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Theorizing Hate in Contemporary USA

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In this chapter, we take up the construct *hate*: what it is, how it appears, and how psychology can study it. Hate is often studied in its extreme forms (e.g., murder, genocide). We turn, however, to its more mundane forms to understand the normalization of this concept in the early decades of the 21st century in the United States and how it combines with moral exclusion and injustice. Mundane forms of hate can teach us to see its manifestations in contemporary life, its progression, and, we hope, the possibilities for its dismantling. We write this chapter at a moment when the president of United States produces a constant stream of disrespectful and violent political messages that have made hateful racist statements increasingly acceptable. His messages have, of course, affected how people treat one another; the day after Donald Trump won the 2016 U.S. presidential election, hate crimes connected with racial and ethnic bias increased (Eligon, 2018; Williams, 2018). Given the increase in hate speech and hate-based violence in contemporary United States, understanding hate as a psychological construct is an urgent matter that demands our attention now. Mundane examples of hate abound and are on the rise:

1. At a high school basketball game in Connecticut, suburban fans shouted “Trump! Trump! Trump!” as the predominantly Black and Latino team from the city emerged on the court. Their taunt invoked the president’s name as a racist jeer in the aftermath of a contentious 2016 presidential election that “gave oxygen to hate” (Barry & Eligon, 2017).

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2. Sixty boys from Baraboo High School in Wisconsin pose for a photo while enacting the *Sieg heil* ("Hail victory") salute, a gesture of greeting that connotes alignment with Nazi ideology (Caron, 2018; Lawler, 2018). The Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum responded to this image by stating, "We need to explain what the danger is of hateful ideology rising. Auschwitz with its gas chambers was at the very end of the long process of normalizing and accommodating hatred" (Hassan, 2018).

3. In November 2018, U.S. House of Representatives member Steve King (Iowa-R) was recorded describing the "caravan" of people walking from Central America to the United States to seek asylum from violence and poverty as "dirt." King commented, "There's plenty of dirt, it's coming from the West Coast, too. And a lot of other places, besides. This is the most dirt we've ever seen" (Phillips, 2018).

These three scenarios offer hate in its mundane forms: speech acts, symbolic gestures, and endorsements of negative stereotypes. Perhaps each on its own would be dismissed as momentary, fleeting, and, at worst, offensive. But such observations are important because they indicate that hate has jumped levels of analysis from individuals and small groups to become pervasive in larger groups and as part of the nation's culture. These mundane examples of hate help frame our larger discussion that defines, theorizes, and studies hate in contemporary United States.

DEFINING HATE

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (2018) defines *hate* as "a feeling of intense dislike or aversion towards a person or thing; hatred, loathing, animosity." This definition is straightforward and widely understood by all. Hate, however, has many guises (Sternberg, 2005) and exists along a continuum from *thinking* hateful thoughts to *acting* on hate. With this in mind, we argue that hate is not simply an intense negative feeling, but has several additional components, including emotional, behavioral, moral, and relational elements (McClelland & Opotow, 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2009; Opotow & McClelland, 2007). Hate is a construct with tangled psychological, sociological, political, and historical threads that entwine.

MacDougall (1921) defined hate as arising from fear brought on by harsh experiences and punishments. Fear, he argued, combines with other emotions, particularly revenge, disgust, shame, and anger, to yield hate. He offered the example of a young child who might hate a violent-tempered father after enduring a consistently threatening environment. Allport (1979/1992) defined hate as "a matter of frustrated affiliative desire and the attendant humiliation to one's self-esteem or to one's values" (p. 93). In both descriptions, hate mingles anger and aggression in a particular context—one that is relational, cumulative, and a response to attacks on one's well-being and personhood. These descriptions depict hate building up, gaining force through the layering of

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negative emotions, a sense of grievance, and a continuing conflict-laden relationship that become increasingly unbearable (Opotow, 2005). These descriptions focus on the person hating another person(s), but the buildup of hate is not limited to interpersonal relationships. It can also emerge from repeated, negative intergroup interactions that emerge in intergroup conflict and war (e.g., Awan & Zempi, 2016; Moore & Aweiss, 2002; Yanay, 2002).

