Justice Quarterly, 2017
https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2017.1351576

Accomplishing Difference: How Do Anti-race/Ethnicity Bias Homicides Compare to Average Homicides in the United States?

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Research on the nature of bias homicide has experienced increased interest in the academic literature. To date, few studies have compared the similarities and differences between anti-race/ethnicity bias homicides and average American homicides. Consequently, we know little about how the offender, victim, and situational characteristics compare across these two homicide types. Drawing from doing difference theory of bias crime, the aim of this study is to comparatively analyze the attributes of anti-race/ethnicity homicides to average homicides between 1990 and 2014. Anti-race/ethnicity homicide data is extracted from the U.S. Extremist Crime Database and paired with average homicides from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's 2000 Supplementary Homicide Reports. The results of this study suggest that the characteristics of anti-race/ethnicity homicides are both similar and different from average homicides. Implications for bias crime theory, research, and policy are discussed.

Keywords homicide; bias crime; hate crime

Every year across the United States thousands of individuals are victimized by discriminatory violence[1] (Langton & Planty, 2011; Sandholtz, Langton, &

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1. "Discriminatory Crime," "Bias Crime," and "Hate Crime" are used interchangeably throughout the manuscript.

Planty, 2013; Wilson, 2014). Research on this form of interpersonal violence has seen considerable progress over the past several years. Much of this work has focused on specific types of bias-motivated violence, including sexual orientation bias homicides (Comstock, 1991; Gruenewald, 2012; Gruenewald & Kelley, 2015; Herek & Berrill, 1990, 1992; Kelley & Gruenewald, 2015) and anti-Muslim bias crimes (Byers & Jones, 2007; Disha, Cavendish, & King, 2011; Swahn et al., 2003). The growing consensus in the criminological literature is that discriminatory violence is unique from other more conventional forms of violence. Relative to traditional violent crimes, bias violence is overwhelmingly perpetrated by young, White males (Berrill, 1990; Comstock, 1991; Garofalo & Martin, 1993; Harry, 1992; Martin, 1996; Maxwell & Maxwell, 1995), often involves multiple offenders and victims (Garofalo, 1991; Gruenewald, 2012), tends to subject victims to severe forms of brutality (Levin, 1999; Levin & McDevitt, 1993; Messner, McHugh, & Felson, 2004; Perry, 2003), and has a greater impact on communities as a whole (Cogan, 2002; Herek, Gillis, & Cogan, 1999; Noelle, 2002).

Although research has advanced knowledge of the distinguishing features of discriminatory violence, what is absent from the literature are studies on how fatal acts of violence that target a person because of their race or ethnicity are unique from more routine homicide events. Consequently, we lack an empirical understanding of whether the offender, victim, and situational elements of anti-race/ethnicity[2] homicides are quantitatively dissimilar from the characteristics of the "average" homicide in the U.S.[3] This gap in prior research is curious, as racial violent crimes have constituted the majority of bias victimizations across the U.S. for several years (see Langton & Planty, 2011; Sandholtz et al., 2013; Strom, 2001; Wilson, 2014). Drawing from Perry's (2001) doing difference theory of hate crime and past comparative bias homicide research (see Gruenewald, 2012), the purpose of this study is to contribute to the broader bias crime literature, as well as homicide studies more generally, by comparatively analyzing the features of anti-race homicides to common homicide events. The following research question guides this study: how do offender, victim, and situational characteristics of anti-race bias homicides compare to the average homicide in the United States?

To address this question, the current study utilizes open source data on racial bias homicides occurring between 1990 and 2014 from the U.S. Extremist Crime Database (ECDB). The ECDB defines anti-race homicides as unlawful acts of fatal violence involving victims who are selected in whole or part because of their actual or perceived race or ethnicity. For comparative purposes, a random sample of "average" homicides is drawn from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) 2000 Supplementary Homicide Reports (SHRs). Average

2. Hereafter referred to as anti-race.

3. Throughout the text, words such as "average," "common," "traditional," "parallel," and "conventional" are used synonymously.

homicides are considered "events representing modal homicide incident and participant categories in the United States" (Gruenewald, 2012, p. 3602).

Theoretical Framework

To begin to understand why the characteristics of anti-race lethal violence may be discernible from traditional homicide types, we draw from Perry's (2001) reconceptualization of structured action theory (Messerschmidt, 1993, 1997) and doing difference theory (West & Fenstermaker, 1995) to explain incidents of bias crime. We believe our conceptual framework provides the appropriate background for understanding racially and ethnically motivated fatal violence as a distinguishable homicide category.

For Perry (2001), the key to understanding bias crime as a unique type of violence lies in exploring the inextricable link between situated action and the structural underpinnings that shape social relations (see also Messerschmidt, 1993; West & Fenstermaker, 1995). At the core of this explanatory framework is the notion of *difference*. Perry (2001) argues that stemming from historic stratification processes in the United States, virtually every institution in society (e.g. family, politics, economics, the media, education) is organized hierarchically across intersections of gender, class, and race (see also Messerschmidt, 1993; West & Fenstermaker, 1995). Consequently, *difference* has been socially constructed between various social groupings, culminating into mutually exclusive identity classes (e.g. gender, class, sexuality, and race) that are perceived as normal parts of life (Omi & Winant, 1994; Perry, 2001). Notably, such difference has assumed a hegemonic form whereby dominant social groups are favored, and all "Others" are marginalized (Perry, 2001). White racial identities are considered the dominant norm in American culture (Hyde, 1995; McDermott & Samson, 2005) and all other non-whites are viewed as different, marginal, and underprivileged. As a result, stark demarcations between racial identities have been borne, each with its own assumed social rules and norms of conduct (Perry, 2001).

Within such a context, individuals enter social situations with biased opinions about how people should appear and behave based on their racial identity. For example, members of society expect Whites to look and act like Whites, Blacks to behave and appear as Blacks, and so on (Omi & Winant, 1994; Perry, 2001; West & Fenstermaker, 1995). By doing so, individuals situationally demonstrate conformity to hegemonic social norms and thereby reproduce the broader socio-structural order (Messerschmidt, 1993, 1997). From this perspective, the situated enactment of difference is viewed as a dynamic and interactive process, during which people hold each other accountable for the presentation of their racial identity across various human encounters (Messerschmidt, 1993; Perry, 2001; West & Fenstermaker, 1995; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Insofar as people comply and conform to society's racialized rules of

interactive behavior, they are thought to "do difference" in a socially acceptable manner (Perry, 2001, p. 54; West & Fenstermaker, 1995).

