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Religiosity and Hate Groups

An Exploratory and Descriptive Correlational Study

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Abstract

A novel concept, the Hate Group Representation Rate (HGRR), is introduced and defined as a measure of the social problem of the degree to which hate groups are present and represented within specified ecological units of analysis, specifically within the U.S. states. Exploration of several and various relationships between the HGRR and religiosity measures considered within national Gallup Poll and Pew Forum of Religion and Public Life surveys reveals numerous and consistent statistically significant associations between Hate Group Representation and indicators of religiosity between and among states. The findings provide justification sufficient for the formulation of two hypotheses predicting a positive association between HGRR and Evangelical Protestant Fundamentalism in the U.S. Indirect confirmatory research findings related to critical thinking, religious orientations, and inter-group relations are discussed and presented as potentially fruitful areas for further empirical inquiry.

Research Process and Findings

Hate Groups

[1] According to statistics compiled by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) there were 926 active hate groups in the U.S. in 2008, which represented an increase of 4% over the 888 of 2007 and a 54% increase above the 602 identified in 2000 (Holthouse: 48-69). Of the various factors contributing to this growth, the SPLC singles out the rise in non-white immigration and, more recently, the worsening economy and the election of the nation's first African-American president.

[2] Hate groups are classified by the SPLC into the following categories: Ku Klux Klan with 186 groups; Neo-Nazi, 196; White Nationalist, 111; Racist Skinhead, 98; Christian Identity, 39; Neo-Confederate, 93; Black Separatist, 113; and General Hate, 90.

[3] The SPLC also provides a breakdown of hate groups by state. Not surprisingly, these data reveal that in general the largest states in terms of population size have the largest number of hate groups, while the smallest states have the fewest. For example, the largest state, California, with an estimated 2008 population of 36,756,666, representing 11.95% of the U.S. total, had the largest number of hate groups, 84, and Texas, the next largest, with 7.81% of the U.S. total population, had 66, the second largest number of hate groups (U.S. Census Bureau). At the other extreme, were states like Alaska with .22% of the U.S. population having 0 hate groups; Hawaii at .42% also with 0; Maine at .43% with 1; and North Dakota at .21% also with 1 hate group. A cursory examination and consideration of these examples might lead to the conclusion that the size of the state population explains or accounts for much or most of the variation in the number of hate groups it will have. In short, the larger the state population the larger its number of hate groups. In fact, the product-moment correlation (r) between the percent of a state's population size (relative to the total U.S. population) and its percent of the nation's 926 hate groups for the 50 states and the District of Columbia is .85. This simple correlation tells only part of the story, however. If the state-by-state relative population size and hate group percentage comparisons are examined in detail, some interesting facts are revealed. Again, using the example of California, it is observed that, while that state's population represents 11.95% of the U.S. total, its 84 hate groups correspond to 9.07% of the U.S. total. California actually has fewer hate groups than one would expect if the state's percentage of hate groups were the same as its percentage of the U.S. population. If that were the case, then we would expect California to have 111 hate groups rather than the 84 it actually has. In this sense, it can be said that hate groups in California are "underrepresented" in terms of the state's population size. To cite another example, while South Carolina's state population is 1.44% of the country's total, its 45 hate groups represent 4.86% of the 926 total. Accordingly, if its share of hate groups were the same as its population share, it would have only 13 hate groups.

[4] One way of allowing for standardized comparisons among states is by computing a simple ratio of its percent of total hate groups to its percent of the total population for each state. To continue with the current examples, the ratio for California is .76, while that for South Carolina is 3.38, leading one to be able to assert, for example, that, while South Carolina has 3.38 times more than its "fair share" of hate groups, California has substantially fewer than its fair share would be if its ratio were 1.0 rather than .76. Henceforth, in the interest of parsimony, the percentage of state hate group to the percentage of state population ratio shall be referred as the Hate Group Representation Rate (HGRR).

