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THE STATE OF HATE IN AMERICA: A STUDY OF HATE GROUP PERMEATION IN  
THE UNITED STATES BY STATE

by

Michelle Rogers

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Political Science in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

2018

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Michelle Rogers

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Political Science in satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts.

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## ABSTRACT

### The State of Hate in America: A Study of Hate Group Permeation in the United States by State

by

Michelle Rogers

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This paper will analyze some of the statistics regarding hate groups. The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) has studied hate groups in the United States in depth for decades, developing tools and providing some useful statistics. They have developed a hate map that describes the quantity of hate groups in America individually by state and helps specifically identify trends in year over year comparisons. However, the hate map does not offer per capita breakdowns for a state or reasons for hate group permeation unique to the demographics and culture of each state. Factors and elements in conjunction with the hate map figures need to be considered together with the hate map to provide a more complete analysis. This paper will try to determine which state does have the highest amount of hate group activity per capita and offer some reasons to explain it. A few possible explanations that will be examined include tipping point thresholds, unemployment, and ideological cultural issues such as Confederate state status.

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In this brave new era of President Trump, hate groups have taken center stage as the media hot button topic. Breitbart Media, Stormfront, Steve Bannon and Richard Spencer are all household names regularly discussed at water coolers and dinner tables alike. Violent tragic events like Charlottesville and the Charleston church massacre by white supremacist Dylann Roof are deliberated for weeks and months in long media news cycles. It seems like Americans truly hate each other and have organized that hate into a media savvy machine that practically sustains itself.

Anti-immigrant, anti-muslim, black separatist, and white patriot armed militia have all woven into a social media hate group melange that seems to be a growing unstoppable behemoth. Is this really happening in America? Maybe. This paper will try to analyze some of the statistics regarding hate groups and create some perspective.

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) has studied hate groups in the US in depth for decades, and provides some useful statistics. Of note, anti-muslim groups, the newest edition to the fold has tripled from 34 groups nationwide to in 2015 to 101 in 2016.<sup>1</sup> The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) has dropped slightly in organized groups from 190 to 160 in the past year<sup>2</sup> and the patriot group movement has dropped by about half from 1360 to 623 during the period from 2012-2016.<sup>3</sup> Armed militias have also had a precipitous drop this past year from 276-165 nationally.<sup>4</sup>

According to the SPLC, California has the highest amount of active hate groups in the US.<sup>5</sup> Is this really correct? California has a very high population count. Are there just more people and therefore, more groups? If so, the per capita numbers should be somewhat equal to less populous states. North Dakota only has one hate group in the state.<sup>6</sup> Is that the same percentage when

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<sup>1</sup> Potok, Mark. "The Year in Hate and Extremism" Southern Poverty Law Center. <https://www.splc.org> (accessed October 17, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Potok, Mark, The Year in Hate and Extremism, *ibid*

<sup>3</sup> Potok, Mark, The Year in Hate and Extremism, *ibid*

<sup>4</sup> Potok, Mark, The Year in Hate and Extremism, *ibid*

<sup>5</sup> Potok, Mark, The Year in Hate and Extremism, *ibid*

<sup>6</sup> Potok, Mark, The Year in Hate and Extremism, *ibid*

analyzed per capita? If it is not correct, what state does have the highest amount of hate group activity and why. This paper will address a few possible reasons including tipping point thresholds, unemployment, and ideological cultural issues such as Confederate state status.

In housing studies, there is a theory that once a certain number of minorities move into a neighborhood, a "tipping point threshold" is reached after which the phenomena of "white flight" occurs.<sup>7</sup> Is there a similar "tipping point threshold" that can be reached in society generally after which hate groups form? Does California or the actual highest hate state have a high minority population such that these states may have reached a "tipping point" for hate group formation? Another possibility is economic factors that foster conditions for hate group formation? Is high unemployment present in high hate group states, and if so is there a correlation present in high hate activity states? What is the role of the internet in all of this? Is it merely a tool used by hate groups in the same fashion as any other organization? Does the internet contribute in a special way that is different from older communication modes such as telephones and letters? Does the current or previous presidency factor into the prevalence of hate groups?

Tackling the numbers first, per capita calculations, definitely changes the order of which state has the most hate group activity. California is down towards the middle of the pack and its dense population explains its high numbers. Hawaii and Alaska each have zero and Vermont, Rhode Island and North Dakota have 1 each.<sup>8</sup> That's almost 5 million people with a grand total of 3 groups.<sup>9</sup> It's more than a convenient math problem. Sean E. Mulholland says that cultural factors and tradition make hate groups more likely.<sup>10</sup> He states that the original Confederate States of America have a

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<sup>7</sup> Schelling, Thomas C. "Dynamic Models of Segregation" *Journal of Mathematical Sociology*: 157

<sup>8</sup> "Southern Poverty Law Center Hate Map 2017" Southern Poverty Law Center Hate Map. <https://www.splcenter.org/hate-map> (Accessed October 23, 2017)

<sup>9</sup> "Census US 2017" US Census Bureau State Population Totals Table.

<http://www.census.gov/data/tables/2016/demo/peppest/state-total.html>. (Accessed October 23,2017)

<sup>10</sup> Mulholland, Sean E. "Hate Fuel: On the Relationship Between Local Government Policy and Hate Group Activity" *Eastern Economic Journal*: 488

tendency towards more hate activity.<sup>11</sup> This, if true, can only hope to tell the story for 11-states. These numbers may tell part of the story but it doesn't convey any explanation for the union states of which many have robust hate group activity. Illinois, the land of Lincoln has 32 hate groups<sup>12</sup> 1 group per every 400,000 people<sup>13</sup> putting them 21 on the hate list (where 50 is worst), and of course half the states did not even exist yet. There must be other factors.

The study of hate cannot be told without a discussion of the role of the internet. The internet is essentially the hub of hate activity. The logistics and identity of hate activity has changed in almost operational way save for the basic goal of hatred itself. As such much of the literature focuses on the means of internet hate. Also, the SPLC notes that much of its tracking and research is done via the world wide web.

Hate groups and the internet are like popcorn and the microwave oven, one has fully realized the potential in the other. New cheap technological tools and funding sources play a role in the advent and expansion of organized, active hate groups. There is little doubt that the organizational, mobilizing abilities, and outreach opportunities of the internet have assisted this goal. The world-wide-web allows coordination of like-minded souls in far-flung reaches of the country. It also allows for easy planning of meetings and protests in real life. The web allows for virtual anonymity to almost any degree desired. It is therefore a logical place to start to study these groups in relation to their internet presence and influence.

