

- Think about hate crime as a form of perpetration;
- Understand psychological theories of hate crime;
- Understand social psychological theories of hate crime;
- Understand interactional theories of hate crime; and
- Understand historical-cultural accounts of hate crime.



*Please do the following
required reading for Lessons
Five and Six:*

- Examining Hate Motivated Aggression: a Review of the Social Psychological Literature on Hate Crimes as a Distinct Form of Aggression, Chapter 8 of *Hate and Bias Crime: A Reader* (BP)
- *In the Name of Hate: Understanding Hate Crimes*, by Barbara Perry
- Accounting for Hate Crime: Doing Difference, Chapter 6 of *Hate and Bias Crime: A Reader* (BP)
- Black Church Arson in the United States, 1989-1996, Chapter 12 in *Hate and Bias Crime: A Reader* (BP)
- Constructing Whiteness: The Intersections of Race and Gender in U.S. White Supremacist Discourse, Chapter 24 of *Hate and Bias Crime: A Reader* (BP)
- *The Urban Ecology of Bias Crime: A Study of Disorganized and*

*Defended
Neighborhoods, by
Ryken Grattet*

In this lesson and the next, we will explore the question of why people commit hate crimes. Lesson Five looks at the individual-level theories (psychological, social psychological, and interactional), and Lesson Six explores the macro-level theories (historical-cultural, sociological, and economic). Let's begin by discussing a new topic: hate crime as perpetration.

How can we explain hate crime as a form of perpetration?

According to the article "Hate Crime: An Emergent Research Agenda":

"Those seeking to understand the nature and origins of bigoted violence are likely to be disappointed by extant scholarship on prejudice, racism, and discrimination. Although many scholars aspire to explain behavioral manifestations of intergroup hostility, this literature is dominated by the investigation of attitudes and beliefs, yet scarcely any of this research examines directly and systematically the question of why prejudice erupts into violence" (Green, McFalls, and Smith 2001: 479-80).

Acknowledging this, let's try to identify some of the factors associated with hate crime, as well as the theoretical frameworks used to explain hate crime perpetration.



Now let's think more systematically about explanations, or theories, of hate crime. To do so, we'll use a typology of theories. Any typology of hate crime theories must distinguish between two broad levels of analysis: individual and societal.

Individual-level analyses seek to understand the psychological and interactional causes that impel people to commit hate crime, including:

- Enduring psychological orientations or propensities;
- Situations in which individuals with certain kinds of beliefs and aversions find themselves in situations where these psychological attributes are brought to the fore; and
- Types of interactions that seem to facilitate hate crime perpetration.

In contrast, societal-level theories focus attention not on individual circumstances or profiles, but rather on macro forces that lead to hate crime perpetration, such as:

- Modernization;
- (Dis)integration;
- Economic downturn; and
- Other social, economic political conditions favorable to the proliferation of hate crime.

With this distinction between individual and societal levels of analysis in mind, we can identify at least six general types of explanations for hate crime:

- psychological
- social psychological
- interactional
- historical-cultural
- sociological
- economic

Let's begin with a look at psychological explanations of hate crime.

Most theoretical accounts of hate crime assume a necessary psychological cause because leading definitions of hate crime presuppose individual hostility toward the victim's social group. Individual psychological accounts of hate crime focus on cognitive and affective processes by which perpetrators identify their victims, generate hostility, and become disposed to aggression and violence. Clearly, then, this approach explains hate crime as a form of prejudice.

In "Psychological Heterosexism and Anti-Gay Violence: The Social Psychology of Bigotry and Bashing," Greg Herek asks, "Why do some heterosexuals feel strongly hostile toward gay people while others are tolerant and accepting in their attitudes?" Herek answers this question by offering a "functional approach" to the development and maintenance of attitudes.



Herek argues that people hold and express particular attitudes because they get some sort of psychological benefit from doing so. In other words, attitudes and opinions serve psychological functions for the person who holds them.