[5] These two sets of percentages with their corresponding HGRRs have been calculated for all 50 states plus the District of Columbia and are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Hate Group Representation Rates of the U.S. States

State	Hate Group Representation Rate	Percent of Total U.S. Population*	Percent of Total U.S. Hate Groups**
Washington D.C.	4.53	0.19	0.86
South Carolina	3.38	1.44	4.86
Alabama	2.58	1.51	3.89
West Virginia	2.56	0.59	1.51
Mississippi	2.51	0.95	2.38
Arkansas	2.32	0.93	2.16
Montana	2.1	0.31	0.65
Tennessee	2.04	2.01	4.1
Oklahoma	1.74	1.18	2.05
Louisiana	1.7	1.4	2.38
Missouri	1.69	1.92	3.24
Nevada	1.67	0.84	1.4
South Dakota	1.65	0.26	0.43
Idaho	1.55	0.49	0.76
Delaware	1.54	0.28	0.43
New Jersey	1.52	2.84	4.32
Georgia	1.38	3.12	4.32
Wyoming	1.29	0.17	0.22
Virginia	1.12	2.52	2.81
Vermont	1.1	0.2	0.22
North Carolina	1.05	3.08	3.24
Colorado	1.02	1.59	1.62
Florida	1.01	5.97	6.05
Arizona	0.99	2.07	2.05
Kansas	0.94	0.91	0.86
Texas	0.91	7.81	7.13
Iowa	0.88	0.98	0.86
Kentucky	0.86	1.39	1.19
Indiana	0.84	2.07	1.73
Pennsylvania	0.84	4.06	3.4
Maryland	0.76	1.84	1.4

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California	0.76	11.95	9.07
Michigan	0.75	3.29	2.48
New Hampshire	0.74	0.43	0.32
Nebraska	0.74	0.58	0.43
Massachusetts	0.66	2.11	1.4
Ohio	0.66	3.75	2.48
Rhode Island	0.63	0.35	0.22
Washington	0.62	2.11	1.3
Oregon	0.62	1.23	0.76
Utah	0.62	0.87	0.54
Illinois	0.59	4.2	2.48
Wisconsin	0.59	1.83	1.08
North Dakota	0.52	0.21	0.11
Minnesota	0.51	1.7	0.86
Connecticut	0.47	1.15	0.54
New York	0.41	6.31	2.59
Maine	0.26	0.43	0.11
New Mexico	0.17	0.64	0.11
Hawaii	0	0.42	0
Alaska	0	0.22	0

* U.S. Census Bureau Estimates for July 1, 2008

** Southern Poverty Law Center's Intelligence Report (Spring 2009)

An examination of the HGRRs of Table 1 reveals that hate groups generally tend to be more disproportionately overrepresented among Southern states, with the exception of Montana and Washington D.C.

Religiosity and Hate Groups

[6] A recent Gallup Poll Survey provides evidence that states having the highest HGRRs are the most "religious," as measured by church attendance (Newport 2006: 1-5). While 42% of Americans reported that they attended church "once a week" or "almost every week," there was wide variation among states, the range extending from a high of 58% to a low of 24%. Of the above-mentioned states, Alabama and South Carolina residents attended church at a rate of 58% each, Mississippi was at 57%, Arkansas 55%, Tennessee 52%, West Virginia 46%, Montana 34%, and D.C. 33%. With the exception of Montana and D.C., states having more than their "fair share" of hate groups, most notably in the South, had church attendance rates above the national average. The correlation (r) between state percentage of church attendance ("once a week" or "almost every week") with HGRR for all 50 states plus D.C. is .30 ($p < .05$).

[7] A similar, but somewhat more distinct and definitive, pattern occurs when one utilizes a different measure or index of religiosity, namely state-by-state Gallup Poll Survey respondents' answers to the question "Is religion an important part of your daily life?" which appeared in the 2008 Gallup Poll Daily Tracking Program (Newport 2009: 1-6). While the national average "yes" response to the question was 64%, the range extended from 85% (Mississippi) to 42% (Vermont). Here, the southern states of Mississippi, Alabama, South Carolina, Tennessee, Louisiana, and Arkansas, were the top five, with 85%, 82%, 80%, 79%, 78%, and 78%, respectively. West Virginia was at 71% and Montana at 56%. With respect to this indicator of religiosity, Washington D.C. was less of an exception with its 66%. The product-moment correlation (r) between state percentage of "importance of religion in daily life" and the HGRR for all 50 states and D.C. is .46 ($p < .01$).

[8] The findings based upon exploring the relationships between state Hate Group Representation Rates with two measures or indicators of religiosity are consistent with and supported by comparable recent Pew Research Forum Survey results (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life). Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for both the Gallup and Pew surveys.

