

CHAPTER 4

Committing Hate

Who and Why

What images come to your mind when you read the words *hate crimes*? Red-necked, white-robed men burning crosses? Gangs of skinheads attacking people of color? Swastika-bedecked neo-Nazis toting copies of *Mein Kampf* and shouting “*Sieg Heil!*”? All of these are part of the reality of bias in America. The truth, however, is that they make up only a small part of the hate crimes that occur. Contrary to popular notions, most hate crimes are not committed by members of organized white supremacist groups (J. Levin, 2002; Levin & McDevitt, 1993). Most, in fact, are committed by people very similar to those you might see sitting in almost any high school or college classroom: teenagers and young adults who are unaffiliated with any racist organization. In fact, hate crimes on campus are a serious problem (Downey & Stage, 1999; Levin & McDevitt, 1993; Wieland, 2007; see Box 4.1).

BOX 4.1 HATE ON CAMPUS

In a report issued in 2001, the Department of Justice concluded that hate crimes on college campuses are a serious problem. The report also concludes that noncriminal acts of prejudice and harassment are common on campuses. Very few hate crimes on campus get reported, so their true extent is unknown, but they occur at colleges and universities of all sizes and in all locations. Hate crimes and harassment are also common at elementary, junior, and high schools. According to the FBI, 11.3% of hate crimes reported to the police in 2007 occurred in schools or colleges. The following are examples of crimes that have occurred on campuses:

- A man in Utah detonated a pipe bomb in the dorm room of two African American students. He later left a threatening note on the door of another African American student.

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- A student in Maine yelled antigay slurs at another student, threatened him, and choked him.
- A college student in Massachusetts made several anti-Semitic comments, threatened several fellow students, and delivered photos of Holocaust victims to another.
- A 15-year-old junior high student in California who self-identified as gay and sometimes wore women's clothing and makeup was shot to death by a 14-year-old classmate.
- Two 16-year-old female students in Illinois handed out antigay fliers in the parking lot of their school, specifically targeting a male student.
- In Queens, New York, a 15-year-old male Sikh student was held down in the bathroom by a 17-year-old classmate and had his turban removed and hair cut off.

SOURCES: Bureau of Justice Assistance (2001) and Department of Justice (2008a).

What leads people to perpetrate acts of violence and intimidation against others? In any individual case, there is no one single cause of bigotry, and the origins of prejudice vary from person to person. In this chapter, I address this issue by looking at a variety of explanations for prejudice and hatred.

Scholars in many different fields—psychology, sociology, and economics, among others—have spent several decades studying the causes, correlates, and effects of prejudice. Many books have been written on the subject, and by necessity, this chapter consists of only an introduction to that literature. In recent years, a small body of work has accumulated concerning the specific roots of hate crimes, and we explore that work in more detail. This chapter begins with an examination of research on the profile of the typical hate crime offender. The discussion then turns to the psychology of prejudice and to situational factors that influence bigotry in individuals. Finally, we will consider why some people join hate groups.

As you read this chapter, it is very important to note that none of us is free of prejudices. Different people have different biases, and some people are more strongly biased than others. Most of us probably cannot imagine being so bigoted as to actually commit a crime against someone. However, these are differences in kind and degree only, and there is no magic boundary that separates you or me from the people who commit hate crimes.

The Offender Profile

The “Typical” Offender

In recent years, a consistent, if incomplete, picture of the “typical” hate crime offender has emerged. He is young, white, and male; he does not come from an especially impoverished background; he has little or no previous contact with the criminal justice system; and he does not belong to an organized hate group (Craig,

2002; Dunbar, 2003). In 1999, for example, more than 68% of reported hate crime offenders were white (Nolan, Akiyama, & Berhanu, 2002), and in 2007, of the 6,965 offenders of known race, the FBI reported that 62.9% were white (Department of Justice, 2008a). J. Levin (2002) estimated that no more than 5% of hate crimes are committed by members of hate groups; in a study of 58 convicted hate crime offenders in Los Angeles, fewer than 14% had belonged to a hate group (Dunbar, 2003). However, this is not to say that hate crime offenders act alone; in fact, they are more likely than other kinds of offenders to act in small groups (Craig, 2002; Dunbar, 2003). Levin (1993) reported that more than half of all hate crimes involve multiple offenders, whereas only about one quarter of ordinary violent crimes do.

Although the data give us some useful information about hate crime perpetrators, some commentators have warned that it is not wise to draw too firm a profile of the typical offender. Craig (2002), for example, argues,

Whether it is useful to attempt construction of a profile of the typical hate crime offender beyond predicting that he is male, is debatable. . . . Hate crime perpetrators, though overwhelmingly male, hail from a diversity of ethnic and racial backgrounds, and with the exception of their hate-motivated activity, have little in common and are otherwise unremarkable. (p. 97)

Interestingly, however, this same author and a colleague found that college students, especially those of color, tended to associate hate crimes with white, male perpetrators (Craig & Waldo, 1996).

Offender Motivations

Attempts have been made to develop a typology of hate crime offenders. Levin and McDevitt (1993) examined the case files of the Boston Police Department from 1991 and 1992. They found that offender motivations could be divided into three classifications: thrill-seeking crimes, reactive crimes, and mission crimes.

Thrill-Seeking Crimes

Thrill-seeking crimes were the most common type, constituting two thirds of the total (McDevitt, Levin, & Bennett, 2002). These were cases in which the offenders, almost always young and in small groups, were “just bored and looking for some fun” (p. 307). In other words, like many young people, they were looking for a little excitement, only they decided to have it at someone else’s expense. Levin and McDevitt (1993) state that in many of these cases, most of the perpetrators may not even have been especially biased toward the victim, but they were following a leader who was. They were unwilling to refuse to go along, perhaps because they feared rejection from their friends or because they wished to be able to brag about their prowess later. In almost all of these cases (91%), the offenders left their own neighborhood and purposely sought out a victim somewhere else, such as at a gay bar, at a synagogue, or in a minority neighborhood (McDevitt et al., 2002).

Other research has confirmed that thrill seeking seems to be a common motive among hate crime offenders. Byers and Crider (2002) conducted interviews with eight young men who had committed acts of “claping” (assaults, property damage, and harassment) against Amish victims. The researchers found that generating excitement and alleviating boredom were common explanations given by the offenders for their behaviors. For example, one participant gave the following explanation for why he claped: “It is fun, an adrenaline rush, tradition I suppose you could say. Just something to do. They [the Amish] were there. . . . [We were] fifteen or sixteen year old kids that had nothing [else] to do” (p. 124). Another participant explained, “Because I was probably with a lot of my friends and we were just looking for something to do and they were doing it and I was doing it so we were all doing it” (p. 124). There were other motives as well—for example, the Amish were perceived as easy targets or as deserving of ill treatment—but excitement appeared to be a major theme.

In another study, Franklin (2000) surveyed 489 community college students about their attitudes and behaviors toward gays and lesbians. Ten percent of the participants admitted to having threatened or physically assaulted people they believed were homosexual, and an additional 23.5% reported having engaged in verbal harassment. Most of the incidents occurred at school or work, and more than 70% of the offenders were with friends at the time of the incident, whereas most of the victims were alone. Franklin found that four factors accounted for most of the variance in offenders’ motivation. In order of importance, these were peer dynamics (i.e., the desire to fit in with and impress friends), antigay ideology, thrill seeking, and self-defense. Both Franklin’s peer-dynamics and thrill-seeking factors would fall under Levin and McDevitt’s (1993) thrill-seeking category.

One important finding of all these studies is that, in the case of thrill-seeking hate crimes, the offenders generally do not have a particularly strong animosity toward their victims. To call these “hate” crimes, then, is somewhat of a misnomer. This is not to say that the offenders are completely without bias, nor does it alleviate the psychological and physical damage done to the victims. However, it does suggest that, given the prevalence of these kinds of crimes, prevention programs aimed at simply reducing bigotry may not be as effective as hoped.

Reactive (Defensive) Crimes

The second type of hate crimes identified by Levin and McDevitt (1993) was originally called “reactive” crimes, but these researchers later renamed them “defensive” crimes (McDevitt et al., 2002). These are crimes in which the perpetrator is reacting to what he considers to be an intrusion—that is, some incident triggers an expression of anger. The trigger incident need not be objectively significant. For example, a black person might simply enter an all-white neighborhood, as happened in 1986 in Howard Beach, New York, and in 1989 in the Bensonhurst section of Brooklyn (see Box 4.2). Or perhaps a would-be offender spots an interracial or same-sex couple, or a person of a different group than the offender receives a promotion at work.

BOX 4.2 HOWARD BEACH AND BENSONHURST

In the late 1980s, there was much media attention on two deaths that occurred in New York, both precipitated when whites encountered African Americans in what the whites considered “their” neighborhoods.

The first incident occurred in Howard Beach, a largely Italian American, working-class community. On December 19, 1986, a car belonging to three young black men broke down in Howard Beach. As these men searched for a way to return home to Brooklyn, they were verbally accosted by some young white men. The black men later went to a local pizzeria. One of the white men, Jon Lester, went to a birthday party and rounded up nearly two dozen friends. Armed with baseball bats and other impromptu weapons, the mob accosted the “intruders” outside the restaurant. They then gave chase. One of the black men escaped; a second was badly beaten. The third, Michael Griffith, was struck by a car and killed as he tried to escape.

Lester and two of his colleagues were eventually found guilty of manslaughter and assault, and received sentences ranging from 10 to 20 years. In 1999, the street in Brooklyn where Michael Griffith had lived was renamed after him.

A strikingly similar crime occurred in the Bensonhurst section of Brooklyn, another mostly white neighborhood, on August 23, 1989. Four black teenagers walked to Bensonhurst to look at a car they had seen advertised for sale. They were soon surrounded by a group of bat-wielding white youths, who began chasing them and yelling racial slurs. One of the whites, Joey Fama, pulled out a gun and fired several times. One of the blacks, 16-year-old Yusuf Hawkins, was shot twice and died soon afterward.

Eight people were tried for Hawkins’s death. Three were acquitted, two were convicted but given probation, and three were sent to prison. By 1999, only one of the defendants, Fama, remained in prison. During several marches that were held in Bensonhurst after the killing to protest the violence, spectators yelled racial slurs, waved watermelons, threw bananas at the marchers, and even spat in the face of Hawkins’s father.

Again in Howard Beach, this time in 2005, a group of young white men attacked three black men. One of the victims was bashed in the head with an aluminum baseball bat, sustaining a skull fracture. His attacker, Nicholas Minucci, was later convicted of a hate crime and sentenced to 15 years in prison. And in 2006, four young men lured Michael Sandy, a gay man, to a location in Brooklyn, intending to rob him. They beat him, and when he tried to escape, he was struck by a car. He died of his injuries. All four of the attackers were convicted of hate crimes.

SOURCES: Brick (2007), Donahue (1999), Fenner and Shifrel (2006), Hajela (1999), Levin and McDevitt (1993), and Santiago (1999).

