000)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>4.890*** (.022)</td>
<td>−.263 (.264)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. All tests are two-tailed.

\(^*\) $p < .05. \,**p < .01. \,***p < .001.$
However, this pattern does not hold after the initial week. The short duration of the spike in hate crimes following a terrorist attack may imply that a sense of anger or a desire for retribution peaks in the initial moments following a terrorist attack, but these emotions have a half-life. In addition, it is plausible that law enforcement and perhaps politicians draw attention to the backlash in the days following a terrorist attack, which increases the perceived costs of hate crime offending relative to other expressions of anger or resentment against an out-group.11

In Model 2, we regress terrorism on lagged hate crime incidents, again controlling the post-9/11 era. There have been fewer terror attacks on U.S. soil since the events of 9/11, as captured by the negative coefficient on the 9/11 dummy variable. However, we see no relationship between past hate crimes and current terror attacks. In fact, this model was also tested using month as the temporal unit of analysis (going back 7 months) to account for the amount of planning that must be done in a terrorist attack. That set of models also revealed no significant association.

### Table 2. Negative Binomial Regression Coefficients: Hate Crime and Terrorism (Disaggregated; \( n = 832 \))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Right-wing hate crimes</td>
<td>Right-wing hate crimes</td>
<td>Non-right-wing hate crimes</td>
<td>Right-wing terrorism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lag 1 week</td>
<td>.045*** (.010)</td>
<td>- .016 (.013)</td>
<td>.004 (0.14)</td>
<td>- .019** (.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lag 2 weeks</td>
<td>.016 (.010)</td>
<td>- .013 (.013)</td>
<td>- .003 (0.14)</td>
<td>- .013 (.013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lag 3 weeks</td>
<td>.010 (.010)</td>
<td>- .011 (.013)</td>
<td>- .002 (0.14)</td>
<td>- .011 (.013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lag 1 week</td>
<td>- .049 (.032)</td>
<td>- .047 (.032)</td>
<td>- .107*** (.034)</td>
<td>- .1212*** (.259)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lag 2 weeks</td>
<td>.006 (.007)</td>
<td>- .002 (0.007)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lag 3 weeks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-9/11 period</td>
<td>- .002 (.007)</td>
<td>.0002*** (.00007)</td>
<td>.0001* (.00007)</td>
<td>.0002*** (.00007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>.0002*** (.00007)</td>
<td>.0001* (.00007)</td>
<td>.0002*** (.00007)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>4.562*** (.024)</td>
<td>4.626*** (.024)</td>
<td>3.679*** (.024)</td>
<td>.107 (5.99)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. All tests are two-tailed.

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.
The findings in Table 1 suggest that hate crimes may escalate following terrorist attacks, but they are not predictive of future terrorist attacks. Yet these models assess each variable in the aggregate, while theory suggests that any association may be contingent on the motivations. For instance, we expect that hate crimes with a right-wing motive would escalate following a terrorist attack without a right-wing motive but that right-wing hate crimes may foreshadow right-wing terror attacks. As such, we next disaggregate our variables on both sides of the equation to further examine this thesis.

Model 1 of Table 2 shows the results of hate crimes against minority groups (see Note 4), which we use as a proxy for hate crimes with at least a partial right-wing motive, regressed on non-right-wing terrorism. Consistent with the results in Table 1, the lagged non-right-wing terror attacks in the past week are significantly associated with a spike in right-wing hate crime incidents in the present (\(b = .045; p < .001\)). Each additional terror attack carried
out by a non-right-wing group leads to a 4.6% increase in the number of right-wing hate crimes in the following week. We also see that this effect weakens considerably and quickly over time, as the coefficients for the Week 2 and Week 3 lagged variables weaken substantially.

The coefficient in Model 1 aligns with our theoretical premise regarding hate crime as social control and vicarious retribution, yet if this argument "holds water," then we would expect no association between right-wing hate crimes and a lagged measure of right-wing terrorism. Model 2 in Table 2 indeed suggests this is the case. The coefficients here are in the opposite direction of those in Model 1, and no lagged indicators of right-wing terrorism are statistically significant. We thus find evidence of an association between hate crime and terrorism, but the nature of the respective offenses is clearly salient. Also noteworthy is that no association is apparent for non-right-wing hate crimes and right-wing terrorism (see Model 3), which suggests that vicarious retribution following a terror attack is more likely when those on the right-fringe feel a sense of grievance. Furthermore, in Model 4 of Table 2 we again regress terrorism on hate crime, although in this case we look specifically at whether our proxy measure of right-wing hate crimes are predictive of right-wing terrorism. The negative and significant coefficient on the 1-week lagged variable runs counter to the radicalization hypothesis discussed above. It thus appears that non-right-wing terrorism creates a climate conducive to the perpetration of hate crimes against minorities, while hate crimes do not indicate an escalation in behavior that would foreshadow future terrorist attacks.12

Finally, it is important to disaggregate the results in Model 1 of Table 2 by different types of non-right-wing terrorism. It would be consistent with our argument if different types of terrorism yielded unique responses, particularly with respect to hate crimes. We would expect a strong effect for what we coded above as attacks on symbols of core American ideals but small or null effects for the other types. To this end, in Table 3 we examine the impact of four different classifications of non-right-wing terrorism on right-wing hate crimes.13 As described above, the four classifications are classified as leftist, attacks on symbols of core American ideals, other, and unknown.