With that view, the internet is also instrumental in the coordination of fundraising activities and goals. The online options also help shelter the participants' financial transactions from watchful prying eyes. These internet tools and circumstances have allowed hate groups to flourish and created

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<sup>11</sup> Mulholland, Sean E. Hate Fuel, ibid

<sup>12</sup> "Southern Poverty Law Center Hate Map 2017" Southern Poverty Law Center Hate Map.  
<https://www.splcenter.org/hate-map> (Accessed October 23, 2017)

<sup>13</sup> "Census US 2017" US Census Bureau State Population Totals Table.  
<http://www.census.gov/data/tables/2016/demo/pepest/state-total.html>. (Accessed October 23,2017)

opportunities for many entities to profit, including ancillary organizations that provide logistics and other services to them.

Much of the literature to date has been an analysis of the recruitment tactics, and the efforts to combat the spread of hate groups and the active role of social media and the internet in facilitating these activities.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

*The Internet Rhetoric of the Ku Klux Klan: A Case Study in Web Site Community Building Run Amok* by Denise M. Bostdorff was one of the early works of analysis of hate groups and the internet. Her work provides a thorough analysis of the web presence and methods of the KKK. (technology as of that time circa 2004).<sup>14</sup> She wrote this in what was still early days of the internet and the web was still an adjunct or tool for most organizations with the exception of sales and commerce entities. Her analysis discusses the discovery of anonymity and freedom from societal behavioral constraints accorded by the internet.<sup>15</sup> She also discusses the global reach, low-cost, and the ability for a user to coalesce their web activities into silos. She notes the phenomenon of "community without commitment".<sup>16</sup> She also noted that the internet allows for users to behave more aggressively.<sup>17</sup> Some of these ideas would seem common knowledge in today's technologically dominant world even those with only a light internet presence. However, she discussed all of these issues before they were obvious, and in what can only be described as prescient, she predicts that "linkages among hate groups on the Web also allow these groups to work together on political issues by providing them -as well as other groups with a means by which to mobilize quickly and with

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<sup>14</sup> Bostdorff, Denise M. "The Internet Rhetoric of the Ku Klux Klan: A Case Study in Web Site Community Building Run Amok." *Communication Studies* 351.

<sup>15</sup> Bostdorff, Denise M. "The Internet Rhetoric of the Ku Klux Klan, *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Bostdorff, Denise M. "The Internet Rhetoric of the Ku Klux Klan, *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Bostdorff, Denise M. "The Internet Rhetoric of the Ku Klux Klan, *ibid.*

information that might be needed for action.”<sup>18</sup> ‘Action’ like electing a candidate for president maybe?

*Hateful Sirens...Who Hears Their Song? An Examination of Student Attitudes Toward Hate Groups and Affiliation Potential* by Carolyn Turpin-Petrosino discusses among other things the education and age level of those who join hate groups. Her main focus is the effective type of communication for recruitment,<sup>19</sup> however, this research was pre-smart phone and does not entirely capture the changes in communication based on technological advancement. She discovered that criminal history in youth was more associated with hate group activity than was a history verbal or physical abuse.<sup>20</sup> She did not ascertain whether the youths with a criminal history also had an abusive past which was remiss in the study. Also, her sample size is very small, 567 students in New England from 9th grade through senior in college and mostly catholic.<sup>21</sup> She does not break down the numbers separating between the high school and college respondents in the paper. Her data finds that a number of university students are willing to or are participating in hate group activities.<sup>22</sup> Four college students considered joining the KKK, one university student was willing to join a Neo-Nazi group and 14 university students read hate literature.<sup>23</sup> Although this cannot be assumed from her study, if these numbers were to hold true in the greater population, then 9-thousand per million university students are members of hate groups.<sup>24</sup> 108-million white Americans have some college education<sup>25</sup> so extrapolating from the survey numbers, that would mean almost a million university at

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<sup>18</sup> Bostdorff, Denise M. "The Internet Rhetoric of the Ku Klux Klan, *ibid*.

<sup>19</sup> Turpin-Petrosino, Carolyn. "Hateful Sirens...Who Hears their Song? An Examination of Student Attitudes Toward Hate Groups and Affiliation Potential." *Journal of Social Issues*: 291

<sup>20</sup> Turpin-Petrosino, Carolyn. "Hateful Sirens...Who Hears their Song? *ibid*

<sup>21</sup> Turpin-Petrosino, Carolyn. "Hateful Sirens...Who Hears their Song? *ibid*

<sup>22</sup> Turpin-Petrosino, Carolyn. "Hateful Sirens...Who Hears their Song? *ibid*

<sup>23</sup> Turpin-Petrosino, Carolyn. "Hateful Sirens...Who Hears their Song? *ibid*

<sup>24</sup> "Census US 2017" US Census Bureau State Population Totals Table.

<http://www.census.gov/data/tables/2016/demo/popest/state-total.html>. (Accessed October 23,2017)

<sup>25</sup> "Census US 2017" US Census Bureau State Population Totals Table.

<http://www.census.gov/data/tables/2016/demo/popest/state-total.html>. (Accessed October 23,2017)

least partially educated Americans are active hard core racists. This number is likely higher as the percentages in some other regions of the country, like the South, would have a greater percentage and possibly not all university students have admitted their participation. With the assumption that many university students become university graduates and then go on to white collar influential careers such as doctor, lawyer, teacher, senator and president this means that a not insignificant percentage of our decision makers are ardently racist. They also have more money to fund racist activities. Of course, not all university educated people go on to lead eminent careers, but some do.

Lacy Mc Namee, Brittany L. Peterson and Jorge Pena wrote *A Call to Educate, Participate, Invoke and Indict: Understanding the Communication of Online Hate Groups* in 2010 to create a methodology for analysis of the operational nexus of these groups. While the criteria are subjective and qualitative, their process is very useful as a standardizing tool for the comparison of different groups to each other. The paper explores the substance of the data and makes albeit subjective categories that demonstrate similarities and consistencies of different groups' content and their processes for participation. They categorize the various groups by the website's perceived overarching goals to educate, participate, invoke or indict.<sup>26</sup> Education and participation are fairly self-explanatory. The authors say that invocation sites make the claim that some ethereal divine right makes a white person better than or superior to the other races.<sup>27</sup> Christian dogma is sometimes interjected into the reasoning of these ideas. Indictment websites make claims of blame against other ethnicities or religions for their troubles or failures within their own lives. The most useful conclusion in this study is the discovery that these groups all use very similar methodology to sustain their existence.<sup>28</sup> Potentially then, maybe one or a very few similar solutions could work to dissolve all such groups.