Perry (2001) maintains that in some instances, however, racial difference is unsuitably demonstrated. More specifically, this occurs when Whites perceive subordinate races to depart from normative societal roles (individually or collectively) and infringe upon their racial sovereignty. Racial minorities settling in traditionally White neighborhoods (Green, Strolovitch, & Wong, 1998), minority races benefiting from affirmative action programs (Bobo, 1998; Bobo & Kluegel, 1993; Fine, Weis, Addelston, & Marusza, 1997; Wilson, 2006), and minority progress in other social, political, and economic sectors (Perry, 2001) are just a few examples of perceived threats to the White status quo. Within this context, minority races can become the discriminant targets of bias-motivated attacks. For example, lethal violence inspired by racial and ethnic prejudice may transpire as the situated mechanism of "intimidation and control" aimed at reaffirming racial boundaries (Perry, 2001, p. 2). To this point, anti-race fatal violence can be viewed as a situated act intended to temporarily achieve one's racial identity, reinvigorate socially constructed racial hierarchies, and sanction minority victims for overstepping normative divides (Perry, 2001).

A similar logic applies to minority-perpetrated fatal crimes, as well. The situated practice of racial discrimination is not unique to the White dominant class. In fact, as Perry (2001, p. 122) suggests, "all members of society are susceptible to dominant viewpoints." As divisions of difference appear natural and normal, all human actors buy into hierarchical classifications of race, whereby status maintenance or status achievement is the ultimate goal (Perry, 2001). Accordingly, the same racism underlying Whites' marginalization of others can also be employed by subordinate groups but with one key difference. Whereas Whites oppress others to *maintain* their hegemonic social standing, minority-led discrimination occurs instead as a tool for *gaining* identity status (Perry, 2001). What is thus seen is a virtual "trickle-down bias" effect in which racial minorities demarcate both oppressed and dominant groups as a means of offsetting their marginalization and momentarily achieving power. Considered within the structure of doing difference and situated action, such racial prejudice can be enacted through several mechanisms (e.g. racial slurs, racial micro aggressions), the rarest and most severe of which being racially-motivated violence and homicide (Perry, 2001).

Importantly, the context of the bias homicide situation (incident) is integral to Perry's (2001) explanatory framework. She argues that situated encounters are the channel through which conformity to hegemonic racial divisions is demonstrated, and systemic racial prejudice is violently played out. In other words, the homicide event presents a snapshot of the unique interplay between individual behavior, situated interactions, and the broader social order (see also Meier, Kennedy, & Sacco, 2001; Miethe, Regoeczi, & Drass, 2004; Sacco & Kennedy, 2002).

Critical for this study, we recognize that the common homicide event—like racially-motivated homicide—is still a byproduct of structural inequalities of power that constrain and shape one's actions and opportunities. However, what distinguishes anti-race fatal crimes from average homicides is that the former also serves as a means to reinforce such hierarchical relations. That is, racial lethal violence is unique in that the homicide situation (a) results from racial power differentials in society *and* (b) provides a situational resource of oppression that maintains these normative hegemonic racial hierarchies (Perry, 2001). Accordingly, and to the extent that anti-race homicides function as a resource for violently doing racial difference, it is reasonable to expect the elements of these homicides to vary in important ways. In particular, we anticipate that the offender and victim demographic features of racial fatal violence will contrast with those features of the average American homicide. Also, we predict that certain situational characteristics between the two homicide types will contrast just the same. Yet, because few applications of doing racial difference theory have been systematically evaluated, specific hypotheses about the possible unique patterns of racial bias homicide must be derived from the extant bias crime literature. Thus, in the following section we review prior research comparing the various similarities and differences between bias crimes and more routine offenses to inform the current study's research expectations.

Literature Review

Few studies to date have compared the features of racially-motivated violent crimes to those of more conventional crimes in the U.S. (for exceptions see Garofalo, 1991; Garofalo & Martin, 1993; Martin, 1996; Messner et al., 2004). Nonetheless, it is possible to draw from the limited literature to ascertain general patterns of bias violence that is dissimilar from non-bias crimes. One way that bias-motivated violence is distinguishable is that the harms caused by such crimes extend beyond the immediate victims and their families (McDevitt, Balboni, Garcia, & Gu, 2001). Researchers contend that racially inspired bias crimes can undermine the stability of collective racial groups (Perry, 2001; Perry & Alvi, 2012; Weinstein, 1992), destabilize neighborhoods (Iganski, 2001, 2003, 2008), and unsettle community solidarity (McDevitt et al., 2001; Perry, 2001; Perry & Alvi, 2012).

Other studies have shown that some demographic features of bias crime participants are distinct from more routine criminality. In particular, previous research indicates that comparatively young, White males are more likely to be the perpetrators of bias offenses (Berrill, 1990; Comstock, 1991; Garofalo, 1991; Garofalo & Martin, 1993; Gruenewald, 2012; Harry, 1992; Martin, 1996; Maxwell & Maxwell, 1995). According to Perry (2001), White men in particular are more prone to use bias violence as a way of renegotiating racial divisions when traditional racialized norms are threatened. Indeed, Garofalo's (1991)

research on racial bias crime in New York City suggests that Whites commit proportionately more of these crimes compared to non-bias-related offenses.

Also important, evidence indicates that bias crime victim demographics are generally different from those of parallel crimes. Perry (2001) explains that perceptions of minorities as threats to the hegemonic classes tend to materialize into violence that discriminately targets marginalized racial categories. Prior research findings tend to support this idea. Using data from the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), Messner et al. (2004) found that when compared to White races, non-Whites are four times more likely to be the victim of bias-motivated assaults. Additional evidence suggests that minority races are overrepresented as victims of bias crimes relative to non-bias crime victimizations (Garofalo & Martin, 1993; Levin & McDevitt, 1993; Martin, 1996). Other victim demographics have also been shown to be distinguishable. For example, studies have shown that men who are relatively young are disproportionately targeted by bias crimes when compared to similar non-bias crimes (Garofalo, 1991; Garofalo & Martin, 1993; Martin, 1996).

Finally, previous studies have focused on the potentially distinctive situational characteristics of bias crimes. Compared to traditional parallel crimes, research has shown that interpersonal bias violence tends to involve multiple perpetrators (Gruenewald, 2012; Martin, 1996; Tomsen, 2009), and this includes racially-motivated crime (Garofalo, 1991; Garofalo & Martin, 1993; Levin & McDevitt, 1993). Bias crime offenders are also more likely to use extreme brutality (Levin, 1999; Levin & McDevitt, 1993; Messner et al., 2004; Perry, 2003) against unknown victims (Herek & Berrill, 1992; Tomsen, 2009). More specific to racial bias, research also shows that these crimes are more likely to involve victims and offenders who are not previously acquainted (Garofalo, 1991; Garofalo & Martin, 1993; Messner et al., 2004; Stacey, 2011). Furthermore, past research findings show that discriminatory violence is more likely to target multiple victims than conventional types of violence (Gruenewald, 2012; Martin, 1996), including anti-race motivated crimes (Garofalo, 1991). Lastly, relative to non-bias crimes, some forms of bias-driven homicides are less likely to involve the use of firearms, and more likely to use knives or blunt objects or engage in particularly brutal beatings of the victim (Gruenewald, 2012; Levin & McDevitt, 1993; Tomsen, 2009).