According to the functional approach, two people can have very different motivations for expressing what appears to be the same attitude. Or, they can express the same attitude for the same reason. Finally, the functional approach assumes attitudes are more likely to change when they stop being functional for the individual.

Based on an analysis of essays about homosexuality written by 205 heterosexual college students, Herek identified both evaluative and expressive functions for both positive and negative attitudes toward homosexuality:

Evaluative functions:

- Experiential: assist in making sense of previous interactions with gays/lesbians.
- Anticipatory: helps an individual to understand the world and to develop strategies for maximizing rewards and minimizing negative experiences.

Expressive functions:

- Social identity: the attitude toward a symbol - homosexuality - helps people increase self-esteem by expressing important aspects of themselves.
- Value-expressive: enables people to affirm their belief in and adherence to important values that are closely related to their self-concepts.
- Social expressive: strengthens one's sense of belonging to a group and helps an individual gain acceptance, approval, or love from other people whom he or she considers important (peers, family, neighbors).
- Ego defensive: lowers a person's anxiety resulting from her or his unconscious psychological conflicts, such as those connected to sexuality and gender.

The table shows the psychological function of heterosexism, according to this theory. Notice that both positive and negative attitudes (in this case about homosexuality) can serve a function for the individual who holds them.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FUNCTIONS OF HETEROSEXISM		
	DESCRIPTION	BENEFIT TO INDIVIDUAL
Evaluative Functions		
• Experiential	Generalizes from past experiences with specific lesbians or gay men to create a coherent image of gay people in relation to one's own interests.	Makes sense of past experiences and uses them to guide behavior.
• Anticipatory	Anticipates benefits or punishments expected to be received directly from lesbians or gay men.	In absence of direct experiences and gay men or lesbians, plans future behavior so as to maximize rewards and minimize punishments.
Expressive functions		
• Social Identity		
Value-expressive	Lesbians or gay men symbolize an important value conflict.	Increases self-esteem by affirming individual's view of self as a person who adheres to particular values.
Social-expressive	Lesbians or gay men symbolize the in-group or our-group	Increases self-esteem by winning approval of others whose opinion is valued, increases sense of group solidarity.
• Defensive	Lesbians or gay men symbolize unacceptable part of the self.	Reduces anxiety associated with a psychological conflict by denying and externalizing the unacceptable aspect of self and then attacking it.

Critical Thinking

What kind of comments do you hear about homosexuality - in conversation, on TV, in newspapers and magazines, and so on - that might reveal a "function" for the person expressing the view? Likewise, what kinds of comments do you hear about race, ethnicity, religion and/or national origin that might reveal a function for the person expressing them?



Please read the following articles on the murder of Eddie Araujo, known as Gwen:

- [**3 Charged in Beating of Boy, 17, Who Lived as a Girl**](#)
- [**Trying to Understand Eddie's Life - and Death**](#)
- [**More Told in Teen's Killing**](#)
- [**Man Pleads Not Guilty in Slaying of Transgender Bay Area Teenager**](#)
- [**Mourners Overflow Funeral of Teen Allegedly Slain Over Sexual Identity**](#)
- [**R.I.P. Gwen Araujo**](#)
- [**'Heat of Passion' Claimed in Transgender Killing Case**](#)
- [**Araujo's Killers Sentenced**](#)
- [**Life After Gwen**](#)
- [**Governor Signs Bill to Limit Bias in California Courtrooms**](#)
- [**No Issue of Sexual Deception**](#)
- [**Conviction in Killing of Transgender Woman**](#)



Now that you have read about the murder of Gwen, discuss with your cohort the following question:

To what degree might an explanation of this murder lie in the "psychological functions" served by the alleged murders' psychologies?

To participate in the discussion, select OUTLINE from the TOOLS menu. Once you are back at the OUTLINE, select the appropriate FORUM from this lecture.