Defensive crimes accounted for one quarter of the total in the McDevitt et al. (2002) study. They differed from thrill-seeking crimes in that the offenders usually did not leave their own neighborhoods to seek out the victims; instead, the victims happened upon them. In addition, although the offenders’ primary feelings tended to be those of having their territory invaded, there was frequently an economic theme as well. As an example, Levin and McDevitt (1993) cite events at Galveston, Texas, in 1981. A growing number of shrimp fishermen were Vietnamese immigrants, and the

white fishermen felt that the newcomers were competing unfairly. The white fishermen invited the Ku Klux Klan to help them drive out the Vietnamese, and the Klan engaged in a several-month campaign of intimidation, property destruction, and violence (Stanton, 1992).¹ In most cases of defensive hate crimes, the offenders have no previous criminal history and were not previously involved in hate-related activities.

Mission Crimes

The third, and rarest, type of hate crime identified by Levin and McDevitt (1993) is the mission hate crime. Only one mission crime occurred in Boston during the two years of the study. In a mission crime, the offender, usually acting alone, seeks to rid the world of a particular kind of people whom he views as evil. Here are some examples of offenders and the mission hate crimes they committed:

- Marc Lepine, who killed 14 women in a Montreal classroom in 1989 (see Chapter 3)
- Patrick Purdy, who took an AK-47 to an elementary school in Stockton, California, in 1989 and sprayed 60 rounds of bullets, killing 5 Southeast Asian children and wounding 30 other children and adults (Levin & McDevitt, 1993)
- Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, who bombed the federal building in Oklahoma City in 1995, killing 168 people
- Buford Furrow, a white supremacist who shot five people in a Los Angeles Jewish community center in 1999 and then shot and killed a Filipino American postal worker
- George Sodini, shown in Photo 4.1, who killed three women and injured nine others at a fitness club in Pennsylvania in 2009
- James von Brunn, shown in Photo 4.2, a white supremacist who shot and killed an African American guard at the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., in 2009
- Racist skinheads Daniel Cowart and Paul Schlesselman, who were arrested in 2008 for allegedly plotting to assassinate then-presidential candidate Barack Obama, as well as 88 African Americans
- Benjamin Smith, a former member of the racist World Church of the Creator, who went on a shooting spree in Indiana and Illinois in 1999, aiming at blacks, Jews, and Asian Americans, killing two and injuring nine

Three of the killers (Lepine, Purdy, and Smith) in these examples subsequently committed suicide. Furrow pled guilty to murder and was given two life sentences, McVeigh was executed for his crime in 2001, and Terry Nichols, who was convicted of involuntary manslaughter and conspiring with McVeigh, is serving a life sentence.

People who commit mission hate crimes are usually deeply troubled and sometimes even psychotic. They see others as having perpetrated some sort of conspiracy against them and desire revenge (Levin & McDevitt, 1993). In addition, they may have had some previous affiliation with organized hate groups. Although mission

hate crimes are very uncommon, they do deserve attention due to the extreme amounts of violence involved; mission offenders, unlike those in the first two categories, will not be satisfied with simple acts of vandalism or intimidation. It is likely, however, that the psychological factors underlying mission criminals' behaviors are significantly different from those of other hate crime offenders.

Retaliatory Crimes

In 2002, McDevitt et al. (2002) reexamined the original Boston data and determined that it would be appropriate to add a fourth category, retaliatory crimes. These crimes accounted for 8% of the total. Retaliatory crimes are those in which a person hears a report or rumor of a hate incident against his or her own group and takes revenge by committing a crime against a member of the initial supposed offending group. An example of this may have occurred in Brooklyn's Crown Heights neighborhood in August 1991. A car containing Hasidic Jews jumped the curb and struck two young African American children, killing one of them, 7-year-old Gavin Cato. Rumors immediately began that a Jewish ambulance service had declined to help the child. A series of confrontations and attacks soon erupted between blacks and Jews in the neighborhood. About 3 hours after the children were struck, a group of young black men came across Yankel Rosenbaum, an Australian Jew who had come to New York to study. One of the young men stabbed Rosenbaum, who died several hours later. The rioting and violence continued for several more days, with each side blaming the other and claiming that city officials were not properly serving justice.

The Validity of This Typology

McDevitt et al.'s (2002) typology of hate crime offenders is the most complex that has been offered, and it has been used as a guide by law enforcement agencies. However, although it is supported in part by Franklin's (2000) and by Byers's and Crider's (2002) research, the robustness of this typology is unclear. It is based on data from only a single city, and those data are now more than a decade old. No large-scale efforts have yet been made to replicate the analysis in other places and at other times.

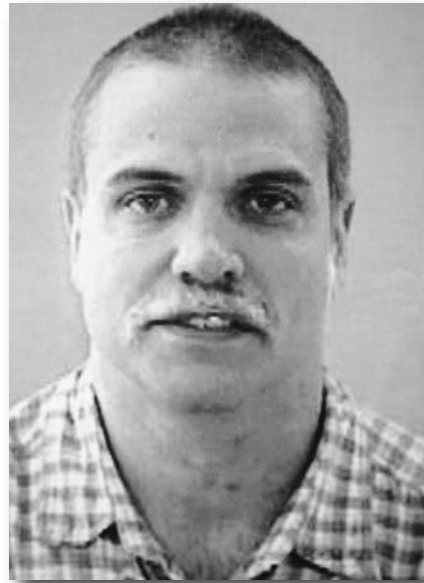


Photo 4.1

SOURCE: AP Photo/Allegheny County Police.

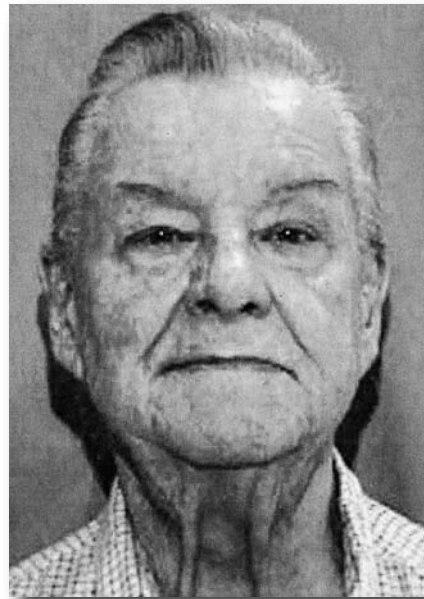


Photo 4.2

SOURCE: AP Photo/Talbot County Sheriff's Office.

Moreover, there are clearly some incidents that do not fit neatly into any of these four categories. Consider, for example, Benjamin and James Williams. In 1999, these brothers set fire to three synagogues in the Sacramento, California, area. A week later, they burned an abortion clinic. And several days after that, they shot and killed a gay couple in Shasta County as the couple lay in their own bed. These crimes have some of the attributes of mission crimes, including the elder brother's later confession that he had committed the crimes to become a "Christian martyr" and to spark more crimes against Jews, gays, and minorities (Bailey, 2001).² On the other hand, they seem unlike other mission crimes in that there was more than one offender (although they were close relatives), and the scale of the violence seems somewhat milder, albeit still serious. The crime spree also lasted longer than in other mission crimes.

Consider also the case of Todd Mitchell, which we discussed in Chapter 3. His crime could be considered retaliatory, in that he and his friends were apparently reacting to a scene in a movie they had recently watched. However, this crime also had some of the earmarks of a thrill-seeking crime in that a group of young people was standing around with nothing much to do, perhaps looking for some excitement.

Finally, assuming that this typology proves to be valid in contexts other than that in which it was created, its utility and meaning remain to be found. Is it useful in solving hate crimes or in assigning appropriate levels of culpability to offenders, as its authors claim? Are there regional variations in the proportion of offenders of each type? Exactly what situational and personal factors differentiate the types of offenders? Do prevention and enforcement strategies differ in effectiveness for each type? What, exactly, is the role of organized hate groups in motivating or supporting each type of offender? Clearly, these are questions that merit additional research.

The Psychology of Prejudice

The Development of Prejudice

No baby is born with prejudices against other people. Considering that the average 2-year-old finds talking purple dinosaurs unremarkable, it is not surprising that very young children are pretty accepting of human beings of all shapes, colors, abilities, and beliefs. Yet we have already seen that most hate crime offenders are young people in their teens or early 20s. In the space of less than two decades, how does a person change from an accommodating (at least in the realm of intergroup relations) toddler into a violent bigot?

The first stage in the development of prejudice is the ability to engage in social categorization: the division of human beings into groups on the basis of gender, race, age, and so on (Allport, 1954). Half a century of social psychological research suggests that social categorization is an innate and inescapable human trait, necessary for us to make sense out of a complex world (Bruner, 1957; Fiske, 1993; Tajfel, 1969). Social categorization begins early in life. Ninety percent of 3-year-olds, for example, can correctly classify people in photographs as male and female (Thompson, 1975), and other research shows that children of that age can classify

people according to race as well (Brigham, 1971; Katz, 1983; Milner, 1975). Children are particularly likely to sort people by certain categories—gender, race, and age (Brewer, 1988; Fiske & Neuberg, 1990)—although there are endless other ways to sort people as well.

As young children engage in social categorization, two additional processes take place. The first of these is self-identification: Children learn which groups they belong to (the ingroups) and which they do not (the outgroups; Jones, 1982; Tajfel, 1969). In other words, they learn to distinguish between “us” and “them.” Most children between ages 3 and 7 correctly identify their own ethnic group (Brown, 1995).

At about the same time, children begin to learn the stereotypes associated with different groups (Goodman, 1964; Katz, 1976). Allport (1954) defined a *stereotype* as “an exaggerated belief associated with a category” (p. 190). It is a mental picture that is attached to a particular group. Stereotypes are often negative—for example, “women are bad drivers”—but they can be positive as well—for example, “blacks are good at sports.” Whether positive or negative, they are often erroneous and are potentially dangerous because they lead us to make judgments about an individual based only on that individual’s group affiliation rather than on information we have actually learned about that individual.

As they learn stereotypes, children also learn racial slurs. They may not fully realize what the words mean, but they recognize their potency and ability to bring about strong reactions from adults (Allport, 1954). Children may use racial slurs (albeit often incorrectly) because of the lure of the forbidden at that age.

Although preschoolers are aware of stereotypes, research indicates that children do not actually internalize the attitudes associated with them until about age 7 (Goodman, 1964; Katz, 1976). This is when children begin to show a preference for their own group. Observe, for example, third graders on the playground, and you will see the girls mostly playing with other girls, and the boys with other boys. The internalization of stereotypes leads to *prejudice*, which Allport (1954) defines as “an averted or hostile attitude toward a person who belongs to a group, simply because he belongs to that group, and is therefore presumed to have the objectionable qualities ascribed to that group” (p. 7).

Allport (1954) also pointed out an interesting facet of children’s behavior. Although grade-school-age children often engage in total verbal rejection of the outgroup, that rejection is often not reflected in their behavior: They will continue to associate with members of the outgroup. However, by the time children reach middle school, they have learned that verbal rejection is usually not socially acceptable, so they engage in politically correct speech. However, by then they have adopted society’s prejudices, and they will usually reject members of the outgroup behaviorally. You can verify this by visiting any ethnically diverse middle or high school at lunchtime, where you will see the students mostly sitting with members of their own race or ethnicity.