The Current Study

Despite recent advances in the extant bias crime literature, past studies have yet to comparatively analyze the offender, victim, and situational characteristics of racial bias fatal attacks and the average American homicide. By examining the distinctive circumstances in which difference is accomplished during anti-race fatal violence, the current research contributes to the extant literature on bias crimes specifically, and on homicides more generally, in several ways. First, while Decker (1993) has suggested that traditional homicides are

either instrumental (i.e. profit-motivated and stranger offenders) or expressive (i.e. dispute-related and known offenders) in nature, prior studies have shown the importance of studying "deviant homicide," or homicides that do not meet normative expectations, to better understand variability in homicide occurrences (Decker, 1996; Varano & Cancino, 2001). It is important then to consider anti-race homicides as a form of "deviant homicide" insomuch that stranger offenders, as opposed to known offenders, commit expressive homicides because of their real or perceived racial identity. Second, Flewelling and Williams (1999) have suggested the need for the disaggregation of homicides as different types of homicides may be characterized with alternative causes and patterns. Therefore, concentrating on a certain type of bias has its advantages (see Stacey, 2011), as we anticipate that anti-race homicides will be patterned in relatively distinctive ways that could afford a more nuanced understanding of lethal bias-driven attacks. Third, while prior empirical research has revealed important patterns of bias crimes more generally, our study adds to this knowledge base a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of racial bias crime, which is a form of interpersonal violence that has long been a persistent threat to public safety (see Sandholtz et al., 2013; Strom, 2001). In fact, although laws such as the 1964 Civil Rights Act have historically provided protection to persons based on race for far longer than any other victim group (e.g. LGBT), persons discriminately targeted because of their race still remain the most common victim of bias crime (FBI, 2015). Lastly, our research integrates an innovated open source bias homicide database (ECDB) with official homicide data (SHR), drawing on the strengths of both sources. This allows us to systematically compare the structural elements of homicide inspired by racial bias to homicides motivated by other non-bias reasons. Comparing characteristics of crime on the same condition (e.g. homicide) in this way can provide researchers and practitioners with noteworthy insights into the ways in which racially inspired crimes are uniquely structured.

Research Hypotheses

Building off of previous bias crime theory and research, we expect variations to exist in the situated accomplishment of difference between racial bias homicide and average homicide events. In particular, the current research expects to find differences in the racial demographic of offenders and victims, victim—offender relationship, the number of incidents involving multiple victims and multiple offenders, and the utilization of firearms. Our specific research hypotheses include:

> **H_1:** Racial bias homicides will involve proportionately more White offenders than conventional homicides;

> **H_2:** Racial bias homicides will involve proportionately more Black and Asian victims than conventional homicides;

H_3: Racial bias homicides will involve proportionately more unknown (or stranger) victims than conventional homicides;

H_4: Racial bias homicides will involve proportionately more victims in an incident than conventional homicides;

H_5: Racial bias homicides will involve proportionately more offenders in an incident than conventional homicides; and

H_6: Racial bias homicides will involve proportionately less firearms than conventional homicides.

Method

Although the FBI's Uniform Crime Report (UCR) program and the NIBRS have collected data on hate crime incidents since the early 1990s, prior research is hamstrung by the limitations of these data, which tend to reflect unreliable reporting of bias-motivated crimes across police agency jurisdictions (see Boyd, Berk, & Hamner, 1996; Haider-Markel, 2002; McDevitt et al., 2000; Nolan & Akiyama, 1999). To overcome these constraints, the current study examines data from the ECDB on all known anti-race bias homicide incidents (n = 134) in the United States from 1990 to 2014. The ECDB is an open source, event-level database that primarily tracks information on the violent and financial crimes committed by domestic extremists (Freilich, Chermak, Belli, Gruenewald, & Parkin, 2014). The ECDB has also assembled additional information on bias homicides committed by both individuals who are not affiliated with an organized hate group or domestic extremist movement as well as those that are, providing an original source of comprehensive data on fatal incidents of racial/ethnic violence. ECDB data have been a reliable source for studying such crimes as terrorism and extremist violence (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2015; Gruenewald, 2011; Gruenewald, Chermak, & Freilich, 2012; Gruenewald & Pridemore, 2012; Parkin, Freilich, & Chermak, 2014/2015) as well as bias homicide (Gruenewald, 2012, 2013; Gruenewald & Kelley, 2015; Kelley & Gruenewald, 2015). The ECDB sample constitutes four bias homicide subtypes, including anti-Black (57%), anti-Hispanic (19%), anti-Asian (13%),[4] and anti-White (11%).

4. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget and the U.S. Census Bureau define Asian as any "person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent" (Hoeffel, Rastogi, Kim, & Shahid, 2012). This includes, for example, China, India, Pakistan, Cambodia, Japan, Bangladesh, and Thailand. Therefore, any victim descending from the aforementioned areas that were specifically targeted because of their race/ethnicity were coded as anti-Asian. If indicators of bias suggest a victim was targeted solely because of their religion, rather than race/ethnicity, those were coded as anti-religious bias homicides and excluded from this study.

ECDB Inclusion Criteria and Data Collection Procedures

The unit of analysis in this study is the homicide incident, which is chosen as a way of linking key historical, social, offender, and victim characteristics to the situational features of homicide (Decker, 1996; Decker & Curry, 2002; LaFree & Birkbeck, 1991; Meier et al., 2001; Miethe et al., 2004; Sacco & Kennedy, 2002), while allowing us to examine precisely how racial homicides may be different from average homicides.[5] Researchers for the ECDB identify and systematically search anti-race homicide incidents using various publicly available open-source materials, such as advocacy group reports (e.g. Southern Poverty Law Center and Anti-Defamation League), government reports, academic chronologies, and comprehensive print and internet news media searches using the *LexisNexis* search engine (see Freilich et al., 2014).