Table 2. Church Attendance and Importance of Religion in Everyday Life for States with HGGR \geq 2.0

State	Hate Group Rate	Church Attendance Once a Week or Almost Once a Week		Religion Very Important in Every Day Life	
		Gallup %	Pew %	Gallup %	Pew %
D.C.	4.53	33	37	66	56
South Carolina	3.38	58	54	80	70
Alabama	2.58	58	52	82	74
West Virginia	2.56	46	43	71	60
Mississippi	2.51	57	60	85	82
Arkansas	2.32	55	50	78	74
Montana	2.1	34	31	56	47
Tennessee	2.04	52	52	79	72
Maximum all states	4.53	58	60	85	82
Minimum all states	0	24	23	42	36
Median	0.91	43	38	64	55
Mean	1.18	42.10	38.94	64	55.63
Standard Deviation	0.86	9.06	9.27	9.88	10.72
Correlation (r) with HGGRs (N=51)	1	0.30	0.44	0.46	0.50
p	NA	< .05	< .01	< .01	< .01

Having shown statistically significant positive correlations between state Hate Group Representation Rates and both the *church attendance* and *importance of religion in everyday life* variables, the availability of other Pew Survey findings allows for the exploration of the relationships of HGRRs with other measures of religiosity.

Caveats

[9] Before continuing this line of analysis it is important to make explicit four caveats appropriate to the utilization of data aggregated at the level of states, which represent areas delineated by geographically and politically defined boundaries:

1. One must always be cautious to avoid the *ecological fallacy*, which occurs when a researcher erroneously infers behavior at the level of individuals within states based on aggregated state-level data. For example, if one finds (as in the case of the present study) that the percentage of individual state residents stating that religion is an important part of their daily lives correlates positively ($r = .46$ and $r = .5$) with states' Hate Group Representation Rates, it does not necessarily follow, logically nor empirically, that either: (a) persons who say religion is important to them join hate groups; or (b) hate group members indicate that religion is an important part of their daily lives. The only way one can answer such questions with more convincing validity is by eliciting responses regarding both matters from (or by observing the behavior of) individual members of hate groups. Since these kinds of data are not currently available on a national level, the most that one can assert is that the state-level correlation statistics provide *suggestive evidence* about relationships among variables, and that such findings warrant further research, ideally involving units of analysis that are smaller and more demographically homogeneous than states, and preferably individual hate groups and their members.
2. One must similarly resist the temptation to *confuse correlation with causation*. As has been repeated time and again by instructors of courses in research methods and statistics, this author included, "Correlation does not necessarily imply causation." Keeping with our current example, just because religiosity and hate group membership are related (either at the state, hate group, or individual member levels) one may not necessarily "cause" the other. They could alternatively, for example, both be "caused by" some other variable or variables, such as "fear of social isolation" or "need for social recognition."
3. Correlation data, of the sort reported here, capture facts acquired at a particular point in time or within a specified time period, which may or may not coincide exactly among the variables under study. For example, the state percentage population estimates cited above were prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau for July 1, 2008; the Gallup Poll church attendance records were compiled between January 2004 and March 2006; while the Gallup survey containing the question about the importance of religion in everyday life was conducted throughout 2008; data reported in the Pew U.S. Religious Landscape Survey were gathered between May 8 and August 13, 2007; the SPLC hate group data are for 2008; and so on. Of equal, perhaps even greater, importance is that such *cross-sectional data reveal nothing about change(s) over time*. To take another example, church attendance (perhaps due to deteriorating economic

conditions), may have increased (or decreased) significantly since the 2004 – 2006 Gallup Poll survey period.

4. *State-level data may mask or conceal large within-state variations.* For example, it may initially be surprising to learn that the state of Georgia did not have an HGRR of 2.0 or higher as all of its neighboring “Bible Belt” states did. In fact, Georgia’s HGRR was 1.38, while its religiosity levels were comparable to surrounding states; 52% church attendance and 76% importance in daily life from the Gallup surveys, for example. Unlike Alabama, South Carolina, and Tennessee, to cite but one potentially relevant differentiating factor, Georgia contains the country’s second fastest-growing urban metropolitan area, Atlanta, whose demographically more diverse population may be less attracted to hate group ideologies.

As long as one remains ever mindful of the potential limitations of state-level data, one may proceed to explore relationships between Hate Group Representation Rates and other indicators or measures of religiosity.

Relationships between Hate Group Representation Rates and Religious Beliefs and Practices

[10] The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life Survey presented findings relative to both religious beliefs and religious practices. Among the *beliefs*, in addition to “importance of religion in everyday life” that have already been considered, the Pew survey contained questions pertaining to “belief in God or universal spirit”; “views of one’s religion as the one true faith”; “interpretation of religious teachings”; “interpretation of scripture”; and “frequency of receiving answers to prayers.” Regarding religious *practices*, in addition to “frequency of attendance at religious services,” the Pew survey included a question on the religious practice of “frequency of prayer.”

