

# **Black Faces, White Racists, and the Mobilization of American Hate Groups**

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## **ABSTRACT**

In recent years, a growing literature has examined the effects of black descriptive representation on white political behavior. The findings of these studies are mixed, with some concluding that black representation serves to enhance whites' views of blacks, and others finding that black empowerment leads to alienation among whites or white backlash. In this paper, we shift the focus from electoral to nonelectoral participation and examine the relationship between black descriptive representation and the mobilization of white hate groups. Based on analyses of individual and county-level data, we find that the election of blacks has likely fueled an increase in group consciousness among the most prejudiced whites, thus contributing to a proliferation of hate groups across the country. Given current demographic projections, this study suggests that organized hate groups will continue to occupy a significant place on the fringe of the American political landscape for years to come.

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant achievements of the Voting Rights Act over the last four decades has been the dramatic increase in the number of black elected officials across all levels of government. Indeed, between 1970 and 2002, the number of black elected officials increased from 1,469 to 9,430, representing an increase of over 500% (Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies 2009). While the vast majority of black officials are concentrated in local government positions, blacks have made significant progress at other levels of government as well. Today, African-Americans hold over 600 state or federal level offices, and perhaps most importantly, for the first time in U.S. history a black man serves as President of the United States. As a result, even though African-Americans remain underrepresented in elected offices compared to their share of the U.S. population, there can be no denying the fact that black representatives are a highly visible force in American politics.

Understandably, political scientists have devoted much attention to the impact of black descriptive representation to determine if the anticipated benefits of black empowerment have actually been realized within the black community. Much of this literature has examined the impact of black elected officials on policy outcomes. While some congressional studies question the impact of black descriptive representation (Cameron, Epstein and O'Halloran 1996; Lublin 1997a; Swain 1995), studies of state and local politics generally conclude that black representation in government promotes more favorable policy outcomes for minorities across a variety of policy areas (e.g., Browning, Marshall, and Tabb 1984; Eisinger 1982; Saltzstein 1989; Yates and Fording 2005; Meier et al. 2005; Stewart, England and Meier 1989; Haynie 2001; Owens 2004; Preuhs 2006).

An equally large literature has addressed the effects of black descriptive representation by examining its impact on black political behavior. The vast majority of this literature has examined black political attitudes and electoral behavior, and although there is some disagreement, the balance of this literature finds black descriptive representation to lead to higher levels of black voting participation (Bobo

and Gilliam 1990; Vanderleeuw and Utter 1993; Whitby 2004), greater interaction with elected officials (Gay 2002), and higher levels of political efficacy and political trust (Bobo and Gilliam 1990).

Recently, scholars have extended research on the impact of black descriptive representation to its effects on white political behavior. These studies have utilized a variety of methodological approaches and have reached widely varying conclusions. For example, several experimental studies have examined white support for (fictional) black candidates, with some studies finding evidence of discrimination (Moskowitz and Stroh 1994; Terkildsen 1993), and others concluding that race plays little, if any role in white voting decisions (Reeves 1997; Sigelman et al. 1995). Other studies have examined the impact of black descriptive representation by utilizing survey data. These studies are also characterized by mixed results, with some studies finding the presence minority elected officials to have a negative effect on white political participation (Barretto, Segura and Woods 2004; Gay 2001, 2002), and others concluding that black descriptive representation has a positive impact on white racial attitudes (Hajnal 2001, 2006). Finally, several studies have examined white support for black candidates in recent electoral contests. While some evidence can be found that is supportive of a white backlash (Lublin 1997b), other studies have found little evidence of significant racial bias in white voting patterns (Bullock and Dunn 1999; Highton 2004; Voss and Lublin 2001).

In sum, the existing empirical evidence provides mixed support for competing theories of white response to black descriptive representation. Yet, this literature is limited in one very important respect. Without exception, these studies have focused on white *electoral* behavior, and have therefore implicitly failed to recognize the importance of *nonelectoral* forms of political expression. In this paper, we investigate the possible non-electoral response to black representation by examining its effect on an increasingly important nonelectoral dimension of white political behavior – the mobilization of white hate groups.

There are several reasons to expect that black descriptive representation has fueled white hate group activity in recent years. First, the history of U.S. race relations is replete with examples of non-electoral, often violent responses by whites to black political progress, ranging from full-blown race riots

to the more organized activities of white separatist groups such as the Klan (Grofman, Handley and Niemi 1994). Second, although the election of black representatives does not appear to have resulted in a widespread electoral backlash among whites, even the most optimistic account of white response finds the prejudice-reducing effect of black representation to be limited to those on the political left (Hajnal 2001). If white voters on the extreme right have indeed become more politically alienated in response to black representation (Gay 2001), there is good reason to suspect that this may be enough to motivate those on the political fringe to pursue non-electoral forms of political expression. Finally, the election of blacks has largely been achieved by the creation of majority-minority districts. As a form of affirmative action, race-conscious districting is especially likely to anger many white racists, perhaps leading them to contribute to the efforts of white hate groups (Swain 2002).

Several studies have examined the political manifestations of white racism, focusing on such phenomena as black lynchings (e.g. Corzine et al. 1983; Olzak 1989; Reed 1972; Tolnay, Beck and Massey 1989), black-targeted urban violence (Olzak 1989), and electoral support for racist political candidates (Giles and Buckner 1993; Voss 1996). However, these studies are often based on earlier historical periods or are restricted to a single state. In addition, nearly all of these studies have relied on relatively crude measures of black “threat,” and are therefore unable to distinguish between the broader effects of black presence in the community (i.e. black population size) and the specific effects of black descriptive representation. In contrast, our study of white hate group activity utilizes contemporary data for the entire United States, while our explanatory model explicitly distinguishes between the effects of black descriptive representation (i.e. the presence of black elected officials) and other potential forms of “racial threat” rooted in cultural and economic competition.

In the first section of the paper, we provide a detailed overview of white hate groups in the United States, including a discussion of recent trends in hate group activity across time and space. In the second section we address the possible link to black representation by positing two possible causal paths through which black empowerment might lead to the mobilization of the racist right. Based on a review of the relevant empirical literature, we conclude that if black representation has led to an increase in hate group

activity, it has not done so by increasing the level of racial hostility among whites. Rather, we argue that it has likely contributed to hate group mobilization through its effect on the level of group consciousness of existing racists. We test this hypothesis through two sets of analyses. First, we examine the relationship between black descriptive representation and white political attitudes using survey data. The results of this analysis find that the election of blacks leads to a significant decrease in external efficacy among the most racially intolerant whites. Second, we conduct county-level analyses of the relationship between the level of black descriptive representation and white hate group activity. The results of these analyses find the presence of black elected officials to be positively and significantly related to white hate group activity, even after controlling for the size of the black population, local economic conditions, and other characteristics of the political environment. Ultimately, we conclude that increases in white hate group activity over the last two decades have been at least partially fueled by whites who have chosen unconventional politics to combat the enfranchisement of black voters and the election of blacks to office.

### **WHITE HATE GROUPS IN CONTEMPORARY U.S. POLITICS**

Our use of the term “hate groups” in this paper most closely resembles that of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), which defines hate groups as any group associated with racial or ethnic hatred, regardless of racial background. However, the SPLC counts “black separatist” organizations, such as the Nation of Islam or the New Black Panther Party, as well as the more numerous white racist organizations, such as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) or Aryan Nations, as hate groups in their reports. We continue to use the label “hate group” in this paper, but our focus is on American hate groups associated with the white “racist right-wing.” Others have referred to these groups as “extreme right” or “far right.”<sup>1</sup>

The hate groups under consideration in this study are set apart from other extremist groups on the far right by the fact that their agenda is largely dictated by their concern with protecting what they believe

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<sup>1</sup> The specific criteria used to identify hate groups is a contentious issue in the literature (for a review, see Hainsworth 2000). See also George and Wilcox (1996) who focus on political style and tactics over the normal ideological criteria. For an extended look at defining the “Right” (including the extreme right), see Eatwell and Sullivan (1989).

to be a threatened white racial identity. Like a more broadly defined nationalist ideology, these groups believe people of white European background are a separate community based on myths of common ancestry and culture (Kaplan 2000). According to this ideology of “racialism,” which ignores traditional nationality differences among whites, hate groups oppose anything that they believe will dilute the purity of this unique white culture—immigration, interracial marriage, globalization, multiculturalism, etc. Some contemporary hate groups will call themselves “white nationalists” or “white separatists” (Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 1997). These terms, as opposed to the traditional term “racists,” are likely used by hate groups to make their ideology seem more reasonable. However, the implication of the ideology is the same - hate groups rigidly separate those who “belong” and those who do not based on race.

This criterion (racist ideology) is also important in determining which groups are excluded from our analysis. Thus, groups that are part of the “religious” right, such as the Christian Coalition, are not included. Neither are more narrowly focused anti-abortion groups, despite their extremist views and tactics. We also exclude organizations that can be characterized as part of the militia/patriot movement. While it is true that “New World Order” conspiratorial thinking is quite prevalent among patriot groups, racism and anti-Semitism are not core aspects of the citizen militias’ ideology.<sup>2</sup> Finally, although the SPLC includes “neo-confederate” groups in their count of hate groups, we exclude such groups because they are relatively new and it is not clear that they fit the above criteria.

Our final dataset of hate groups thus utilizes SPLC data for white-led “racist right” hate groups in all 50 states. Specifically, our modified count of hate groups is calculated by summing across the following SPLC group categories: KKK, neo-Nazi, Identity, Skinhead, and Other. One of the strengths of the SPLC’s count is that it only lists hate groups that were “known to be active” each year, where “activity” includes marches, rallies, speeches, meetings, leafleting, publishing literature or criminal acts. Thus, this should exclude groups that exist solely as a post office box or in cyberspace.

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<sup>2</sup> Only about one quarter of all militia groups are connected with the “racist right.” See Southern Poverty Law Center (1996), as well as Barkun, (1996), and Dees (1996).

## Temporal Trends in Hate Group Activity

The top panel (A) of Figure 1 displays the annual total of hate groups in the United States during the years 1997-2007. As can be seen, hate groups continue to flourish in the United States, and in recent years their numbers appear to be on the rise. The average number of hate groups observed in a given year in this period was approximately 450. Based on the figure, however, we can see that since 1999, the number of hate groups has increased each year, peaking at 749 in 2007.