The ECDB adopts the FBI conceptualization of criminal homicide, defined as the "willful (nonnegligent) killing of one human being by another" (FBI, 2004, p. 15), which specifically encapsulates murder and nonnegligent manslaughter.[6] Included within the database are racial homicide incidents involving persons officially charged with bias homicide, in addition to individuals who committed a bias homicide, but for which official bias crime charges were not filed (Gruenewald, 2012).[7] To be eligible for inclusion, anti-race homicide incidents must involve one or more bias indicators validating that the victim was selected in part or whole because of their actual or perceived race or ethnicity. Derived from law enforcement training resources, such bias indicators include (1) *the use of derogatory remarks* (e.g. racial epithets, slurs, or other bigoted innuendo either written or verbalized by the offender to the homicide victim), (2) an *offender's admission* to law enforcement or other witnesses that suggest the victims were selected because of their racial identity, (3) the *labeling of a crime as bias-motivated or official filing of a bias crime charge by police or prosecutors*, (4) the selection of a victim based on *symbolic location* and/or *the location of where a victim's body is found* (e.g. a traditionally Black church, neighborhood, community),[8] (5) the selection of a victim through

5. Also, the homicide incident is the theoretically appropriate unit of analysis. Perry's (2001) explanatory framework is focused on understanding the hate crime event as an interactive, situated process that is inseparable from the social structures of racialized difference. To this point, the homicide incident is the conduit by which social structure is acted out and situational demonstrations of hegemonic difference can be observed.

6. Accordingly, manslaughter by gross negligence, involuntary manslaughter, and incidents for which offenders were acquitted of homicide charges are not included in the current study.

7. Including incidents that are officially charged as bias homicides as well as those homicides that are of a biased nature (based on situational indicators), but police or prosecutors decided not to charge as a bias crime reduces the possibility of selectivity bias. Our selection of anti-race bias homicides are based on situational evidence, which is consistent over time and protects against variations in police or prosecutor charging discretion.

8. In response to anonymous reviewer concern about the symbolic location bias indicator as a lone indicator in the identification of a bias homicide, we note that this bias indicator was never the sole criterion in which inclusion of a racial bias homicide was based.

a *meeting service, organization, or activity associated with a particular social identity group*, (6) evidence that offenders committed *previous bias violence* against a particular victim in the hours or days prior to the homicide, and (7) the *symbolic manipulation of victim's bodies* in such a way that reflects dominance, dehumanization, or institutionalized discrimination against a specific social group (e.g. lynching).[9]

Because the ECDB inclusion criteria focus on a series of observable factors, attempts to assess offenders' beliefs and drives are avoided. ECDB researchers instead rely on situational evidence and observable suspect-based behaviors to more reliably identify anti-race homicides, significantly reducing the likelihood of selectivity bias.[10] In order to assess suspect-level behaviors, only incidents in which the offenders' identity was known are included in the ECDB. Additionally, all gang-on-gang violence is excluded from the database.

Supplementary Homicide Reports (SHR)

For comparison, data on average homicide events come from the FBI UCRs-SHR. SHR data are collected and organized by the FBI and can be accessed through the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research housed at the University of Michigan. To match the racial bias homicide conditions found within the ECDB sample, only murder and non-negligent manslaughter is extracted from the SHR. For this study, we use data from the year 2000 because it represents a reasonable midpoint between 1990 and 2014 (see also Gruenewald, 2012). Following the methodology employed in previous homicide research (Gruenewald, 2012; Gruenewald & Pridemore, 2012), five average homicides for every one anti-race homicide are randomly sampled from the 2000 SHR data, comprising a total of 670 homicides selected for comparison.[11] Importantly, the 2000 SHR homicides randomly selected in the present analysis

9. To reduce the potential for selectivity bias, two extensively trained ECDB researchers reviewed each case for inclusion to ensure the necessary criterion was met. Also, as the current study focused only on a single type of bias homicide, the likelihood of confounding multiple types of bias offenders in the analysis is reduced.

10. The data collection and coding protocols of the ECDB have been documented as capturing most of the known universe of far-right extremist homicide incidents (see Chermak, Freilich, Parkin, & Lynch, 2012). Accordingly, we see no reason to suspect that the anti-race/ethnicity homicides pulled from the ECDB, which include both extremist and non-extremist crimes, do not also come close to representing all known cases. Additionally, the coding of variables in the ECDB has been documented as a reliable system. Coders tend to agree between 89 and 98% of the time. When data are missing or are inconsistent, a database manager conducts additional comprehensive searches to fill-in missing values (Chermak et al., 2012).

11. Although it appears that utilizing the total sample of homicides in the 2000 SHR might provide the current analysis with more statistical power, Gruenewald and Pridemore (2012 citing Breslow, 1982) suggest little increase in statistical power from providing more comparison homicides. Accordingly, anything more than the five traditional homicides per anti-race/ethnicity homicide provides no useful increase in the probability to reject the null hypothesis and identify differences between anti-race/ethnicity homicides and SHR homicides (see also Gruenewald, 2012).

are representative of the "average" homicide event, so it is unlikely the characteristics of these homicides will vary by year (see Gruenewald & Pridemore, 2012). Research suggests some fluctuations in homicide characteristics are to be expected (e.g. offender age), though over the last century the structure of homicide events have remained relatively stable. For instance, contemporary average homicide tends to be characterized as intraracial crimes disproportionately committed by Black men against other Black male victims involving the use of firearms, typically involves single offenders and victims, and often targets victims known to the offender (Miethe et al., 2004). To further investigate whether differences exist across homicide characteristics at different time points, we used SHR data to examine variable percentages across three decades, 1990, 2000, and 2010.[12] These analyses did not indicate major differences across time periods. For example, within victim—offender relationships we found that stranger relationships made up 13.5% of homicides in 1990, 12.5% in 2000, and 11.9% in 2010. For weapon use, we found that firearms were used in 64.2% of homicides in 1990, 65.4% of homicides in 2000, and 67.4% of homicides in 2010. Accordingly, it is reasonable to suspect that the 2000 SHR data provide a stable comparison group for identifying differences between anti-race homicides and average homicide events. Likewise, the racial bias homicide data sampled from the ECDB are also characteristic of the modal racially biased homicide in the U.S. As such, we have no reason to believe that the structure of these homicide events will significantly vary by year either. ECDB data from 1990 to 2014 is sampled to provide enough statistical power to detect meaningful differences between anti-race homicide and average homicide events.

We note that it is plausible the SHR random sample may also contain anti-race bias homicides. Findings of statistical significance may thus be biased in a conservative direction, making it difficult to evaluate key differences between the two homicide types (see Gruenewald & Pridemore, 2012). Supplemental analyses, however, revealed this not to be a threat to the validity of our findings (see note 18). Moreover, it is also important that we briefly recognize the limitations of SHR data, which have been well documented in prior research (see Loftin, 1986; Maxfield, 1989; Pizarro & Zeoli, 2013; Williams & Flewelling, 1987). For example, prior studies note the inaccuracy and incompleteness of SHR variables as a primary concern (Fox, 2004; Pizarro & Zeoli, 2013), with homicide circumstance and victim offender relationship being arguably the most problematic variables (Pizarro & Zeoli, 2013).[13] In addition, it appears that the level of missing data in the SHR has increased over time, including the year 2000 (Fox, 2004). Our analyses, therefore, must be placed within the context of these data limitations. However, general information known to law

12. This information came from Puzzanchera, Chamberlin, and Kang (2016).

13. Though a contested topic within the literature, some scholars suggest that due to the systematic issues within the SHR, data imputation procedures may be inadvisable (Pizarro & Zeoli, 2013, p. 729). To analyze these data then, we remove cases listwise in logistic regression.

enforcement at the initial investigation of the homicide incident—such as certain offender and victim demographics, as well as other event characteristics —is relatively more reliably reported data (Fox, 2004; Pizarro & Zeoli, 2013), which is the main focus of this study.