[11] Table 3 displays the correlations between each of the Pew survey beliefs and practices religiosity measures and the Hate Group Representation Rates (HGRRs) for the 50 states and the District of Columbia (the N for all of the analyses is 51).

Table 3. Relationships between Religious Beliefs and Practices and HGRRs

Beliefs and Practices	<i>r</i>	p
Belief in God or Universal Spirit		
Absolutely certain that God exists	0.49	< .01
Fairly certain	-0.52	< .01
Uncertain	-0.37	< .01
Does not believe in God	-0.37	< .01
Importance of Religion in Everyday Life		
Very important	0.50	< .01
Somewhat important	-0.42	< .01
Not too or not at all important	-0.49	< .01

Interpretation of Scripture		
Word of God, absolutely certain	0.58	< .01
Not certain or not literally true	-0.38	< .01
Bible is book written by man	-0.45	< .01
Interpretation of Religious Teachings		
Only one way to interpret teachings	0.40	< .01
More than one way	-0.42	< .01
Views of One's Religion, One True Faith		
Only one true faith, one's own	0.30	< .05
One's faith is one among many	-0.32	< .05
Receiving Answers to Prayers		
At least once a month	0.47	< .01
Several times a year	0.27	> .05
Unsure if prayers are answered	0.36	< .01
Seldom or never receives answers	-0.37	< .01
Seldom or never prays	-0.46	< .01
Attendance at Religious Services		
At least once a week	0.44	< .01
Monthly or a few times a year	-0.13	> .05
Seldom or never	-0.44	< .01
Frequency of Prayer		
At least once a day	0.53	< .01
Once a week or a few times a week	-0.26	> .05
Seldom or never prays	-0.44	< .01

The summary descriptive statistics of Table 3 reveal that of the 25 separate bivariate product-moment correlations between the religious beliefs and practices variables (responses to survey questions) and the State Hate Group Representation Rate variable, the correlation coefficients and confidence levels show statistically significant relationships for 22 of the religiosity variables. Particularly striking is the finding that for all 6 of the religious beliefs survey questions and for the 2 religious practices questions, the question response alternatives indicative of the highest degree of “religiosity” consistently reveal moderate or strong, statistically significant, positive relationships with State Hate Group Representation Rates. *The higher the religiosity within a state, the higher its proportional representation of hate groups.* In general, the greater the hate group representation rate, the higher the percentage of the state’s population who assert their *belief* that: they are *absolutely certain* that God exists; religion is *very important* in their everyday lives; they are *absolutely certain* that Scripture represents the word of God, word-for-word; there is *only one way* to interpret religious teachings, their way;

their religion represents *the only one* true faith; and they receive answers to their prayers *at least once a month*.

[12] Conversely, the smaller or lesser the representation of hate groups within a state (lower HGRRs), the larger the percentage of the population indicating that they *believe* that: they are only fairly certain, or uncertain that God exists, or that they do not believe in God; religion is only somewhat important, or not too important, or not at all important in their lives; they are not certain that Scripture is the actual word of God, or that it is not literally true, or that the *Bible* is a book written by “man”; there is not only one way to interpret the teachings of their religions, but rather more than one way; one’s own religion is not the only one true faith, but rather one among many; and they seldom or never receive answers to their prayers or that they seldom or never pray.

[13] Changing the focus from religious beliefs to religious practices, similar response patterns are to be observed, indicating a consistency between belief and practice. In general, the greater the hate group representation within a state (higher HGRRs), the greater the percentage of the population reporting engaging in the *practices* of attending religious services *at least once a week* and praying *at least once a day*.

[14] In contrast, the smaller or lesser the representation of hate groups (lower HGRRs), the larger the percentage of a state’s population indicating that they: attend religious services only monthly or a few times a year, or that they seldom or never attend; and pray less than once a day, actually only once a week or a few times a week, or they seldom or never pray.

[15] The findings thus far revealed and discussed strongly suggest consistent and demonstrable relationships between the presence of hate groups within states and relatively extreme degrees of religiosity that might be appropriately and heuristically characterized as indicative of Evangelical Fundamentalist values and ideologies.