To get at the cause of hate crime, we have to move beyond the sources of potentially prejudicial motivations and orientations to examine the circumstances or the conditions under which such prejudices will express themselves as (violent) conduct. Here the focus is on small group dynamics that can conspire to push a person to engage in acts of violence.

Various models of small group dynamics suggest the following factors as "facilitators" of violence:

- contagion
- conformism
- extremification of attitudes
- disinhibition
- yearning for group acceptance

Other social psychological approaches focus on the interplay between psychological orientations and broader social influences. For example, some have argued that the media can instigate hate crime by formulating, propagating, and legitimating stereotypes about potential target populations.

The main point of social psychological theories is to suggest that attitudes are not enough. Many folks hold attitudes consistent with committing hate crime, but do not do so. Others, in contrast, engage in violence acts as venues through which they can express their opinions and attitudes.

Consider Donald Green and his colleagues' work on "The Distinctive Political World View of Hate Crime Perpetrators and White Supremacists." In this article Green and his colleagues emphasize the role of social psychological causes of hate crime by comparing the views of the general public, white supremacists, and hate crime perpetrators.

To do so, Green and his colleagues begin with the assumption that is not a foregone conclusion that the opinions of white supremacists and hate crime perpetrators differ from those of the general public. As they hypothesize, "Some white supremacists may harbor a visceral sense of hatred and contempt for racial minorities; others merely feel a sense of disdain for people they perceive to be less civilized, still others insist that the pride they take in being white implies no ill-will toward other races."

Find evidence of each view or various views on the following white supremacist web pages:

- [Imperial Klans of America](#)
- [Kingdom Identity Ministries](#)
- [White Pride World Wide](#)
- [Skinheads](#)

Ethnographic research, including Kathleen Blee's book *Inside Organized Racism*, suggests that white supremacists hold distinctive attitudes on topics having to do with the desirability of interracial contact and the need for whites to exhibit racial pride. Do you find evidence of this on the white supremacist web pages?

To participate in the discussion, select OUTLINE from the TOOLS menu. Once you are back at the OUTLINE, select the appropriate FORUM from this lecture.



Hate crime perpetrators, on the other hand, seem to lack an overarching racial ideology. Rather, they often engage in violence in an effort to defend their turf against outsiders, as a way of venting frustration with dim economic prospects. With this in mind, Green's study is the first study to compare systematically the views of hate crime perpetrators, white supremacists, and the general public.



To do so, Green and his colleagues used a 62-item survey instrument containing the following four broad categories of questions to assess the views of the general public, white supremacists and hate crime perpetrators:

1. Convergent items comprise issues, such as environmental protection or behaviors such as media attention, on which there is no reason to suppose that special and general populations differ;
2. Divergent items attempt to capture the putative differences between special and general populations;
3. Economic evaluations items tap into respondents' assessment of both their job security and descriptions of their overall personal finances (both prospective and retrospective), as well as level of economic resentment toward "newcomers" and a sense of frustration with the financial condition of "ordinary people"; and
4. Demographic measures.

This questionnaire was distributed to the following types of people:

- The perpetrator/supremacists sample was derived from an initial pool of suspected hate-crime perpetrators and participants in hate group activity in North Carolina between 1986 and 1995. This pool yielded a total of 174 perpetrators and 126 white supremacists.
- The "general population" was drawn from a pool of listed phone numbers drawn at random. This pool yielded a sample of 700.

Once identified, the respondents were read the following introduction at the start of the interview:

"Hello, my name is [first name]. I'm calling from the [survey firm] in Greensboro, and we're conducting the North Carolina Public Opinion Survey. We are calling to hear your opinions about crime, gun control, and other political issues in North Carolina. The interview will take approximately 15 minutes."

This is a true statement, but it is designed to ensure the respondent does not know exactly what the study is designed to do. The idea here is that if respondents knew the purpose of the study, they might forego participating or resist providing honest answers.