Coding and Measures

Using multiple open source materials (e.g. court records, print/internet news media, advocacy reports), a team of extensively trained researchers first coded offender, victim, and situational variables into the ECDB's relational database. We then exported and merged these data into statistical analysis software (SPSS version 23) with the sample of 670 traditional homicides from the 2000 SHR. In this study, the dependent variable is homicide type, coded as (1) *anti-race homicide* or (0) *average homicide*.

Several independent variables that capture the demographic features of homicide offenders and victims are included. For ease of comparison, only the first (or primary) offender and victim for each homicide are selected (see Gruenewald & Pridemore, 2012). The first two variables measure offender gender as well as victim gender as (1) *male* or (0) *female*. Next, offender age and victim age are measured as a two distinct continuous variables. Offender race is coded as (1) *White*, (2) *Black*, (3) *Hispanic*, (4) *Other (e.g. Asian, Bi-racial, and Native American/American Indian),* while victim race is coded as (1) *White*, (2) *Black*, (3) *Hispanic*, (4) *Asian*, or (5) *Other (e.g. Bi-racial and Native American/ American Indian)*. Notably, due to reporting issues and missing data within the SHR (see Fox, 2004, note 1; Pizarro & Zeoli, 2013; Smith & Cooper, 2013), offender and victim (e.g. Hispanic) are excluded for average homicides.[14]

Additionally, the current study is interested in examining the situational characteristics of homicide events. The first variable identifies the most lethal weapon used in the homicide and is coded as (1) *firearm,* (2) *knife/cutting instrument,* (3) *blunt object,* (4) *bodily weapon* (e.g. hands, feet, fists), or (5*) other weapon* (e.g. fire/arson, asphyxiation). A second situational variable examines the relationship between the victim and the offender as either being known to one another or complete strangers (1 = strangers, 0 = known).[15]

14. Specifically, offender ethnicity in the SHR sample had over 78% unknown or missing values, while victim ethnicity had over 67% unknown or missing values. Because ethnic origin is difficult to establish for reporting officers, it is possible that Hispanic ethnicity is coded as White under the SHR's offender and victim race variable. Pizarro and Zeoli (2013) compared Newark Police Department homicide records to SHR data, finding that Hispanic individuals in the Newark data-set tended to be captured under the White racial category of the SHR. This suggests that White offender and victim races in the current study may be confounded with Hispanic ethnic origins.

15. We note that victim offender relationship in our SHR sample specifically may contain coding errors and it also has approximately 40% missing values. By aggregating values and dichotomously coding this variable, we hope to reduce the likelihood of coding errors within the SHR. Still, prior research has shown the quality of victim offender relationship to be relatively poor (Pizarro & Zeoli, 2013), so caution should be observed.

Next, two separate binary coded variables capture whether there were multiple offenders (1 = multiple offenders, 0 = single offender) or multiple victims (1 = multiple victims, 0 = single victim) involved in the homicide. Lastly, the current study measured the geographic region of the homicide event using four U.S. Census-based regional categories: (1) *South*, (2) *Midwest*, (3) *West*, or (4) *Northeast*.

Analytic Strategy

The analysis occurs in two stages and follows the approach of past bias and extremist crime research (Gruenewald, 2012; Gruenewald & Pridemore, 2012). First, we utilize bivariate statistical tests (Chi-square, *t*-tests) to assess the offender, victim, and situational differences between anti-race homicides and average homicides. Next, we use multivariate logistic regression analysis to model the relationship of offender, victim, and situational elements as predictors of anti-race homicides versus routine homicides. Using multivariate statistics provides us with the necessary tools to simultaneously examine multiple relationships that may explain differences between the two homicide categories, while also decreasing the odds of observing artificial findings (Messner et al., 2004). As the dependent variable is binary, logistic regression is the appropriate statistical method (Long, 1997).

Findings

Table 1 presents the results of the bivariate statistical tests (Chi-square analysis and *t*-tests) used to compare anti-race homicides with average homicides. The analyses revealed a number of noteworthy differences in offender characteristics between the two homicide types. Anti-race offenders are approximately 27 years old on average, which is significantly younger than average homicide offenders who have a mean age of about 30 years. Doing difference theory of bias crime predicts that White men are more prone to engage in racial bias crimes (Perry, 2001). Indeed, findings from Table 1 support this notion. Although males perpetrate the majority of all homicide offenses, anti-race offenders are significantly more likely to be male than average homicide offenders. Moreover, racial homicide perpetrators are significantly more likely to be White (72.7% compared to 47.4%) and less likely to be Black (16.7% relative to 49.7%). There are no significant differences in homicides committed by other races (e.g. Asians, Biracial, Native American/American Indian).

The findings for victim characteristics show that victims of both homicide types have similar mean ages; however, victims of anti-racial homicides are significantly more likely to be male compared to average homicide victims (85.8% compared to 75.8%). In support of doing difference theory (Perry, 2001) and past research findings (Garofalo & Martin, 1993; Levin & McDevitt, 1993;

Table 1 Bivariate statistics for anti-race homicides and average homicides (N = 804)

Variables	Anti-race/ ethnicity homicide (n = 134)		Average homicide (n = 670)		
	n	Percent	n	Percent	X^2/t-test
Primary offender characteristics					
Offender age (years)	133	27.54 (avg)	410	30.47 (avg)	*
Offender gender					**
Male	130	97.00	405	90.00	
Female	4	3.00	45	10.00	
Offender race/Ethnicity					***
White	96	72.70	210	47.40	
Black	22	16.70	220	49.70	
Hispanic[1]	12	9.10	—	—	
Other	2	1.50	12	2.70	
Victim characteristics					
Victim age (years)	132	33.31 (avg)	649	31.70 (avg)	
Victim gender					*
Male	115	85.80	507	75.80	
Female	19	14.20	162	24.20	
Victim race/Ethnicity					***
White	20	14.90	311	46.90	
Black	68	50.70	335	50.70	
Hispanic[1]	23	17.20	—	—	
Asian	17	12.70	10	1.50	
Other	6	4.50	6	.90	
Situational characteristics					
Strangers	91	78.40	112	28.30	***
Multiple victims	17	12.70	25	3.70	***
Multiple offenders	67	50.40	81	12.10	***
Weapon					***
Firearm	73	54.50	440	65.70	
Knife	23	17.20	87	13.00	
Blunt object	12	9.00	26	3.90	
Bodily weapon	21	15.70	7	1.00	
Other or unknown weapon	5	3.70	110	16.40	
Region					*
Midwest	21	15.70	141	21.00	
Northeast	23	17.20	101	15.10	
West	46	34.30	149	22.20	
South	44	32.80	279	41.60	

[1]SHR data for Hispanic ethnicity are excluded due to missing cases.
*$p \leq .05$; **$p \leq .01$; ***$p \leq .001$.