Relationships between Hate Group Representation Rates and Four Largest U.S. Religious Traditions

[16] The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life Survey of 2007 reports present additional data that may be interpreted as evidence supportive of this supposition. Contained within the survey instrument were a number of questions formulated to reveal the religious faith or tradition with which the respondents identified. Altogether, over 30 distinct traditions were cited in the report, their proportional representations ranging in size from a high of 26.3%, Evangelical Protestant Churches, to lows of less than 0.3%, Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Jewish Orthodox, Zen Buddhists, Sunni Muslims, Shia Muslims, Other World Religions, Native American Religions, and a few others. Because of the relatively small national population sample size (35,000 U.S. adults, as compared with the Gallup 2008 surveys of 350,000 respondents, for example) distributed among the 50 states plus the District of Columbia, concerns about reliability were responsible for this researcher’s decision to focus solely on the four largest U.S. religious denominations or religious traditions: Evangelical Protestants comprising 26.3% of the total sample, Mainline Protestants at 18.1%, Catholics at 23.9%, and Unaffiliated at 16.1% (including “Atheist,” “Agnostic,” “Nothing in Particular” [“Secular Unaffiliated” or “Religious Unaffiliated”]).

[17] Altogether, these four major religious traditions accounted for 84.1% of the Pew national sample. This author would have preferred including the Historically Black Churches (numerically constituting the next largest religious tradition), but concluded that their national percentage representation of only 6.9% would produce insufficient state-level raw numbers and percentages to yield reliable inter-state comparisons.

[18] The bivariate correlations between Hate Group Representation Rates and the percentages of state populations identifying themselves as Evangelical Protestant, Mainline Protestant, Catholic, or Unaffiliated appear in Table 4.

Table 4. Relationships between Percentages of State Populations Identifying with a Major Religious Tradition and State HGRRs

Religious Tradition	<i>r</i>	p
Evangelical Protestant	0.41	< .01
Mainline Protestant	-0.08	> .05
Catholic	-0.45	< .01
Unaffiliated	-0.40	< .01

The summary statistics of Table 4 reveal remarkable differences among the major religious traditions in their relationships to the HGRRs and they are also highly consistent with the findings of the beliefs and practices relationships of Table 3. Whereas the percentages of Evangelical Protestants in state populations show a moderately strong *positive* relationship with HGRRs ($r = .41$), the corresponding correlation coefficient for Mainline Protestants is but -0.08 and it is not statistically significant. A pattern similar to that of Table 3 continues with the examination of results for Catholics and Unaffiliated, with the descriptive statistics for both of these unveiling moderately strong *negative* relationships with product-moment correlations of -0.45 and -0.40, respectively. *Hate Group Representation Rates are higher in states having the largest percentages of persons identifying themselves with the Evangelical Protestant religious tradition.*

Demographic and Attitudinal Characteristics of Protestant Evangelicals

[19] The Pew Survey also reports demographic and attitudinal findings that are potentially useful in understanding differences among the four major denominations. The percentage distributions of Table 5, which are quoted directly from the Pew study, reveal that compared with national totals and with Mainline Protestants, Unaffiliated, and Catholics (especially the former two), larger percentages of Evangelical Protestants have annual incomes of less than \$50,000, while they have smaller percentages earning \$75,000 or more, and are especially underrepresented among those making over \$100,000. Similar differences are to be observed concerning educational attainment, where Evangelicals have smaller percentages having earned college or post-graduate degrees and larger percentages having completed high school or less. Regarding age distributions, the major differences are not between Evangelical and others, but rather pertain to the Unaffiliated who are relatively

overrepresented among the youngest (18 – 29 year olds) while significantly underrepresented in the 65+ age category.

Table 5. Income, Educational, and Age Distributions for the Four Major Religious Traditions

	National Total	Evangelical Protestant	Mainline Protestant	Catholic	Unaffiliated
Income Distribution of Religious Traditions					
Less than \$30,000	31%	34%	25%	31%	29%
\$30,000 – \$49,999	22%	24%	21%	20%	23%
\$50,000 – \$74,999	17%	18%	18%	16%	16%
\$75,000 – \$99,999	13%	11%	15%	14%	13%
\$100,000 +	18%	13%	21%	19%	19%
Educational Distribution of Religious Traditions					
Less than High School	14%	18%	9%	17%	13%
High School Graduate	36%	40%	34%	36%	34%
Some College	23%	24%	24%	21%	24%
College Graduate	16%	13%	20%	16%	16%
Post-Graduate	11%	7%	14%	10%	13%
Age Distribution of Religious Traditions					
18 – 29	20%	17%	14%	18%	31%
30 – 49	39%	39%	36%	41%	40%
50 – 64	25%	26%	28%	24%	20%
65 +	16%	19%	23%	16%	8%