If babies are not born knowing stereotypes, and yet they learn them in only a few short years, where do these ideas come from? Are they some sort of germ they pick up in preschool, like chicken pox? Yes, metaphorically speaking. Children are exposed to stereotypes from all aspects of their society and culture, including family, teachers, friends, and the media (Allport, 1954; Brown, 1995; Nelson, 2002).

These stereotypes are pervasive and can be quite insidious. Recently, for example, I ordered a fast-food meal for my daughter. The restaurant employee asked whether I wanted a “girl’s” meal or a “boy’s” meal. It turned out that, in addition to hamburger and fries, the girl’s meal contained a small doll (wearing a frilly dress and flowered hat), whereas the boy’s meal came with a toy fire truck.

A particularly interesting aspect of stereotypes is their consistency. In 1933, Katz and Braly asked white college students to indicate which attributes they believed were typical for each of 10 different ethnic groups (Jews, blacks, Italians, Turks, and so on). There was a great deal of consensus on some attributes. For example, 75% of the students believed that blacks were lazy (Brown, 1995, p. 83). The experiment was repeated a generation later (Gilbert, 1951) and again a generation later (Karlins, Coffman, & Walters, 1969). In each of these cohorts there was a great deal of similarity in the content of the lists. There were also some differences, most notably a “fading” of many of the more negative characteristics. This fading has been seen in more recent studies as well (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1991). However, some research has indicated that this is due not so much to a reduction in prejudice, as to a change in the social desirability of expressing it. People today may still have bigoted attitudes (consciously or not) while at the same time valuing equality. The theories to explain this phenomenon have referred to it as modern racism (McConahay, 1986), symbolic racism (Kinder & Sears, 1981), or aversive racism (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; see Box 4.3).

BOX 4.3 MODERN RACISM

When researchers first began studying prejudice, stereotypes, and racism in the 1920s, it seemed to be a fairly simple task. Researchers like Katz and Braly (1933), for example, could simply ask people what traits they associated with various groups, and people would willingly list very negative traits. As the studies continued over the next several decades, however, subjects showed less and less overt prejudice against others. Did this mean that people really were becoming less biased? Perhaps.

Some scholars, however, proposed that what was really happening was that the form of prejudice was changing and that the new type, which they called *modern, symbolic, or aversive racism*, was more subtle. Technically, modern, symbolic, and aversive racism are all slightly different. Under all three, however, a person still has negative feelings about others, but now those feelings are expressed indirectly. The problem is, how can this form of prejudice be measured accurately? McConahay (1986) devised the Modern Racism Scale to accomplish this task. Instead of asking people to list traits of various groups, people are presented with statements and asked to indicate the degree to which they agree or disagree with them; then, the results are analyzed. Here are a few items from that scale:

- I don’t think any black people in my state miss out on jobs or promotions because of racial discrimination.
- Minorities who receive money from welfare programs could get along without it if they tried.

- Blacks should not push themselves where they are not wanted.
- Minorities are getting too demanding in their push for equal rights.
- Discrimination against blacks is no longer a problem in the United States.

The Modern Racism Scale is not without its critics. Some, for example, argue that it measures political conservatism more than racism. Others claim that scores on this scale, too, are affected by factors such as social desirability, and that reaction-time studies (i.e., studies that examine the time it takes people to respond to certain stimuli) are more accurate at assessing true levels of prejudice (Fazio, Jackson, Dunton, & Williams, 1995). All modern researchers, however, would agree that measuring prejudice today is considerably more complicated than it was 80 years ago.

NARRATIVE PORTRAIT

Growing Up Racist, I

Larry L. King grew up in a small town in West Texas during the Depression. After serving in the Army just after World War II, he attended college at Texas Tech and became a newspaper reporter, an aide to a U.S. congressman, and, eventually, a writer.

In this excerpt from *Confessions of a White Racist*, King recounts his experiences with racism as a young child:

On our porch in the slow summer evenings where the undistinguished dogs and small boys wondered at their inability to catch even one of a million darting fireflies, I often sat on my father's knee while he sang "The Nigger Preacher and the Bear" in a high, comic falsetto that never failed to please. The black preacher, out hunting quail and hare on the Sabbath against the natural laws of Heaven, is treed by an avenging bear. He is shot through with cowardice and malapropisms, and is so deserted by the presumably white God to whom he frantically prays that the bear is eventually permitted to squeeze the life from him—although, indeed, the black preacher gives a fair account of himself thanks to a congenital talent for expertly flourishing the razor. One of our family's private jokes, never told in the presence of company, concerned the horrifying moment when my older brother was discovered in the act of taking alternate bites off an apple with a Negro boy whose family paused briefly in Putnam. I remember the scandalized whispers when an eight-year-old cousin was caught playing bridegroom to a little black bride in a backyard mock wedding. . . .

Quite without knowing how I came by the gift, and in a complete absence of even the slightest contact with black people, I assimilated certain absolutes: the Negro would steal anything lying around loose and a high percentage of what was bolted down; you couldn't hurt him if you hit him on the head with a tire tool; he revered watermelon above all other fruits of the vine; he had a mule's determination not to work unless driven or led to it; he would screw a snake if somebody held its head.

Even our speech patterns were instructional: as we youngsters surreptitiously smoked cedar bark or dried grapevine in Cousin Kenneth's backyard storm cellar, we displayed generous contempt for the amateur who "nigger-lipped" the noxious offerings. To give participants in games of "Hide and

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Go Seek" time enough to conceal themselves, the hunter thrice or more intoned "Eenie meenie miney moe / Catch a nigger by the toe / If he holler make him pay / Fifteen dollars every day." One's menial labors could leave one "dirty as a nigger" or possibly "sweating like a nigger at election." Get a shade sunburned at the ole swimmin' hole, and your mother was sure to pronounce you "black as a nigger" even in the presence of your lobster-red qualities. Two objects instead of being as identical as "peas in a pod" were likely "as much alike as nigger soldiers." "I wouldn't feed it to a dog" was easily interchangeable with "It would choke a nigger." If you had an exceptional pal, you might boast that the two of you were "as close as runaway niggers." David may have slain Goliath with a slingshot, but in Putnam we warred on frogs, birds, and alley cats with "nigger-shooters." I don't remember that we employed our demeaning expressions in any remarkable spirit of vitriol: we were simply reciting certain of our cultural catechisms, and they came to us as naturally as breathing.

SOURCE: King, Larry L. (1969). "Growing Up Racist." *Confessions of a White Racist*, published by Viking Press. Reprinted with permission.

Despite the changes in the way people express prejudice today, everyone is still widely exposed to stereotypes. Every year on the first day of my hate crimes course, I ask my students to complete (anonymously) a series of questions that begin, "What do people say about . . ." I include a variety of different groups: African Americans, Anglos, Latinos, Jews, women, police officers, and Asian Americans. I collect the sentences and put them onto posters. On the second day of class, I hang these posters on the walls, together with those from previous classes. The consistency of these posters from year to year is remarkable, and it is rare for a stereotype to appear with which most of the class is not already familiar. The associations are so strong and well recognized that I do not even have to put the names of the groups on the posters; by the time the class reads the second or third item on each list, it is always obvious to everyone to which group the list of stereotypes refers. All of this holds true not only for the groups with which my students have had a great deal of contact and familiarity, but also for those whose membership is very small in our area. Furthermore, the content of these posters is not very different from the lists generated by Katz and Braly's (1933) subjects 70 years ago.

How Stereotypes Affect Us

What is the impact of this early and frequent exposure to stereotypes on the way that we view other people? Research suggests that it is quite significant.

A *schema* is a mental model of a thing, containing all of our knowledge about and attitudes toward that thing (Nelson, 2002). For example, your schema about California may include the information that it is a state located on the West Coast of the United States, that it has the largest population of any state, and that its capital is Sacramento; your schema may also contain your impressions that it is full

of palm trees, that it is too liberal or too trendy, that it has beautiful weather, or that everyone there is a movie star. Schemas are essential to enable us to deal with an extremely complex world in an efficient manner. We have schemas not only about things but also about people, and one component of those schemas is our stereotypes about those people. Thus, your mental model of attorneys may be that they are well educated (knowledge), that they can help you if you are having legal troubles (expectation), and that they are dishonest (stereotype).

When we see a person, the schema about that person's group is automatically activated (Devine, 1989; Macrae, Stangor, & Milne, 1994). This is true regardless of our own degree of prejudice or the extent to which we actually believe those stereotypes. It takes conscious effort to nullify the stereotypes (Devine, 1989). We may be unable to nullify them because we are unaware that the schema has been activated or because our cognitive processes are occupied with other tasks. Or we may be unwilling to nullify them because we are biased.

Once a schema has been activated, it acts as a filter, affecting the way in which we process information about the person. One effect of this process is called *out-group homogeneity*. This refers to the fact that the schema for our ingroup is more complex than those for outgroups (Linville, Salovey, & Fischer, 1986). In other words, "we" are very different as individuals, but "they" are all the same.

One possible result of outgroup homogeneity is polarized appraisals of members of the outgroup. We tend to see them as either really wonderful or really awful, whereas we see members of our own group in many more shades of gray (Linville & Jones, 1980; McConahay, 1986). Thus, a white American might conclude that all blacks are either heroes, like Martin Luther King, or dangerous, like the African American gang members depicted so often in movies and on television, and fail to see that most blacks, like most members of other groups, are somewhere in between.

Stereotypes affect how we attribute others' characteristics and actions. In general, and not surprisingly, we tend to think more positive things about members of our ingroup than about members of outgroups. Causal attributions are also affected: For members of the ingroup, we view positive things as having an internal cause, and negative things as having an external cause. For members of outgroups, this pattern is reversed (Hewstone & Jaspars, 1984). Therefore, I might conclude that a member of my own race is successful because she is smart and hardworking, whereas a member of another race is successful because she has been lucky or has been given unfair breaks. Conversely, I might believe someone of my own race is poor because of bad luck or a conspiracy against him, whereas I might believe a member of another race is poor because he is lazy and stupid.

Stereotypes also influence the ways in which we remember information about other people. We tend to recall things better when they are consistent with our stereotypes (Fiske, 1993; Rothbart, Evans, & Fulero, 1979). A consequence of this is that stereotypes tend to be self-perpetuating. We also recall negative information more easily about outgroup members than about ingroup members (Howard & Rothbart, 1980). And we recall subcategory information better about ingroup members than about outgroup members, which helps produce the outgroup homogeneity effect. For example, in one experiment (Mackie & Worth, 1990), college

students read short scenarios about other students. Later, the male subjects were better at remembering the major of the male student, and the female subjects better remembered the female student's major.

What all of this research leads us to conclude is that we are never neutral observers, but instead, our knowledge, expectations, and beliefs are lenses through which we perceive others. And those lenses alter our perceptions in many ways.

What Makes a Bigot?

In the previous section, we established that knowledge of stereotypes begins very early, that those stereotypes are pervasive throughout our culture, and that the content of the stereotypes is quite stable from place to place and time to time. Moreover, the cognitive effects of those stereotypes are universal: Human brains all operate more or less the same way.

All of this begs the following question: If we are all exposed to the same stereotypes, and if our minds are all identically affected by those stereotypes, why are we all not equally prejudiced? Why is it that a small minority of people are biased enough to actually commit crimes against others because of their groups, another small minority of people devote their lives to fighting bigotry, and the rest of us lie somewhere in the large gap separating the other two?