Primo Levi, an Italian Jewish chemist, writer, and Holocaust survivor describes hate's stunning complexity. In *The Truce* (1965), Levi's memoir on the liberation of Auschwitz and its aftermath, he captured hate's intensity in a powerful passage describing hate as spiraling, as alive, and as having profound human significance:

> Hate is an inexhaustible fount of evil; it breaks the body and the spirit of the submerged, it stifles them and renders them abject; it returns as ignominy upon the oppressors, it perpetuates itself as hatred among the survivors, and swarms around in a thousand ways, against the very will of all, as a thirst for revenge, as a moral capitulation, as denial, as weariness, as renunciation. (p. 426)

This description of hate as something that "swarms around in a thousand ways" captures hate's power and its self-perpetuating destructiveness both for its victims and its perpetrators. Hate, Levi warns, has a temporal element; it is contagious, erodes morals, and returns in the future as revenge. Levi's description is relevant to the alarming escalation of hate and hateful dynamics evident in our society today.

In the remainder of this chapter, we present our theory of hating and place this theory within contemporary instances of hate in the United States. Our aim is to provide psychologists with a nuanced definition of hate and to encourage research on hate that prioritizes four characteristics that we argue are essential for contemporary research on hate: (a) attention to historical antecedents; (b) attention to levels of analysis; (c) attention to processes of normalization; and (d) attention to the "swirl" and to affect, morals, cognitions, and hateful behaviors.

A THEORY OF HATING

Hate can be understood in a number of ways: as a viscerally felt emotion, as a readiness to act hatefully, as actions that are imbued with and informed by hate, and as an ideology and worldview. Our theory of hating is based on empirical research. It includes a combination of five essential elements—antecedents, cognitions, emotions, morals, and behaviors (Opotow & McClelland, 2007)—as well as attention to micro, meso, and macro levels of analysis (McClelland & Opotow, 2011).

We delineate the trajectory of hating as follows:

1. Hate emerges from antecedents prior to the experience of hate, some proximate contextual factors, and some unconscious or irrational beliefs.
2. These antecedents create a readiness to hate.

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3. Hate, a negative form of affect, depends on the availability of social categories, particularly derogated social groups, and on moral justifications that exclude particular groups from the scope of justice to justify and act on hate.
4. This affective–cognitive–moral swirl can intensify destructive conflict and exclusionary rhetoric, giving rise to hate speech, hateful acts, and hate crimes; but hate can also remain quiescent and not lead to hateful behavior.

The following schematic represents our theory of hating (Opotow & McClelland, 2007), in which behaviors that emerge from hate can then serve as antecedent conditions for hate to escalate in a self-reinforcing cycle. We describe each of the elements of our theory and how the elements relate to one another.

Antecedents

Antecedents ask us to consider the role of the past in current hate. This element in the theory acknowledges the role of personal and collective histories that can contribute to conscious and unconscious origins of hate (Riviere, 1964). In our theory, we ask researchers to consider what came before hate in terms of historical, fictional, and unconscious factors. Antecedents include events—real, imagined, or distorted in the lives of people as individuals, as members of groups, or within the larger society—that affect people's worldview. For individuals, antecedents can include experiences and unconscious aspects of a person's past that can persist in memories and irrational thinking. For groups, antecedents can include events and experiences that have meaning for people in the group, such as histories that may have involved competition, uneven resource distribution, favoritism, and injustice. In the larger society, antecedents can include recent or historical events, including acts of violence, periods of tension, and wars that give rise to histories and myths that persist in expectancies, stereotypes, fears, and collective memories (e.g., Halbwachs, 1992). By including antecedents as the first element in our theory, we argue that personal, group-level, or societal antecedents can generate the predisposition to hate. However, they do not directly lead to hateful behaviors. These antecedents, in turn, are mediated by cognition, emotions, and morals.