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<sup>26</sup> "Lacy G. McNamee et al. "A Call to Educate, Participate, Invoke and Indict: Understanding the Communication of Online Hate Groups." *Communication Monographs*: 277

<sup>27</sup> Lacy G. McNamee, et al "A Call to Educate, Participate Invoke and Indict ibid

<sup>28</sup> Lacy G. McNamee, et al "A Call to Educate, Participate Invoke and Indict ibid

*Beyond Free Speech: Novel Approaches to hate on the Internet in the United States* by Jessica S. Henry discusses the various issues surrounding the First Amendment and free speech issues and those groups who wish to curtail the power and activities of online hate groups.<sup>29</sup> She discusses in depth the ways in which the SPLC has tried and mostly failed to use law suits and other legal tools to force Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to take down websites that incite violence and/or espouse hate.<sup>30</sup> At the end of a protracted legal battle, the prevailing law today is that ISPs are allowed to and can shut down websites that promote violence, but they do not have to and cannot be forced to do this.<sup>31</sup> Major ISP companies such as Verizon and AT&T have different policies for identifying hate websites and have only had modest success in policing the entire World Wide Web. Also, Stormfront is an ISP that has the direct mission of the promotion of white power and alt-right groups. Neo-Nazis, and the KKK webpages will always find a safe haven with this company. The SPLC also publishes several reports such as the *Intelligence Report* that expose the various hate groups which can then create public pressure on the ISPs to shut down the sites. Henry also highlights the some of the activities of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) which employs legal and other methods.<sup>32</sup> The ADL has created software that individuals or organizations can use to filter out hate sites from their own computers.<sup>33</sup> Of course, there are limitations here as the use of the software is proactive, voluntary and limited to the reach of the individual organization using it.

*Hate Online: A Content Analysis of Extremist Internet Sites* by Phyllis Gerstenfeld, Diana R. Grant and Chau-Pu Chiang analyzed the content of internet sites used by hate groups. These authors, like others, found sophisticated recruitment tools and multimedia content. They discovered that the

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<sup>29</sup> Henry, Jessica S. "Beyond Free Speech: Novel Approaches to hate on the Internet in the United States ." *Information and Communications Technology Law*: 246

<sup>30</sup> Henry, Jessica S. "Beyond Free Speech ibid

<sup>31</sup> Henry, Jessica S. "Beyond Free Speech ibid

<sup>32</sup> Henry, Jessica S. "Beyond Free Speech ibid

<sup>33</sup> Henry, Jessica S. "Beyond Free Speech ibid

sites often conveyed mixed messages with text disavowing violence and then pictures or video of violent scenes, images and racist symbols with praise in the captions.<sup>34</sup> They found the reach of these sites extended beyond national borders to international populations.<sup>35</sup>

The authors compartmentalized hate groups into different headings. They included Neo-Nazis, the KKK, Skinheads, Holocaust Deniers, White Nationalists, and Christian Identity groups.<sup>36</sup> A compelling finding of this study noted that most of these independent sites had links to other sites and other groups. While Neo-Nazis and Holocaust Deniers seem a natural marriage, the KKK and Skinheads may not make for perfect partners.<sup>37</sup> This said, Gerstenfeld et al found links on most of the websites to the other groups. They found that 90% of the Skinhead sites had links to other types of hate group sites. KKK sites had the fewest links, but still had links to others 38% of the time.<sup>38</sup> This encourages visitors to explore and join other or multiple groups. The authors theorize this cross pollination is creating a collective identity amongst hate groups.

The International activity made for some interesting if unexpected coupling among the groups. The authors note that some of the Aryan sites have links to Hamas and other Islamist based sites (that is Islamist that hate others). Other Islamist hate sites had links to David Duke and the Nation of Islam. The authors speculate that these groups all shared an anti-Jewish sentiment.<sup>39</sup>

*Persuasive Storytelling by Hate Groups Online Examining Its Effects on Adolescents* by Elissa Lee and Laura Leets explores the effects of white supremacy messages on adolescents and specifically the messages' ability to be persuasive.<sup>40</sup> They studied the effects of 'low narrative'

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<sup>34</sup> Gerstenfeld, Phyllis, et al "Hate Online: A Content Analysis of Extremist Internet Sites ." *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 38

<sup>35</sup> Gerstenfeld, Phyllis, et al. Hate Online ibid

<sup>36</sup> Gerstenfeld, Phyllis, et al. Hate Online ibid

<sup>37</sup> Gerstenfeld, Phyllis, et al. Hate Online ibid

<sup>38</sup> Gerstenfeld, Phyllis, et al. Hate Online ibid

<sup>39</sup> Gerstenfeld, Phyllis, et al. Hate Online ibid

<sup>40</sup> Lee, Elissa et al. "Persuasive Storytelling by Hate Groups Online Examining Its Effects on Adolescents." *American Behavioral Scientist*: 939

explicit messages and ‘high narrative’ implicit messages.<sup>41</sup> As expected, the authors discovered that initially the direct explicit messaging had a very high but immediately fading ‘decaying’ impact.<sup>42</sup> The effects seemed to wear off with the direct messages, and did not immediately prove persuasive.<sup>43</sup> Conversely, the high narrative stories with implied, racist messages seemed to have an initially greater impact on the test subject.<sup>44</sup> However, both these results reversed themselves over time. The influence of the indirect narrative stories wore off and diminished greatly.<sup>45</sup> The low narrative, explicit messages increased in their impact over time. Their persuasive effect became greater with time not lesser.<sup>46</sup> Another disturbing finding in this analysis noted that individuals deemed neutral regarding racist attitudes at the commencement of the study found that a combination of both high narrative and low narrative messages proved more effective than either type used by itself and could be very persuasive. Repeated exposure increased the effectiveness of all techniques. Another disturbing footnote in this study is the understanding that part of the study was based on self-reporting of the results by the respondents.<sup>47</sup> The authors acknowledge that it is plausible and likely that some respondents were “susceptible to social desirability biases” meaning that respondents may have self-reported the politically correct answer instead of their true feelings.<sup>48</sup> The messages may be even more effective and persuasive than that study conveys.