Another way we could ask the same question is to ask, what makes a bigot? Not surprisingly, there is no simple answer. Research in this area has tended to focus on two rather distinct forces, both of which I discuss in this section. Some of the research, especially the early work, has concentrated on the role of the personality. These studies have attempted to determine whether there is a constellation of individual characteristics that make up a "prejudiced personality." They examine the factors that might combine to shape a personality that is intolerant of others, and the traits of a person who is wont to act on that intolerance. In contrast, other research has looked at the role of external factors, such as the behaviors and attitudes of others, economic and social forces, and the larger cultural milieu.

The Role of the Family

The previous section discussed the fact that stereotypes and prejudice can be found in almost every segment of our society. Of these segments, perhaps none has more influence on an individual than that individual's family. Allport (1954) argued that prejudice can be learned from parents in two ways: It can be taught, or it can be caught.

Clearly, some children have parents or other family members who are bigoted and who consciously teach those bigoted values. For example, Tom Metzger heads a white supremacist organization called White Aryan Resistance (WAR). It is probably no surprise that his son, John Metzger, is also very active in the group. On WAR's Web site, in response to a question about when parents should teach their children about racism, Tom Metzger replies, "Immediately! A baby records all from the very beginning. Its mind is like a blank tape and ready to go. As soon as you are training a child not to touch a hot stove is the right time to teach RACISM" (Metzger, n.d.).

A fictional, but probably pretty accurate, portrayal of this process was given in the movie *American History X* (Kaye, 1998). In this film, a white father occasionally voices bigoted views, but he is apparently not a member of a hate group. After the father, who is a fireman, is shot and killed by a black person while putting out a fire, his older son becomes an avowed racist. He joins a skinhead gang and is carefully taught the dogma of racism and groomed to be a leader by an older man. When he is sent to prison for the brutal killing of a black man, his younger brother, who clearly idolizes him, soon follows in his footsteps.

Not all bigots, however, were intentionally tutored in bigotry by their parents, and few have family members who belong to hate groups. These children, instead, catch their parents' attitudes as they listen to their jokes, watch the way they interact with other people, and so on (Katz, 1983; Rohan & Zanna, 1996). In addition, early researchers argued that parenting style also affects the likelihood that a child will grow up prejudiced (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950; Allport, 1954). As Allport (1954) put it,

The parents may or may not express their own prejudices (usually they do). What is crucial, however, is that their mode of handling the child (disciplining, loving, threatening) is such that the child cannot help but acquire suspicions, fears, hatreds that sooner or later may fix on minority groups. (p. 297)

Authoritarianism

What type of parents are likely to raise prejudiced children? Adorno et al. (1950) and Allport (1954) referred to them as having an *authoritarian* personality. These parents tended to treat their children in a way that was neglectful, rejective (suppressive or overly critical), or inconsistent. Moreover, when asked to state their opinions, these parents were more likely to agree with the statements contained in Box 4.4. Allport argued that this parenting style resulted in a person who learns that the world is not equal, but hierarchical, and that power and authority are the important factors in human relationships. Moreover, children of authoritarian parents learn to fight impulses within themselves that they have been taught to view as evil, and they project those impulses onto others, which means they cannot trust those others. Finally, because these children fear showing aggression toward their parents, they displace that aggression onto others whom they view as vulnerable.

BOX 4.4 OPINIONS OF THE AUTHORITARIAN PARENT

Obedience is the most important thing a child can learn.

A child should never be permitted to set his will against that of his parents.

A child should never keep a secret from his parents.

I prefer a quiet child to one who is noisy.

(In the case of temper tantrums) Teach the child that two can play at that game, by getting angry yourself.

SOURCE: Allport (1954, p. 298).

Allport's (1954) research was subject to quite a bit of criticism (Brown, 1995). Although more recent research did support the link between authoritarian parenting and prejudiced children, later researchers pointed out that in reality, the type of parenting described in the early work would be more appropriately called "Right-Wing Authoritarianism" (RWA), and, although RWA might lead to prejudice, so might its opposite, "Left-Wing Dogmatism" (LWD) (Altemeyer, 1981; Brown, 1995; Nelson, 2002; Rokeach, 1956). Altemeyer (1998) devised a scale to measure RWA and found that scores on this scale were strongly correlated with levels of political conservatism, punitiveness, and prejudice. Examples of items on this scale include "What our country really needs is a strong, determined leader who will crush evil and take us back to our true path" and "Our country will be destroyed someday if we do not smash the perversions eating away at our moral fiber and traditional beliefs" (p. 50). Most white supremacist Web sites and literature closely echo these sentiments.

Although there is limited research available on hate crime offenders, some of it does support the view that hate crime offending may be related to parenting style and personality factors. Ezekiel (1995, 2002), for example, conducted extensive interviews with members of Klan and neo-Nazi groups. The young men who joined a Detroit neo-Nazi group were from poor neighborhoods, had fathers who left or died during their sons' childhoods, had experienced a series of cold or abusive step-fathers or mothers' boyfriends, and had family histories of alcoholism or violence. Dunbar (2003) found a high rate of indicators of psychopathy among convicted hate crime offenders. Some research also suggests that homophobia, in particular, may be related to particular personality factors in the offenders (see Box 4.5).

BOX 4.5 THE SPECIAL CASE OF HOMOPHOBIA

One topic related to prejudice that has received special attention is prejudice against gays and lesbians, or homophobia. This kind of hatred is particularly common, as we will discuss in Chapter 6, and often also particularly violent.

A study by Herek and Capitanio (1999) suggests some antigay animosity is related to AIDS. The study showed that most heterosexuals continue to associate AIDS with gay men. The stigma of AIDS negatively affects attitudes in general toward gay men. On the other hand, antigay attitudes certainly predated the AIDS epidemic and may have largely contributed to the stigmatization of AIDS itself.

Other scholars have long hypothesized that homophobia may be linked to individuals' own unconscious sexual preferences. The argument here is that some men are attracted to other men but are unable to accept these feelings. They so violently reject their own desires that they also lash out at others whom they perceive to have those same desires. This theory is supported by several cases in which men who have murdered gay men were shown to have a history of same-sex encounters themselves, as well as either denial of those encounters or extreme emotional turmoil associated with them. Furthermore, several men who have been tried for murdering gay men have used the *homosexual panic* or *homosexual threat* defenses, claiming that their violence was a response to the victim's sexual propositions or demands (Dunbar, 1999).

This hypothesis was tested by Adams, Wright, and Lohr (1996). Men who claimed to be heterosexual were given a test to determine their levels of homophobia and, based on their responses, were categorized as homophobic or nonhomophobic. They were then shown a series of erotic videotapes. While watching the videos, they were attached to a penile plethysmograph, a device that measures sexual arousal. Although all the men became aroused while watching videos depicting heterosexual or lesbian sex, only the homophobic men became aroused while watching videos of gay male sex. This study suggests that unconscious feelings of attraction toward other men may, in fact, act as a catalyst to homophobia and, perhaps, antigay hate crimes.

Situational Factors

Despite the quite extensive work that has been done on parenting styles and authoritarianism, most psychologists today avoid attempting to define the prejudiced personality. Instead, the focus has shifted to the role of situational forces (Reynolds, Turner, Haslam, & Ryan, 2001). As Brown (1995) states,

It is by now almost a truism in social psychology that our opinions and behavior are strongly influenced by such factors as the attitudes of others around or near to us, the norms of our group, and the relationships between our group and others. (p. 31)

With respect to hate crimes, the data support this view. As we have already discussed, most such crimes are committed by young people (who are especially susceptible to social influences) with a group of friends. Furthermore, most of these offenders are not hard-core, committed members of hate groups; rather, they are youths who are looking for excitement and wanting to fit in with what they perceive to be the norms of their social group. In Dunbar's (2003) study, only one quarter of the convicted hate crime offenders had clear signifiers of bias motivation, such as possession of hate paraphernalia or affiliation with a hate group, and only one quarter of the offenders had acted by themselves when they committed their crimes.

Indeed, recent research suggests that most hate crime offending may be a function not so much of the personality of the offender, but rather of the situation in which he finds himself. In this section, we explore some of the situational factors that might influence hate crime offending. It is worth noting again that no two offenders are alike and that these factors almost certainly play differing roles for each individual. This is supported by research that indicates that there are several typologies of hate crime offenders (Dunbar, 2003; McDevitt et al., 2002).

The Influence of the Group: Conformity, Obedience, and Groupthink

As mentioned previously, almost all of the research shows that hate crimes are not usually committed by individuals acting alone or by members of organized hate

organizations, but rather by small groups of friends or associates (Craig, 2002; Dunbar, 2003; Levin, 1993). This fact strongly suggests that social groups play an important role in explaining hate crimes. The fact that few offenders have any previous history of bias-related crimes particularly implies that in most cases, hate crimes may be due not so much to the offenders' own levels of prejudice as to the impact of group dynamics.

Much research has been conducted to try to explain why people sometimes do things when acting in groups or when influenced by others that they would not ordinarily do by themselves. Some of the early studies in this area were inspired by what could, arguably, be called the biggest hate crime of all: the extermination of 12 million Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, handicapped people, and others during the Holocaust. How can we explain why most Germans and millions of other Europeans cooperated in genocide or at least failed to take any actions to prevent it? The answer seems to lie in the related constructs of conformity, obedience, and groupthink.

Solomon Asch (1956) conducted the classic set of experiments on conformity. In these experiments, a group of people was gathered, and each individual was asked to state which of several lines was the same length as a comparison line. This was not a difficult task. However, in reality, all but one of the people present were actually confederates of the experimenter and purposely gave the same wrong answer. Then it was the turn of the remaining person, the true subject of the experiment. Would he give the answer that his eyes told him was obviously correct, or would he give in to group pressure and give the same wrong answer as the others? Surprising even Asch, three quarters of the subjects responded incorrectly at least once, and more than one third of all the answers the subjects gave were incorrect.³ These studies clearly indicated the power that social influence can have on individual behavior. However, even if a person is willing to give an obviously wrong answer on a perceptual task, does that mean that person will conform to pressure to take the much more serious step of committing acts of violence against others?

Stanley Milgram (1974) attempted to answer this question. In his experiments, subjects were told they were participating in a learning study and that their job was to "teach" a "learner" (actually a confederate of the researchers) a series of word pairs. The learner was taken into another room and, supposedly, hooked up to a device that would administer electric shocks to the arm. Photo 4.3 depicts the learner being strapped to the apparatus. The teacher was placed in front of a large control panel and told that whenever the learner made a mistake, he was to deliver to the learner shocks of increasing intensity. The buttons that controlled the shocks varied from 15 volts (labeled "slight shock") to 450 (labeled "XXX"). The teacher could hear the learner but not see him.

At the beginning of the experiment, the teacher gradually increased the shock level with each of the learner's wrong answers. After a while, the learner began to moan or cry out with each shock. Then he demanded to be released. There was growing indication of pain and then a continuing, ominous silence. The subjects were not threatened or bribed to continue the experiment but, if they hesitated, were simply told by a white-coated official that it was important for the experiment to continue.