(Figure 1)

The bottom panel (B) of Figure 2 provides greater detail by dividing organized hate groups according to the major subgroups in our study: KKK, neo-Nazi, Christian Identity, Skinhead, and Other. The Klan, whose history can be traced back to the Reconstruction-era secret societies, is the most notorious of American hate groups. Some Klans, such as the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (KKKK), claim to be non-violent “white civil rights organizations,” while others, such as the American Knights of the KKK, are associated with violent behavior. Despite dwindling membership in the early part of the decade, Klan activity has increased in recent years, with over 150 active groups by 2007.<sup>3</sup>

Neo-Nazi groups are associated directly with the ideology and symbolism of Hitler’s Third Reich. This subgroup has shown the most consistent growth over the last several years, starting at 99 groups in 1997, and then rising steadily to become the country’s second largest hate group category in 2007 with 207. One of the most prominent neo-Nazi groups is the National Alliance, formerly led by Dr. William Pierce. Pierce, a former physics professor, was also the author of *The Turner Diaries*, a book describing a “white revolution” which lays out a plot strikingly similar to the events surrounding the Oklahoma City bombing. The World Church of the Creator is also a prominent neo-Nazi styled organization.<sup>4</sup>

The third subgroup of American hate groups is “Christian Identity.” The Identity movement has been declining in recent years and such groups now represent the smallest hate group category at 36

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<sup>3</sup> On the Klan, see ADL (1991), Quarles (1999) and Wade (1998).

<sup>4</sup> On American neo-Nazis, see Kaplan (2000), Simonelli, (1999) and Whitsel (1995). The SPLC actually counts Aryan Nations in the “neo-Nazi” category, despite its connection with seed-line doctrine, since it borrows heavily from Nazi ideology and symbolism.

active groups in 2007. Yet, this subgroup is important because of its radical ideology, its connection to survivalism, and occasional violent tendencies. In most periods, Identity followers retreat to rural areas to exit modern society, which they regard as corrupt and anti-white. Some prominent Identity groups are America's Promise Ministries, Church of Israel, Mission to Israel, and Scriptures for America Ministries.<sup>5</sup>

Neo-Nazi skinheads are the fourth subgroup of the American racist right included in our analysis. These gangs, whose origins trace back to 1960s Britain, are very similar in terms of ideology to the other neo-Nazis cited above. However, skinheads tend to be younger, more violent (involved in hate crime vandalism and assault, not necessarily organized domestic terrorism), and participate in their own youth subculture with certain styles of dress and music. Skinhead groups were less numerous in the late 1990s, with only 42 active groups in 1997. Since then, the number of skinhead organizations has more than doubled and now stands at 90. Currently, the most notorious group is called Hammerskin Nation, and in the 1980s skinheads were closely associated with White Aryan Resistance (WAR "Skins").<sup>6</sup>

Groups that do not fit easily into the above subgroups are included under the category of "Other". This is a diverse set of organizations that, according to the SPLC, "includes groups and publishing houses endorsing a hodgepodge of hate doctrines," such as: the Council of Conservative Citizens (CCC), National Association for the Advancement of White People (NAAWP), David Duke's Federation for European American Rights (FEAR), Posse Comitatus, and Women for Aryan Unity. "Other" hate groups started the time period with a relatively modest number of active groups at 112. This figure has steadily increased since 1997, and this category now represents the largest category of hate groups in the United States, reaching an all-time high at 261 active groups in 2007.

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<sup>5</sup> On the American Identity movement, see Aho (1995), Barkun (1997), Brannan (1999), Kaplan (1997, 1993), and Noble (1998).

<sup>6</sup> On skinheads, see ADL (1993, 1995), Cotter (1999), Hamm (1993), Lööw (1998), and Moore (1993).

## **Geographic Variation in Hate Group Activity**

Figure 2 displays the geographic distribution of hate group activity in the United States, based on data for the years 2000-2001.<sup>7</sup> As can be seen, no region of the country has been immune from hate group activity, although the South and the Northeast appear to be prone to higher levels of mobilization than other regions of the country. Within the South, approximately one out of every four (24%) counties was home to at least one active hate group during 2000-2001. Yet, only 13% of counties outside the South experienced hate group activity during this period. Generally, it would appear that hate group activity is most likely to occur in states with racially diverse populations. For example, the states with the highest levels of hate group activity in 2000-2001 were: Texas (126), Florida (76), Mississippi (72) and Alabama (71). In contrast, the states with the lowest levels of hate group activity tended to be more homogenous. These states include Iowa and Vermont, where no hate groups were found, and Rhode Island, Maine, New Hampshire and the Dakotas, which witnessed 1-2 active hate groups during 2000-2001.

(Figure 2)

In sum, figures 1 and 2 suggest that there has been significant variation in hate group activity in recent years, both across space and across time. In the next two sections, we seek to determine if recent trends and patterns of hate group mobilization can be linked to gains in black descriptive representation.

## **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE LINK BETWEEN BLACK REPRESENTATION AND HATE GROUP PARTICIPATION**

If the election of black officials has led to an increase in hate group mobilization, the existing literature suggests it has done so through one of two alternative causal paths. First, it is possible that black descriptive representation has led to heightened levels of white hostility toward blacks, thus leading to a

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<sup>7</sup> We present data for 2000-2001 as these data serve as our dependent variable in our county-level analyses of hate groups below. As we explain below, the choice of this time period is based on the availability of county-level data on black elected officials, as well as the availability of the other independent variables in our analysis. The SPLC reports hate group activity by city. To produce our county-level dataset it was necessary to manually match each city to its corresponding county. As this is a labor intensive process, we have not yet produced a county-level dataset of

larger recruitment pool for hate group leaders. This possibility is suggested by the “racial threat” hypothesis, which is rooted in theories of intergroup competition. This perspective was first offered by Key (1949) in his classic account of Southern politics. Specifically, Key observed that white repression of blacks was strongest in the regions where blacks comprised a relatively large share of the local population. The theory was later generalized and extended by Blalock (1967) in what has since become known as the “group threat” hypothesis. Blalock argued that majority group repression of a minority group may be a result of two types of perceived threats – those originating from competition over economic resources, and those arising from competition for political power. Subsequent work has cited the importance of whites’ group identity (Bobo 1983) and suggests that the election of black officials heightens the perceived level of economic and political threat posed by blacks in the community. Regardless of the specific form the theory has taken, this perspective suggests that the election of blacks should result in a heightened level of white intolerance, and ultimately a white backlash (Hajnal 2001).

Although a large number of studies have claimed to find support for the theory in its most general form, nearly all of these studies have considered the effect of black presence more generally (usually measured as black population size), rather than the specific effect of black descriptive representation. One important exception to this generalization is the work of Hajnal (2001, 2006), who provides an exhaustive collection of analyses of the presence of black mayors on white racial attitudes. In what he terms the “information hypothesis,” Hajnal argues that white voters have very little information about black candidates and generally fear the policy consequences of black representation. Once black candidates assume office, however, these fears are not realized due to the fact that black representatives must be responsive to both black and white constituents (Swain 1995). Therefore, Hajnal argues that black representation plays an important informational role by demonstrating to white voters that black representation will not result in a significant change in the quality of their lives. Once black leaders are elected, whites’ experience with the black incumbent thus serves to erode racial stereotypes. Ultimately,

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hate group activity for more recent years. However, based on a causal inspection of more recent data, it does not appear that there has been much change in geographic patterns of hate group activity.

race will become a less salient factor for white voters and they will be more likely to vote for black candidates in future elections. Hajnal provides strong support for this theory through an extensive analysis of white survey data across time. While the hostility-reducing effects of black representation were strongest among the most liberal whites, in no case was black empowerment found to increase racial animus. Given Hajnal's findings, it is therefore unlikely that black representation has fueled hate group mobilization through an increase in white hostility toward blacks.

If this is the case, then how might black representation be related to hate group mobilization? Rather than leading to a larger pool of white racists, a second possible causal mechanism may be through the effect of black representation on the political behavior of *existing* racists. To understand how this might be the case, we recognize that in many ways, hate groups can be characterized as a social movement (Berlet and Vysotsky 2006), in which participants in the movement seek to further group goals by engaging in unconventional political acts. The question then becomes, how might black representation affect the decision of white racists to engage in nonelectoral forms of political activity? To answer this question, we look to the literature on social movement formation and the determinants of nonelectoral political participation more generally. Based on this literature, one possible causal mechanism through which black descriptive representation might lead to a nonelectoral mobilization of the extremist right is through a heightened level of group consciousness, which most theorists agree is a critical determinant of unconventional participation (e.g. Gamson 1968; McAdam 1982; Miller et al. 1981; Shingles 1981).

Although the literature reflects significant variation in the precise conceptualization of group consciousness, nearly every theoretical account recognizes the importance of attitudes toward the political system, often manifested in a concept labeled "system blame." This refers to a belief that the relatively low status (whether objective or subjective) of one's group is not due to the individual shortcomings of group members, but rather to group-based inequities in the political or economic system (e.g. Gamson 1968; McAdam 1982; Miller et al. 1981). Over the years, several studies have shown that the combination of group identity and system blame have proven to be an important predictor of participation in unconventional political acts (Chong and Rogers 2005; Craig 1981; Miller et al. 1981; Shingles 1981).

By definition, white racists share a strong sense of (white) racial identity. However, the degree to which white racists blame the political system for their status is likely to vary and depend on their belief that the incumbent government is pursuing an anti-white (i.e. anti-racist) agenda. Perhaps no better cue to white racists that this is the case is the presence of blacks in office. Therefore, we expect that the election of black officials will lead to an increase in white hate group activity through its effect on white group consciousness, and more specifically the level of system-blame among white racists.