Martin, 1996), victims of racial bias are proportionately less likely to be White. Slightly less than 15% of anti-race homicides involve White victims, compared to almost 47% of average homicides. Anti-race victims are significantly more likely to be Black, Asian, and other races.

The bivariate significance tests also suggest that the situational characteristics of anti-race homicides are in many ways dissimilar from average homicide events, which supports previous research and relevant bias crime theory. In particular, racial bias victims and offenders are significantly more likely to be strangers, or unknown to each other (78.4% compared to 28.3%). Also, while average homicides tend to involve a single victim, anti-race homicides are significantly more likely to involve multiple victims. Moreover, anti-race homicides are proportionately more likely to be committed by two or more offenders. Multiple offenders perpetrate around 50% of these homicides compared to approximately 13% of average homicides. Although firearms are utilized in a majority of all homicide events, they are significantly less likely to be the weapon of choice in racial bias homicides, which are proportionately more likely to involve knives (17.2% compared to 13%), blunt objects (9% compared to 3.9%), and bodily weapons (e.g. hands, feet, fists) (15.7% compared to 1%). Finally, the results show significant differences regarding geographic region, such that anti-race homicides are more likely to occur in the West relative to traditional homicides.

Informed by the bivariate results, multivariate statistical analysis (binary logistic regression) is also used to comparatively analyze each homicide offender, victim, and situational characteristic across homicide type.[16] As shown in Table 2, offender age and male offenders are not statistically associated with anti-race homicides. To better understand the important differences in the race of offenders across homicide type, offender race is recoded into a binary variable *offender White* (1 = White offender, 0 = non-White offender). Consistent with prior research and theory (Garofalo, 1991; Gruenewald, 2012; Perry, 2001), the multivariate findings suggest that anti-race homicide offenders were significantly more likely to be White than average homicides net the effects of other variables.

The multivariate analysis also considered several homicide victim attributes. As presented in Table 2, there are no significant differences across the homicide types concerning victim age, though males are significantly more likely to be victims of racial homicides. Victim race was an important predictor of homicide type. Similar to the race of offenders, victim race is recoded into two separate binary variables, including *victim Black* (1 = victim Black, 0 = victim non-Black) and *victim Asian* (1 = victim Asian, 0 = victim non-Asian). Due to a lack of statistical variation, *other victim races* are excluded, and *White*

16. Multicollinearity does not appear to be an issue as collinearity diagnostics show variance inflation factors ranging from 1.052 to 1.527.

Table 2 Predicting anti-race bias homicides using binary logistic regression (N = 804)

	β	*SE*	Odds ratio
Primary offender characteristics			
Offender age	.14	.01	1.01
Offender male	.65	.67	1.91
Offender White[1]	1.55***	.33	4.72
Victim characteristics			
Victim age	.00	.01	1.00
Victim male	.82*	.41	2.27
Victim Black[2]	1.13***	.33	3.08
Victim Asian[2]	2.23***	.66	9.27
Situational characteristics			
Strangers	1.97***	.32	.14
Multiple victims	2.03***	.56	7.58
Multiple Offenders	1.54***	.33	4.68
Nonfirearm[3]	.53	.31	.59
Region[4]			
Midwest	−.15	.48	.86
West	.21	.35	1.24
Northeast	.12	.44	1.13
Constant	−6.49***	1.02	.02
Chi^2	182.23		
Pseudo R^2	.49		
−2 Log likelihood	329.44		

[1]Reference category = Non-white.
[2]Reference category = White.
[3]Reference category = firearm.
[4]Reference category = South.
*$p \leq .05$; **$p \leq .01$; ***$p \leq .001$.

victims is used as the reference category.[17] The findings indicate that anti-race homicides are significantly more likely to involve Black and Asian victims relative to average homicides, net the effects of other variables, which is supportive of relevant theory (Perry, 2001) and prior research (Levin & McDevitt, 1993; Martin, 1996).

17. To clarify, we coded race/ethnicity differently for offenders and victims for two reasons. First, it is theoretically driven and linked to our hypotheses. Doing difference theory predicts that Whites will be more likely to commit racial homicides than traditional homicides. So we coded offender race as (0 = non-White, 1 = White). Also, doing difference theory predicts that minorities (Blacks and Asians) are more likely to be victims of racial homicides than traditional homicides. No comparison was made for Hispanic victims because of the missing data and reporting issues of SHR data. Second, our data showed that no Asian offenders perpetrated a bias homicide, and because the Hispanic comparison could not be made, Black offender race was the most meaningful comparison group for offenders.

Finally, the situational predictors of homicides are examined in the multivariate analysis. Supporting previous studies and bias crime theory (Garofalo, 1991; Garofalo & Martin, 1993; Messner et al., 2004; Perry, 2001; Stacey, 2011), Table 2 shows that anti-race homicides are significantly more likely to involve stranger victim/offender relationships, meaning that victims are more often unknown to the offender compared to average homicides while controlling for other important variables. Also, anti-race homicides are significantly more likely to involve multiple victims and multiple offenders relative to average homicides and controlling for other predictors, again which are findings consistent with extant bias crime comparative research (Garofalo, 1991; Gruenewald, 2012; Martin, 1996; Tomsen, 2009). Weapon is recoded into a binary variable (1 = non-firearm, 0 = firearm) to further analyze whether the use of non-firearms is unique to anti-race homicides. As shown in Table 2, there are no significant differences in non-firearms use between the two homicide types net the effects of other variables. To capture the relative cultural and geographic context of homicide events, region is recoded into three separate binary variables *Midwest* (1 = Midwest, 0 = not Midwest), *West* (1 = West, 0 = not West), and *Northeast* (1 = Northeast, 0 = not Northeast) with *South* as the reference category. The findings, however, show no significant differences in region between anti-race fatal violence and average homicides.[18]

Discussion

In this article, we drew from doing difference theory of bias crime to uncover the patterns in which racial lethal violence is similar and different from the average American homicide. We argued that to the extent racially motivated homicide reflects the situated accomplishment of "doing" racial difference, important variants in the offender, victim, and situational characteristics would emerge between these crimes and average homicides. Using information from a unique open source database (ECDB) paired with official homicide data

18. To supplement our analysis, we ran several additional models to test the robustness of key findings. We first conducted two different logistic regression analyses, separating the individual (primary offender and victim characteristics) and situational characteristics of homicides from the model. Our substantive findings remained largely unchanged; however, two variations are noted. First, offender age became negative and statistically significant, net of other offender and victim characteristics. Second, we found that racial homicides were significantly more likely to involve non-firearms. In contrast to the results from Table 2, our findings here suggest that anti-race homicides are more likely to involve knives, blunt tools, and bodily weapons, controlling for other situational variables. In our final supplemental model, we removed those 12 racial homicides that occurred in the year 2000 to explore any potential bias between the two samples (ECDB and SHR data). Again, our substantive findings generally remained unchanged. However, victim age became negative, our variable for male victim lost statistical significance, and non-firearms became statistically significant. Similar to the previous supplemental model, this suggests that compared to average homicide events, anti-race homicides are more likely to involve non-firearms, net of other offender, victim, and situational factors.