Model 1 in Table 3 shows the impact of leftist terrorism on right-wing hate crimes. The results are generally consistent with the results from Model 1 in Table 2, although the magnitude of the coefficient appears weaker. Leftist terrorism in the past week corresponds to an increase in the number of right-wing hate crimes today. Specifically, each additional leftist terror attack increases the number of right-wing hate crimes by about 3.4% ($b = .034, p < .05$).
Model 2 in Table 3 shows the impact of attacks on symbols of core American ideals on right-wing hate crimes, which is where we would expect the most substantial backlash. This is indeed the case, as the results indicate that past terrorism of this nature is strongly associated with an increase in the number of right-wing hate crimes in this time period. Two points warrant particular attention in Model 2. First, as opposed to the 1-week lag found in previous results, hate crimes remain associated with terrorist attacks against core American social, political, or economic institutions for 4 weeks. Second, the magnitude of the coefficients, particularly in the first week or two following the terrorist attack, is substantially larger than what we find for any other type of terrorism. One attack against symbols of core American ideals today increases the expected number of hate crimes next week by a large margin—28% ($b = .247, p < .001$). In addition, one attack of this nature today increases the number of hate crimes 4 weeks from now by 12% ($b = .114, p < .05$). We note that the magnitude of the coefficients is in large part driven by the attacks of September 11 and the hate crime wave that unfolded in the aftermath of those attacks. Although the 9/11 attacks may be an outlier with leverage on the equation, including these events from the analysis is important, and perhaps even necessary. The total number of anti-American attacks during this time period is only 10, and the events of September 11 account for 40% of all anti-American attacks during our observation period. As such, we would lose a sizable proportion of data by dropping September 11. In addition, including the event allows us to make a tentative proposition that more lethal attacks will yield a more widespread backlash that is longer in duration.

Finally, it is useful to show that effects are not present where we would not expect them. In Models 3 and 4, we examined the impact of terror attacks that could not be classified (unknown) and those in the “other” category. Neither of these was significantly associated with subsequent right-wing hate crimes ($p < .05$, two-tailed).

**Discussion**

We began this inquiry by asking whether hate crimes and terrorism can fruitfully be conceptualized as analogous behaviors, and whether knowledge about one is useful for understanding the other. The answers entail some nuance and complexity, and hence we close this work by succinctly summarizing our two primary conclusions and discussing the broader implications of our findings.

First, we found no evidence of hate crimes as prologue to terror attacks. In other words, it does not appear that hate crimes against minority groups
constitute a “poor man’s terrorist attack” or a form of radicalization that signifies an escalation to terrorism. However, we found a strong relationship between past terror attacks and future hate crimes. This finding appeared entirely driven by right-wing hate crimes perpetrated in response to terror attacks carried out by non-right-wing terrorist groups. More specifically, when we focus exclusively on attacks on symbolic American institutions, we see a backlash that is longer in duration (4 weeks) and substantial in its magnitude. In the week immediately following an anti-American attack of this nature, our proxy for right-wing hate crimes increased by a substantial 28%.

These findings have both theoretical and practical implications. With respect to the significant effect of terrorism on hate crimes during the week or weeks after an attack, we see the pattern of results in Tables 2 and 3 as contributing to theory and prior empirical findings concerning hate crime. Much prior work has either been cross-sectional in nature (Green et al., 1998; C. J. Lyons, 2007) or based on selective and high-profile crimes (Levin & McDevitt, 1993), yet little work has systematically examined time-series data on hate crimes, particularly with small temporal units of analysis that allow researchers to capture the relationship between hate crimes and other events transpiring in close temporal proximity. Here we demonstrated that (a) many hate crimes appear to be reactionary and in many cases follow non-right-wing terrorist acts, (b) minorities are most at risk following a terror attack, particularly one that attacks symbols of core American ideals, and (c) the backlash tends to be short in duration—typically no more than a week but lasting up to 4 weeks following serious anti-American attacks. This set of empirical findings aligns with prior work suggesting that crimes are often responses to other crimes or perceived injustices (Black, 1983) and work in psychology on intergroup aggression and the vicarious selection of targets (Lickel et al., 2006). The latter theoretical work and our time-series results complement findings from prior cross-sectional work, which also suggests that hate crimes are generally defensive or reactionary in nature. Yet perpetrators not only respond to demographic change as suggested in other research (Green et al., 1998); an encompassing account of hate crime must take into account other events that are temporally—although not necessarily spatially—proximate.