In 1971 economist Thomas Schelling wrote *Dynamic Models of Segregation*. In his paper, he detailed his theory that various arenas e.g. places neighborhoods, cities experienced tipping points when a perceived undesirable, unwelcome group entered the arena.<sup>49</sup> He used several variables to

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<sup>41</sup> Lee, Elissa et al. “Persuasive Storytelling by Hate Groups Online ibid

<sup>42</sup> Lee, Elissa et al. “Persuasive Storytelling by Hate Groups Online ibid

<sup>43</sup> Lee, Elissa et al. “Persuasive Storytelling by Hate Groups Online ibid

<sup>44</sup> Lee, Elissa et al. “Persuasive Storytelling by Hate Groups Online ibid

<sup>45</sup> Lee, Elissa et al. “Persuasive Storytelling by Hate Groups Online ibid

<sup>46</sup> Lee, Elissa et al. “Persuasive Storytelling by Hate Groups Online ibid

<sup>47</sup> Lee, Elissa et al. “Persuasive Storytelling by Hate Groups Online ibid

<sup>48</sup> Lee, Elissa et al. “Persuasive Storytelling by Hate Groups Online ibid

<sup>49</sup> Schelling, Thomas C. *Dynamic Models of Segregation* 149

explain his theory such as race, age and gender.<sup>50</sup> In one example, he explains that an ice-cream shop changed from an older customer base to mostly teenagers.<sup>51</sup> While he notes that this phenomenon can happen with many different types of demographics scenarios, this theory has been used extensively to explain and predict white flight in the housing sector.<sup>52</sup> Using his model, ultimately called the Schelling model, he and later others have calculated the tolerance level of one group usually white homeowners or renters for the new arrival of a minority group usually black homeowners or renters. At the time of this study the tolerance level in cities was about 20% and slightly less in less urban settings.<sup>53</sup> This means that as soon as a city neighborhood reached 20% of black home dwellers, white home dwellers moved. The phenomena dubbed white flight has implications on segregation, property values, schools and urban blight. The numbers have fluctuated over the decades, and tolerance levels have gone up, but the principle remains. At a certain point, the “tipping point” is reached and white people sell and leave the area creating a pseudo voluntary segregation.<sup>54</sup> A new variation of this phenomenon works in reverse in which whites move into a neighborhood, and price increases force minorities to leave. This process is known as gentrification.

*Tipping and the Dynamics of Segregation in Neighborhoods and Schools* by David Card, Alexandre Mas and Jesse Rothstein calculates the tipping point for neighborhoods and cities. Card et.al developed a test of racial attitudes to determine whether tipping points would correlate with racial attitudes. The results did in fact correlate.<sup>55</sup> The authors determined that in neighborhoods and cities with less racist whites, the tipping point was higher and conversely, more racist less tolerant

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<sup>50</sup> Schelling, Thomas C. Dynamic Models of Segregation ibid

<sup>51</sup> Schelling, Thomas C. Dynamic Models of Segregation ibid

<sup>52</sup> Schelling, Thomas C. Dynamic Models of Segregation ibid

<sup>53</sup> Schelling, Thomas C. Dynamic Models of Segregation ibid

<sup>54</sup> Schelling, Thomas C. Dynamic Models of Segregation ibid

<sup>55</sup> Card, David, et al. "Tipping and the Dynamics of Segregation in Neighborhoods and Schools ." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 214.

locales had a lower tipping point.<sup>56</sup> The study also determined that areas that were home to more affluent blacks and Hispanics had higher tipping points even with slightly lower tolerance scores in their racial attitudes.<sup>57</sup>

The authors then took Schelling's original data and compared it to their own and determined that between the 1970s and 1990s the "extent" of the tipping point declined.<sup>58</sup> That is to say that some places did not experience tipping points or had higher thresholds for tipping points due to more tolerance in individuals. The study also determined that minority inflow to an area did not ever equal or offset the white flight outflow.<sup>59</sup> In other words, more whites left than minorities moved in leaving the neighborhood smaller and skewing the demographic statistics to higher minority composition.

Higher incomes of white families and behaviors such as crime statistics amongst minorities appeared to have no significant effect on the phenomenon. This happened in both very affluent and more modest income neighborhoods with either combination of high or low crime statistics.<sup>60</sup> Property values did fall slightly in neighborhoods with white flight, but that effect as well has lessened from the 70s-90s.<sup>61</sup>

The authors discovered the only statistic that correlated with higher or lower tipping points was in fact corresponding higher or lower tolerance levels or racist attitudes based on the specific survey data. Higher racism scores equalled lower tipping points and vice-versa.<sup>62</sup> It should be noted that the definition of "whites" was specifically non-Hispanic whites which differs from the US Census definition of "whites"

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<sup>56</sup> Card, David, et al. "Tipping and the Dynamics of Segregation" *ibid*

<sup>57</sup> Card, David, et al. "Tipping and the Dynamics of Segregation" *ibid*

<sup>58</sup> Card, David, et al. "Tipping and the Dynamics of Segregation" *ibid*

<sup>59</sup> Card, David, et al. "Tipping and the Dynamics of Segregation" *ibid*

<sup>60</sup> Card, David, et al. "Tipping and the Dynamics of Segregation" *ibid*

<sup>61</sup> Card, David, et al. "Tipping and the Dynamics of Segregation" *ibid*

<sup>62</sup> Card, David, et al. "Tipping and the Dynamics of Segregation" *ibid*

Most larger cities in California and the New York/New Jersey area and Philadelphia had the least racist scores and highest tipping points.<sup>63</sup> Cities in the Midwest, Chicago, St. Louis and Dallas and Tampa Bay had middling scores and corresponding tipping points and several cities in the Carolinas and Mississippi had the lowest tipping points with Birmingham and Memphis holding the highest racism scores and lowest tipping points.<sup>64</sup>

In *Hate Fuel: On the Relationship Between Local Government Policy and Hate Group Activity*, Sean E. Mulholland discusses hate groups through an economic lens with a view towards public policy initiatives that may reduce hate group activity. His data suggests that a one-percent increase in the poverty rate leads to 17% increase in hate group activity within the community.<sup>65</sup> Interestingly, he also discovered that robust or improved public transportation services created a reduction in hate group activity. He theorized that the transportation system may have provided more and expanded job opportunities.<sup>66</sup>

Alex Curthoys discusses a very straightforward connection between hate crimes and unemployment in *Identifying the Effect of Unemployment on Hate Crime*. He correlates low unemployment with low hate crime levels and higher unemployment with higher rates of hate crime.<sup>67</sup> However, this study also finds that at its highest unemployment levels, hate crime levels do not continue to increase.<sup>68</sup> Whereas this study may suggest that hate crime reaches a maximum effect at medium levels of unemployment, he also suggests that information on hate crime as separated from other crimes may have data gaps that could explain the lack of correlation at higher

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<sup>63</sup> Card, David, et al. "Tipping and the Dynamics of Segregation" *ibid*

<sup>64</sup> Card, David, et al. "Tipping and the Dynamics of Segregation" *ibid*

<sup>65</sup> Mulholland Sean E. *Hate Fuel: On the Relationship Between Local Government Policy and Hate Group Activity*, *Eastern Economic Journal*: 492.

<sup>66</sup> Mulholland Sean E. *Hate Fuel* *ibid*

<sup>67</sup> Curthoys, Alex *Identifying the Effect of Unemployment on Hate Crime*, *Surface Syracuse University Research* 17.

<sup>68</sup> Curthoys, Alex *Identifying the Effect* *ibid*

levels.<sup>69</sup> While hate crimes and hate groups are not synonymous variables, this study does imply a connection between hate activity and unemployment.