### **ESTABLISHING THE MICROFOUNDATIONS OF THE MOBILIZING EFFECT OF BLACK REPRESENTATION: AN ANALYSIS OF WHITE POLITICAL EFFICACY**

We begin our empirical analysis with an examination of the effect of black representation on white attitudes toward the political system. For this analysis we rely on survey data available in the National Election Studies (NES) Cumulative Datafile. This dataset provides the richest source of data on political attitudes and, due to consistency in question wording over time, has the advantage of allowing us to add a longitudinal dimension to our research design. Our dependent variable for this analysis is the NES external efficacy index, and consists of the following two dichotomous items:

"People like me don't have any say about what the government does." (Agree or Disagree)

"I don't think public officials care much what people like me think." (Agree or Disagree)

The final index (*External Efficacy*) takes on three possible values – a value of 100 if the respondent agrees with both statements, a value of 50 if the respondent agrees with one or the other statement, and a value of 0 if the respondent disagrees with both statements.

The choice of this indicator as the dependent variable was based on several important considerations. First, the external efficacy index is closely related to the concept of system blame as it measures the perceived sympathy of the incumbent government to the respondent's interests. Indeed, a number of studies have identified external efficacy as a key attitudinal component of group consciousness and have linked the concept of external efficacy to unconventional political participation (Craig 1980;

Craig and Maggiotto 1981; Pollack 1983; Shingles 1981). Second, the external efficacy indicator is available over a relatively long period, thus allowing us to incorporate temporal variation in black descriptive representation into our research design. And finally, this indicator seems a more appropriate choice than other political system items which are available for a similar period of time.<sup>8</sup>

### **Independent Variables**

In measuring black descriptive representation we face two important decisions. First, we must define the range of elected offices to include in our measure. Past studies of the effects of minority representation on white political behavior have taken a relatively narrow approach in this regard, usually focusing solely on congressional representatives (Barreto, Segura and Woods 2004; Gay 2001, 2002; Swain 1995; Voss and Lublin 2001) or black mayors (Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Hajnal 2001, 2006). However, our theoretical interests do not lie in the effects of black representation within any specific office, but rather we are interested in the white response to black descriptive representation across all elected offices. Therefore, we take a more inclusive approach by considering a broad range of elected offices in our analyses. Specifically, we measure *Black Representation* as the percentage of (all) elected offices that are held by an African-American.

As our analysis of white external efficacy relies on individual level data, a second important decision is the choice of the geographic range for which we define black representation for each individual in our sample. The NES offers two geographic identifiers below the regional level for each respondent – the county and the state. Each level of analysis would seem to offer important advantages. From a theoretical perspective, a county-based measure would be preferable in some ways as it would restrict our measure of representation to elected positions that are likely to be the most salient to white respondents due to geographic proximity. However, restricting our measure of representation to the county level necessarily assumes that white respondents only care about black descriptive representation when blacks represent districts in which they reside. Yet, one can easily imagine that many white racists

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<sup>8</sup> For example, while political trust might seem to be an equally appropriate choice for the dependent variable, the standard political trust index is narrowly focused on attitudes toward the federal government and taps perceptions of

living in predominantly white counties might still be sensitive to black descriptive representation that is concentrated in other parts of the state. Therefore, we measure black representation at two geographic levels in our analyses of white external efficacy- county and state. As we will show, the results are strikingly similar across both levels of measurement.

We do not expect that black representation should reduce external efficacy among all whites. Rather, we expect that the effect of black representation will vary, depending on the respondent's level of hostility toward blacks. To model this contingency in the efficacy-representation relationship, we include *White Prejudice*, a measure which we construct from the NES feeling thermometer items for "Blacks" and "Whites" as follows:

$$\textit{White Prejudice} = \text{Feeling thermometer score for "Whites"} - \text{Feeling thermometer score for "Blacks"}$$

As each feeling thermometer score ranges from 0-100, our measure of *White Prejudice* can take on a minimum value of -100 (representing the maximum degree of preference for blacks over whites) and a maximum value of 100 (representing the maximum degree of preference for whites over blacks). We expect that *Black Representation* should interact with *White Prejudice* to affect *External Efficacy*, such that the effect of *Black Representation* should become increasingly negative (indicating an increasing efficacy-reducing effect) as *White Prejudice* increases.

Finally, our analysis of white external efficacy controls for several possible confounding variables. Most importantly, we control for black population size by including *Black Population%*, which we define as the percentage of the (state or county) population that is black. By controlling for this variable, we are able to control for potential negative reactions among whites to the general presence of blacks in their state or community, and thus isolate the effect of black descriptive representation on external efficacy. We also control for a number of individual level variables that, based upon the results of past studies, might plausibly be related to external efficacy (Bowler and Donovan 2002; Finkel 1987).

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corruption and wastefulness. This seems less appropriate for our purposes.

These variables include the respondent's level of *Education*, *Gender*, *Family Income*, *Age*, *Partisanship* (Strong Democrat=1, Strong Republican=7), and strength of partisan attachment (*Partisan Strength*). These variables are described in more detail in the appendix.

### **State-Level Black Representation and White External Efficacy**

Our first analysis of the effect of black representation on external efficacy relies on a statewide measure of representation. Our sample period for this analysis spans the NES years 1974-2000, and is largely determined by the availability of state-level data on black representation.<sup>9</sup> Our sample consists of over 16,000 white respondents representing 47 states. As our data consist of variables that are measured at two levels of analysis (individual and state), we examine the determinants of external efficacy by employing a hierarchical linear model.<sup>10</sup>

The results of our first analysis are presented in Table 1. The first column of coefficients reflects a specification in which black representation is measured in a linear fashion. However, it is possible that the marginal effect of black representation diminishes as the level of representation increases, indicating that it is the simple presence of black officials, rather than the precise number of officials, that is most important. Thus, we also estimate our model by including the log of *Black Representation*.<sup>11</sup> The results for this specification are presented in column 2 of Table 1. Regardless of this variation in measurement, the results across both specifications point to the same conclusion – black descriptive representation matters, although its effect is highly contingent on white racial attitudes. This can be seen in the table by the significance of the multiplicative term representing the interaction between *Black Representation* and *White Prejudice*. As hypothesized, the sign of the interaction term is negative, suggesting that the efficacy-reducing effect of black representation increases in magnitude as white prejudice increases.

(Table 1)

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<sup>9</sup> Statewide data on black officials are unavailable prior to 1973. Data are also unavailable for the feeling thermometer variables needed to construct our measure of white prejudice for years 1978, 1986 and 1990. We therefore do not include these years in our analysis.

<sup>10</sup> We use a linear, as opposed to a nonlinear model, due to ease of interpretability. Results for a nonlinear version of the model that accounts for the ordinal nature of the dependent variable leads to the same substantive conclusions.

The substantive meaning of this result is much clearer through an inspection of panel A of Figure 3, which presents the predicted relationship between *Black Representation* and *External Efficacy*, across a range of values for *White Prejudice*. We present the results for the logged version of *Black Representation* because this model displayed a slightly better fit. Based on the figure, we see that among the least prejudiced whites (i.e. those at the minimum value of *White Prejudice*), the level of black representation is actually positively related to external efficacy. This finding is not surprising, as the minimum value in the sample is -97 and therefore represents whites who strongly prefer blacks to whites. As one might expect, however, this represents an extremely small number of respondents (<1%). As the level of prejudice increases, the slope of the relationship decreases, eventually becoming negative. At the maximum value of white prejudice, where most hate group participants are likely to be located, the effect of black representation is quite large in magnitude. Indeed, moving from the minimum (0%) to the maximum (16%) value of statewide black representation in our sample, the predicted level of external efficacy decreases by nearly 50 points – an amount that is equivalent to approximately half of the range of the entire scale. Thus, our first analysis provides strong support for the hypothesized efficacy-reducing effect of black representation among white racists.

(Figure 3)

### **County-Level Black Representation and White External Efficacy**

While the state-level results are convincing in their own right, the preceding analysis suffers from at least one important weakness. That is, one might reasonably argue that the more theoretically appropriate level of aggregation for our measure of black representation is the county, rather than the state. This could be true for a number of reasons, including the increased salience of elected officials whose districts are geographically proximate to the respondent, as well as the possibility that external efficacy (as a measure of government responsiveness) is most likely to be affected by the elected officials who represent the districts in which the respondent resides. Therefore, we provide an additional test of the

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<sup>11</sup> Since some states and many counties have no black elected officials, we add a constant (.01) to our measure of *Black Representation* prior to computing the natural log for all analyses reported in this paper.

black representation-external efficacy relationship by examining the effect of county-level black representation.

For this analysis, we rely on data from the 1998 NES, as this is the most recent year for which the county-level codes are publicly available.<sup>12</sup> For this analysis, we use the same measures, but with two exceptions detailed as follows. Our measure of external efficacy (the dependent variable) relies on the same two items as before. However, beginning in 1988 the NES began to offer respondents a third response option to these items, beyond simply agreeing or disagreeing with the statement. Since 1988, respondents have been able to respond that they “neither agree nor disagree” with each statement. Therefore, the construction of the external efficacy index proceeded as follows. Each response was coded so that Agree=0, Neither agree nor disagree=50, and Disagree=100. For each respondent, the scores for the two items were then averaged to arrive at the final index score. The result is that the index now takes on five, rather than three possible values (0, 25, 50, 75 and 100).<sup>13</sup>

A second difference, of course, is our measure of black representation, which we now measure at the county level. For each respondent in the 1998 survey, we identified every black elected official whose district contained at least some part of the respondent’s county. Due to the limited availability of individual-level data on black elected officials, we necessarily restrict our measure of county-level black representation to state and federal offices.<sup>14</sup> We are also unable to obtain data on the number of elected offices at the county level, so we are unable to construct a measure of black representation that represents the percentage of all offices held by blacks (as we were able to do at the state level in the preceding analysis). Therefore, for this analysis we define *Black Representation* for each respondent as the number

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<sup>12</sup> We rely on a single survey for this analysis due to the fact that the construction of our county-level measure of black representation is quite labor intensive.

<sup>13</sup> In the previous analysis (presented in Table 1), for the sake of consistency across time, we collapsed the index to three values for years 1988-2000 by recoding values of 25 and 75 to 50.

<sup>14</sup> Individual level data on black elected officials are not published. However, the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies maintains these data and we were able to purchase the individual level records for our study. Our budget for this study limited our purchase to records for state and federal elected officials for all U.S. counties, and records for all officials (including local level officials) for a sample of six states. While the use of the six state sample is not feasible for our analysis of NES data (due to sample size limitations in the NES), we use the data from the six-state sample in our county-level analyses of hate group activity in the following section.

of (state or federal) black elected officials whose district contains at least part of the respondent's county of residence.