Our findings concerning hate crime are likely to be of interest to a policy-oriented audience as well. Knowing that hate crimes are likely to increase in the wake of a terrorist attack, and which type of attack has the highest probability of spurring a hate crime wave, may be useful to law enforcement. One way in which the current research departs from prior empirical studies of hate crime is that we make use of rather finely grained data—literally the week and day (see the appendix for the latter). We cannot predict with pinpoint
accuracy the time and place of a hate crime—indeed that would be a tall order for any research—but we can point to specific times when the risk of hate crime is elevated, which may be useful to law enforcement in planning for the aftermath of terrorist attacks.

Our analysis also calls into question any suggestion of hate crime–terrorism propinquity. We do not dispute that each behavior entails an in terrorem quality, but we strongly suggest that they be treated as distinct conduct for both theoretical and analytic purposes. We find no association or a negative association between the two in our models with short- and long-term lags on the hate crime variable (the latter are not shown in the tables but available from the authors on request). In addition, we note that the bivariate correlation between contemporaneous measures (i.e., no lags) of hate crimes against minorities and right-wing terrorism is negative and statistically significant ($b = -0.020$ in a negative binomial model; $p < .001$), further suggesting that the two behaviors are conceptually unique and likely driven by different social processes. We noted some differences between terrorism and hate crime earlier in this work, and we think these differences may be underappreciated in prior research on this topic. Our research is unlikely the last word on the issue, but we have at a minimum laid out a set of conceptual differences and offered a series of empirical findings to suggest that hate crimes in no way signify an elevated risk of terrorism. This finding also implies that hate crime might not be viewed as a useful measure of radicalization, at least not in relation to terrorist attacks.

Although we see these conclusions as more than provisional, we also recognize that our data are limited in some respects and that more inquiries of this nature are needed. For instance, the hate crime data include rich information on the type of bias but no information about the affiliation, if any, of the perpetrators. Accordingly, we used hate crimes against select minority groups as a proxy for right-wing motives, but many of these attacks were likely perpetrated by offenders with no demonstrable right-wing affiliation. In short, we acknowledge some measurement error. We were also unable to pair the victims of one type of action with the offenders of the other. That is, we could assess neither the effect of a terrorist attack resulting in the killings of many Whites with hate crimes perpetrated by Whites nor whether offenders in terrorist attacks were the targets of hate crimes. We utilized the available data to the maximum extent possible to make an empirical case that would predict such a correspondence, but the data precluded a complete test of this thesis. Still, we think the pattern of our findings is consistent with the notion of “hate crime as retaliation,” and we briefly point to two cases that show correspondence between the alleged perpetrators of terrorism and the targets of subsequent hate crimes. The first is rather obvious—the case of 9/11 and the subsequent hate crimes targeting Arabs and Muslims. As Disha et al. (2010)
show, hate crimes against these two groups spiked following the attacks, whereas hate crimes against other groups modestly declined in the immediate aftermath. Second, we point to a case that we think is less obvious but fits with our theoretical premise. The bombing of the Murrah Building in Oklahoma City was the work of a White American with a military record, but as chronicled in detail by Hamm (1997, pp. 54-57), the immediate reaction to the bombing by politicians and the media was to describe it as the work of Islamic fundamentalists. We think it unlikely to be a coincidence that on April 19, 1995, the day of the bombing, hate crimes against Arabs increased from zero the 2 days prior to nine on the 19th and then dropped precipitously back toward zero within a few days. Both the 9/11 case and the erroneous attribution of responsibility on the day of the Murrah Building bombing underscore our argument. There is more than a quantum of evidence that the group alleged to have committed the act is likely to be the target.

The previous example suggests that future work might be wise to focus on media framing and how this affects responses to terrorism. In addition, we think three additional areas are ripe for future work. For one, studies of this nature should incorporate a spatial dimension as well, for instance by analyzing counties or cities over time to examine whether the timing and location must be considered conjointly. Second, our results showed a weak but statistically significant association between leftist terrorism (including ecoterrorism) on subsequent hate crimes against minority groups (see Table 3, Model 1). We interpret the correlation cautiously and are reluctant to make grand claims in the absence of independent corroboration of this effect in future research. But the notion that the far right responds to actions by the far left is hardly beyond the pale. For instance, historical analyses show that the right-fringe in Germany targeted Jews when the communist party did well in elections, regardless of whether Jewish candidates were actually elected (Brustein, 2003; King & Brustein, 2006). In light of our findings, we think it worthwhile to explore the nature of the association between actions on the far right and far left, and specifically how they respond to one another, if at all. An association emerged in our disaggregated analysis, but we see this as merely a first step in investigating the phenomenon. Third, we explored terrorism on U.S. soil here, but we think it worthwhile to also investigate whether terrorism against U.S. targets abroad would have repercussions on the homeland, for instance with respect to hate crime.