Photo 4.3

SOURCE: From the film *OBEDIENCE* © 1968 by Stanley Milgram, © Renewed 1993 by Alexandra Milgram, and distributed by Penn State, Media Sales.



Milgram had asked 40 psychiatrists what they thought the subjects' responses would be. Those mental health professionals predicted that most would quit when the learner first asked to be let out, and only 1% would continue up to 450 volts (Aronson, 1999). In actuality, a stunning 62% of subjects continued to administer shocks right up to the end, even though they obviously believed they might be giving a lethal dose (Milgram, 1974)! The implication of these studies is that even ordinary people might be willing to commit serious acts of violence merely because they were asked to do so by an authority figure.

Another study on social influence, the famous Stanford Prison Experiment, was conducted by Zimbardo, Haney, Banks, and Jaffe (1974). In this experiment, they created a mock prison in the basement of the psychology department at Stanford University. Volunteer subjects, who were all male college students, were randomly assigned to be either guards or prisoners. The researchers then attempted to replicate, as closely as possible, the conditions of a real prison. Although the experiment was supposed to last 2 weeks, it had to be stopped after only 6 days because the "guards" had become increasingly cruel and brutal, whereas the "prisoners" had become fearful and servile, and some were experiencing severe psychological distress. The "guards" in this study were not ordinarily vicious people, nor were they encouraged to act that way by the researchers, but they had nonetheless become so because of their own perceptions of what their new social role required.

Taken together, these three studies, as well as numerous others they have inspired, indicate that human beings are deeply influenced by their social situations. More specifically, they show us that we are often willing to do things we would not otherwise have done, even to the extent of inflicting harm on others, if such behaviors seem to be socially desirable. Many hate crime offenders may be led to commit their crimes not primarily out of bias, but rather out of pressure or a desire to follow their group. Again, then, the term *hate crime* may be somewhat of a misnomer.

Why should the influence of groups be so great? A number of processes likely account for this. One of these is *deindividuation*, which may occur when a person feels anonymous. It has been shown that deindividuated people are more likely to act aggressively. For example, in one study (Zimbardo, 1969), student subjects who were dressed in loose-fitting robes and large hoods (not terribly unlike the traditional Klan regalia) gave longer and more severe electric shocks (as in the Milgram experiment, the shocks were not real, but the subjects did not know that) to another person than did subjects who were easily identifiable. As Aronson (1999) concludes, “When a person is part of a crowd, he or she is ‘faceless’ and, therefore, takes less responsibility for his or her actions” (p. 214). Wearing uniforms or other identical gear (as do not only Klan members, but also neo-Nazis and other extremists) further decreases the differences among members of a group, and therefore increases deindividuation.

A second process that can occur in groups is *identification*. This occurs when a person finds a group attractive and wants to be like its members. As a result, that person assumes the group’s attitudes and behaviors, although that person does not actually believe in those attitudes very strongly (Aronson, 1999). The strength of this process becomes obvious when one observes adolescents enthusiastically adopting their peers’ style of dress, musical tastes, slang expressions, and so on. They also may adopt less benign conduct, such as smoking, alcohol and drug abuse, delinquency, and bigotry.

Third, a person can internalize the beliefs of others. This tends to happen when the others are not only admired but are also considered particularly credible. The others’ attitudes become a permanent, important part of the person’s belief system and one that is extremely resistant to change (Aronson, 1999). This may help explain why some people join hate groups: They initially engage in moderately racist thoughts or actions because doing so gains them acceptance from their peers, but when exposed to the teachings of a charismatic leader, they come to embrace racism as a core value.

Internalization can also occur because of cognitive dissonance, which we discussed briefly in Chapter 3. The primary tenet of cognitive dissonance theory is that people are driven to avoid inconsistency (dissonance) in their ideas and beliefs (cognitions). When they become aware of inconsistencies, they must either change one of the cognitions or create new ones to deal with the contradiction (Aronson, 1999). A corollary to this theory, which has been demonstrated in research on human aggression (see, e.g., Glass, 1964), is that when people inflict harm on others, they often self-justify their actions by denigrating their victims.⁴ This may be particularly true when their harmful actions were done publicly, in view of others. Imagine, then, a young person who has engaged in verbal slurs, condemnation, or harassment of members of another group because he thinks doing so will gain him popularity or acceptance from his friends. Although he might not have been strongly biased to begin with, he may justify his behaviors by convincing himself that his targets *deserved* what he did to them. Those initially mild prejudices may become reinforced and, eventually, solidified. The study by Byers and Crider (2002) confirms this hypothesis. Young men who had committed hate crimes

against the Amish told the researchers that for one reason or another, their victims had deserved what had happened to them.

A final process that can occur with groups is known as *groupthink*, a term coined by Janis (1972). Under the groupthink model, groups sometimes strive so much to achieve or maintain consensus that dissent and critical thinking are strongly discouraged. As a result, groups of people often make poor decisions, even though the individuals involved may be aware that they are poor decisions and may not have reached the same decisions on their own. Although Janis (1989) has primarily used this theory to explain errors in judgment by policymakers and business leaders, it may apply equally well to the actions of hate crime offenders.

The research on social influence and group dynamics provides reasonable explanations for why some people commit hate crimes. To date, unfortunately, very little research has directly addressed these issues specifically with respect to group influence and hate crime offending. Franklin (2000) found that young adults who had committed antigay hate crimes were frequently motivated by their friends' antigay ideology. Byers, Crider, and Biggers (1999), in their research on young men who had committed hate crimes against the Amish, concluded that the offenders' families and peers often held anti-Amish beliefs. Again, this is another area of research that deserves more attention.

The Influence of Economics

Although little research has been done on the links between social influence and hate crimes, a fair amount of research has been conducted on the influence of another factor: economics. Specifically, a number of studies have tested the assumption that hate crimes are closely related to economic difficulties on the part of the offenders.

Conflict theory predicts that intergroup hostility arises when groups are in conflict for scarce resources (Campbell, 1965). For example, in their famous Robber's Cave experiment, Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, and Sherif (1961) were able to successfully create a great deal of hostility between two previously collegial groups of Boy Scouts by setting the two groups in competition with each other for prizes and other desirable things.⁵

Similarly, scapegoat theory predicts that, when things are difficult, people will strike out at a convenient target. According to Allport (1954), it is perennially tempting for us to shift the burdens of our own misfortunes onto the backs of another. Allport also pointed out that, historically speaking, certain groups have made particular favorites as scapegoats, including Jews and blacks. An example of scapegoating occurred 2 days after the September 11 attacks when Jerry Falwell blamed abortionists, pagans, feminists, gays, and the American Civil Liberties Union (he later apologized; Gerstenfeld, 2002). And soon after the terrorist attacks, David Duke's Web site sported a large pop-up banner blaming the Jews.

The conflict and scapegoat theories help explain an interesting phenomenon: A significant number of hate crimes occur not between poor whites and poor blacks, but rather between two minority groups. Examples of this include the conflict

between blacks and Jews in Crown Heights (discussed earlier in this chapter); between blacks, Hispanics, and Asian Americans in Los Angeles, New York, and Washington, D.C.; and between people of color and gays throughout the United States (Perry, 2001). Often, these groups are in competition for the second-lowest rung on the social and economic ladder. It makes sense that attacks by minorities might be targeted not at whites, whose position on that ladder is several steps ahead and perhaps viewed as unattainable, but instead at the attackers' closest rivals. In addition, as Perry points out, members of minority groups, too, have "internalized the dominant aspects of white masculine supremacy" (p. 134) and thus might choose white culture's traditional scapegoats.

Apart from the stereotype of racists as poor rednecks, there is some anecdotal evidence to support economics as an explanation for hate crimes. Money matters almost certainly played a part in the Klan persecution of Vietnamese shrimpers in Galveston Bay (discussed earlier in this chapter) and the well-publicized murder of Chinese American Vincent Chin by two unemployed autoworkers in Detroit in 1982 (the killers mistook their victim for Japanese American; Perry, 2001). And, in the Narrative Portrait at the end of this chapter, you will read about C. P. Ellis, who grew up in a desperately poor family during the Depression, just over the tracks from the black neighborhood. As an adult, Ellis, like his father before him, joined the Klan.

Ezekiel's (1995) work among young neo-Nazis also illustrates the potential link between poverty and hate crimes. All of the young men came from families that were working class at best, extremely poor at worst. Most of the men were unemployed, although a few had occasional low-paying jobs. They lived in Detroit, a city in which industrial employment, the mainstay of men of their class, was rapidly shrinking. They all lived in neighborhoods that were either largely or primarily African American, giving them plenty of opportunity to find handy targets for their anger.

Craig (2002) cites several examples outside the United States in which ethnic violence has been tied to difficult economic times in recent years. In Germany, China, France, Italy, and several former Soviet bloc countries, there have been high rates of unemployment and other monetary stresses that have frequently been blamed on immigrants, Jews, and others. During a recent trip to Hungary, which is still facing great difficulties in the transition from communism, I heard frequent resentment voiced against the Roma (Gypsies), who actually make up only a small proportion of the population. People told me that the Roma were to blame for Hungary's crime problems and that they put a strain on the government by having large families that they were unable to support. Roma teenagers at a high school I visited in the Czech Republic told stories of having been harassed and otherwise marginalized by their fellow citizens.

Economic themes frequently appear in hate literature and propaganda. In a content analysis my colleagues and I completed of extremist Web sites, half the sites mentioned economic issues (Gerstenfeld, Grant, & Chiang, 2003). Some of the claims were rational, if incorrect (e.g., "they" are stealing our jobs, "they" are costing us too much in welfare, etc.), whereas others were extremely far-fetched (e.g., kosher food certification constitutes an unfair tax on non-Jews, etc.). However, just because money issues are often discussed does not necessarily mean they are the root of hatred.

In 2008 and 2009, as the United States sank into a deep recession, some commentators noticed increases in hate crimes and in hate group activity, and blamed these increases, at least in part, on the poor economy. Of course, some of the cause may also be attributed to the election of the first African American U.S. president, an event that many extremists viewed with considerable alarm. However, as the economy soured, there also appeared to be an increase in violent acts against immigrants, which may have been fueled by the mainstream media blaming immigrants for the country's economic woes (Leadership Council on Civil Rights, 2009; SPLC, 2009a).

Perhaps the earliest controlled research on the link between hate crimes and economics was conducted by Hovland and Sears (1940), who found an inverse correlation between the price of cotton and the number of lynchings of African Americans in the South between 1882 and 1930. More recently, Medoff (1999) reported that hate crime activity decreases when market wage rates increase. Gale, Heath, and Ressler (1999) also found a complicated connection between economics and hate crime.⁶

Despite evidence to the contrary, it is not clear that bad economic times are, in fact, a major stimulus of hate crimes. Certainly, not all extremists are poor. For example, Vincent Bertollini, a Silicon Valley millionaire, was one of the biggest supporters of Richard Butler, the founder of Aryan Nations. When Butler lost his property in Idaho in a lawsuit, Bertollini bought him a new home. Bertollini and fellow high-tech millionaire Carl Story also founded a Christian Identity ministry called the 11th Hour Remnant Messenger. Other prominent white supremacists have also come from the higher socioeconomic strata: Richard Butler himself was once an aerospace engineer; the late William Pierce (leader of the National Alliance and author of the 1978 book *The Turner Diaries*) was a physics professor; and Arthur R. Butz, who is active in Holocaust denial, teaches electrical and computer engineering at Northwestern University. Among the leaders of the white supremacist organizations that Daniels (1997) studied, five of eight had college degrees and two had graduate degrees. Aho (1990), in his study of Christian Patriots in Idaho, found that his subjects were actually slightly better educated than the average members of their communities.