Lewis R. Gale, Will Carrington Heath and Rand W. Reesler in *An Economic Analysis of Hate Crimes* also attempts to identify certain economic connections with hate crimes. They explain that the inherent problem in compiling this data lies in the subjective label of “hate crime” as defined by the FBI.<sup>70</sup> Hate crimes are more often defined by what they are not i.e. what is missing instead of the specific facts of the event. This makes hate crime identification and statistics subject to error. For example, a hate crime is committed without the goal of profit from a stolen wallet or car or the property taken from a home. A hate crime is also committed without an underlying motive like revenge, neighborly dispute or cheating spouses. The author notes that hate crimes are only committed with the goal of harming another person simply due to a specific trait, ethnicity or lifestyle.<sup>71</sup> The definition seems simple but there will sometime be motives that are never revealed leaving the crime in appearance as a hate crime but actually may not be a hate crime. Therefore, the authors have taken a very thin dataset to compare hate statistics. This narrow picture does conclude that economic stressors like unemployment contribute to hate crime activity.<sup>72</sup> The study was not conclusive, however, as to whether minority permeation in neighborhoods was significant to increases. Although hate crimes and hate group activity are not interchangeable statistics, the existence of either implies at least the similar attitudes of hate in a specific locale. If economic factors fuel hate crime, it is plausible they fuel other hate group activity. The concepts may run parallel.

## METHODS

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<sup>69</sup> Curthoys, Alex Identifying the Effect *ibid*

<sup>70</sup> Gale, Lewis R., et al. "An Economic Analysis of Hate Crimes." *Eastern Economic Journal* 213

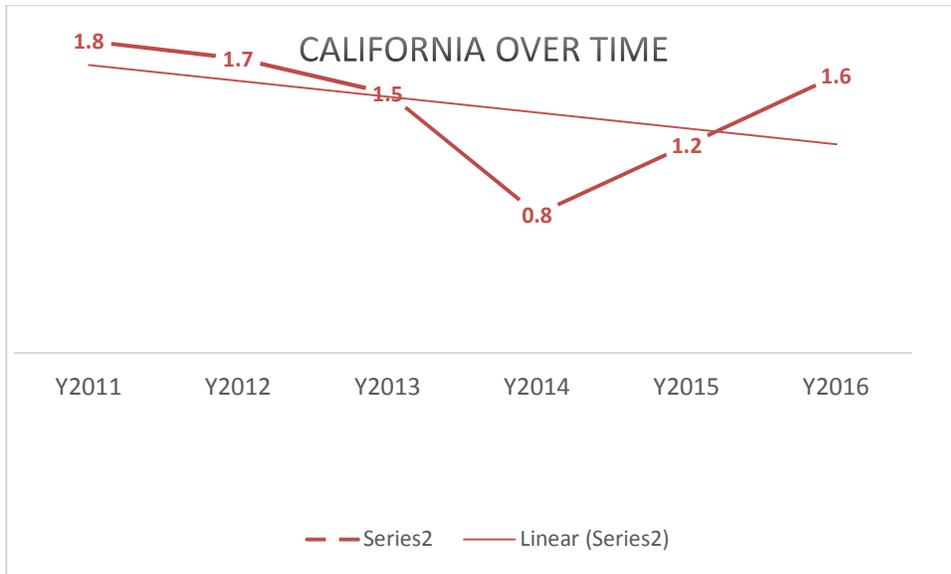
<sup>71</sup> Gale, Lewis R., et al. "An Economic Analysis of Hate Crimes." *Eastern Economic Journal* *ibid*

<sup>72</sup> Gale, Lewis R., et al. "An Economic Analysis of Hate Crimes." *Eastern Economic Journal* *ibid*

Data was collected from the US census bureau on population estimates by state and including Washington D.C. and in totals for the United States from 2010 through 2016. The percent of white only population was also collected from the US Census data. Data was collected from US department of Labor Statistics on unemployment numbers, then was organized in ranking from lowest unemployment as best or number 1-51 with 51 as worst. The number of hate groups in a state were collected from the SPLC hate map and calculated against their per capita population totals from the Census data and then ranked from least amount per capita as the best (1) to worst (51) again including Washington D.C. These statistics were compared against each other to find various correlations. Results are below and graphical data is included and in annexes.