Our measure of *White Prejudice* is constructed in the same manner, and as before we model the relationship between *Black Representation* and *External Efficacy* as conditional on the level of *White Prejudice*. Similarly, we also include as independent variables the percentage of the county population that is black, along with the same individual-level control variables. The sample for our analysis consists of approximately 800 white respondents distributed across 92 different counties in 1998. Once again, due to the use of data measured at two different levels of analysis (individual and county), we estimate the coefficients using a hierarchical linear model.

The results of our analysis are presented in Table 2. The first two columns of coefficients report results for the entire sample, for linear and logged versions of *Black Representation*, respectively. As can be seen, the coefficient for the interaction term is not statistically significant in either case, although the sign of the coefficient is in the predicted direction and it is close to significance for the linear version of *Black Representation* ( $p=.08$ , two-tailed). Columns 3 and 4 of the table present results for the same specifications as represented in columns 1 and 2, but with the sample restricted to men, who represent the vast majority of hate group participants. As can be seen, the coefficients for the interaction term increase in magnitude across both versions of the model, and the coefficient for the linear version of *Black Representation* is now statistically significant at conventional levels. Finally, columns 5 and 6 of the table present results for the entire sample, but in this case the measure of white prejudice has been dichotomized so that a value of 0 represents whites below the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile value of *White Prejudice* (i.e. below a value of 20), and a value of 1 indicates whites with a prejudice score in the top 10 percent of the distribution. The results for this modification of the original analysis are also somewhat stronger, with the coefficient for the interaction term now statistically significant below the .01 level for the model relying on the linear version of *Black Representation*.

This result is graphically represented in panel B of Figure 3, which graphs the predicted level of *External Efficacy* for both values of the dichotomized version of *White Prejudice*, across the range of

values for *Black Representation*. As can be seen, when the level of prejudice is below the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile value, the predicted relationship between black representation and external efficacy is actually positive, although the slope is not statistically significant (see coefficient for *Black Representation* in Table 2). However, for the small minority of whites who exhibit high levels of prejudice, the relationship is strongly negative. Indeed, holding other variables constant, moving from a county with no black elected officials to a county in which 24 black officials represent at least part of the respondent's county of residence (i.e. the maximum and minimum values in our sample), the level of *External Efficacy* is predicted to decrease by approximately 40 points. This result is remarkably similar to the result for our first analysis, despite the fact that our sample consists of data for only one (recent) year, and our measure of black representation is based on county-level, rather than state-level data.

The consistency of these results thus provides us with added confidence that the relationship between black representation and external efficacy is not spurious. It appears that increases in black descriptive representation have indeed led to a feeling among the most racially intolerant whites that the government is not responsive to their interests. Past research suggests that this is an important dimension of group consciousness and as such is a pre-condition for participation in unconventional politics. However, it is not clear from these analyses if black representation has actually led to an increase in unconventional politics among white racists, and if so, if it has taken the form of hate group mobilization. We investigate this possibility in the next section.

## **BLACK REPRESENTATION AND HATE GROUP ACTIVITY: AN ANALYSIS OF COUNTY-LEVEL DATA**

To examine the impact of black representation on hate group activity, we conduct a cross-sectional county-level analysis. Our dependent variable is labeled *Hate Group Activity*, and is measured as a simple dichotomous variable based on hate group activity observed during the years 2000 and 2001

(0 = no active hate groups, 1 = at least one active hate group).<sup>15</sup> <sup>16</sup> During this two year period, approximately 17% (535) of all counties in the United States experienced at least one active hate group.<sup>17</sup> Hate group activity was experienced in all but two states during this period (Iowa and Vermont), and as can be seen in Figure 2, the majority of the counties experiencing hate group activity (57%) were concentrated in the South.

### **Independent Variables**

We measure *Black Representation* in two different ways across two different county-level analyses. Our first analysis is based on a sample which includes every U.S. county (N=3,111).<sup>18</sup> For this sample, for each county we measure *Black Representation* as the number of federal or state black elected officials representing all or part of the county. In a second analysis, we utilize a sample of 6 states for which we were able to obtain individual records for local-level black elected officials, in addition to federal and state elected officials (Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, North Carolina, Ohio, and Pennsylvania). Thus, for the 6-state sample, for each county we measure *Black Representation* as the number of federal, state or local-level black elected officials representing all or part of the county. If increasing levels of black representation have indeed led to hate group mobilization, we expect that our measures of black representation will be positively related to *Hate Group Activity*. In addition to the effects of black representation, we expect hate group mobilization to be driven by a number of other contextual factors, which we detail below.

Economic Competition. Many studies have examined the effects of black-white economic competition on minority-targeted violence, many of which have focused on violence targeted at blacks. Following Blalock (1967), most researchers have examined the impact of black population size as an indicator of the level of threat posed by blacks due to economic and/or political competition (e.g. Corzine

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<sup>15</sup> We sum across two years to provide a more reliable measure of hate group mobilization. Our choice of the years 2000-2001 is due to the fact that our county-level data on black elected officials is limited to 1998 and 2000. This time period also coincides well with the availability of county level data from the most recent decennial census.

<sup>16</sup> Only 10% of U.S. counties experienced more than one active hate group during this time period.

<sup>17</sup> Vermont and Iowa were the only two states not to experience hate group activity during this two year period.

<sup>18</sup> Due to missing data for one or more variables, we are forced to exclude 31 counties from our estimation sample.

et al. 1983; Giles and Buckner 1993; Olzak 1989; Reed 1972; Tolnay, Beck and Massey 1989; Voss 1996). As hate group ideology has historically been known to be anti-black, we therefore include *Black Population %*, measured as the percentage of the county population that is black, along with the square of black population size to account for possible nonlinearity (Blalock 1967; Yates and Fording 2005; Fording 1997). We also include  $\Delta$ *Black Population%*, measured as the ten-year (1990-2000) change in the percentage of the county population that is black.

In addition to the size of the black population, we also control for two direct measures of black-white economic competition. Specifically, we include the *Per Capita Income Ratio* (black income / white income) and the *Unemployment Ratio* (white unemployment rate / black unemployment rate). As these measures are constructed so that higher values correspond to greater levels of racial equality, we expect each measure to be positively related to *Hate Group Activity*.

There are two competing theoretical perspectives which suggest that local economic conditions may affect hate group mobilization. The common theme among traditional psychological approaches to explaining right-wing extremism is the belief that changing socioeconomic conditions can lead to frustration, especially for the economically vulnerable working and middle classes. In turn, frustration can lead to scapegoating of economic competitors, and eventually, to an increase in extremist activity or violence. This thesis has received mixed empirical support over the years. Several studies have found relationships between economic downturns and various manifestations of white racist activity, from black lynchings in the South (e.g. Hepworth and West 1988; Hovland and Sears 1940), to extremist group recruitment (e.g. Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 1997; Ezekiel 1995). A number of other studies, however, have questioned the existence of this relationship (e.g. Green, Glaser and Rich 1998; Green, Strolovitch and Wong 1998; Mintz 1946).

Social movement theory, however, suggests an opposite effect of local economic conditions. According to resource mobilization theory, protest movements are facilitated by an influx of resources to the aggrieved group, often contributed from external groups. Although the literature has been rather vague in specifically identifying what types of resources are the most relevant in this regard (McAdam

1982), economic resources have frequently been identified as the most important. For example, Oberschall (1973) identifies material resources, such as jobs, income and savings, as important. Similarly, McCarthy and Zald (1973) identify “money” as one of several possible important resources that promote social movement organization. As the acquisition of economic resources by protest groups is likely related to their abundance in society more generally, resource mobilization theory would seem to suggest that it is economic prosperity, rather than economic decline (as suggested by psychological theories), that is the more important predictor of hate group activity.

We examine the effects of county-level economic conditions by including two different indicators of county economic health: *Per Capita Income* (measured as the level of per capita income for the white non-Hispanic population) and the white (non-Hispanic) *Unemployment Rate*. If traditional psychological explanations are correct, we expect *Per Capita Income* to be negatively related to *Hate Group Activity*, while the *Unemployment Rate* should display a positive relationship. However, if hate group mobilization is spurred by economic resources as social movement theory would suggest, we would expect *Per capita Income* to be positively related to *Hate Group Activity*, and the *Unemployment Rate* to display a negative relationship.

Immigration. In addition to the presence of blacks, some accounts of contemporary hate groups suggest that they may be organized around a perceived threat to white racial identity that stems from increasing levels of Hispanic immigration to Western countries, including the United States (Kaplan and Weinberg 1998; Swain 2002; Tolbert and Hero 1996). In the 1990s, the United States experienced nearly unprecedented levels of immigration, much of it originating from Latin America.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the size of the white (non-Hispanic) population compared to non-whites is declining, and is projected to shrink to 53% by the year 2050 (in 1980 the white population was 80%).<sup>20</sup> Thus, to examine the economic, political and cultural threats posed by increases in immigration in recent decades, we include *Hispanic*

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<sup>19</sup> US Immigration and Naturalization Service, 2000, *Statistical Yearbook of the United States, 1998* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office).

<sup>20</sup> Jennifer Cheeseman Day, 1996, *Population Projections of the United States by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1995 to 2050* (Washington, DC: US Census Bureau/ US Government Printing Office).

*Population%*, measured as the percentage of the county population that is of Hispanic origin. As with black population size, we also include  $\Delta$ *Hispanic Population%*, measured as the ten-year (1990-2000) change in the percentage of the county population that is Hispanic.

Racial Attitudes. In an effort to control for whites' racial attitudes, we include three variables which have been shown by past research to be related to racial conservatism. First, many studies have found education to be an important determinant of support for racial equality (Smith 1981; Stouffer 1955). We therefore include *Education*, which is defined as the percentage of the white population in each county with less than a high school degree. In addition, in the aftermath of the civil rights movement, several studies have found racial issues to be an important predictor of partisanship (see Cowden 2001), especially in the South (Valentino and Sears 2005). We therefore include *Republican Vote%*, measured as the percentage of the two-party vote cast for George W. Bush in the 2000 general election. Third, we include a dummy variable for the South (based on the Census Bureau definition), due to its history of racial conflict and the belief among many scholars that levels of racial prejudice remain high in this region of the country (Kuklinski, Cobb and Gilens 1997). We expect each of these three indicators of racial conservatism to be positively related to *Hate Group Activity*.