Like Ezekiel (1995), Hamm (1993) also conducted extensive research among young members of organized hate groups in America. Hamm's research among skinheads found that, whereas most of them came from working-class backgrounds, they did not report particularly traumatic childhoods. Most of them were either currently enrolled in high school or college, or held blue-collar jobs. Thus, the stereotype of hate crime offenders as poverty-stricken, isolated, disaffected youth proved erroneous.

In a recent study, Espiritu (2004) concluded that the link between economics and hate crimes was inconclusive. Research by Green and his colleagues also failed to find empirical support for a direct link between economics and hate crime. Green, Glaser, and Rich (1998) reevaluated Hovland and Sears's (1940) data on cotton prices and lynchings and concluded that there was no relationship between the two variables. In a second study, Green, Strolovitch, and Wong (1998) found that hate crimes in New York City neighborhoods were unrelated to the economic status of those neighborhoods. And when Green, Abelson, and Garnett (1999) examined responses to a survey given to residents of North Carolina, they found that members of extremist

groups and hate crime offenders had only slightly more negative views pertaining to economics than did the other respondents. These studies led Ezekiel (2002) to question his own earlier conclusion that economic pressure is a major factor influencing whether youths become white supremacists (Ezekiel, 1995).

The link between the economy and hate crimes is yet another area that needs additional research. Although there is some credible evidence that such a link exists, recent studies raise serious doubt. At the very least, the relationship appears to be complex, and we should question assumptions that hate crimes are a function of poverty or economic conflict.

The Influence of the Social Milieu

A variety of sociological theories have been proposed as explanations for hate crimes. Instead of focusing on individual differences, as do psychological theories, or exclusively on the offender's economic status, sociological theories concentrate on the entire social environment that surrounds offenders. Although the research in this area is enlightening, it suffers from a significant shortcoming in that most of it has been conducted among members of white supremacist groups. As we have already seen, only a small minority of hate crimes are actually committed by people affiliated with these groups. It is reasonable to propose that significant differences exist between avowed white supremacists and the "casual" or situational hate crime offender, so the generalizability of much of this research is questionable. Furthermore, there are important differences between extremist groups as well; this means that, for example, the data on Ku Klux Klan members are likely to be quite different from those on skinheads.

One theory that has frequently been used to explain hate crimes is strain theory. According to this theory, anomie occurs when people feel unable to reach a society's desired goals in a socially approved manner (Merton, 1957). Deviant behavior results. With respect to hate crimes, this concept is closely related to theories concerning the effects of economic difficulties but is broader. Strain theory does not require that the offender actually be living in poverty but rather that he or she have the subjective view that the offender or others like him or her are powerless and unable to fulfill the American Dream.

Again, there is a great deal of circumstantial evidence to support Merton's theory. For one thing, hate movements often have gained momentum during times of social and economic strife, even though the participants themselves are not necessarily directly affected by this strife. For example, Christian Identity, "patriot," tax protest, and militia groups (these groups are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5) experienced large increases in membership in the American Midwest during the farm crisis of the 1980s (see, e.g., Corcoran, 1990).

Another piece of evidence to support strain theory has already been mentioned: Much extremist literature and propaganda centers on economic and related themes. David Duke's Web site, for example, claims that immigration costs Americans \$30 billion a year, and one of the central goals of his "EURO" (European-American Unity and Rights Organization) is to fight affirmative action and similar policies.

A third piece of evidence is that many extremists, in addition to being opposed to ethnic and racial minorities, are also against anyone else they view as interfering with the privileges that should be accorded to white, Christian men. Misogyny is common; for example, the Fathers' Manifesto site (www.christianparty.net) contains, in addition to anti-Semitic material, exhortations to repeal the Nineteenth Amendment and to blacklist feminists. Homophobic invective is also widespread, often decrying gays' and lesbians' attempts to obtain "special privileges."

Furthermore, much of the literature on hate crime offenders has focused on their feelings of alienation and powerlessness. Dunbar (2003), Korem (1995), and Ezekiel (1995) all found that hate crime offenders tended to come from families that had histories of dysfunction and violence. Ezekiel (2002), especially, concluded that feelings of social dislocation and social isolation were two major factors influencing white supremacist behaviors.

Perry (2001), however, counters that strain theory does not adequately explain hate crimes. For one thing, who should feel strain more than women and minorities, who remain relatively disempowered and disadvantaged? Yet the majority of hate crime perpetrators are male and white. Moreover, hate crime offenders do not seem to feel powerless at all; rather, they appear to be interested in exercising and maintaining their power over others (Perry, 2002). In fact, maintenance of power is a major theme of white supremacists, who sport "White Power!" tattoos and recite David Lane's 14 Words: "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children."⁷

Perry (2001) also points out that hate crimes are frequently committed not by members of the underclass but rather by those who are privileged and socially powerful, such as college students and police officers. Offenders generally do not reject the authority of the status quo, but instead are hyperconformists who embrace it with extreme vigor (Hamm, 1993; Perry, 2001). Consider, for example, the words of former skinhead Thomas James Leyden, reflecting on why he allowed himself to be recruited into the movement: "I thought these were good guys, that I was being patriotic. I believed we were cleaning up America by drinking and fighting" (www.wiesenthal.com).

Two closely related sociological theories that might serve as more complete explanations for hate crimes are differential association and differential identification. According to differential association theory, people act in deviant ways because they were socialized to do so by a deviant subculture (Sutherland & Cressey, 1970). A modification of this concept, differential identification theory, states that people need not interact personally with those on whom they model their behavior but instead may choose models presented to them by the mass media. Furthermore, after they have chosen these models, they may be given rewards for doing so, such as the approval of others, notoriety, and material goods such as T-shirts or music CDs (Hamm, 1993).

In the context of hate crimes, then, offenders may learn to be bigoted from family, friends, and others around them, who socialize them to believe that prejudice and action against outgroups is acceptable behavior. Alternatively, these offenders might be influenced by television, music, movies, the Internet, and so on.

Although very little research has been conducted specifically to test this hypothesis, once again there is circumstantial evidence that supports it. As we have already seen, several decades of social psychological research tends to show a relationship between biased parental values and prejudice on the part of children. We have also seen that most hate crimes occur while the offenders are among groups of friends, and these friends might very well be a major source of biased attitudes. Levin and McDevitt (1993), for example, argue that many cases of hate crime involve small groups of people who were initially relatively nonbigoted, following a highly prejudiced leader.

Some research also suggests the power of friends in persuading people to join hate groups. Ezekiel (1995) concluded that most of the neo-Nazis he studied became involved because their friends recruited them. Similarly, nearly two thirds of the white supremacists in McCurrie's (1998) sample were recruited into hate groups; this cause of joining differs from that of more traditional gangs, in which youths tend to seek gang membership for protection or to make money. Several authors have emphasized the fact that extremist groups rely heavily on their recruitment efforts, especially among young people, to maintain memberships (Aho, 1988; Blazak, 2001). Finally, Turpin-Petrosino (2002) found that among secondary and college students, word-of-mouth contacts with white supremacists were more common than any other type of contact and were associated with stronger support for the groups than other types of contact.

Hero worship of a particular sort certainly seems to be an important facet of the white supremacist movement. Meeting places and gatherings frequently are adorned with depictions of racist luminaries such as Adolf Hitler and Adolf Eichmann, and white supremacists of many ilks wear Nazi uniforms and insignia. It is also common for them to adulate other champions and martyrs of white supremacism, such as Randy Weaver (whose wife and son were killed by federal agents in Idaho in 1992), William Pierce, George Lincoln Rockwell (founder of the American Nazi Party, who was murdered in 1967), and Bob Mathews (founder of The Order, who died during a standoff with the FBI).

It is not difficult for would-be bigots to find role models within the mass media. Ezekiel (1995), for example, reported that the neo-Nazis he studied gained most of their knowledge about Nazism from watching movies about World War II. Nearly a century ago, the Klan enjoyed its largest membership, in part due to the popularity of the film *The Birth of a Nation* (Griffith, 1915), the first full-length motion picture. In the movie's depiction of a white woman whose virtue had been compromised by a black man, it glorified the Klan.

In the 21st century, hate on the Internet is commonplace (Brown, 2009; Gerstenfeld et al., 2003). Estimates of the number of hate-related Web sites and pages range from several hundred (Franklin, 2001) to more than 10,000 (Simon Wiesenthal Center, 2009). The rapid rise in the use of social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube has also resulted in greater opportunities for extremists to spread their views. There are also extremist electronic mailing lists, chat groups, blogs, and the like (see Box 4.6). The extent to which these Internet sources appeal to people who are not already hard-core bigots is uncertain. In a survey by Turpin-Petrosino (2002), only 10 of 567 high school and college students reported online contact with white

supremacist groups, but this may be an underestimate because Leets (2001) found that students did not necessarily recognize the true nature of extremist Web sites. Furthermore, it likely does not take into account extremist materials people have encountered on social networking sites. One need not be a fan of old war movies or seek out extremist Web sites to be exposed to bigotry, however; as I discuss in the next section, biases of all types are a significant segment of mainstream culture.

BOX 4.6 HATE ONLINE

Hate groups have long used computers as a method of communicating with current and potential members. In the early 1980s, long before most Americans had heard of the Internet, groups such as WAR had created electronic bulletin boards (Hamm, 1993). As the Internet became a popular part of American society, extremist groups made frequent and enthusiastic use of it (B. Levin, 2002).

Hate groups can use Web sites and other online features to communicate with members, to recruit members, to spread their doctrines to a wider audience, and to sell merchandise. Moreover, the Internet has advantages over more traditional methods such as fliers and telephone hotlines. It is fast and inexpensive; it enables connections with a very wide audience, including people in other countries; it permits groups to attract young people with multimedia content and, sometimes, intentionally misleading information; and it allows groups careful control over their own images (Gerstenfeld et al., 2003).

By some counts, there may be more than 10,000 extremist Web sites and pages. Getting a count and an accurate picture of their content is difficult because of the fluidity of the Internet in general and because these types of sites have a particular propensity to quickly appear and disappear.

Some people have called for these sites to be shut down, and some major Internet service providers, such as Yahoo, refuse to host sites that they consider unacceptable. Other people argue, however, that extremists have the constitutional right to express their views. Some Web hosting services refuse to censor the content of the pages they host. A few, such as Stormfront, which is run by former Ku Klux Klan leader Don Black, were actually created specifically for the purpose of hosting and promoting white supremacist sites.