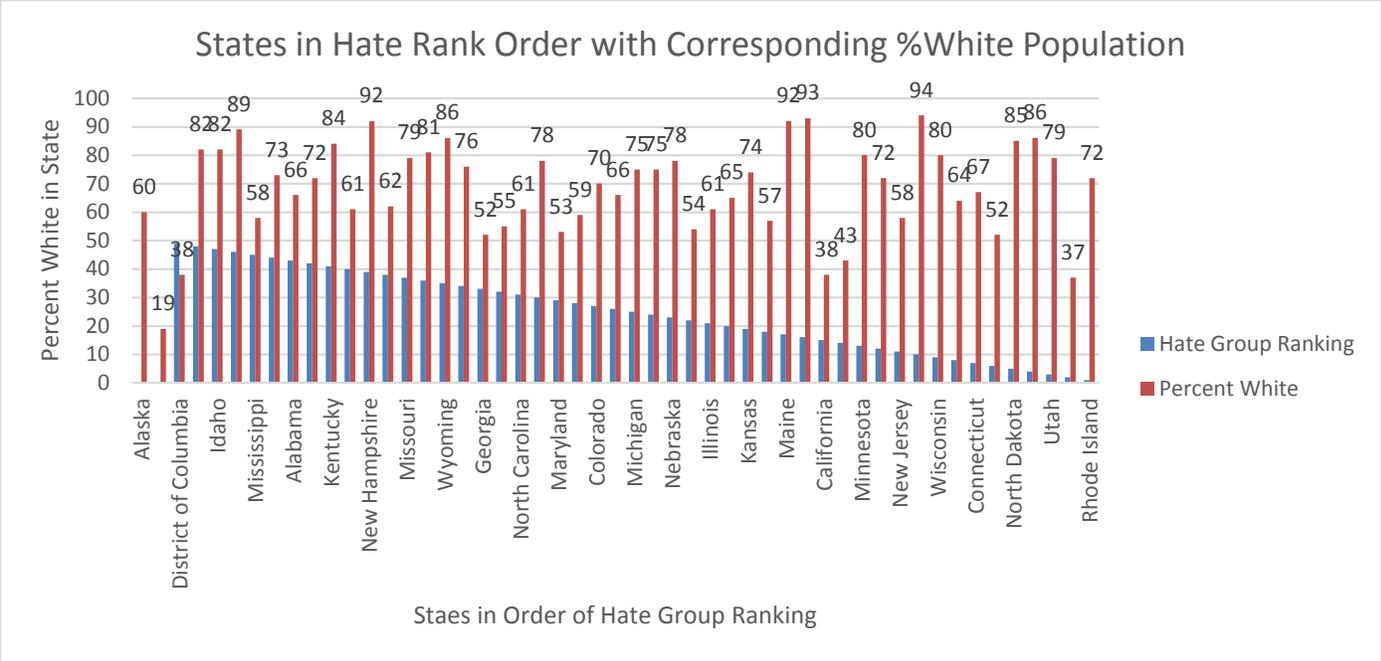
## CONCLUSIONS

As earlier noted California does not have the highest amount of hate groups when calculated per capita. As it turns out Washington D.C., the cradle of American democracy is home to the highest amount of hate groups per capita. There is one hate group per every 32,437 people or 0.3 percent of the population. California has hate group per 496,836 people and finds itself at the 15-spot in the state rankings where number 1 is the best. The other states that are in the worst positions are South Dakota, Montana and Mississippi. Just to complete the vindication of the maligned golden state, California has had a decrease in hate group activity over the past several years. Calculating estimated population increases from the census with the actual SPLC numbers the below chart showing the percentage change in hate groups in California shows an overall declining trend from 2011.



Source: US Census data and SPLC Hate Map  
 Data shows an overall slight decline from the year 2011 until 2016. While the numbers are slightly higher from 2014 and 2016, overall the percentage has remained steady.  
 CHART 1

It is clear from the below chart, the percentage of white or non-white population does not prove to have any effect on the amount of hate groups in a state. Alaska and Hawaii have vastly different totals of white and minority populations and neither have any hate groups. South Dakota, Idaho, and Kentucky all have around 80% white population and all have very high amounts of hate group activity. Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Utah also have about an 80% white population yet have some of the lowest hate group amounts in the United States. Mississippi and New Jersey are at opposite ends of the hate group ranking yet both have a 58% white population.



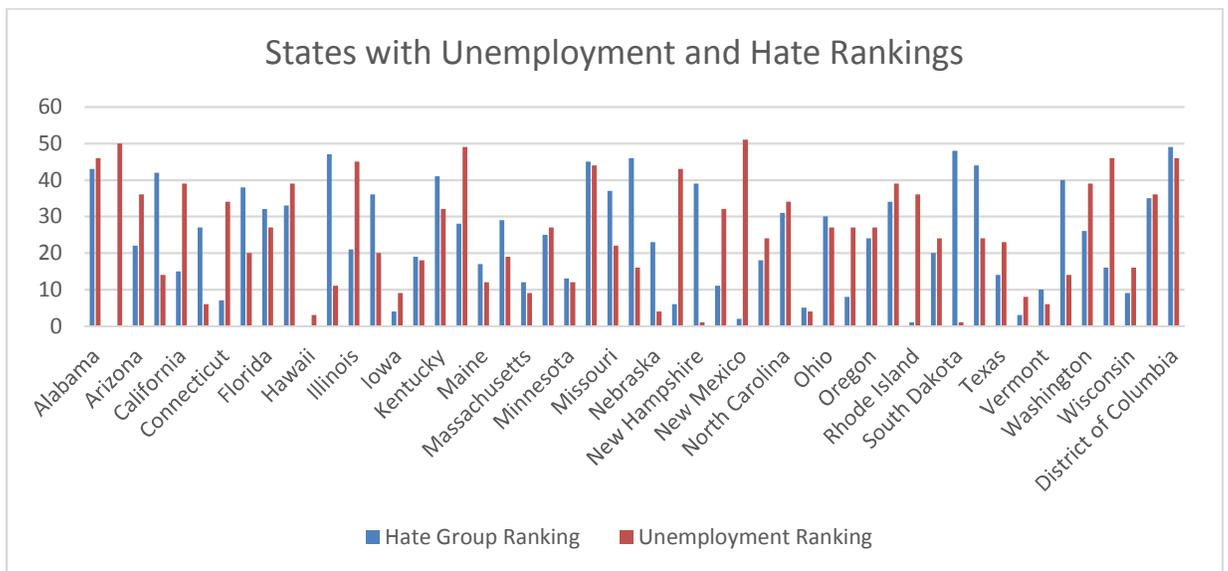
(Full Chart in Annex A) Source: US Census Data and SPLC Hate Map  
 Chart reflects hate group ranking in descending order from highest activity to lowest with no pattern based on the white population totals.

CHART 2

So, as it turns out the tipping point threshold theory is not a plausible significant variable in measuring hate group prevalence in a state. One of the reasons for this may include that the tipping point has already happened well in the past and is no longer relevant. California and New Mexico each have a non-white majority. California has about 38% white population and about a 40% Hispanic population. New Mexico is similar, and many other states have a white minority when compared with all the other minorities put together including Black, Hispanic, Asian those who claim more than one ethnicity. It is also possible that since many groups have an anti-Jewish credo that race and ethnicity are just not relevant measures for hate group enlistment when looked at alone. Religion statistics are not collected by the census and other options for collection differ too much. Another possibility is that while some states have long racist traditions, many have tried to overcome these faults. Maybe that ideal is winning enough hearts and minds to make the difference in the numbers. Or it maybe it is completely insignificant and always was. Maybe people care about their

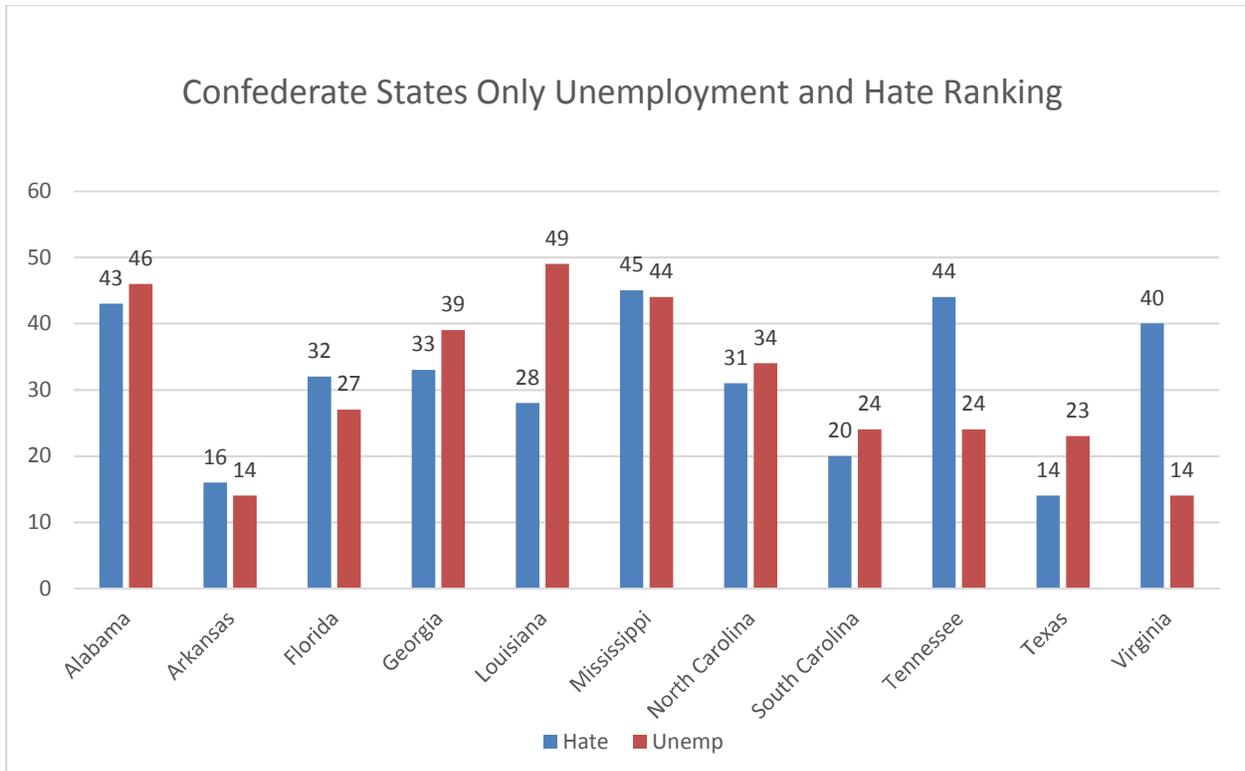
homes and neighborhoods and neighbors identity enough to move to another home, but not enough to attend meetings or marches in their free time.