Now, let's look at some of the results. The table compares the opinion distributions of the general public with hate-crime perpetrators, members of white supremacists organizations, and respondents whose names coincided with those of perpetrators/supremacists but whose identifying characteristics showed that they were not the person we sought to interview (that is, "mistaken perpetrator/supremacist").

What patterns do you see?

[Views of Public Perpetrator and Supremacist Whites, Age 18-45](#)

Questions that tap broad orientations toward government intervention in areas such as health care or social services reveal small differences between the four groups. However, when the issue shifts to admitting immigrants into the United States or banning marriages between blacks and whites, perpetrators and white supremacists differ sharply from the general public. Contrasts such as these emerge on a variety of issues having to do with the exclusion of outgroups, such as whether blacks or gays should move into neighborhoods where they are not wanted, and whether employers should have the right to fire gay employees.

Items that tap directly into white supremacist ideology reveal differences between the general population and the special populations and between perpetrators and white supremacists. For example, look at the question on whether "whites need to organize themselves." Also, look at the question about banning the confederate flag.



Finally, an item that does not appear in the table - "The traditional American way of life is disappearing so fast that we need to use force to protect it" - is instructive. The statement is endorsed by 30% of the general public, 57% of perpetrators, and 67% of white supremacists.

The bottom line is that these data suggest that perpetrators and supremacists hold distinct political views when compared to the general public. At the same time, supremacists differ from perpetrators insofar as the former is much more likely to see a need for white activism and condone the use of force to protect tradition.



The table compares the opinion distributions of the general public with hate crime perpetrators, members of white supremacist organizations, and respondents whose names coincided with those of perpetrators/supremacists but whose identifying characteristics showed that they were not the person we sought to interview (that is, "mistaken perpetrator/supremacist"). What patterns do you see with regard to the link between extreme political behavior and economic conditions?

TABLE 14.3 Economic Assessments of Public, Perpetrator, and Supremacist Whites, Age Eighteen to Forty-five

	General public [percent]	Perpetrators [percent]	Supremacists [percent]	Mistaken perpetrators/ Supremacists [percent]
Personal finances versus last year:				
Better off	65.4	57.1	44.4	73.7
Same	15.7	14.3	22.2	15.8
Worse off	18.4	28.6	33.3	10.5
Don't know	.5	0	0	0
Personal finances this time next year:				
Better off	48.4	57.1	44.4	42.1
Same	46.1	42.9	55.6	47.4
Worse off	4.6	0	0	0
Don't know	.9	0	0	10.5
How easy would it be to find another job?				
Very easy	16.6	15.4	12.5	31.6
Fairly easy	51.8	38.5	50.0	47.4
Fairly difficult	23.3	23.1	25.0	15.8
Very difficult	7.8	23.1	12.5	5.3
Don't know	.5	0	0	0
Community finances versus last year:				
Have gotten better	42.4	28.6	22.2	42.1
Have stayed about the same	44.2	50.0	55.6	47.4
Have gotten worse	12.9	21.4	22.2	10.5
Don't know	.5	0	0	0
Community finances this time next year:				
Will get better	34.1	21.4	55.6	47.4
Will stay about the same	43.8	50.0	11.1	36.8
Will get worse	18.9	28.6	33.3	15.8
Don't know	3.2	0	0	0
"Longtime residents are losing ground."				
Agree	59.0	78.6	66.7	52.6
Disagree	31.3	14.3	33.3	36.8
Neither/both	1.8	0	0	0
Don't know	7.8	7.1	0	10.5
"Economic prospects of ordinary people are rising."				
Agree	49.3	28.6	22.2	63.2
Disagree	48.4	71.4	77.8	36.8
Neither	.5	0	0	0
Both	1.4	0	0	0
Refused	.5	0	0	0
Number of cases	217	14	9	19

The pattern of responses to question concerning personal financial circumstances is weak and inconsistent. The general public gives a more upbeat assessment of their financial progress over the past year, but their economic expectations for the future are no different from those held by perpetrators or white supremacists. In terms of employment, perpetrators appear to be a bit more vulnerable, but the differences between them and the general public are slight and not statistically significant.