Finally, we expect that hate group mobilization will be more likely to be successful where the size of the recruitment pool is large. Given the fact that there is significant variation in the population of counties across the United States, we include the size of the white population in each county (*White Population Size*) in our model of hate group activity.

## **Estimation and Results**

We estimate our model using logit analysis due to the fact that our dependent variable – *Hate Group Activity* – is measured as a dichotomous variable. To account for possible error correlation among counties within the same state, all of our county-level analyses rely on robust standard errors, adjusted for error clustering within states. For each of our samples (the U.S. sample and the 6-state sample) we included both a linear version of *Black Representation* and a nonlinear (logged) version. For the U.S. sample, the linear version clearly provided a better fit, while for the 6-state sample, the logged version

was superior. Therefore, we report the results for the linear specification for the U.S. sample, and report the results for the logged version for the analysis relying on the 6-state sample.

We begin with a model specification which assumes that the effect of *Black Representation* is additive (i.e. unconditional). The results for the U.S. sample and the 6-state sample are presented in the first two columns of Table 3. The first column presents results for the full sample of counties and finds the effect of *Black Representation* to be positive as expected, but the coefficient does not quite reach statistical significance ( $p = .15$ , two-tailed test). The second column of results estimates the effect of *Black Representation* within the 6-state sample. Here we do find a positive effect that is highly significant, although the effect is based on the logged version of *Black Representation*, thus suggesting that the effect diminishes as the number of black representatives increases.

(Table 3)

Generally speaking, these results are consistent with our hypotheses concerning the mobilizing effect of black representation among white racists. Yet, just as we expected that black representation should not affect the political attitudes of all whites in the same way, to the extent that white racial hostility varies across local communities, we should also expect the ultimate effect of black representation on hate group activity to vary across counties as well. That is, we expect that the mobilizing effect of black representation should be strongest where white racial hostility is the most widespread. Unfortunately, we do not have a direct measure of white prejudice at the county level. However, past research has found that conservatives tend to display significantly higher levels of racial prejudice than liberals (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Kinder and Sears 1981; Valentino and Hutchings 2005). Therefore, we follow Hajnal (2001, 2006) and use local partisanship as a surrogate for white racial hostility. Note that we are not claiming that this relationship between partisanship and racial hostility is causal in any way; just that there exists a sufficient correlation to justify the use of partisanship as a surrogate.<sup>21</sup> Our

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<sup>21</sup> We confirmed the relationship between partisanship and prejudice within the NES data by regressing *White Prejudice* on *Party Identification*, while controlling for *Education*, *Income*, *Age* and *Gender*. We estimated the relationship for different time periods, including 1980-2000, 1990-2000, and 1996-2000. In each case, the effect of partisanship was statistically significant in the expected direction (Republican identification positively related to

expectation is that the effect of *Black Representation* on *Hate Group Activity* should increase across counties as the level of conservatism increases. To model this interactive relationship, we add a multiplicative term (*Black Representation* \* *Republican Vote %*) to the model estimated in columns 1 and 2 of Table 3 and re-estimate.

The results for the interactive specification are presented in columns 3 and 4 for the full sample and 6-state sample of counties. As can be seen, the coefficient estimate for *Black Representation* is insignificant in each of the interactive models. However, given the presence of the multiplicative term, this simply suggests that black descriptive representation has no effect on hate group activity among counties in which the Republican share of the vote was equal to zero in 2000. Given the fact that such counties do not exist in our sample, the more important result is the coefficient for the multiplicative term. For each of the interactive models, we see that the multiplicative term is positive and statistically significant, consistent with our expectations. This suggests that the mobilizing effect of black representation significantly increases in magnitude as the county political culture becomes more conservative. We provide a graphical interpretation of these results in Figure 4, which for each of the interactive models plots the predicted probability of hate group activity, by the number of black elected officials and the level of local conservatism.

(Figure 4)

The top panel (A) of Figure 4 displays the predicted relationship between *Black Representation* and *Hate Group Activity* for the full sample of counties. Here, we see that even at the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile of *Republican Vote %* (44%), the relationship is positive, and based on post-estimation calculations, the relationship is marginally statistically significant ( $z=1.87$ ,  $p=.06$ ). However, as the level of county conservatism reaches the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile of Republican support (75%), the effect of *Black Representation* increases significantly. Indeed, for a county at this level of conservatism, having 5 black (state or federal)

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*White Prejudice*). As an alternative test, we aggregated our *White Prejudice* measure to the county level, based on all NES responses after 1980. For all counties in which we had more than 30 respondents (N=136), we then regressed the county-level measure of prejudice on our county-level measure of *Republican Vote%*, (controlling for

elected officials results in a predicted probability of hate group activity that exceeds .50 – a level that is approximately 3 times that of an otherwise similar county at the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile value of Republican support.

The bottom panel (B) of Figure 4 reflects the results from our 6-state sample, and therefore is based on a measure of *Black Representation* which includes local, as well as state and federal black elected officials. In addition, the results used to generate this figure are based on the log of *Black Representation*, although for the purpose of the figure we have transformed this variable back to its original metric (i.e. the number of black officials). This graph tells a slightly different story than the graph in panel A, but the bottom line is still the same – black representation has a mobilizing effect on white racists. In this case, we see no effect whatsoever for black representation among counties at the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile value of *Republican Vote %* (40%). At the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile value of *Black Representation*, however, the relationship is positive and substantively (as well as statistically) significant. Due to the nonlinear transformation of *Black Representation* in the model, the predicted probability of hate group activity increases sharply – from .14 to .39 - as we move from a county with no black representatives to an otherwise similar county with only 2 black officials (the median value for this sample). However, although the predicted probability continues to increase as the number of black officials increases, the probability of hate group active does not surpasses .50 until the number of black elected officials reaches 15. Thus, for this sample it appears that it is the mere presence of black officials, rather than the exact number, that matters most for the mobilization of white hate groups.

Table 3 also provides several other interesting results in addition to the effects of black representation. The local racial context (*Black Population %*) has a strong effect on hate group mobilization, but only for the full sample of counties. Consistent with many other studies, the effect of the black population size is curvilinear, reflecting an inverse U-shaped relationship. This not only provides support for theories of racial threat, but also suggests that the threat effect is multidimensional, and

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*Black Population %* and *White Education*). The effect of *Republican Vote%* was positive and highly significant (t=2.37; robust SE).

originates from social and cultural competition, in addition to political competition. We find no evidence that black-white economic competition has spurred hate group mobilization, as evidenced by the coefficients for *Per Capita Income Ratio* and *Unemployment Ratio*. However, it would be premature to reject economic competition, at least as it is subjectively perceived by white separatists, as an important motivation for participation in hate groups. Rather, this merely suggests that subjective perceptions of economic threat may be only weakly correlated with objective conditions.

The results in Table 3 provide strong support for the importance of county economic conditions; however the pattern of results is not consistent with any single theoretical perspective. As traditional psychological theories of extremism predict, hate group activity is significantly more likely to occur in counties with high levels of white unemployment. At the same time, hate group mobilization also appears to be fueled by higher levels of income. This result is more consistent with resource mobilization theory, and suggests that like protest movements more generally, hate group mobilization may be facilitated by economic resources and a strong middle class to provide group leadership.

Somewhat surprisingly, we find little evidence in our county-level results that hate group activity is associated with non-black sources of ethnic diversity, as *Hispanic Population%* was found to be negatively (rather than positively) related to *Hate Group Activity*. Once again, however, it would be premature to conclude that hate group activity is unrelated to the growing Hispanic population. Instead, these results may simply reflect the fact that Hispanic immigrants have tended to settle in areas where the local white population is more receptive to their presence. Finally, we find hate groups to be significantly more likely to mobilize in the South. This result is not surprising given the geographic distribution of hate group activity displayed in Figure 2, and is consistent with studies which find Southern whites to display relatively higher levels of racial resentment than whites outside the South (Kuklinski, Cobb and Gilens 1997).

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Although there have been several studies of the impact of black descriptive representation on white electoral behavior (e.g. turnout, contact with elected officials), to date there have been no

systematic (i.e. large-N) studies of the effects of contemporary black political representation on non-electoral responses by whites. In this paper, we have addressed this question by examining the effects of black representation on both the attitudes of whites and the mobilization of hate group organizations in the United States. Based on a series of analyses of both county and state-level measures of black descriptive representation, it appears that black political empowerment has led to a significant reduction in external efficacy among the most racially intolerant whites, contributing to a proliferation of white hate groups. Importantly, these effects are found even after controlling for the size of the black population, as well as a host of other variables inspired by a variety of theoretical perspectives on right-wing extremism and social movement formation. These findings have several important implications for the literature on black representation, as well as the future of race relations more generally.

This study provides further evidence that the structure and characteristics of democratic institutions contribute directly to the most basic attitudes toward the political system, as well as the forms of political expression utilized by citizens. While many studies have shown that political attitudes and behavior are affected by such basic features of political institutions as the type of electoral system or the degree of citizen control over policy (e.g. Bowler and Donovan 2002; Anderson and Guillory 1997; Powell 1982), this study provides further evidence that this list of institutional features should also include the characteristics of the individuals who are elected to work within them. More specifically, our findings corroborate those of other scholars who have found minority descriptive representation to have a significant impact on white political trust and engagement (Barreto et al. 2004; Gay 2001). This finding is not surprising given the larger number of studies that have found the race of a representative to matter for minority citizens. Yet, our findings diverge in an important way, as the efficacy-reducing effects of black representation are largely concentrated among the relatively small percentage of whites who exhibit high levels of racial prejudice.

These findings also have several implications for the theories of “racial threat” and “white backlash.” Our results suggest that it is important to distinguish between what we might call an “attitudinal backlash,” which is characterized by an increase in racial intolerance among whites, and a

“behavioral backlash,” which is reflected by anti-black behavior initiated by whites. The racial threat literature often presumes that these two forms of white response go hand in hand, and therefore rarely distinguishes between them. Our results highlight the fact that this is not necessarily the case. While it seems likely that an attitudinal backlash will generally lead to a behavioral backlash, the absence of an attitudinal backlash does not necessarily preclude a behavioral backlash. This is especially true for racially motivated collective action, where successful mobilization is not only dependent upon white racial hostility, but the activation of white group consciousness.