While the tipping point threshold is seemingly unrelated to hate group ranking, unemployment data proved an entirely different story. Unemployment and hate group rankings were very closely related in over half of the states in the US and the District of Columbia. In 24 states and D.C. the unemployment ranking was within ten-points of the hate group ranking. The correlation was found at the high unemployment and low unemployment spectrum. High unemployment correlated with high hate group activity ranking and low unemployment correlated with low hate group activity ranking.



(Full Chart Annex B)  
 Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics and SPLC Hate Map  
 CHART 3

The correlation was even stronger when looking only at the former Confederate States of America. 8 out of 11 had almost the same ranking.



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics and SPLC Hate Map  
CHART 4

This strengthens the findings of Mulholland who theorized that the poverty rate combined with cultural factors such as the history of former Confederate membership led to more hate activity within the state.<sup>73</sup>

Mining the data, a bit further provided another correlation. The unemployment rate has declined in the United States about 5% over the last 5 years. Hate group number have also declined over the same period by about 8%.

The SPLC theorized that this may be good news or it may be a reaction to the current political climate with the new election of Donald Trump.<sup>74</sup> It may be that the 2008 election of the

<sup>73</sup> Mulholland, Sean E. *Hate Fuel*, 494

<sup>74</sup> Potok, Mark, *The Year in Hate and Extremism*, *ibid*

nation's first black president was a "call to arms" and motivated white supremacists to organize or the economic woes of the recent past stirred anger and racial hate, and likewise the election of a racist white man has quelled the call to arms or even provided a sense of victory, thus no longer needing the fight. It is also possible that the hate group participants have substituted their hate meetings and rallies for Trump political rallies. As political party rallies, fundraisers or other gatherings in the name of elections are impossible to fully interpret as anything other than instruments of democracy, it may never be known whether or not hate activity declined or was substituted and disguised.

This idea that President Obama's election fanned the fires for hate group formation makes sense sociologically as a reaction to Obama's wide support as especially white supremacist hate groups may have seen his presidency as the ultimate threat. If the percentage of hate groups increased in the years from 2008-2016, then it is plausible that the Obama presidency was at a least contributing catalyst for hate groups in these states. However, hate groups overall did not increase when calculated against population increases. As discussed earlier, hate group formation declined or remained steady. Also, one would need to compare this data against the years after the Obama era i.e. 2017 onward to see if the hate group trend decreased. Of course, this data has not occurred yet and will need to be analyzed in the future. If the number of groups does decrease dramatically, this would be a strong indicator that there was a reactionary component regarding the election of President Obama. One could argue that the election of Donald Trump is a reaction unto itself and helps bolster this theory, but it's too early for this to be proved as well. So, this study will focus on the other options to explain why and if hate groups are so prevalent.

The hate map is a brilliant yet simple tool that deftly describes the state of hate groups in America and helps specifically identify trends in year over year comparisons. That said the hate map should never be taken as the whole picture. Other factors and elements in conjunction with the hate map figures must be considered to complete the analysis. As discussed, California has the highest

number of hate groups in the United States and that raw number has increased steadily over the last few years. However, as demonstrated when combined with US census data the per capita percentage puts California 15 (with 51 as worst) for organized hate in America. Washington D.C. is in fact the worst. Also, other factors need to be addressed in these calculations including economic factors such as employment status. It may be useful in future analysis to also look at educational factors, family harmony and religious divisions.