Cognitions

Cognitions are the labels, categories, stereotypes, and social representations that can give rise to ingroup/outgroup dynamics. Cognitive research on how we process information, make decisions, and solve problems (Fiske & Taylor, 1991) is relevant to hate. This includes work on the attitudes, schemas, attribution, social identities, and social representations that are at the core of stereotyping and prejudice (Augoustinos & Walker, 1998). Cognitive research is not limited to the individual at the unit of analysis. It is also attentive to the broader societal structures in its investigations based on discourse analyses

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(Wertz, 2011). Stereotypes, for example, are of particular relevance to hate. Though some categorizations are clearly benign (e.g., accountants, art students) and some simplify information (e.g., expert, creative), negative stereotypes that derogate individuals and groups have considerable "affective, symbolic, and political punch" (Augoustinos & Walker, 1998, p. 631; see also Allport, 1954) and can serve as precursors for and justify hateful ideologies, hate speech, and hateful behavior. We argue that cognitions are a necessary component to hate because they provide a ready and endorsed set of organizing categories that divide people into groups, label these groups, and provide rationales for this organization. Again, like antecedents, cognitions alone do not lead to hateful behaviors. Affective and moral elements are necessary to animate these categories.

Emotions

Hate is often associated with feelings such as anger, fear, frustration, contempt, disgust, powerlessness, guilt, and envy, but remains distinct. Together with cognitions, emotions facilitate "categorization guided by embodied knowledge" (Barrett, 2006, p. 20). Thus, we evaluate our experiences emotionally in light of how we label a context and how we perceive ourselves in relation to others, an observation with particular relevance to hate. Frijda (1986) described *emotion* as a middle term mediating an event and an outcome. Something triggers an emotion, and the emotion then shapes perceptions, actions, and social relationships. In his theory, emotion is "a hypothesis to explain behavior that has neither sufficient nor adequate external purpose nor reason; the explanation is then sought 'within' the subject" (Frijda, 1986, p. 2). Zajonc (1984) argued that emotions are part of all events: "the individual is never without being in some emotional state" (p. 121). Emotions and cognitions are always in a bidirectional relationship as they continually influence each other. In our theory of hating, they are inexorably entwined and neither should be examined without the other.

Morals

In our theory, an additional element is necessary that is too often left out of research on hate. Morals are the norms, rights, entitlements, obligations, responsibilities, and duties that guide our behavior with others and shape our sense of fairness (Deutsch, 1982). Morals, shaped by cultural norms, guide our behavior in particular social contexts, allow us to distinguish right from wrong and good from bad, and are attuned to what we owe particular people in specific contexts. Morals connect with emotions when they are deeply felt, such as when people perceive a discrepancy between what should be and what is (Lerner, 1980). Morals can deter hate when they advise perspective taking, tolerance, and appreciation of differences, but morals can also give rise to violence and inflame hate when they are coupled with cognitions that

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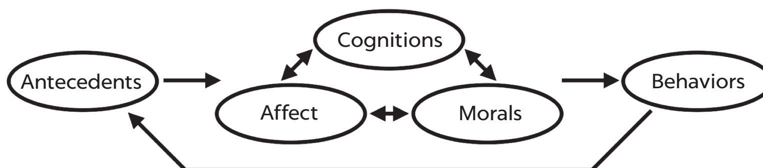
supply categorical differences that supposedly justify hating, hate speech, and hate-based behaviors. Stereotypes and unwarranted assumptions about what is good or bad about others (e.g., they are inferior, selfish, wrong, or dangerous) can justify hate.