(SHR), our bivariate and multivariate analyses revealed several interesting findings supporting the assertion that anti-racial fatal violence is a fundamentally unique crime type. In this section, we situate these findings within a discussion of relevant bias crime theory and previous hate crime research, ending with limitations of the study and directions for future scholarship.

Perhaps most illuminating, our findings suggest that racial bias attacks are more likely to be committed by White offenders *and* to target minorities (e.g. Blacks and Asians) relative to conventional homicides. Perry (2001) theorized that insomuch as Whites perceive minority groups to jeopardize the status quo (individually or collectively), discriminatory homicide could occur as a way of reconstituting White dominance. General support for this reasoning comes from prior research on White's attitudes toward alleged racial minority gains. Evidence suggests there is a growing perception (albeit a false reality) among Whites that their hegemonic location in American society is somehow dissipating (Eibach & Keegan, 2006; Jones, Cox, & Navarro-Rivera, 2014; Norton & Sommers, 2011; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Indeed, a significant number of White individuals now consider themselves the "new minority," or the victims of "reverse discrimination" (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Perry, 2001). Kimmel (2013, p. 18) terms this attitude "aggrieved entitlement," or the (mis)perception that the advantages thought rightfully to belong to Whites is being unfairly appropriated by racial minorities. In fact, prior studies show that since the 1950s Whites have increasingly viewed anti-White bias to be a significant social problem (Norton & Sommers, 2011). Given this growing normative attitude, it is conceivable that in response to perceived threats to traditional norms homicide presents a resource for Whites to renegotiate their hegemonic social position. In other words, bias fatal violence may provide White Americans with the symbolic and situational means to reclaim their mislaid identity and to restore racialized borders (Perry, 2001).

Of course, it is feasible that much of the observed racial differences are attributable to the prevalence of far-right extremist crimes in the bias homicide sample. To explore further, we examined the proportion of racial bias homicides committed by known far-right extremists. Notably, we found nearly 48% of these fatal incidents are carried out by affiliates of extreme far-right hate groups (e.g. skinheads/neo-Nazis, KKK, or other White supremacist organizations). Within White-perpetrated racial homicides, members of the far-right movement committed approximately 67% of these crimes. While scholars estimate that hate group members commit only a small fraction of bias crimes in general (Levin & McDevitt, 1993), with respect to *anti-race homicides* more specifically, our results indicate that hate groups play a more prominent role in shaping racial lethal situations than once thought. It appears racial homicides are not entirely committed by angry White Americans trying to accomplish difference, but rather by an extreme faction of White racists who want to violently uphold the supremacy of the White race. Notwithstanding this evidence, the implications for bias crime theory are still relevant. For example, hate groups are at the foreground of the White nationalist movement

(see Zeskind, 2009) propagating callous ideologies of difference, hate, and power (Ferber, 1998; Perry, 1998, 2001). Extreme far-right hate ideologies are intent on constructing racial difference in a negative light (Perry, 1998, 2001) by denigrating minority races and situating Whites as superior to all others (Ezekiel, 2002; Futrell & Simi, 2004; Simi & Futrell, 2010). Furthermore, many extreme far-right affiliated racists believe it is their consecrated mission to safeguard the future of the White race (Ezekiel, 2002; Futrell & Simi, 2004), which is used as justification for the violent subordination of non-Whites (Perry, 2001). In this context, homicide could serve as a means for hate group members to not only reestablish White superiority and vilify devalued races (Perry, 2001), but to also purge society of supposed impure "others" (see "mission" offender in Levin & McDevitt, 1993).

Situationally, our results suggest anti-race homicides unfold and transpire in relatively unique ways as well. Contrary to normative fatal violence, racially inspired homicide is more likely to involve victims unknown to offenders, multiple perpetrators, and multiple victims. These findings are not surprising given that prior studies consistently show that offenders tend to commit bias crimes in the company of likeminded others (Garofalo, 1991; Gruenewald, 2012; Levin & McDevitt, 1993; Martin, 1996; Tomsen, 2009), typically victimize more than one individual at a time (Gruenewald, 2012; Martin, 1996), and often target strangers (Garofalo, 1991; Garofalo & Martin, 1993; Levin & McDevitt, 1993; Martin, 1996; Messner et al., 2004; Stacey, 2011). Theoretically, such findings are also expected. Doing difference theory asserts that conformity to racialized norms of conduct is demonstrated interpersonally whereby individuals are expected to keep each other accountable for the appropriate enactment of their racial identity (Perry, 2000, 2001; see also West & Fenstermaker, 1995). From this perspective, our findings could indicate offenders may be more prone to violently act out racial difference before an audience of peers as a way of retaining their dignity. Moreover, it is plausible that offenders may be more inclined to violently uphold racial boundaries when confronted with groups of strangers in their communities who endanger the normative racial hierarchy. The defended neighborhoods perspective (Green et al. 1998) and Levin and McDevitt's (1993; McDevitt, Levin, & Bennett, 2002) research on the "defensive" bias crime typology corroborates this idea.

Interestingly, the situational findings in this study show that non-firearms are just as likely to be used in anti-race fatal attacks as traditional homicides. This conflicts with previous bias crime research on weapon use, which suggests that bias crimes in general more often utilize non-firearms (Gruenewald, 2012; Tomsen, 2009). However, it is important to note that previous bias crime studies have disproportionately focused on sexual orientation bias, which may unfold under different criminogenic circumstances. For instance, anti-LGBT crimes tend to involve gay bashing offenses (Gruenewald & Kelley, 2015) that take place near firearm-prohibited areas, such as gay clubs (Comstock, 1991) and schools (Stacey, 2011). Conversely, racial crimes may emerge in more public situations like traditional homicides in which multiple weapon types,

including firearms, are more readily available and easily concealed. It may be that the situational circumstances surrounding racial homicides present opportunities for offenders to use a diverse set of weapon types for the preservation of racial difference.