[20] The Pew survey data reproduced in Table 6 reveal that Evangelical Protestants are more likely to be Republican or lean Republican than any of the other major religious denominations; more likely to identify themselves as conservatives and less likely to claim they are liberal than the other major religious denominations; more likely, along with Mainline Protestants, to prefer a smaller government offering fewer services than either Catholics or Unaffiliated, who prefer a larger government offering more services; less likely to believe that abortion should be legal in all or most cases and more likely to report that they think abortion should be illegal in most or all cases than any of the other major religious denominations; less likely to believe that homosexuality should be accepted by society than Mainline Protestants, Catholics or Unaffiliated; and more likely to indicate that government should do more to protect morality than any of the other three. Altogether these findings are indicative of the more conservative and less tolerant attitudes of Evangelical Protestants,

attitudes that are also consistent with the expressed beliefs, values, and ideologies of hate groups, as described in several issues of the Southern Poverty Law Center's Intelligence Report.

Table 6. Social and Political Views of the Four Major Religious Traditions

	National Total	Evangelical Protestant	Mainline Protestant	Catholic	Unaffiliated
Party Affiliation of Religious Traditions					
Republican	26%	38%	31%	23%	13%
Lean Republican	10%	12%	10%	10%	10%
Independent	10%	9%	10%	10%	15%
Lean Democratic	15%	10%	14%	15%	24%
Democratic	32%	24%	29%	33%	31%
Other	8%	7%	6%	9%	8%
Political Ideology of Religious Traditions					
Conservative	37%	52%	36%	36%	20%
Moderate	36%	30%	41%	38%	39%
Liberal	20%	11%	18%	18%	34%
Do Not Know	7%	7%	5%	8%	8%
Views About Size of Government					
Smaller Government/Fewer Services	43%	48%	51%	39%	41%
Bigger Government/More Services	46%	41%	37%	51%	48%
Depends	5%	4%	5%	4%	5%
Do Not Know/Refused	6%	7%	7%	6%	6%
Views About Abortion					
Legal in All Cases	18%	9%	20%	16%	29%
Legal in Most Cases	33%	24%	42%	32%	41%
Illegal in Most Cases	27%	36%	25%	27%	16%
Illegal in All Cases	16%	25%	7%	18%	8%
Do Not Know/Refused	6%	6%	7%	7%	6%
Views About Homosexuality					
Should be Accepted	50%	26%	56%	58%	71%

Should be Discouraged	40%	64%	34%	30%	20%
Neither/Both Equally	5%	5%	6%	5%	5%
Do Not Know/Refused	5%	5%	5%	7%	5%

Views About Government's Role in Protecting Morality

Government Should Do More	40%	50%	33%	43%	27%
Government is Too Involved	52%	41%	58%	49%	66%
Neither/Both	3%	4%	4%	3%	3%
Do Not Know/Refused	5%	5%	5%	5%	4%

Hypotheses Suggested as Guides for Future Explanatory Research Efforts

[21] The statistics of the Pew U.S. Religious Landscape Study quoted in Table 6 are remarkably consistent with the research findings of the current study on the relationships between Hate Group Representation Rates and the Religious Beliefs and Practices correlation analyses appearing in Table 3. To summarize, it appears reasonable to assert that the principal findings of both studies support two inductively derived hypotheses that might provide direction for further research and theoretical interpretation:

- There is a positive relationship between hate group values, beliefs, and attitudes and the values, beliefs, and attitudes of conservative Evangelical Protestants in the United States;
- If and to whatever extent hate groups members are found to affiliate with or have a history of affiliation with a major religious tradition, it is more likely to be one of the Evangelical Protestant churches.

Because of the limitations imposed by the aggregate state-level data utilized in the current exploratory-descriptive research, it is recommended that future *explanatory research* focused on the relationship(s) between religiosity and hate groups involve individuals or identifiable hate groups as units of analysis, or at least ecological units smaller in population size and geographic area and exhibiting lower levels of demographic diversity than states.

Related Potentially Confirmatory Research Findings and Evidence and Suggested Directions for Explanatory Research

[22] While further research is required to test these hypotheses, the findings of a number of recently reported studies may be interpreted to provide some degree of confirmatory evidence as well as to suggest directions for future research, particularly as they relate to the low levels of educational attainment of evangelicals, with relatively small proportions completing college or post-graduate work (Table 5), as well as with their more conservative social and political beliefs and practices (Table 6).