This fact helps explain what would seem to be contradictory trends in recent years – racial intolerance has steadily decreased, while at the same time we have witnessed an increasing mobilization of organized groups with an explicitly racist mission. Our results suggest that one possible explanation for this development is that despite the prejudice-reducing effects of minority representation among more moderate whites (Hajnal 2001, 2006), increases in minority political representation have helped activate white group consciousness among the relatively small number of hardcore racists on the extreme right. This seems to be exactly what is occurring in response to the election of Barack Obama as President. A recent study suggests that the election of Obama has led to a significant reduction in implicit prejudice and stereotyping among white college students (Plant et al, 2009). At the same time, several different reports have documented a “new energy” among white hate groups, which is directly attributable to the election of a black president and the fact “that there are more people who feel their voice isn't being represented” (Hanna 2009, June 11).

Finally, these findings have significant implications for policy debates concerning U.S. race relations. While hate group members represent a small fraction of the white population, their actions are highly visible, occasionally violent, and when targeted at minority communities can have a profound psychological impact. Over time, such activity can only serve to lower levels of social and political trust among targeted minorities, and may ultimately lead to heightened racial/ethnic conflict. This raises some difficult, yet important questions. Clearly, minority descriptive representation has had many positive benefits within the minority community, both substantive and symbolic. However, the election of blacks

(and Hispanics) has often been achieved by districting policies which many whites equate with affirmative action. This has likely angered many whites on the extreme right, and thus may be contributing to the use of affirmative action as an effective recruiting tool for white hate groups who have long opposed race-based policies of all forms. Thus, as Swain (2002) argues concerning affirmative action policies more generally, the many positive benefits of racial gerrymandering may come with the “tradeoff” of “contributing to a worsening racial climate” (xvi).

We certainly do not advocate policies which would lead to lower levels of black descriptive and substantive representation, but our findings suggest that alternative election rules and processes, which promote minority representation in a less obvious fashion (e.g. cumulative voting), may be worth considering as an alternative to racial gerrymandering. While the election of minorities is still likely to anger many on the racist right, the potential increase in the legitimacy of black and Hispanic elected officials in the eyes of whites on the racist “fence” may be enough to curb the growth of white hate groups in the future. Regardless, given current racial/ethnic demographic projections and the inevitable fact that blacks and Hispanics will be increasing their share of political power through descriptive representation, there is reason to believe that organized hate groups will continue to occupy a significant and troubling place on the fringe of the American political landscape for years to come.

## Appendix

**Table A1. Variable Definitions and Descriptive Statistics for Individual-Level Analyses**

Variable Name	Definition	Source	Mean	s.d.	Min & Max
<b><u>Table 1</u></b>					
<b><u>Analysis</u></b>					
External Efficacy	NES External Efficacy Index; VCF0648	1948-2002 Cumulative NES File	56.68	42.50	0,100
Black Representation	Percentage of all state elected offices that are black	Purchased by authors from Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies	1.99	2.78	0,20
White Prejudice	Feeling thermometer score for whites (VCF0207) minus feeling thermometer score for blacks (VCF0206)	1948-2002 Cumulative NES File	14.12	21.72	-97,97
Family Income	5-category ordinal measure of income; VCF0114	1948-2002 Cumulative NES File	3.12	1.06	1,5
Education	4-category ordinal measure of education; VCF0110	1948-2002 Cumulative NES File	2.56	0.93	1,4
Party ID	7-pt. partisan self-identification scale; VCF0301	1948-2002 Cumulative NES File	3.83	2.03	1,7
Partisan Strength	Folded self-identification scale; VCF0305	1948-2002 Cumulative NES File	2.79	0.96	1,4
Age	Age of respondent; VCF0101	1948-2002 Cumulative NES File	42.25	14.15	18,90
Gender	Gender of respondent; VCF0104	1948-2002 Cumulative NES File	1.53	0.50	1,2
Black Population %	Percentage of state population that is black	Yates and Fording (2005); U.S. Census Bureau	11.7	7.5	.15,39
<b><u>Table 2</u></b>					
<b><u>Analysis</u></b>					
External Efficacy	NES External Efficacy Index; VCF0648	1948-2002 Cumulative NES File	45.21	38.76	0,100
Black Representation	Number of all black state and federal elected officials whose district contains at least part of respondent's district in 1998	Purchased by authors from Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies; district maps obtained by authors from federal and state government websites	1.71	3.78	0,24
White Prejudice	Feeling thermometer score for whites (VCF0207) minus feeling thermometer score for blacks (VCF0206)	1948-2002 Cumulative NES File	3.35	14.86	-50,97
Family Income	5-category ordinal measure of income; VCF0114	1948-2002 Cumulative NES File	3.06	1.13	1,5
Education	4-category ordinal measure of education; VCF0110	1948-2002 Cumulative NES File	2.87	0.90	1,4
Party ID	7-pt. partisan self-identification scale; VCF0301	1948-2002 Cumulative NES File	4.00	2.03	1,7
Partisan Strength	Folded self-identification scale; VCF0305	1948-2002 Cumulative NES File	2.79	0.96	1,4
Age	Age of respondent; VCF0101	1948-2002 Cumulative NES File	47.11	17.57	18,90
Gender	Gender of respondent; VCF0104	1948-2002 Cumulative NES File	1.52	0.50	1,2
Black Population %	Percentage of county population that is black	2000 Decennial Census	8.60	10.35	.15, 58

**Table A2. Variable Definitions and Descriptive Statistics for County-Level Analyses**

Variable Name	Definition	Source	Mean	s.d.	Min & Max
<b>Full Sample</b>					
Hate Group Activity	0=no active hate group, 1=at least 1 active hate group; 2000-2001	Southern Poverty Law Center, <i>Intelligence Report</i>	0.17	0.37	0, 1
Black Representation	Number of all black state and federal elected officials whose district contains at least part of respondent's district in 1998	Purchased by authors from Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies; district maps obtained by authors from federal and state government websites	0.32	1.26	0, 24
Republican Vote%	2-party % of county Pres. vote captured by G.W. Bush in 2000	Voss and Lublin (2001)	58.81	12.22	12, 93
Black Population %	Percentage of county population that is black	2000 Decennial Census	8.55	14.38	0, 87
Δ Black Population%	1990-2000 percentage change in county population that is black	1990, 2000 Decennial Census	0.12	1.84	-10, 26
Hispanic Population%	Percentage of county population that is Hispanic	2000 Decennial Census	6.19	11.86	.1, 96
Δ Hispanic Population%	1990-2000 percentage change in county population that is Hispanic	1990, 2000 Decennial Census	1.70	2.61	-9, 26
Per Capita Income Ratio	Per capita income for blacks divided by per capita income for whites (1999)	2000 Decennial Census	0.69	0.44	0, 7.9
Unemployment Ratio	Unemployment rate for whites divided by unemployment rate for blacks	Bureau of Labor Statistics	0.43	0.38	0, 5.8
Per Capita Income	Per capita income for whites (1999)	2000 Decennial Census	19.55	5.05	9.9, 72.3
Unemployment Rate	Unemployment rate for whites, 2000	Bureau of Labor Statistics	4.91	3.47	0, 44.3
Education	Percentage of whites with less than H.S. education, 2000	2000 Decennial Census	18.99	7.90	0, 52.4
South White Population	Number of whites residing in county, 2000	U.S. Census classification 2000 Decennial Census	0.44 77,770	0.50 253,084	0, 1 70, 8,706,357
<b>6-State Sample</b>					
Hate Group Activity	0=no active hate group, 1=at least 1 active hate group; 2000-2001	Southern Poverty Law Center, <i>Intelligence Report</i>	0.29	0.45	0, 1
Black Representation	Number of all black elected officials whose district contains at least part of respondent's district in 1998	Purchased by authors from Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies; district maps obtained by authors from federal and state government websites	5.88	10.19	0, 88
Republican Vote%	2-party % of the county Pres. vote captured by G.W. Bush in 2000	Lublin and Voss (2001)	55.84	11.06	12, 80
Black Population %	Percentage of county population that is black	2000 Decennial Census	18.88	20.57	0, 87
Δ Black Population%	1990-2000 percentage change in county population that is black	1990, 2000 Decennial Census	0.39	2.22	-8, 11
Hispanic Population%	Percentage of county population that is Hispanic	2000 Decennial Census	2.16	2.29	.4, 20
Δ Hispanic Population%	1990-2000 percentage change in county population that is Hispanic	1990, 2000 Decennial Census	1.36	1.86	0, 15
Per Capita Income Ratio	Per capita income for blacks divided by per capita income for whites (1999)	2000 Decennial Census	0.62	0.20	.1, 2.7
Unemployment Ratio	Unemployment rate for whites divided by unemployment rate for blacks	Bureau of Labor Statistics	0.37	0.26	0, 3.6
Per Capita Income	Per capita income for whites (1999)	2000 Decennial Census	18.79	3.39	12.5, 34.3
Unemployment Rate	Unemployment rate for whites, 2000	Bureau of Labor Statistics	4.42	1.87	0, 15.2
Education	Percentage of whites with less than H.S. education, 2000	2000 Decennial Census	22.39	6.58	6.1, 48.5
South White Population	Number of whites residing in county, 2000	U.S. Census classification 2000 Decennial Census	0.68 73,046	0.47 125,268	0, 1 798, 1,111,554

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**Table 1. Hierarchical Linear Model Estimates of the Relationship between (State-Level) Black Descriptive Representation and White Political Attitudes, 1974-2000**

<b>Independent Variables</b>	<b>Full Sample</b>	
	<b>Linear BEO</b>	<b>Logged BEO</b>
White Prejudice	-.162** (.018)	-.197** (.014)
Black Representation	.849** (.217)	-.775 (.757)
Black Representation * White Prejudice	-.017** (.006)	-.031** (.011)
Gender	.987 (.724)	.979 (.723)
Partisan Strength	4.190** (.460)	4.213** (.460)
Party Identification	.553** (.206)	.547** (.207)
Family Income	3.186** (.325)	3.182** (.325)
Age	-.076** (.023)	-.077** (.023)
Education	10.205** (.462)	10.231** (.465)
Black Population%	-.393** (.217)	-.019 (.164)
<b>Level 1 N</b>	16,614	16,614
<b>Level 2 N</b>	47	47
<b>Deviance</b>	169905.09	169902.63

*Note:* Column entries are slope coefficients, with robust standard errors in parentheses (estimated in HLM 6.02). *Black Representation* is measured as the percentage of all elected officials (federal, state and local) in the respondent's state that are black. The first column of results assumes a linear relationship between *Black Representation* and *External Efficacy*, while in the second column of results we use the natural log of *Black Representation*.