The rapid rise in social networking sites has also permitted extremists more opportunities to spread their views. In August 2009, Facebook claimed to have 250 million active users, and millions more people post to and read MySpace, Twitter, Livejournal, and LinkedIn, as well as blogs and YouTube. In part because of the recentness of the social networking phenomenon, no studies have yet assessed the frequency of extremist material on these sites. However, it takes relatively little time to determine that these sites do contain ample biased material.

As predicted by Hamm (1993), involvement in hate crimes and related activity may bring social benefits. I have already mentioned the potential impact of approval by friends and peers, which is an important reward at all ages, especially during the teenage years. Offenders may also gain greater notoriety: Appearances by white supremacists on talk shows were popular for a while, and some offenders, such as Timothy McVeigh and the Williams brothers, seem to have deliberately set out to

make examples or martyrs of themselves. More tangible benefits are possible as well. In our survey of extremist Web sites (Gerstenfeld et al., 2003), nearly half of the sites contained multimedia content, such as free music downloads. More than half of the sites sold some kind of merchandise, such as T-shirts, stickers, video games, and CDs.

If the sociological theories just discussed are accurate, it might be the case that many hate crime offenders simply happened to associate with people who were already strongly prejudiced. Hate crime offending, then, might be more a matter of luck than personal, economic, or social circumstances. This might have some important policy implications when it comes to hate crime prevention.

There is a major weakness with using differential association and differential identification to explain hate crimes, apart from the lack of direct empirical evidence. Neither theory explains why some youths choose to identify with bigoted models, whereas most do not. Most young people today have access to the same array of role models in the mass media. Why do some find Nazis and other racists so appealing? The answer to that question might lie in the factors we discussed in the previous section; individual differences in personality may play a part.

The Influence of Culture

In her thoughtful critique of existing theories of hate crimes, Perry (2001) makes an important point: It is a mistake to think of hate crime offenders as deviants, because in our culture (and in many others) bigotry is anything but deviant. She argues, "Hate crime is not abnormal; rather it is a normal (albeit extreme) expression of the biases that are diffused throughout the culture and history in which it is embedded" (p. 37).

Does this seem extreme? American history is replete with examples of government-sponsored or -sanctioned violence and discrimination on the basis of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and so on. Within the last 2 centuries our country enslaved African Americans and committed genocide against millions of Native Americans.⁸ Too far in the past? Women were denied the vote until 1920 and were not allowed to serve on juries for several decades more. Immigration, land ownership, and citizenship were limited on the basis of national origin. Japanese Americans had their property confiscated and were interned in camps during World War II. Legalized segregation continued well into the lifetimes of most living Americans. Still too distant? This very minute, homosexuals are not allowed to serve in the military if they are open about their sexual preference, and sodomy remains illegal in several states. Shortly after the September 11 attacks, in several separate incidents, FBI agents interrupted prayer services at mosques and recorded the license plate numbers of those who were attending Muslim religious services (Ibish, 2001b). One member of Congress said during a radio interview, "Someone who comes in that's got a diaper on his head and a fan belt wrapped around that diaper on his head, that guy needs to be pulled over" (Ibish, 2001a).

Even more common than government-sponsored bias, however, is that depicted in the mainstream mass media (see Box 4.7). Of course, hard-core white supremacists can listen to hate-filled music by such bands as Skrewdriver, Angry Aryans, and Nordic Thunder. However, very few teenagers are likely to buy the CDs of such groups. On the

other hand, consider the lyrics in one of Eminem's top-selling songs. "Drips" contains these lyrics: "Now I don't wanna hit no woman, but this chick's got it comin', someone better get this bitch, before she gets kicked in the stomach / and she's pregnant, but she's eggin' me on, beggin' me to throw her off the steps of this porch / my only weapon is force and I don't wanna resort to any violence of any sort." Besides their frequent misogyny, Eminem's songs are also infamous for their homophobic content.

BOX 4.7 BIAS IN THE MEDIA

Many of our perceptions and beliefs about others are influenced by what we have seen on television, in movies, and in other forms of mass media. Unfortunately, research strongly suggests that these sources tend to perpetuate false stereotypes. Stereotypes in the media are probably as old as the media themselves. The first full-length motion picture, *The Birth of a Nation* (Griffith, 1915), glorified the Klan, and the first talking movie, *The Jazz Singer* (Crosland, 1927), featured Al Jolson in blackface. To some extent, the situation has improved in recent years. Few modern filmmakers would cast a servant character like those played by Stepin Fetchit, Aunt Jemima has been given a modern makeover, and Native Americans are now generally treated more sensitively than in the cowboy movies of the 1950s. However, bias is still alive and well in the media.

A number of studies have been conducted on the depiction of crime in the news and on crime dramas. Overall, these studies agree that minorities are disproportionately shown as the perpetrators of crime, especially violent crime. Moreover, whites are disproportionately portrayed as crime victims (see, e.g., Dixon & Linz, 2000; Dorfman & Schiraldi, 2001; Mastro & Robinson, 2000; Oliver, 1994; Weiss & Chermak, 1998).

Although African Americans, and African American men especially, are frequently associated with crime and violence, this is not the only group that is portrayed negatively. People of Middle Eastern or Arab descent are often shown as terrorists or the like (Madani, 2000). In fact, after the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City, members of the media almost immediately speculated that the perpetrators were Arabs, and law enforcement agents began stopping and questioning people in the area who appeared to be Middle Eastern (Gerstenfeld, 2002). Of course, as we know now, this mass murder was committed by white, Christian Americans. Other racial and ethnic stereotypes are common in the media, and many ethnic groups are rarely depicted at all.

Racial and ethnic stereotypes are not the only stereotypes that appear in the media. Women are overrepresented in commercials for domestic products and underrepresented in others (Bartsch, Burnett, Diller, & Rankin-Williams, 2000; Hurtz & Durkin, 1997). Although some argue that portrayals of gay men and women have improved in recent years, the media still tend to show LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people in negative or stereotypical lights, when they show them at all.

It's not just music that may inspire extremism. When Scott Roeder allegedly shot and killed abortion provider George Tiller in 2009, some commentators noted that Fox News commentator Bill O'Reilly had spoken harsh words about Dr. Tiller on his show, even referring to him as "Dr. Killer."

NARRATIVE PORTRAIT*Growing Up Racist, II*

Claiborne Paul ("C. P.") Ellis, like Larry L. King, grew up during the Depression. He lived in Durham, North Carolina, in the poor white section of town, just across the railroad tracks from the black neighborhood. His father worked at a cotton mill at night and painted houses by day. C. P. quit school in the eighth grade, worked a series of low-paying jobs, owned a service station, and eventually worked as a maintenance worker at Duke University. During the civil rights era, he joined the Ku Klux Klan.

When the schools in Durham were to be desegregated, C. P. was named to the desegregation committee, as was Ann Atwater, a local black activist. Surprisingly, the two found common ground and gradually became close friends. In 1996, Osha Gray Davidson wrote a book chronicling C. P.'s and Ann's pasts and ongoing friendship. In this excerpt from that book, Davidson describes C. P.'s childhood:

Paul Ellis [C. P.'s father] was descended from yeoman farmers forced into tenancy and then off the land altogether when tobacco prices plummeted, thrusting him and thousands like him into the new industrial society that was transforming the South. C. P.'s mother, Maude, was an emotionally distant figure, already defeated by hard work and poverty by the time C. P. was born. . . . Paul Ellis drank himself into oblivion every weekend, often turning violent when intoxicated. Years later, C. P. was still haunted by the memory of his father, drunk and wielding an ice pick on the porch of their house, while he huddled inside with his mother behind the locked door.

C. P. and his one sister were raised in chaos and poverty, as their parents had been, and the future held for them nothing more than it had for those who had gone before: a few years of schooling and then the mills. If they didn't die there, amidst the chattering machinery and the cotton dust, they could look forward to a brief and exhausted "retirement" before returning to the red Piedmont soil, their lives having slipped away, trivial and unnoticed. . . .

When he had been drinking, Paul Ellis would sometimes sit with his son on the porch telling the boy stories about the glory days before the Civil War. C. P. relished the tales about Jefferson Davis, Jeb Stuart, Stonewall Jackson, and all the other warriors who had fought to preserve the "Southern way of life" and who, said his father, had been defeated by outsiders and traitorous blacks. But the Lost Cause was not lost forever. Paul Ellis told his son that there was a secret society of Southern men who would rise up someday and restore Dixie to her former greatness. During one of those drunken sessions, Paul Ellis whispered to the boy that years ago he himself had been a member of this group. Did he sense a glimmer of doubt in his son's eyes? Perhaps. Who was Paul Ellis after all but a nearly illiterate linthead who barely provided for his own family and who drank himself to sleep almost every weekend night.

Ellis, though, had proof. He climbed unsteadily to his feet and went inside, returning with a memento of his more illustrious past. In his outstretched hands, he held the white robes and conical hat of the Ku Klux Klan. "Only the Klan looks out for the white man," Paul Ellis told his son, with the profound solemnity of inebriation. "You just watch. The Klan'll save this country."

SOURCE: *The Best of Enemies: Race and Redemption in the New South* by O. G. Davidson/Scribner (1996). Reprinted with permission.

Of course, much of the bias to which we are exposed is subtle. Sports fans might watch a game involving the Chiefs or the Redskins. Those who feel they have gotten a bad deal might complain about getting “gypped” or “Jewed down.” A high school student wishing to express that something is undesirable might say, “It’s so gay!” We might turn on the television almost any time to see young black men depicted as gangsters, Middle Eastern people as terrorists, and gay men as effeminate. In advertising, women are shown as sex objects if they are young, and if they are a little older, they become domestic drudges, responsible for cleaning toilets, doing laundry, and cooking meals. All of these things and many more reinforce our stereotypes, often without us even being aware of it. They also lead to a situation in which bigots believe that their beliefs are mainstream and acceptable.

Arguably, in fact, the beliefs of bigots really are not so very far from the ordinary. Consider, for example, the official platform of one Klan group, the Texas Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (www.texasamericanknights.org/platform.html). The Texas Knights call for returning to traditional Christian values, getting tough on crime, outlawing abortion and gun control, limiting welfare spending, reforming education, allowing prayer in schools, limiting the rights of homosexuals, restricting immigration, making English the official (and only) language, eliminating affirmative action, lowering taxes, and limiting foreign aid. This sounds remarkably similar to the platforms of mainstream political parties, especially those on the more conservative side of the political spectrum (see, e.g., the official Republican Party platform at www.gop.org/gopinfor/platform).

Despite the fact that many people assume we are living in an enlightened era, bigotry is still alive and well in the minds and hearts of many Americans. As discussed earlier in this chapter, we are often less willing to admit to it openly today, so it has become harder to measure, but it has certainly not disappeared. In a poll commissioned in the spring of 2002 by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), 17% of respondents were strongly anti-Semitic, and an additional 35% were moderately so (ADL, 2002a). Anti-Semitic attitudes were also correlated with intolerant attitudes in general. Feelings against other groups run even stronger: Herek (2002b) reports that in 1998, 54% of Americans surveyed felt that homosexual behavior is always wrong, and in 1999, 44% of Americans surveyed considered homosexuality an unacceptable lifestyle. In Franklin’s (2000) study, 10% of high school and college students reported having physically assaulted or threatened homosexuals, and another 23% reported having called them names. Of the remaining students, nearly one quarter had witnessed verbal or physical abuse committed by friends. Morris (1991) found strong evidence of antiminority sentiment among college students, especially those living in fraternities and sororities. For example, 24% of those living in Greek housing responded that interracial marriage was clearly wrong, and an additional 20% had mixed feelings.