Mindful of the limitations with this work and the need for future inquiry, we think the analysis made important strides in assessing the hate crime-terrorism nexus. Based on our findings, future research might look at other triggers of hate crimes as well, such as widely publicized interracial conflict that does not amount to terrorism, or perhaps highly disputed legal or
proprietary issues that strike an emotional chord, such as the recent opening of the Islamic Center near “Ground Zero.” It squares with our argument that a ghastly hate crime was committed against a Bangladeshi taxi driver who stated to a passenger that he was Muslim when the debate about this Center reached fever pitch in 2010 (Hays, 2010). Contentious trials may also serve as triggers. We suspect that an acquittal of an accused terrorist in a widely publicized jury trial would likely lead to vicarious forms of street justice. Yet we must also remember that the association between hate crime and terrorism runs in one direction only, and future work would be well served to look for other macro-level indicators of radicalization if the hope is to better predict the timing of terrorism.

Appendix

**Negative Binomial Regression Coefficients: Right-Wing Hate Crime and Right-Wing Terrorism Using Day as Temporal Unit of Analysis (n = 5,838).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Right-wing hate crime</td>
<td>Right-wing terrorism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-right-wing terrorism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lag 1 day</td>
<td>.048** (.014)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lag 2 days</td>
<td>.047** (.014)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lag 3 days</td>
<td>.064*** (.014)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lag 4 days</td>
<td>.060*** (.015)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lag 5 days</td>
<td>.021 (.015)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lag 6 days</td>
<td>.064*** (.014)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lag 7 days</td>
<td>.045** (.014)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right-Wing Hate Crime</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lag 1 day</td>
<td>-.044 (.024)</td>
<td>-1.945** (.313)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lag 2 days</td>
<td>.012 (.023)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lag 3 days</td>
<td>-.025 (.024)</td>
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<td>Lag 4 days</td>
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<td>Lag 6 days</td>
<td>-.041 (.024)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lag 7 days</td>
<td>-.005 (.023)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-9/11 period</td>
<td>-.059** (.018)</td>
<td>-1.945** (.313)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day</td>
<td>.00003*** (5.45e-6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.626*** (.013)</td>
<td>-1.164* (.477)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. All tests are two-tailed.

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001
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Notes
1. All hate crime data were taken from the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research.
2. Disability would be added in 1994.
3. Reporting error and noncompliance with data collection mandates are hardly unique to the study of hate crime, although the issue appears to be amplified for this type of crime, likely because of the difficulty in determining motive in many cases and apparent resistance to the Hate Crime Statistics Act of 1990 in some areas of the country. For example, in 1996 only two law enforcement agencies in Georgia participated.
4. The variable includes attacks in which the motivation was animus against the victims because they were Black, Asian, multiracial, Jewish, Catholic, Islamic, other non-Protestant religion or multireligion, agnostic/atheist, Hispanic or other ethnicity. Each of these groups has been the subject of right-wing fervor.
5. In all analyses, the year 1993 is omitted because terrorism data are missing.
6. We disaggregate the terrorism variable below, but present the model in its simplest form here.
7. Additional lags of terrorism have been considered, however results showed there were no significant impacts beyond the lags shown in this equation.
8. Poisson models were also run. The results hold across both model specifications.
9. This regression was also run daily instead of weekly. When run daily, this same pattern holds—6 of the 7 days immediately following a terrorist attack lead to a statistically significant increase in hate crime activity (see the appendix). The slopes and t-values dissipate after that initial 7-day period.

10. The percent difference is calculated by calculating $e^{b} - 1$.

11. For example, in the week after the 9/11 attacks, President Bush gave a speech noting that “the face of terror is not the true faith of Islam” and that Muslims “need to be treated with respect” (see Lickel, Miller, Stenstrom, Denson, & Schmader, 2006, p. 384). This speech was most certainly in response to the escalating number of hate crimes against Arabs and Muslims in the days after the attack.

12. The negative coefficient was not statistically significant when running robustness checks (e.g., when breaking down the data by day or when making slight changes to the coding of right-wing attacks). Given this lack of robustness, we are reluctant to interpret the negative coefficient.

13. These four classifications were discussed earlier in our data section.

14. As described above, the “other” category consists of attacks where the motivation is known, but the attack is not easily classified as right wing, leftist, or anti-American.

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