Perpetrators and white supremacists offer a more negative assessment of their community's economic condition over the last year. A similar pattern emerges when respondents are asked whether the economic prospects of "ordinary people" have improved in recent years: half of the general public says yes, compared to just one-quarter of the special population.

A similar pattern emerges when the economic circumstances of long-term residents are compared with "newcomers" when respondents predict the economic future of their community.

The bottom line here is that the general public expresses more favorable economic evaluations, but the gap between it and the special populations is small to moderate in size. Taken as a whole, this study reveals three important conclusions:

1. White supremacists and hate crime perpetrators are not notably more frustrated economically or more pessimistic about their financial future than the general population. This finding contradicts the argument that economic downturns engender frustration or competition for scarce resources, in turn producing hate crime.
2. Of greater explanatory value than economic concerns are the distinctive exclusionary sentiments of hate crime perpetrators and white supremacists. The specter of race-mixing and immigration, as well as the blurring of traditional gender roles, looms much larger in the minds of these respondents than in the minds of the general public.
3. There are significant differences between white supremacists and hate crime perpetrators. For example, the former is more concerned about threats to Southern identity and their sense that whites must organize to defend themselves.

White supremacists and hate crime perpetrators seem to be drawn from a much larger pool of like-minded individuals. However, psychological factors alone cannot explain perpetration. As Green and his colleagues explain in their conclusion:

"No psychological explanation can make sense of hate crime without considering the mechanisms by which individuals are spurred into action, be it hate crime or right-wing activism. A great many social psychological forces come readily to mind: pressures to go along with or prove oneself among a group of bigots looking for action; the blandishments of a charismatic leader; community norms concerning attacks against minorities; to name a few. Here we wish to call attention to a psychological mechanism termed 'entitativity,' or the perception that an outgroup is an internally cohesive actor poised to take action on behalf of its interests" (p. 452).

Using the following links to white supremacist websites, search for evidence of "entitativity"

- [Imperial Klans of America](#)
- [Kingdom Identity Ministries](#)
- [White Pride World Wide](#)
- [Skinheads](#)

Do you find evidence of this? If so, how is it manifested?

To participate in the discussion, select OUTLINE from the TOOLS menu. Once you are back at the OUTLINE, select the appropriate FORUM from this lecture.



Interactional theories of hate crime direct attention on the structure, content, and process of human interactions of all sorts. With reference to hate crime perpetration in particular, the focus is on how social differences are created, managed, and altered or sustained in routine and not-so-routine interactions. Consider, for example, *In the Name of Hate: Understanding Hate Crimes*, by Barbara Perry. Perry writes:

"How do we make sense of the disparate motivations, dynamics, and characteristics of these offenders, their actions, and their victims. This is the role of theory in criminology and sociology: to identify and make sense of patterns in human behavior and experience. Unfortunately, the events described here [i.e., hate crimes] have not been adequately accounted for. Criminology has failed to provide a coherent framework for understanding the diverse phenomenon that we refer to as 'hate crime'" (p. 31).

She then goes on to inventory select theories of crime and show how they have been applied to hate crime, often without compelling results. For example, she reviews a number of popular theories, including social control theory, strain theory, labeling theory, and critical criminology.

For a variety of reasons, which you can read about in Chapter 2, she rejects the following theories.