\*p<.05; \*\*p<.01 (two-tailed tests)

**Table 2. Hierarchical Linear Model Estimates of the Relationship between (County-Level) Black Descriptive Representation and White Political Attitudes, 1998**

Independent Variables	Full Sample		Men Only		Full Sample	
	Linear BEO	Logged BEO	Linear BEO	Logged BEO	Dichotomous Version of White Prejudice	
					Linear BEO	Logged BEO
White Prejudice	-.042 (.097)	-.120 (.085)	.082 (.139)	-.047 (.105)	-1.055 (4.186)	-8.960 (4.899)
Black Representation	.151 (.395)	-.366 (.691)	.103 (.460)	-.621 (.874)	.264 (.394)	-.198 (.728)
Black Representation * White Prejudice	-.011 (.006)	-.026 (.024)	-.018* (.007)	-.048 (.033)	-1.855** (.625)	-2.001 (1.297)
Gender	-.948 (2.428)	-1.034 (2.402)	----	----	-.797 (2.422)	-.865 (2.397)
Partisan Strength	4.672** (1.266)	4.595** (1.290)	4.574* (1.992)	4.535* (1.982)	4.584** (1.261)	4.469** (1.285)
Party Identification	-.160 (.669)	-.136 (.667)	.869 (1.134)	.876 (1.148)	-.201 (.658)	-.164 (.657)
Family Income	.681 (1.414)	.848 (1.387)	-1.722 (1.816)	-1.326 (1.793)	.761 (1.399)	.935 (1.389)
Age	.040 (.089)	.041 (.089)	-.075 (.119)	-.070 (.122)	.042 (.088)	.044 (.088)
Education	10.945** (1.488)	11.006** (1.495)	14.401** (2.214)	14.540** (2.207)	10.733** (1.490)	10.948** (1.490)
% Black Population	-.111 (.192)	.004 (.187)	-.046 (.240)	.004 (.187)	-.102 (.187)	.005 (.185)
<b>Level 1 N</b>	798	798	380	380	798	798
<b>Level 2 N</b>	92	92	83	83	92	92
<b>Deviance</b>	7960.275	7957.511	3810.345	7960.275	7941.009	7940.309

*Note:* Column entries are slope coefficients, with robust standard errors in parentheses (estimated in HLM 6.02). *Black Representation* is measured as the number of state and federal black elected officials whose district includes all or part of the respondent's county of residence. The first, third and fifth columns of coefficients are based on a linear specification of the relationship between *Black Representation* and *External Efficacy*, while the second, fourth and sixth columns of results reflect a nonlinear specification and are based on the natural log of *Black Representation*.

\*p<.05; \*\*p<.01 (two-tailed tests)

**Table 3. Logit Estimates of the Determinants of County Hate Group Activity**

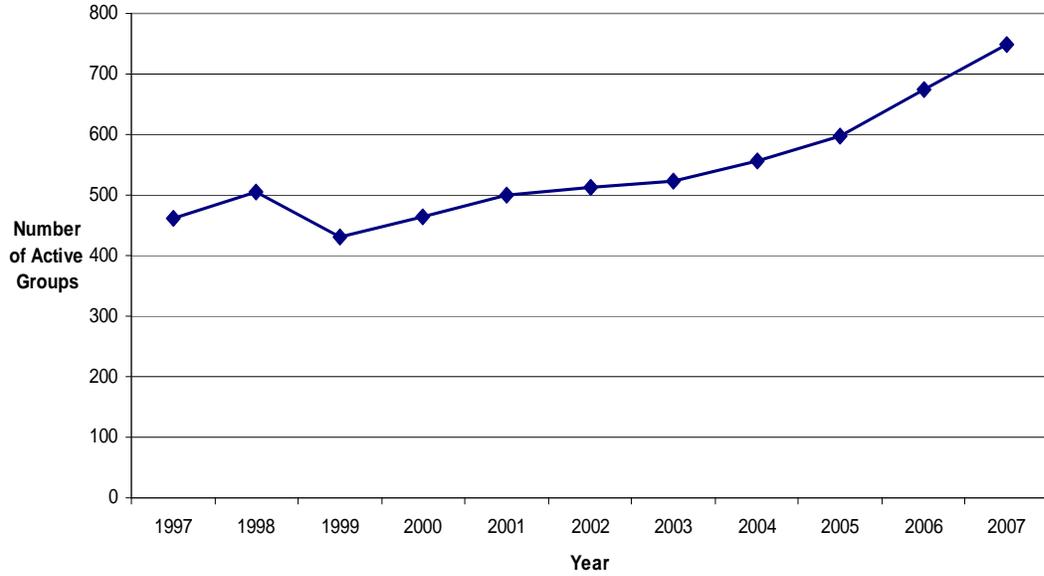
<b>Independent Variables</b>	<b>Additive Effect of Black Representation</b>		<b>Conditional Effect of Black Representation</b>	
	<b>Full Sample</b>	<b>Six-state Sample</b>	<b>Full Sample</b>	<b>Six-state Sample</b>
Black Representation	.0953	---	-.2260	---
Black Representation * Republican Vote%	---	---	.0077*	---
Black Representation (Log)	---	.1622**	---	-.2856
Black Representation (Log) * Republican Vote%	---	---	---	.0078*
Republican Vote%	.0218**	.0112	.0193**	.0111
Black Population%	.0552**	.0098	.0493**	.0036
Black Population% Squared	-.0007**	-.0003	-.0006*	-.0001
Δ Black Population%	.0351	.0453	.0380	.0525
Hispanic Population%	-.0529**	-.2873*	-.0509**	-.2639*
Δ Hispanic Population%	.0391	.2554	.0383	.2408
Per Capita Income Ratio	.1320	.7180	.1362	.7499
Unemployment Ratio	-.1684	-.4489	-.1583	-.3859
Per Capita Income	.0684**	.0962*	.0690**	.1128*
Unemployment Rate	.0919**	.0525	.0914**	.0476
Education	-.0140	.0142	-.0116	.0112
South	.8591**	.7796*	.8328**	.7151
White Population (Total)	7.95e-06**	1.33e-05**	7.96e-06**	1.24e-05**
<b>N</b>	3111	479	3111	479
<b>Log Pseudo-likelihood</b>	-1054.7778	-222.7445	-1052.416	-221.4861
<b>Pseudo-R<sup>2</sup></b>	.2572	.2255	.2589	.2299

Note: The sample for these analyses consists of all counties in the U.S. (“Full Sample”) and all counties in the following states: AL, AR, MS, NC, OH, PA (“Six-state Sample”). Cell entries are binary logit coefficients, and p-values are based on robust standard errors (adjusted for error clustering at the state level).

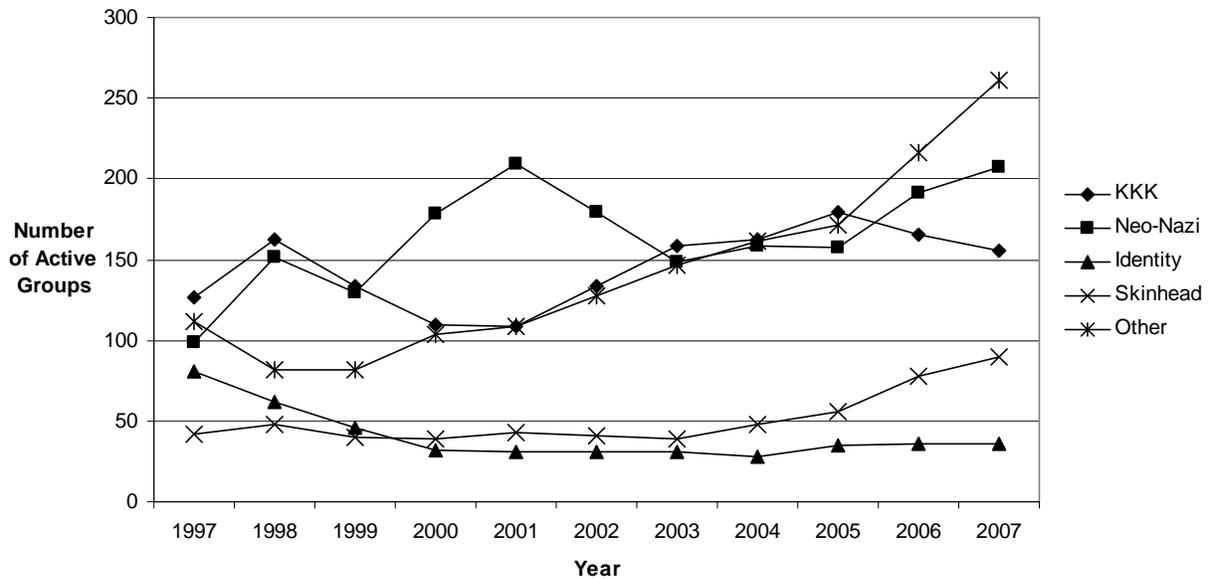
\*p<.05; \*\*p<.01 (two-tailed)