Critical Thinking

[23] In “The Relationship of Political Evangelicalism to Critical Thinking and Selected Sociopolitical Values in 2007,” Williams and Quillivan report that while the “relationship between political evangelicalism and critical thinking must not be overstated,” “the negative relationship between evangelicalism and critical thinking suggests the possibility of cognitive limitation in the ability to think critically about mixed evidence . . . [and] . . . a deficiency in critical thinking may blur one’s potential to formulate clear and defensible conclusions from available evidence” (¶27-28).

[24] That “a deficiency in critical thinking” may be associated with the potential for hate group membership (though not religiosity) is suggested by the findings of a seven year investigation of skinhead groups in Southern California conducted by the FBI during the period 1992–1999. In “The Seven-Stage Hate Model: The Psychopathology of Hate Groups,” in which they cite studies by Levin and McDevitt, Turner and Layton, and Coleman, Schafer and Navarro report that “Skinhead groups typically consist of *uneducated*, young, white males between the ages of 13 and 24 who have no long-term prospects for success” (italics added). Clearly the capacity for critical thinking by these young men is severely limited by virtue of age, life experience, and low level of educational attainment.

Religious Orientations

[25] Psychological research related to “religion, morality, and prejudice” also provides evidence of a probable link between diminished capacity for critical thinking and susceptibility to “group or social norms that tolerate prejudice.” Citing the work of Hunsberger and Jackson; Hood, Hill, and Spilka, referring specifically to the differences between religious fundamentalist (RF, “inflexible”) and Quest (Q, “open-minded”/“questioning”) religious orientations, note that the most current research evidence suggests:

. . . such unique cognitive styles . . . might help us understand the religion-prejudice connection. . . Specifically, those high in RF may cling to existing stereotypes, rather than changing their views in light of new information. Conversely, those with a Q orientation may be inclined to think more complexly [*critically*] about both religion and, for example, cultural diversity, contributing to greater tolerance of such diversity. Similarly, these individuals’ tendency toward greater cognitive complexity may incline them to be less influenced by group or social norms that tolerate prejudice. However, these possibilities [though suggested by empirical research] remain speculations, awaiting empirical test (425).

Hate groups and their members would likely make ideal units of analysis for further research on the applicability of the RF and Q religious orientations to enhancing our understanding of the effects of religiosity on prejudice, discrimination, stereotyping, and hate.

[26] The identification and development of scales to measure the RF and Q religious orientations of individuals as they relate to prejudice builds upon the seminal work on the I (“intrinsic religious orientation”) and E (“extrinsic religious orientation”) scales developed by Allport and Ross. For individuals with an intrinsic religious orientation (scoring high on the I

scale) their religion is viewed as an *end* in itself, not subservient to their personal, social, or political needs, desires, or preferences. It has been described as,

a mature religious sentiment – a motivation that arises from the goals set forth by the religious tradition itself. Religion is thus regarded as a *master motive* that overrides other needs, as compelling as they may be (Hood, Hill, and Spilka: 406).

Conversely, persons exhibiting an extrinsic religious orientation (revealed by high scores on the E scale) use their religion as a *means* to satisfy personal, social, or political ends. Persons scoring high on both the I and E scales are described by Allport and Ross as “indiscriminately pro” religious (IP) in their orientation.

[27] Hood, Hill, and Spilka note that while other researchers have identified methodological problems with the Allport and Ross I and E scales,

Ultimately, Allport and Ross concluded that persons with an I orientation were, as expected, less prejudiced than those with an E orientation, who in turn were less prejudiced than those with an . . . IP . . . orientation . . . [Furthermore] This finding concerning prejudice levels (i.e., $I < E < IP$), has become firmly embedded in the literature (see, e.g., Gorsuch) (411-12).

Further refinement of research on religious orientation and prejudice has incorporated a consideration of the *target* of prejudice, such as differing religious groups, ethnic or racial groups, women, groups based on sexual preference, and political groups. Hood, Hill, and Spilka describe the work by Hunsberger and Jackson, which surveyed and displayed in tabular form the findings of 16 different empirical studies published between 1990 and 2003 that relied on “25 distinct samples involving more than 5,500 adults and undergraduate students” to assess the relationships between religious orientation and the target of intolerance (423-24).