Although hate is often described via emotions and cognitions, we argue that when hate becomes violent and destructive, morals can act as an accelerant, particularly when they justify derogating and harming others. Thus, when particular kinds of people are *morally excluded*, they are judged as underserving of fairness, societal resources, and assistance to foster their well-being. They are instead perceived as outside the scope of our justice so that prevailing norms that ordinarily govern our conduct in societal relationships (e.g., caring about others and offering them help if needed) do not apply to them (Opotow, 1990, 1995, 2018). Instead, they are positioned as nonentities and undeserving of societal resources that support well-being (e.g., rights and fair treatment) and therefore are vulnerable to exploitation and harm that is then justified as fair and the way things are and ought to be (Opotow, 1990, 1995).

We have argued that hate and moral exclusion are a potent combination (Opotow & McClelland, 2007). Hate injects narrative details about disliked social categories with emotion, and moral exclusion provides a justification for harmful acts directed at hated targets. When the cognitive–affective elements of hate combine with moral justifications for harm doing, hating can shift from individually experienced hate to collectively experienced hate that can be brutal in unprecedented ways (Opotow & McClelland, 2007). As Figure 5.1 indicates, the interaction of emotions, cognitions, and morals can generate severe manifestations of hate and sustain beliefs about who deserves to be hated. These elements, working together, infuse hate with destructive power and are much feared.

Consistent with our focus on hate in the contemporary United States, a prominent example of the interaction between moral exclusion and hate is the public disparagement and physical exclusion of people seeking to emigrate from poor, violent countries to the United States. At campaign rallies in 2018, President Trump described America as under attack by immigrants heading for the border. At one rally he said, "You look at what is marching up, that is an

FIGURE 5.1. The Development and Intensification of Hating



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invasion!" (Baker & Shear, 2019). At another he said, "That is an invasion!" Nine months later, a White man armed with an AK-47-style assault rifle and extra magazines fired on people in an El Paso, Texas Walmart, killing 20 and injuring dozens more. A manifesto the man wrote just before the massacre stated, "This attack is a response to the Hispanic invasion of Texas" (Baker & Shear, 2019). This deadly example illustrates hate and moral exclusion working together to normalize an exclusionary ethos that undermines social justice as well as compassion for migrants and their well-being (cf. Ahmed, 2019; Kulish & McIntire, 2019; see also Kanstroom, 2007).

Behaviors

Hateful behaviors are the potential outcome of the cognitive, affective, moral interaction that our theory of hating describes. Hate, individually felt or shared with a few others, can be quiescent as an attitude that remains latent. Hateful behaviors can be verbal or physical and mild or severe (Kernberg, 1992). They can range from symbolic to physical expressions of violence; their severity can range from gestures connoting disrespect, such as rude epithets, slurs, hate-associated symbols, and threats, to physical expressions that inflict mild injury (slaps, kicks) or severe injury and death (Opotow, 2001). These behaviors can be directed at individuals, groups, and categories of people, such as Islamophobia in the United States after the 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center (Sweeney & Opotow, 2013) and the Holocaust in Germany during the Third Reich (Opotow, 2011).

Behavioral expressions of hate can materially and psychologically change the context for both the hater and victim, further intensifying hateful attitudes and behaviors. Repeating this dynamic as a loop can result in the buildup of hate as a *psychological impasto* with increasingly negative emotions, cognitions, and moral judgments that increase hate (Opotow, 2005). This swirl, we argue, inevitably encompasses micro, meso, and macro elements—whether real, feared, or imagined. Intensification and frequency of hateful behaviors change the culture. Hate need not intensify, however. When hate is limited to one element within our theory (cognitions, for example), hate can remain dormant and then wane (cf. Opotow, 2005). However, when hate flows through all the components within our Theory of Hating, and when it moves from individuals to a group, it can be a destructive force generating levels of arousal that escalate swiftly.