#### A FINAL PERSONAL NOTE

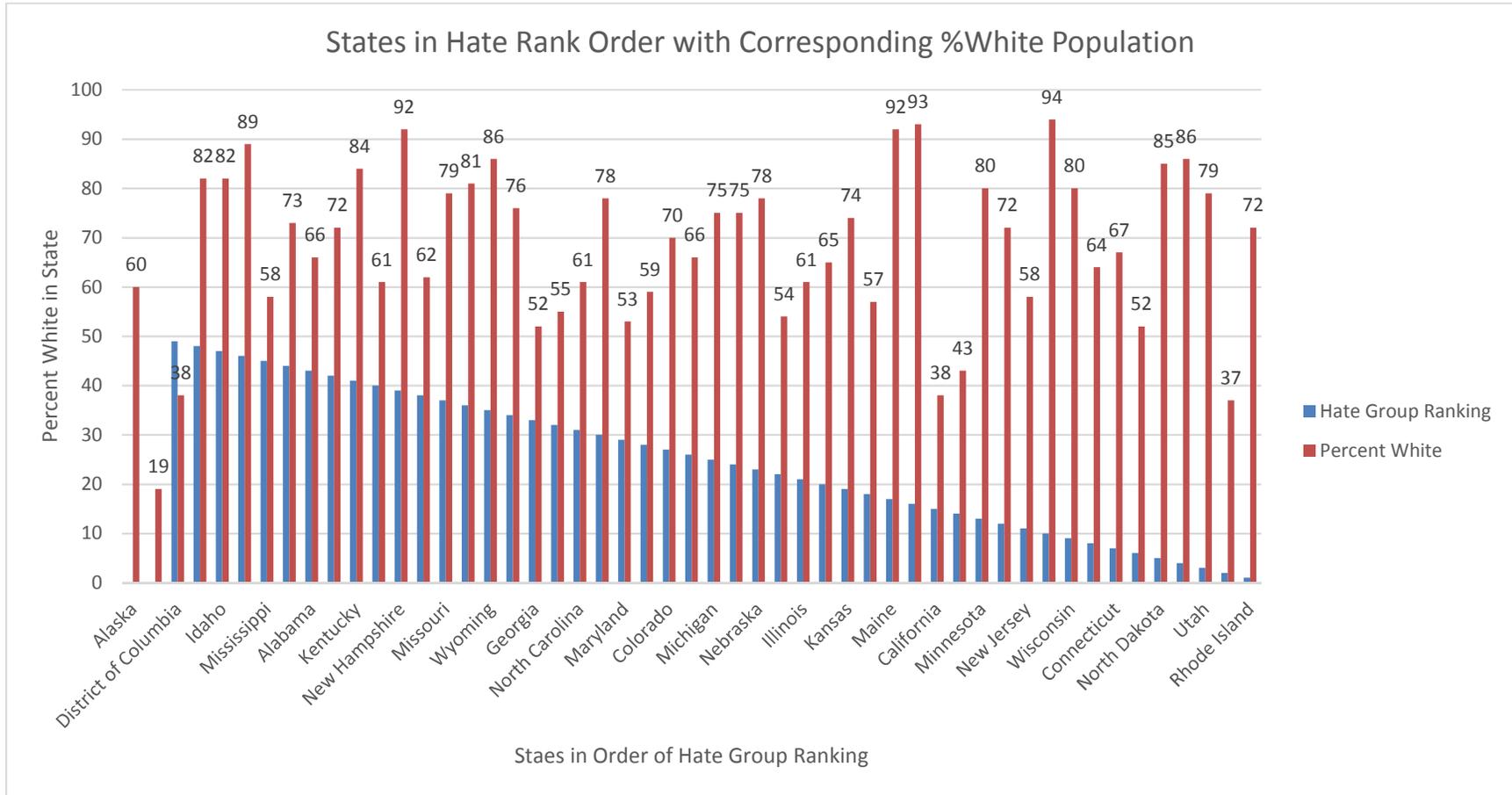
The numbers make it very clear that the trend toward hate groups is decreasing not increasing. As earlier discussed, there is an argument to be made that the election of Donald trump is the reason for this decline in that he represents fulfilment of the hate goal. His rallies may represent the hate group protests of tomorrow. This knowledge will only be discovered in the future when another researcher analyzes possible spikes in activity if, and when more moderate leadership succeeds the current administration.

Therefore, right now we have the luxury to choose what to believe; we can choose to believe in hope, in the idea that decency, understanding and fairness are winning the day. Maybe hate groups are declining because people, nay even the world is getting better. Wouldn't that be nice.

ANNEX A

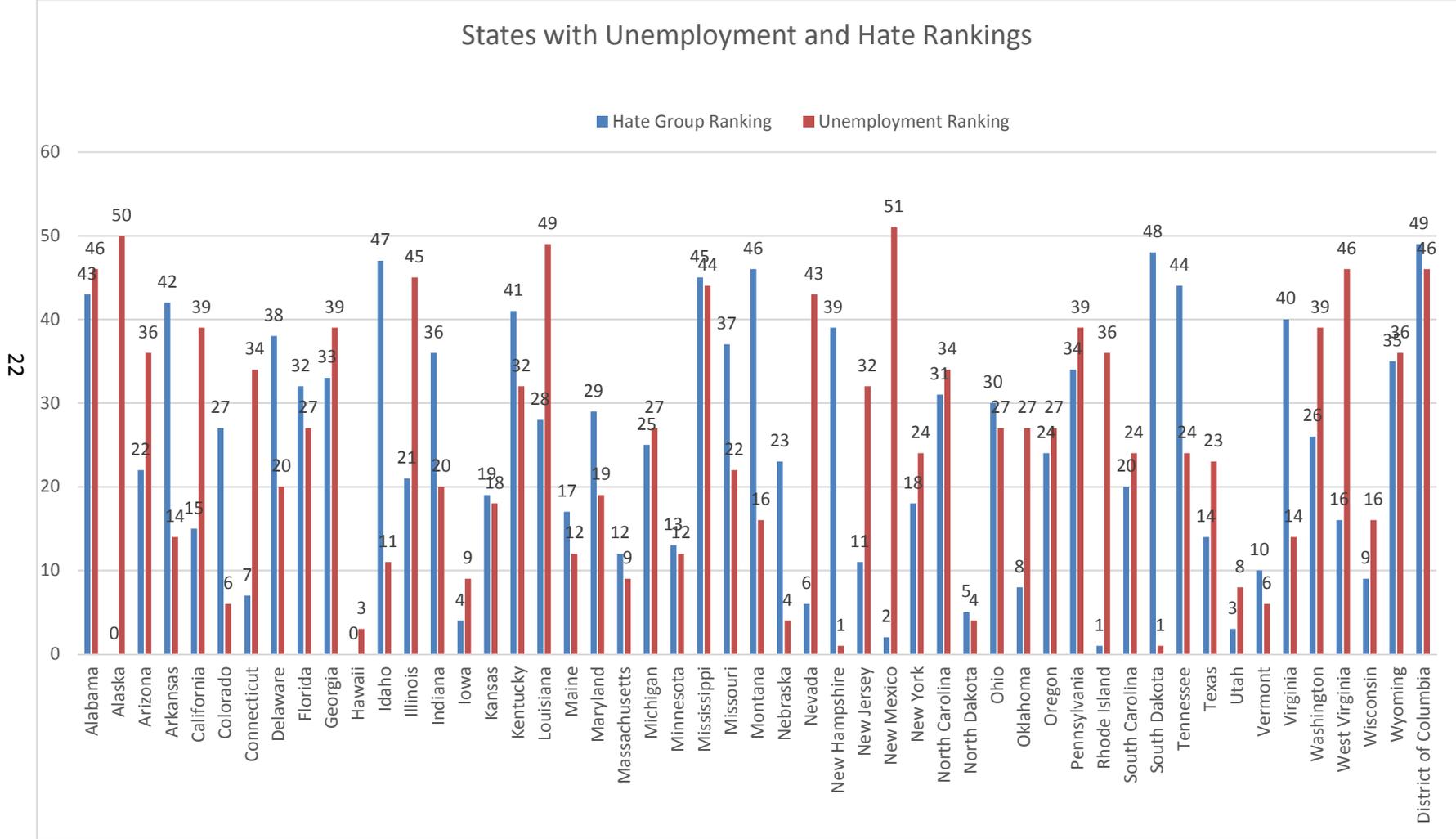
CHART 5

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ANNEX B

CHART 6



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