Many commentators have noted the relationship between prejudice in society at large and the commission of hate crimes. Petrosino (1999) points out that extremist ideology has gained growing acceptance in modern America. White supremacists have run in elections at local, state, and national levels and have sometimes been successful (the most obvious example is David Duke, who was elected to the Louisiana House of Representatives in 1989). Pat Buchanan’s 2001 book is called

The Death of the West: How Dying Populations and Immigrant Invasions Imperil Our Country and Civilization. In its arguments that Western (i.e., white, Christian) civilization is in peril due to immigration and high birthrates of non-Westerners, it closely reflects the dominant themes of most major white supremacist rhetoric.

Garland (2001) links the murders of gay serviceman Allen Schindler and gay textile worker Billy Jack Gaither⁹ to antigay policies in the military and in state and federal governments. He concludes,

Throughout the United States, harassment, punishment, and other forms of intrusion into the love lives of gay and lesbian people are well-rehearsed as a matter of culture and policy. . . . For those Americans who spend life along the culture's most violent and primitive margins, brute force must feel like an effective way to participate in the culture's promotion of death of its gay citizenry. (p. 91)

Speaking of a somewhat broader context, Wang (2002) argues that most of those who commit hate crimes do so mostly out of the desire to fit in or obtain other personal benefits. As we have seen, this argument is well supported by empirical evidence. The hate crime perpetrator, she states, will choose those social groups whom the social environment has marked as acceptable targets.

Perhaps Craig (2002) best summed up the role of societal prejudices in fostering hate crimes. She wrote, "Patterns of prejudice are normative within this culture, and linked to social and historical processes. For the cynic then, the question 'Why do hate crimes occur?' reasonably becomes 'Why don't hate crimes occur more frequently?'" (p. 92).

Why Do People Join Organized Hate Groups?

It seems that most people who commit hate crimes are "casual" offenders. Their biases are perhaps not that much stronger than most people's, and their offending is primarily a function of the situations in which they find themselves. But what about the exceptions to this rule, the hard-core bigots? What leads a person to be so firm in his or her prejudices as to join an organized hate group?

There is no clear answer to this question. Certainly, no single factor stands out as a clear basis for hate group membership. Even previous family membership in such a group is probably not a very good predictor; many current members were the first in their families to join, and the children of current members do not inevitably end up joining themselves. McCurrie (1998) found that among the white supremacists he studied, one quarter had a father who encouraged them to join and one fifth had a mother who provided such encouragement.

As we have already seen, there is no clear profile of extremist group members. On the whole, compared with other people, they do not seem to have come from particularly dysfunctional families or economically disadvantaged households. In one study of 82 white supremacist gang members, McCurrie (1998) found that most had been involved with drug dealing, most came from single-parent homes,

one third were bullied in school and two thirds were bullies, and a fifth had been forced against their will to have sex at some time in their lives. However, McCurrie's sample drew very heavily from prison gang and motorcycle gang members and may not be representative of extremists in general. Drug dealing, for example, although typical of prison and motorcycle gangs, is not usual for most other extremist groups. In fact, because some of the groups are strongly affiliated with conservative Christian ideology, drug use is strongly discouraged.

What does stand out as one reads the research on hate group membership is the role of recruitment, as mentioned previously. People join these groups because they know someone else who already belongs. As Aho (1990) concluded in his work with Christian Patriots,

Respondents rarely joined the movement because they saw it initially as compatible with their political interests. Indeed, many confess at first to have been revolted by the Identity message or by Constitutionalism. Rather, they "joined with" others already in the movement, and only later began articulating its dogma. (p. 187)

In other words, virulent racism does not cause hate group affiliation, but hate group affiliation causes virulent racism.

What appears likely is that particular individuals are especially vulnerable to hate group recruitment. Perhaps this is due to their personal circumstances—feelings of frustration or alienation, economic stresses, religious or political views, and the like—or perhaps they simply have a need to feel like part of a group. Many of us have this need; it is why we join clubs and fraternities and the like. Hate groups, in particular, are often very good at making new members feel welcome. And it takes no special skills for a member of a hate group to be told that he is valued, powerful, and superior. All it takes is for him to be the right race, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation.

Extremist groups tend to produce a large amount of propaganda: pamphlets, books, Web sites, music, cartoons, and so on. It is likely that the major consumers of all of this material are people who have already joined the groups. Why spend so much energy preaching to the choir? Because it is after people have joined that they need to be persuaded to buy into the extremist ideology, and then they need to be constantly reminded to adhere to it.

Conclusion

A moral to be drawn from all of the research and theories presented in this chapter is that there is really nothing abnormal about those who commit hate crimes. It is tempting to think of them as deviant or evil. In fact, doing so reinforces our own self-images as good people. Certainly, those who do commit these acts are responsible for the choices they make and should be held legally and morally accountable. However, we should not become too comfortable in our own ethical superiority, because, by most accounts, the type of people who commit hate crimes are not "them"—they're "us."

Discussion Questions

1. Is it surprising to you that hate crimes are a serious problem on college campuses? Why do you think this is the case? Are you aware of hate crimes on your own campus or others? How prevalent are noncriminal acts of harassment and prejudice on your campus? What can and should be done about this, and by whom?
2. Consider the typology of hate crime offenders created by McDevitt et al. (2002). What categories do the hate crimes you have heard about fall into? Do you think that other categories might exist as well? How different do you think the overall breakdown of types might be in areas other than Boston—for example, more rural locales? If you were a social scientist, what research concerning hate crime types would you like to conduct?
3. In what ways do stereotypes affect how we perceive other people? The research suggests that the processes that underlie stereotypes are automatic but can be reversed through conscious effort on the part of the perceiver. Under what circumstances do you believe this effort will and will not be made? If you were a teacher, how would you design a curriculum that would encourage children to make this effort?
4. Consider the stories of Larry L. King and C. P. Ellis. In what ways was racism evident in their childhoods? What roles did their parents play? King ended up educated and a liberal, whereas Ellis dropped out of school and joined the Klan. What factors do you think might explain these differences, considering that there are a lot of similarities in their childhoods? Why do you think King later disavowed racism?
5. A major controversy in research on prejudice is where the cause of prejudice lies: in the individual personality or in the social factors that affect that person. Describe the evidence for each view. With which side do you find yourself more in agreement?
6. Many people assume that hate crimes are committed by poor, uneducated people. How well is this assumption supported by research? Why do you think this assumption persists?
7. One thing that stands out in nearly all the research on hate crimes, both those committed by members of hate organizations and those committed by those who are unaffiliated with such organizations, is the role of the group. Hate crimes, more than any other kind of offense, appear to be a group activity. Why do you think that is? At least one state (Oregon) further enhances penalties for hate crimes committed by more than one individual. In light of what the research suggests, would you support such a law in your own state?
8. Some of the research suggests that whether a particular person becomes a hate crime offender is largely a function of whom he or she knows—that

is, those who happen to have friends or family who are inclined to commit such crimes may become inclined to do so themselves. If this is the case, what policies or programs does it suggest might be useful in preventing hate crimes?

9. Describe some of the subtle ways in which our culture depicts and reinforces biases. Pay careful attention to the ways in which advertising, mass media, and everyday speech portray members of different groups. Do you feel that, in the past few years, this situation has gotten worse, gotten better, or remained the same? What are some strategies you would suggest to reduce bias within the larger cultural context?
10. Why do people join hate groups? What is attractive to them about these groups? In what ways do you think hate group members differ from “ordinary” people? What are the policy implications of this?

Internet Exercises

1. The Implicit Association Test (IAT), available online, offers an opportunity for you to explore your own biases. You can take tests concerning age, race, gender, and other biases at <https://implicit.harvard.edu/>. At the SPLC’s site (www.tolerance.org/hidden_bias/), there are additional tests on biases about sexual orientation, Native Americans, and other topics. Take a few of these tests. Are you surprised at the results? To learn more about the tests, read this page: http://www.tolerance.org/hidden_bias/tutorials/. The following page contains a bibliography about the IAT: <http://www.projectimplicit.net/articles.php>.
2. The U.S. Department of Education has a comprehensive guide to protecting students from harassment and hate crimes. You can download it at <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OCR/archives/Harassment/harassment.pdf>. Partners Against Hate has a Web site with extensive information on hate crime prevention among school-age children and youths: www.partnersagainsthate.org/.
3. You can find out more about Zimbardo’s famous Stanford Prison Experiment at <http://www.prisonexp.org>. Among other things, you can view a slide show of the experiment or read discussion questions related to it.
4. For an interesting exploration of racist depictions of African Americans in the media, visit the Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia, which has a Web site at <http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/>. Michigan State University’s museum has an exhibit on images of immigrants. Some of the exhibit can be viewed online at <http://museum.msu.edu/Exhibitions/Virtual/ImmigrationandCaricature/ExhibitionSectionI.html>. A Web site that explores media images of Native Americans is <http://www.bluecorncomics.com/stereotype.htm>.

Notes

1. The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) ended up representing the Vietnamese Fisherman's Association in a lawsuit against the Klan. After a bizarre trial, during which Klan leader Louis Beam apparently attempted to perform rites of exorcism against SPLC attorney Morris Dees, a federal judge enjoined the Klan from continuing its activities in Galveston (Stanton, 1992).

2. In November 2002, Benjamin Williams committed suicide in his jail cell.

3. When subjects were placed in a room alone and asked to complete the same task, there were virtually no errors.

4. Social psychologists study the tendency to denigrate victims as a part of cognitive dissonance theory. Sociologists also have studied this phenomenon, and it is one of the central tenets of Sykes and Matza's (1957) neutralization theory. Neutralization theory holds that one way offenders justify their behavior is by denying the harm that their actions cause.

5. Significantly, the researchers were later able to eliminate this hostility and restore friendship by creating situations in which the two groups were forced to cooperate to repair the camp's water supply and restart a stalled bus.

6. These researchers proposed a rather complex mathematical model for hate crimes. Among other things, they found that measures of envy and altruism were helpful in predicting hate crime rates. For a different perspective, see Dharmapala and Garoupa (2001); these researchers use an economic benefits analysis to explore when penalty enhancements are likely to serve as effective deterrents to hate crimes. See also Dharmapala and McAdams (2001); using economic analysis, they conclude that hate crime offenders, unlike other criminals, stand mostly to gain esteem. They also discuss the relationship between hate speech and hate crimes.

7. David Lane was a founding member of The Order, a terrorist organization that, among other things, murdered Denver talk-show host Alan Berg and robbed an armored car in California. Lane was subsequently convicted of several federal charges and sentenced to 190 years in prison.

8. For an excellent analysis of historical events as hate crimes, see Petrosino (1999).

9. Twenty-two-year-old Allen Schindler was beaten to death in 1992 by two of his ship-mates because he was gay. Billy Jack Gaither, 39, was beaten to death in 1999 in Alabama by an acquaintance and the acquaintance's friend.