After controlling for other relevant factors, we found no differences in region between racial and traditional homicides. As a situational theory, doing difference does not explicitly address potential macro-level variations, though it might suggest that there should be more racial bias homicides in regions with more racial tension. Alternatively, it may also be true that "doing difference" is sowed into the fabric of all social life, resulting in people of various racial/ethnic identities to subscribe to the same social constructs. Therefore, location may not be significant, possibly because no matter what area of the U.S. a person lives, they are still held to the same racial identity standards and expectations. Because residents of every region do difference in some capacity, racial bias homicide would be likely to occur across the U.S. While it is not the purpose of this study, future research on the macro-level structural and cultural causes of bias homicide would do well to examine factors associated with predicting the number of racial bias homicides in certain regions of the U.S.

At the same time, doing difference theory may present an incomplete explanation. Although the theory explains why some individuals might hold racial biases and could be at risk for engaging in bias crimes, it is also possible that racial fatal crimes are spontaneous acts of violence that materialize when victims converge with racially prejudiced offenders across varied spaces. In support of this claim, Messner et al. (2004, p. 609) found that racial assaults tend to be unprovoked crimes resulting from offenders "bullying the victim." Further, they speculate that bias offending might simply reflect perpetrators' anti-social attitudes and propensities for violence that is aimed at negatively viewed groups. Indeed, research on hate crime typologies maintains that "thrill" seeking behavior is a common motivator for bias crime offenders (Levin & McDevitt, 1993). Additionally, White bias crime offenders may be more prone to commit violence against minorities because their commitment, involvement, and belief in conventional society have weakened (see Hirschi, 1969 social bond theory). That prior evidence suggests Whites increasingly agree they are losing privilege (Norton & Sommers, 2011), and because members of radical extremist groups are overrepresented among White-perpetrated racial homicides, seems to lend some validity to this explanation as well. Though beyond the scope of our study to systematically evaluate these competing explanations, future research would certainly benefit from doing so.

Study Limitations and Directions for Future Research

While the current study lays an empirical foundation for understanding the nature of anti-race homicides as a distinguishable type of fatal violence, specific

limitations of the research design should be acknowledged. For instance, it is possible that the utilization of open source materials may bias findings of significance toward uncovering disparities in offender and victim race. Because the conventional understanding of the nature of bias crime generally follows the White-on-minority script, media sources may disproportionately focus on such crimes and overlook minority-perpetrated bias violence. This could in part explain why our analysis finds that Whites are more likely to commit racial homicide, and minorities are more likely to be victimized. Given this possible limitation, we also note that racial homicides are identified and triangulated in this study using multiple types of opens sources, including print and internet news media, watchdog groups, government reports, and court records. Further, previous studies indicate that serious crimes such as homicide are some of the most highly publicized and reliably covered events anyway (Chermak, 1995; Gruenewald, 2013; Parkin & Gruenewald, 2015). Chermak et al. (2012) found that ECDB data accurately represent all known far-right perpetrated homicides, so we are confident that the data used in the current study capture nearly all known racial bias homicides as well. In addition, because the results of this study generally find support in prior research that utilizes other data sources, we believe this threat to validity is significantly reduced. Still, we encourage future researchers to replicate our findings using official data sources, self-report surveys, and offender interviews to better understand these homicide events.

An additional study limitation is the possibility that the racial homicide sample contains multiple confounded constructs. To explain, individuals with an Arab-Asian background are sometimes targeted specifically because of their ethnicity as well as their religious affiliation (e.g. anti-Muslim). Though relatively few in number, incidents with evidence of multiple bias indicators for alternative types of victim groups were coded in the ECDB as racial crimes, though they might also be regarded as anti-religious homicides. Similarly, some Hispanic victims were targeted because of their perceived illegal immigrant status (anti-immigrant) as well as their ethnicity. Inferences from our findings must thus consider that in some cases anti-race homicides may tap into with other bias homicide constructs. We recommend that future research build from our study and examine the characteristics of anti-religious and anti-immigration crimes separately to uncover potentially unique characteristics of these crimes.

While perhaps the best available method for comparing racial homicide to conventional homicide, data incompleteness within the SHR (Fox, 2004; Pizarro & Zeoli, 2013) may bias findings in the current research. Though victim characteristics and homicide weapon tend to be well represented, missing offender data (e.g. age, sex, race) and certain situational characteristics (e.g. victim offender relationship) are relatively more problematic (Fox, 2004; Fox & Swatt, 2009; Pizarro & Zeoli, 2013). Under some circumstances, listwise deletion in logistic regression can provide approximately unbiased estimates when data are "missing at random," or MAR (Allison, 2002, p.7), and may have

benefits over imputation methods when data are not MAR (Allison, 2014). Potentially problematic in this study, it appears incomplete data may depend on the value of dependent variable. That is, the probability that offender age, sex, race, and victim offender relationship is missing could depend on whether or not the homicide was a racial bias crime (ECDB) or average homicide (SHR).[19] For these reasons, we must caution readers when interpreting our results, as our estimates may be biased. Nonetheless, future studies may benefit from using more advanced multiple imputation or maximum likelihood techniques to replicate the findings from our study.

Lastly, a future study would do well to compare anti-race homicides to inter-racial fatal violence within the SHR. In doing so, comparisons could be made across racial bias homicides, nonbiased-motivated inter-racial homicides, and conventional homicides, further illuminating whether racially motivated homicide is a unique type of lethal violence.

Conclusion

Bias-motivated violence is a severe crime that harms more than the victims and their families (McDevitt et al., 2001), but undermines the stability of collective racial groups (Perry, 2001; Perry & Alvi, 2012; Weinstein, 1992) and unsettles community solidarity (Iganski, 2001, 2003, 2008; McDevitt et al., 2001; Perry, 2001; Perry & Alvi, 2012). As the current social and political landscape is mired in various forms of race-based conflict, a better understanding of violence inspired by racial hate is imperative to reduce such harms. Because our findings indicate anti-race fatal attacks are unique from traditional homicides in many ways, novel approaches to responding to this violence may be necessary. To this point, we hope the findings in this study help to advance best practices for investigating bias crimes. The trends uncovered from our research—namely that racial homicide is orchestrated by Whites (sometimes far-right extremists) who target racial minorities and tend to operate in a group setting—can be implemented with law enforcement training materials to better inform localized crime control strategies aimed at reducing bias violence and strengthening community relations. Further still, future research should build from the current study, overcome its limitations, and analyze other ways that anti-race violence may be unique. Only then will police and policymakers have the necessary tools, grounded in empirical research, to better manage this severe form of violent behavior.

19. For SHR homicides, 38.8% of offender age, 32.8% of offender sex, 33.9% of offender race, and 40.9% of victim offender relationship values are missing. Comparatively, .7% of offender age, 0% of offender sex, 1.5% of offender race, and 13.4% of victim offender relationship values are missing in the ECDB homicide sample.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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