In this larger swirl, hate intensifies, as Levi (1965) observed, feeding on itself. Moss (2003) emphasized that "when we hate—racistly, homophobically, misogynistically—we do not hate as isolated individuals. Rather, we hate as part of a group, not in the first person singular, but in the first person plural" (p. xviii). Racist hate inevitably merges the individual perpetrator with a real or imagined group. When hate is supported at the highest levels of government, it is a phenomenon that moves hate from fringe groups to the mainstream.

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Levels of Analysis

In describing our theory of hating, we are attentive to individual and group levels of analysis; indeed, it is difficult to tease the two apart. Individuals are nested within families, families within larger social groupings, and larger social groupings within regions and nations. Thus, to understand the origins, intensification, and implications of hate requires remaining attentive to smaller and larger levels of analysis.

Research focused on the individual in the field or the laboratory cannot adequately explain how hate can jump levels of analysis—from the individual to larger levels of analysis—or how groups influence the ideologies and behaviors of individuals. To understand the volatility of hating, both interpersonal and categorical hate must be accounted for. Collectively experienced hate depends on having hated targets; that is, groups that have been identified as outside the scope of justice. When directed at an entire social group, hate can become extraordinarily destructive, as genocidal wars have shown. Unlike interpersonal hate, which can be privately felt and expressed, categorical hate depends on identifying targets, making public commitments, coordinating efforts, and approving collective actions. These steps can become imbued with urgent moral purpose, such as in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda (e.g., Gourevitch, 1998; Prunier, 1995).

We argue that hate is a multifaceted, interactional, and temporal dynamic. When antecedents, mediated by a cognitive–emotional–moral interactive swirl, (can) produce hateful behaviors, they can circle back to modify perceptions of historical events and contemporary circumstances. As this large swirl reoccurs, hate can build up to become an increasingly influential societal dynamic. Szanto (2018) argued that hate's "target is often an *imaginary* other, constructed on the basis of the overgeneralizing, stereotyping tendency of hatred" (p. 22), transposing hated properties from individuals to groups. He argued that this overgeneralization, combined with what he called *collectivization*, constitutes hate's power to form a "community of fellow-feelers—the community of haters" (p. 18). He centered his analysis on hate's affective importance for the hater, but his argument aligns with the porous boundary we have described between micro and macro levels in the intensification of hate. In these dynamic descriptions of hate, we see hate's complexity and the multilevel analysis needed to theorize hate as it moves from the individual to the group and back again.

For an example of research attentive to multiple levels of analysis, we turn to Frenkel-Brunswick's (1950) contribution to *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950). Frenkel-Brunswick foregrounded people's recollections of family interactions to examine the link between childhood memories and hatred of minorities emerging later. She found that anti-Semitism, along with a constellation of other antiminority sentiments, was seen as having potentially fascist tendencies (Greenstein, 1965, p. 91). Frenkel-Brunswick and her colleagues hypothesized that this personality structure could be traced back to early family experiences,

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particularly experiences of feeling frustrated and overly disciplined as a child. Using clinical interviews and questionnaires to study the potential links between a person's past experiences of feeling dominated with their current desire to dominate another, Frenkel-Brunswick's research moved from micro-level (individual) antecedents to macrolevel (group) behaviors to connect unconscious antecedents with later hatred and prejudice. These antecedents are not theorized as remaining simply in the individual mind, but as residing both within individuals and in groups. It is because both can coexist that hate's potential for immense destruction becomes possible.

HATE IN CONTEMPORARY UNITED STATES

This chapter began with several instances connected with the expression of hate buttressed with a normalized exclusionary ideology in the contemporary United States: the increase of hate crimes, a *Sieg heil* salute by Wisconsin high school boys, and Representative Steve King's alluding to migrants as "dirt." We will briefly outline how our theory of hating applies to these examples in an effort to demonstrate how this theory can aid scholars who want to study the phenomena of hate:

- First, all three examples are largely grounded in the same historical antecedents—the long legacy of White supremacy in the United States, the belief by White people that they are superior to people of other races, who therefore should be dominated and exploited (Daniels, 2009; Intelligence Project & Southern Poverty Law Center, 2009; Wildman, 1996).
- Second, these historical antecedents spill into cognitions when they offer racist symbols and tropes to legitimate race-based categories and stereotypes.
- Third, these cognitive shortcuts, bolstered by self-serving, scurrilous myths from the past, incite emotions that are amped up by within-group revelry celebrating White prowess/power and disdaining supposedly lesser others.
- Fourth, inspirations from the past, cognitions, and emotions combine with assessments about what is good and bad, making unflattering between-group comparisons, to supply the moral justifications for racist thoughts and actions.
- Fifth, morals segue into behavior when biased historical accounts give rise to denigrating stereotypes and destructive passions, shaping morals to legitimate hostility and violence directed at people deemed "others."

When Leaders Advance Hate

The incidents described at the start of this chapter are part of larger public policies supported and funded by the U.S. government to threaten, bully, and intimidate people of color who live or want to live in the United States. These

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include, but are not limited to, derogating people of Mexican descent as drug dealers, murderers, and rapists; closing American borders to Syrian refugees and people from seven predominantly Muslim countries; separating parents and children from Latin America at the U.S. southern border; and rolling back LGBTQ protections in schooling, the military, housing, and health. These exclusionary efforts, supported by President Trump, who self-identifies as a "nationalist" (Baker, 2018), have emboldened White supremacist groups (e.g., Proud Boys, the Rise Above Movement [RAM], and many others; *New York Times* Editorial Board, 2017; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2018) that are rooted in America's long history of violently and administratively enforced race-based exclusion in America (e.g., Opotow, 2008a, 2008b).

The distal antecedent of hate in America today is the country's long and stubborn history of White supremacy that began well before the country's founding, when Black Americans were transported to North America under horrifying conditions in order to be bought and sold, overworked, tortured, lynched, and raped (Du Bois, 1903/2018; Shipp, 2019). Early in American history, too, Native people were murdered, were uprooted, and had their lands seized, and in the name of assimilation, their children were sent to brutal boarding schools (Brown, 1970). Later, in the 19th century, Chinese immigrants were persecuted, attacked, and murdered, and this race-based hatred was then codified in the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act (Lee, 2004). In the 1930s, a million people with Mexican ancestry—though 60% were U.S. citizens—were forced across the U.S. southern border into Mexico (Balderrama, 2005).

United States Policy and Hate

Since September 11, 2001, White supremacists have killed more people than any other category of extremists in the United States, and since 2013, the number of people killed in violent, terror-related incidents has quadrupled. Though most Americans report fearing terrorist attacks from abroad (Gramlich, 2018), the vast majority (71%) of extremist-related fatalities in the United States between 2008 and 2017 were committed by members of the far right or White supremacist groups in the United States (Anti-Defamation League, 2018). As reported by the Southern Poverty Law Center (2019a, 2019b), the number of hate groups in the United States rose in 2018 for the fourth year in a row—to 1,020, a 30% jump from 2014. From 2015 to 2017, there was a 30% increase in hate crimes reported to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and in 2018 there was an upsurge in right-wing violence that killed at least 50 people (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2019a, 2019b; Stack, 2019).

In spite of this, for the past 2 decades U.S. counterterrorism strategy has focused almost exclusively on Islamic jihadists, sidelining right-wing extremism in the United States as a national security threat (Reitman, 2018). Of special concern is the role that U.S. leadership plays in sustaining the prevalence of hateful speech and behavior in the United States. As Reitman (2018) observed, "In this atmosphere of apparent indifference on the part of government officials and law enforcement, a virulent, and violent, far-right movement has grown and metastasized" (p. 42).