**Figure 1. Annual Number of Active White Hate Groups in the United States, 1997 - 2007**

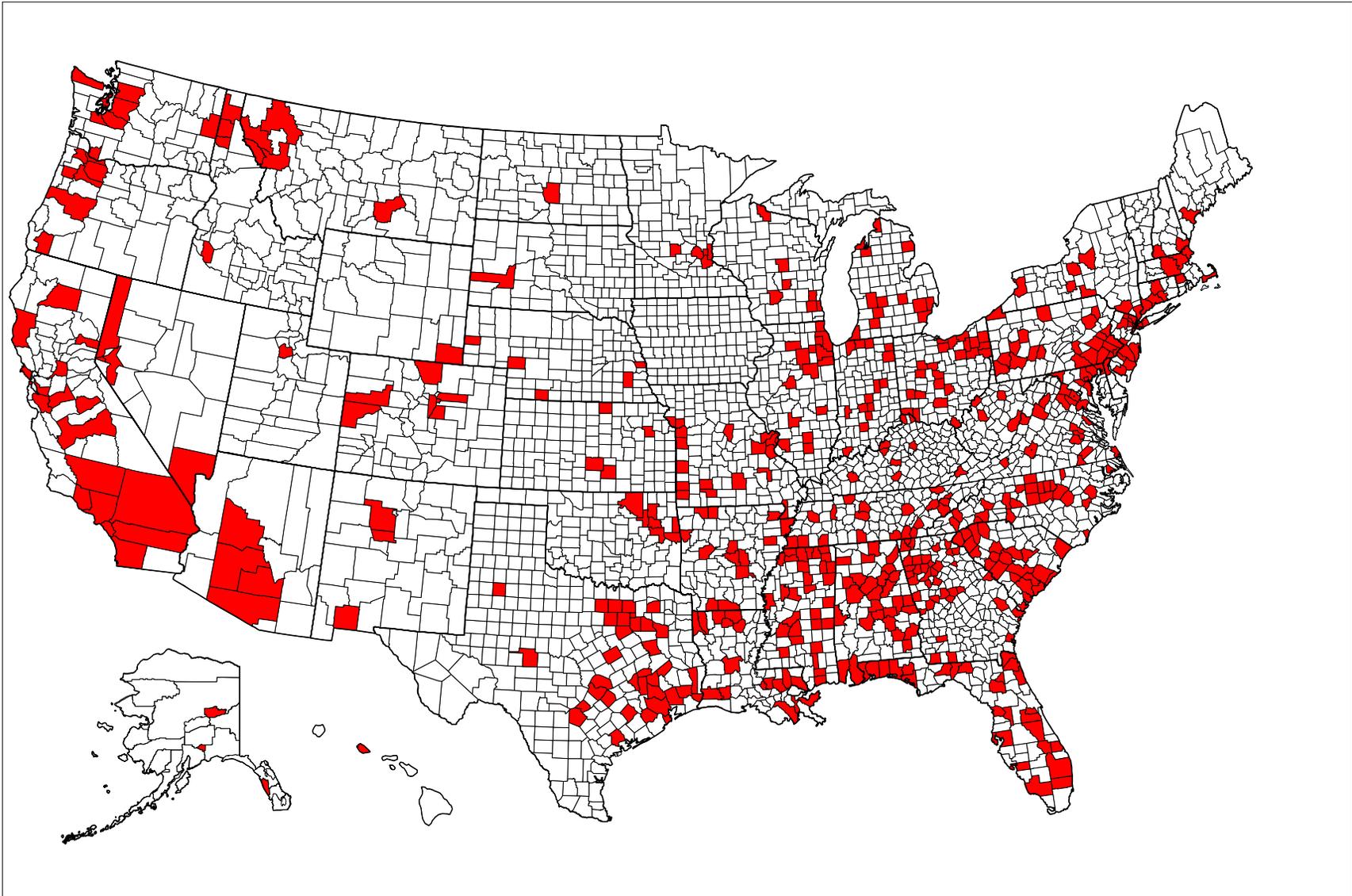
**(A) All Categories of White Hate Groups**



**(B) By Hate Group Category**

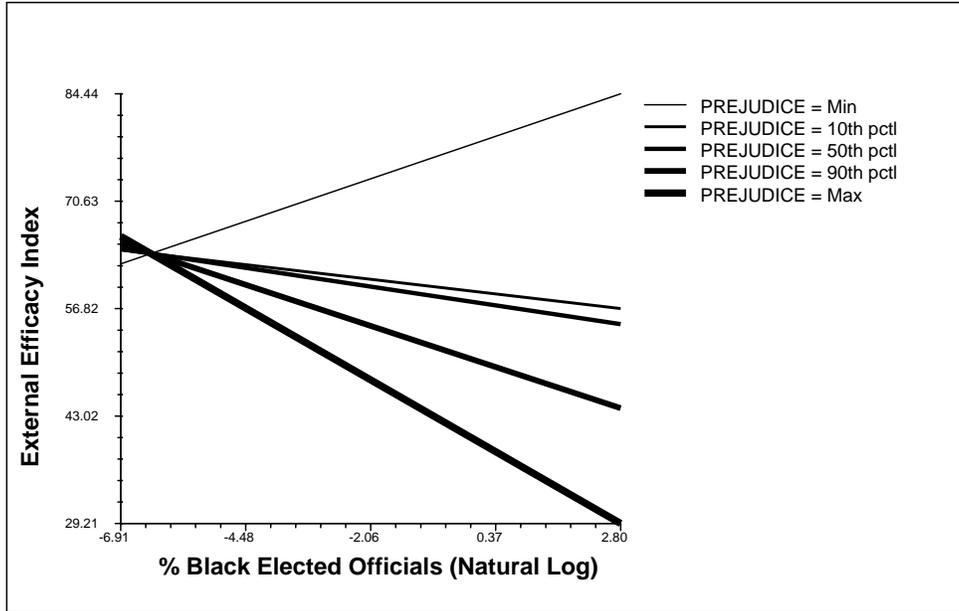


**Figure 2. Geographic Distribution of Hate Group Activity in the United States, 2000-2001**

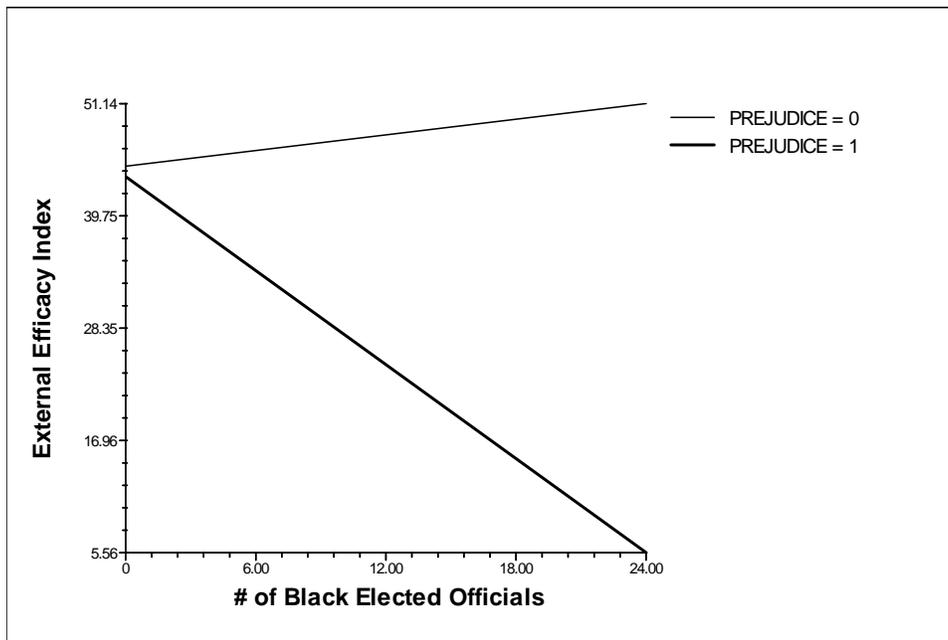


**Figure 3. Predicted Effect of Black Representation on White External Efficacy, by Level of White Prejudice**

**A) NES Sample = 1974-2002, Statewide Black Representation**



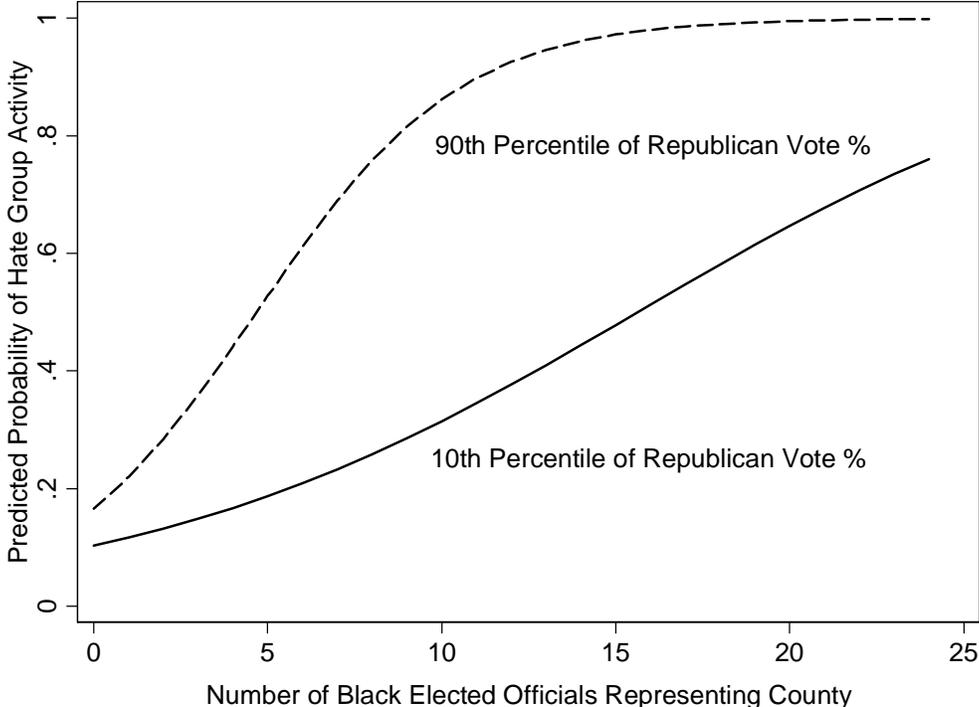
**B) NES Sample = 1998, Countywide Black Representation**



*Note:* Predicted probabilities were calculated based on the coefficient estimates presented in model X in Table X... . Values for the other independent variables are set at the mean value within the estimation sample.

**Figure 4. Predicted Probability of County Hate Group Activity, by Level of Black Representation and Local Political Ideology**

**A) Full Sample**



**B) 6-State Sample**