- Social control theory, which accounts for criminal behavior by focusing on those for whom bonds to conventional society have been loosened so that the constraints that ordinarily inhibit criminal, deviant, or antisocial behavior have deteriorated to such an extent that the perpetrator lacks the incentive to abide by the law.
- Strain theory, which explains crime as a result of a disassociation between culturally prescribed goals and the socially structured means by which to achieve them. In this case crime is a response to a situation in which institutionalized procedures that promise a measure of successful attainment of the goals are not available to individuals. To quote Perry, "Frustration of one's efforts to achieve 'success' (however defined by the culture in question) give rise to aberrant behavior" (p. 35).
- Labeling theory, which explains crime and deviance as a social construct arising out of a process of "tagging" or labeling those deemed - by the audience - in some way defective or deviant. In this explanation, crime and deviance are explained as a social process by which a negative identity is applied and assumed such that accordant behavior (that is, criminal behavior) flows from the identity.
- Critical criminology, which is "anything but a unified theory approach" (p. 42) and typically has direct or indirect links to Marxist theory and ideas. As such, it focuses on the links between the structural and cultural dimensions of capitalism, inequalities, and crime.

Having reviewed popular criminological theories as a venue through which we might best understand hate crime, Barbara Perry concludes:

"As the foregoing critique has implied, criminology has yet to come to terms with the phenomenon we have come to know as hate crime. Existing theory tends to neglect the structural underpinnings of hate crime and the situated process that it entails. As my earlier definition of hate crime suggests, to understand hate crime, one must put it in a sociocultural context. In particular, hate crime - often referred to as 'ethnoviolence' - must be understood as one among an array of mechanisms by which deeply ingrained sets of power relationships are maintained. It is, in short, constituted of and by difference. In fact, as this chapter and the remainder of the book will argue, hate crime is a vitally important mechanism for 'doing difference'" (p. 46).



Critical Thinking

In order to understand the "doing difference" perspective, do the following:

First, identify the various social statuses and attendant identities attached to you: For example, I am white, female, middle-class (but from a working-class background, (early!) middle-aged, and so on.

Then, consider how these social statuses and attendant identities might play themselves in a variety of settings, including:

- 24-hour Fitness Center
- a bowling alley
- an attorney's office
- a first date

In particular, ask: how do my status/identity markers play themselves out in face-to-face interaction, and, almost more importantly, why and with what consequence?



Reconsider the recent murder of Eddie (Gwen) Araujo, as reported in the *Los Angeles Times*, which you read earlier in this lesson, and address the following questions:



- To what degree might this murder be explained by the "doing difference/doing hate crime" perspective?
- Is this an extreme example of the way "doing difference" is done?

To participate in the discussion, select OUTLINE from the TOOLS menu. Once you are back at the OUTLINE, select the appropriate FORUM from this lecture.



The "doing difference" account of hate crime provides a good segue into a the discussion of societal level accounts in the next lesson, especially historical-cultural accounts. It includes a focus on meaning systems that exist external to the individual - a focus on culture as an externality that is consequential for much, if not the vast majority, of our social behavior, including violence.

summary

IN THIS LESSON YOU LEARNED:

- Any typology of hate crime must distinguish between two broad levels of analysis: individual and societal.
- Individual-level analyses seek to understand the psychological and interactional causes that impel people to commit hate crime. Societal level analyses focus attention on macro-level forces that lead to hate crime perpetration.
- Individual-level analyses include psychological, social psychological, and interactional theories.
- Psychological theories: Most theoretical accounts of hate crime assume a necessary psychological cause, since leading definitions of hate crime presuppose individual hostility toward the victim's social group. Individual psychological accounts of hate crime focus on cognitive and affective processes by which perpetrators identify their victims, generate hostility, and become disposed to aggression and violence.
- Social psychological theories: Social psychological theories tend to moved beyond individual accounts of prejudicial motivation to examine the circumstances or the conditions under which such prejudices will express themselves as (violent) conduct. Here the focus is on small group dynamics that can conspire to push a person to engage in acts of violence.
- Interactional theories: Interactional theories of hate crime direct attention on the structure, content, and process of human interactions of all sorts. With reference to hate crime perpetration in particular, the focus is on how social differences are created, managed, and altered or sustained in routine and not-so-routine interactions.