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At the national level, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security focuses largely on preventing Islamist terrorist attacks, though it is also charged with preventing domestic threats, like those coming from violent White supremacists and antigovernment militants. FBI data for 2016 indicate that more than 6,100 hate crime incidents occurred that year, but only 27 federal hate crime defendants were prosecuted (FBI, 2016). This enormous gap suggests that perpetrators are routinely granted impunity. Indeed, data from 2016 to 2018 indicate that groups engaging in violent confrontations with African Americans, Jews, Muslims, non-White immigrants, members of the LGBT community, and the progressive left have largely escaped punishment (Reitman, 2018). This was amply demonstrated on October 12, 2018, in New York City, when a far-right extremist group, Proud Boys, violently beat three men on a street in Manhattan while screaming threats and slurs at them. Though New York City Police Department officers were present at the time of the attack, none of the Proud Boys was arrested (Reinstein & Baer, 2018). After a public outcry, 10 members were arrested over the next 2 months and charged with riot and attempted assault. In August 2019, two members were tried on charges of attempted assault, attempted gang assault, and riot in a State Supreme Court in Manhattan, the first time that any members of the Proud Boys—a group that had battled leftists across the country—had been before a jury for their actions (Moynihan, 2019b; see also Moynihan, 2019a).

In spite of the rise of hate groups, hate speech, and hate-based incidents, White supremacist violence has not been the focus of serious national attention by law enforcement at local and national levels to stanch its upsurge. Reitman (2018) described Dylann Roof, a White youth in South Carolina,

> whose homegrown racism was nurtured on neo-Nazi websites like *The Daily Stormer*, was not, in this context, a domestic terrorist, nor were any of his beliefs seen as indicative of "violent extremism." His shooting spree in a church in Charleston, in which he killed nine African-Americans, was interpreted as something else. What drove him, authorities said, was hate. He was a murderer. (p. 48)

Reitman (2018) reported on the discourse that followed. Roof was not labeled a "domestic terrorist," a designation that would have been apt. Instead, people said, "Maybe it was a mental-health issue. Maybe he was 'disturbed.' Maybe he had a predisposition to violence" (Reitman, 2018, p. 48). Such speculations about the precursors of Roof's murderous rampage are problematic because they individualize the pathology of race-based murder and ignore the influence of pervasive racist symbols and ideologies in our culture. They sidestep the demographics of hate crimes, which are predominantly committed by White men. Yet their acts of violence are not attributed to race or ethnic identity as they would be for youth of color. Instead, they are attributed to causes that make the White perpetrator seem distinctive—mental illness, difficult upbringing—but not to race. This is a form of denial that allows White people to see violence as a characteristic of ethnic/minority groups but not the White majority (Hyman, 2015), which ironically bolsters White supremacist ideologies.

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Rather than individual pathology or small group sociopathy, the core of the phenomenon we call *hate* is the normalization of hate-based violence directed at groups deemed "lesser" and "other" by White supremacist ideologies, along with the likelihood that perpetrators of that violence will be granted impunity. The failure of law enforcement agencies to contain this violent trend is alarming (Reitman, 2018).

In 2009, Congress passed the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act (2009), permitting the prosecution of hate crimes committed against victims because of their race, color, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity, or disability. It provides stringent penalties, but its scope is limited. If Congress provided law enforcement agencies with a domestic terrorism statute, and state legislators strengthened their existing hate criminal laws, it could curtail the expression of hate (Cullen, 2019). As this is being written, domestic terrorism is finally being acknowledged as a growing threat and an important, unaddressed national issue (Benner, 2019). Targeting hateful behaviors, as noted in our theory of hating, can help stanch the spiral of hate and its self-perpetuating destructiveness in the contemporary United States.

CONCLUSION

Hatred of individuals and groups, we argue, is increasingly accepted in the United States as a part of the national discourse, particularly when political leaders endorse White supremacist ideas and derogate immigrants as "invaders." When powerful leaders proffer hateful views, they offer extremists the expectation that they can act with impunity and thus endanger public safety (Baker & Shear, 2019). Our theory of hating offers a way to understand hate's social and psychological complexity, its antecedents and consequences, and the cognitive, emotional, and moral elements that intensify it. How can hate be constructively addressed? We have noted that looking the other way and failing to address the rise in hate-based violence is problematic. We have largely focused on hateful *behavior* to illustrate our theory, but in this conclusion, we focus on hate's *antecedents*. A shift in antecedents, we have argued, can change the dynamics of hate.