[28] In addition to target or “type” of intolerance, Hunsberger and Jackson included “Right-Wing Authoritarianism” (RWA) among the categories considered in studies involving the four religious orientation measures of I, E, Q, and RF. While the concept of right-wing authoritarianism has its origins in the “authoritarian personality theory” developed by Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford, development of the RWA scale and investigation of its relationships to RF, Q, and prejudice are attributable to Altemeyer (1981) and Altemeyer and Hunsberger. Altemeyer (2006) characterizes religious fundamentalists as right-wing “authoritarian followers”:

They are highly submissive to established authority, aggressive in the name of that authority, and conventional to the point of insisting everyone should behave as their authorities decide. They are fearful and self-righteous and have a lot of hostility in them that they readily direct toward various out groups. They are easily incited, easily led, rather un-inclined to think for themselves, largely impervious to facts and reason, and rely instead on social support to maintain their beliefs. They bring strong loyalty to their in-groups, have thick-walled, highly compartmentalized minds, use a lot of double

standards in their judgments, are surprisingly unprincipled at times, and are often hypocrites (140).

Of particular relevance to our concern with religiosity and hate groups are Hunsberger and Jackson's findings of a preponderance of positive relationships between RF and all types of intolerance. Of equal importance is the finding that all 13 of the studies correlating RF with RWA showed positive relationships between variables pertinent to research on hate groups. The more socially and politically conservative beliefs and practices of Evangelical Protestants displayed in our Table 6 suggest tendencies toward right-wing authoritarianism.

Intergroup Relations

[29] While the review of empirical research by Hood, Hill, and Spilka on the relationships between religiosity and intolerance focuses almost exclusively on psychological studies involving individuals as units of analysis (411-27), they also acknowledge that “. . . a group perspective could help us to understand religion-prejudice relationships” (425). Of particular relevance are the insights provided by *social identity theory* and *group conflict theory*.

[30] For example, social identity theory, attributable to Tajfel and Turner,

. . . posits that personal self-esteem may be bolstered when group members compare themselves with other groups. In terms of religious groups, if individuals believe that their religion is the source of absolute truth, this could enhance their self-esteem (and in-group attachment); it could also serve as a source of prejudice against members of other religions, who are seen as belonging to inferior groups . . . (Hood, Hill, and Spilka: 425).

[31] From group conflict theory, Sherif,

. . . argues that the perception of being in competition with other groups for valued resources can exacerbate intergroup tension and prejudice. . . So, for example, the perception that immigrants compete for jobs with established members of a society can foster prejudice against those immigrants' religion in particular. . . Even if the original perceptions of job competition are incorrect . . . (Hood, Hill, and Spilka: 425).

Evidence from Cross-National Research

[32] Additional, indirect evidence potentially supportive of the hypothesized relationships between religiosity and hate groups comes from research reported in Gregory S. Paul's "Cross National Correlations of Quantifiable Societal Health with Popular Religiosity and Secularism in the Prosperous Democracies." With respect to the relationship(s) between religiosity and societal dysfunction(s) (including propensity to violence), Paul asserts:

In general, higher rates of belief in and worship of a creator correlate with higher rates of homicide . . . [and other indicators of societal dysfunction] in the prosperous democracies. . . The United States is almost always the most dysfunctional of the developed democracies, sometimes spectacularly so, and almost always scores poorly . . . when it comes to basic measures of societal

health . . . [and] the least theistic nations are usually the least dysfunctional ¶18).

[33] While Paul bases his conclusions on cross-national analyses utilizing data aggregated at the level of nation states (whereby he faces and addresses the same methodological issues attendant to the inter-state comparisons of the current study, such as the potential for the error described as the *ecological fallacy*), in the following statement, he does reference the variations in societal dysfunction among the U.S. states of the sort suggested by the differing Hate Group Representation Rates (HGRRs) (See Tables 1 and 2 above.):

There is evidence that within the U.S. strong disparities in religious beliefs versus acceptance of evolution are correlated with similarly varying rates of societal dysfunction, the strongly theistic, anti-evolution south and mid-west having markedly worse homicide, mortality, STD, youth pregnancy, marital and related problems than the northeast where societal conditions, secularization, and acceptance of evolution approach European norms ¶20).

Summary and Conclusion

[34] A novel concept, the Hate Group Representation Rate (HGRR), has been introduced and defined as a measure of the social problem of the degree to which hate groups are present and represented within specified ecological units of analysis, specifically within the U.S. states. Exploration of several and various relationships between the HGRR and religiosity measures considered within national Gallup Poll and Pew Forum of Religion and Public Life surveys has revealed numerous and consistent statistically significant associations between Hate Group Representation and indicators of religiosity between and among states. It has been argued that the findings provided justification sufficient for the formulation of two hypotheses predicting a positive association between HGRR and Evangelical Protestant Fundamentalism in the U.S. Indirect confirmatory research findings related to critical thinking, religious orientations, and inter-group relations have been discussed and presented as potentially fruitful areas for empirical inquiry.

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