



Racial Disparities in Hate Crime Reporting

Heather Zaykowski

Summary

This study utilizes data from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) to investigate the role of victim race on reporting hate crimes to law enforcement agencies. Although reported hate crimes are growing annually, Zaykowski suggests there remain reporting disparities among minority victims. The author focuses on two trends derived from the data. First, this study analyzes how the victim's race influences the likelihood of reporting. Secondly, the researcher explores differences between reporting racial hate crimes and non-racial hate crimes. The study concludes that both racial and non-racial hate crimes are less likely to be reported when the victims are minorities, especially for racial crimes.

Methods

Data consist of 170,000 hate crime violent victimizations derived from incident-level files in the NCVS. Those surveyed were asked if their victimization was due to their race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or disability. The variables used to analyze the responses were *reported to the police* (dependent) and *race* (independent). Binary logistic regression was applied to assess the likelihood that hate crimes are reported to the police based on situational features of the incident and characteristics of the victim.

Results

Findings support prior assertions that racial hate crime victimization remains underreported. The majority (~60%) of respondents reported being targeted due to their race. Importantly, though, racial hate crime victims were not the most likely to report violence to the police. Official hate crime reports show that racial minority victimizations were ~35% less likely to be reported than White victimizations. The study found that likelihood of reporting was drastically increased for non-rationally motivated hate crimes that resulted in serious bodily injury.

Implications

The reluctance by racial minorities to report hate crime victimization demonstrates the strained relationship between communities of color and law enforcement. In order for hate crime prosecutions to serve as a legitimate legal responses to hate crimes, these crimes must be consistently reported.

Zaykowski, H. (2010). Racial disparities in hate crime reporting. *Violence and Victims*, 25(3), 378-394. [doi:10.1891/0886-6708.25.3.378](https://doi.org/10.1891/0886-6708.25.3.378)