Since Dylann Roof murdered nine churchgoers in Charleston, South Carolina, in 2015, the nation has struggled with the legacy of Confederate monuments in our country (Stack & Caron, 2017). A passionate controversy throughout the United States has concerned 1,500 statues and monuments commemorating Confederate heroes of the Civil War that have dotted cities and towns throughout the country for the past hundred years or more (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2019a). In recent years, these monuments became controversial because they suggested the heroism and nobility of the Confederacy rather than the racial oppression that was at its core. In New Orleans in 2017, workers removing four monuments wore protective

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gear and were guarded by police. Also in 2017, a violent confrontation in Charlottesville, Virginia, began as a White nationalist, neo-Nazi, and Ku Klux Klan protest over the planned removal of Confederate monuments from public parks, including a statue of General Robert E. Lee.

Although these controversies about the meaning of the Confederate monuments spark violent conflict, they are also conflicts that also offer an opportunity for rethinking the past and curbing the normalization and intensification of hate in America today. By explicitly raising questions about the past, by attending to the influence of the past on the present, and by asking how to achieve a more just present and future, people can gain a deeper and more nuanced historical understanding that has the potential to diminish hate. Attending to antecedents that have given rise to hate offers possibilities for societal change in order to go forward with a more inclusionary ethos.

In an astonishing speech in New Orleans in May 2017, Mayor Mitch Landrieu explained the removal of four monuments to the Confederacy (Landrieu, 2017; see also Robertson, 2017). He first acknowledged how New Orleans is a city that is rooted in "diverse people who have been here together every step of the way." He went on to address "truths about our city that we must confront, including slave markets, forced labor, rape, and torture." If the controversy about historical monuments is really about history, he asked, why then are there no slave ship monuments, no monuments to lynchings or slave blocks, and nothing to remember lives lived in suffering and pain? The Confederate monuments had one goal—to hide the truth by representing a "sanitized Confederacy, ignoring the death, the enslavement and the terror that it actually stood for." He described removing these monuments as making "straight a wrong turn we made many years ago, making straight what has been crooked and make a better future for ourselves; otherwise we will continue to pay a price with discord, with division and yes, with violence." He quoted Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to describe the urgency of change: "Wait has almost always meant never."

Landrieu's speech has been widely praised for its clarity, eloquence, and practicality. It revealed the challenge as well as the possibility of changing a hate-tolerant status quo to an inclusionary direction, a far more difficult process than exclusionary change (Opotow, 2018). Our theory of hating suggests that an understanding of antecedents can enable an inclusionary shift by attending to a larger historical past that humanizes and extends caring to other people. This, in turn, can influence the content and valence of cognitions, emotions, and morals to support prosocial, rather than hateful and exclusionary, behaviors.

We have shown how our theory of hating can offer clarity to see through rhetoric that may have become normalized and suggest ideas about how to respond constructively to prevent the normalization and escalation of hatred. Rather than assuming that hate is simply a negative emotion that can be studied in the lab in its isolated parts, we argue, first, that hate is comprised of several discrete elements that work together, and second, that a theory of hating is

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necessary to describe these elements and their role in creating and sustaining hate. In addition, a theory is necessary because it instructs researchers on how to attend to multiple levels of analysis rather than focusing on just one at a time. For example, emotions, cognitions, and morals transferred from individual feelings to a culture (e.g., from "I hate you" to "I hate people like you") is a jump made between levels of analysis that cannot be simply observed, but must be theorized as a characteristic of hate.

In sum, we argue that the hate crisis in contemporary United States is complex and that psychological research can bring important insight into the work that needs to be done.

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