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THESIS

**ASSESSING DOMESTIC RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM
USING THE THEORY OF COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR**

by

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December 2009

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OF COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR**

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ABSTRACT

Despite published warnings from the Department of Homeland Security, the current social, economic, and political environment is not likely to lead to a violent confrontation between right-wing extremist groups and government authorities. This thesis applies the theory of collective behavior and examines—in the context of the current health care reform debate—existing conditions and dynamics and their influence on the domestic far right. Although several determinants of collective behavior (i.e., structural conduciveness, structural strain, and ideology) produce a climate within which right-wing extremism can emerge and flourish, the lack of an influential far-right leader and the effective operation of existing social controls hinder the mobilization of the domestic far right.

To counter right-wing extremism, the U.S. government should avoid dismissing outright the grievances of the far right. Instead, the government should direct its efforts to reduce the social structures that create an environment in which right-wing extremism can emerge and flourish and to encourage and ensure the effective operation of social controls. Endeavors along these lines are similar to international efforts countering radical Islamic extremism. Further studies are needed to explore how counter-radicalization approaches against Islamic extremists can be tailored to comply with domestic law and be applied to domestic right-wing extremists.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE

As a consequence of the terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center in New York and against the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. on September 11, 2001, the United States has concentrated on combating Osama Bin Laden and other radical Islamic extremists. Although the focused effort of the United States against these groups is understandable, the nation neglects to consider the intent and capacity of the domestic far right to conduct a violent terrorist campaign similar to those conducted in the early 1990s or a mass casualty terrorist attack on a scale similar to those Al Qaeda seeks to conduct.

The domestic far right, whose ideologies and motivations are categorized under “right-wing extremism,” is reported to have been responsible for 75 terrorist incidents between the 1995 bombing of Oklahoma City and the summer of 2009.¹ These plots include plans to bomb or burn government buildings, critical infrastructure, memorials, banks, clinics, and places of non-Christian worship; to assassinate law enforcement personnel, judges, politicians, and civil rights figures; to rob banks and armored cars; and to amass illegal machine guns, missiles, explosives, and biological and chemical weapons.² In April 1997, three white supremacist adherents were arrested in a plot to blow up a natural gas refinery outside Fort Worth, Texas, as a diversion for a simultaneous armored car robbery. Law enforcement officials estimated that the explosion would have killed as many as 30,000.³ In June 1999, two brothers—one a confirmed adherent of the anti-Semitic Christian Identity theology—carried out arson

¹ Southern Poverty Law Center, *The Second Wave: Return of the Militias* (Montgomery, AL: Southern Poverty Law Center, 2009), 13, <http://www.splcenter.org> (accessed August 12, 2009).

² Andrew Blejwas, Anthony Griggs, and Mark Potok, “Terror From the Right: Almost 60 Terrorist Plots Uncovered in the U.S.” *Southern Poverty Law Center Intelligence Report* 118 (Summer 2005), <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?aid=549> (accessed May 2, 2009); Larry Copeland, “Domestic Terrorism: New Trouble at Home,” *USA Today*, November 14, 2004, http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2004-11-14-domestic-terrorism_x.htm (accessed April 12, 2009); Rebecca Sinderbrand, “A Racist on the Rise: After a Post-9/11 Slump, Hate Groups See A Surge,” *Newsweek*, May 10, 2004, <http://www.newsweek.com/id/105098> (accessed May 1, 2009); Bennie G. Thompson, “10 Years After the Oklahoma City Bombing, the Department of Homeland Security Must Do More To Fight Right-Wing Domestic Terrorists,” April 19, 2005, 4–5, <https://www.hsdl.org> (accessed April 9, 2009).

³ Southern Poverty Law Center, *The Second Wave*, 15.

attacks against three synagogues and an abortion clinic in Sacramento, California. Two weeks later, they shot to death a gay couple at their home near Redding, California. Both were convicted in September 2001.⁴ In May 2004, William Krar of Noonday, Texas was convicted for the possession of “enough sodium cyanide to kill everyone inside a 30,000-square-foot building.”⁵

Recently, the election of Barack Obama, an African-American, to the Presidency of the United States has triggered white supremacist activity. In December 2008, parts of a dirty bomb were discovered in the home of a white supremacist adherent who was reportedly “very upset” when President Obama was elected into office. In the summer of 2009, an eighty-year-old, longtime neo-Nazi, James von Brunn, allegedly shot to death a security guard at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. A note allegedly left by von Brunn reads: “Obama was created by Jews. Obama does what his Jew owners tell him to do.” Von Brunn has been charged with murder.⁶

This thesis investigates significant social, economic, and political conditions and dynamics in the United States. It particularly examines these conditions and dynamics in the context of the health care reform debate, which may have the potential to be a precipitating event around which violent right-wing extremists can rally. In addition, it examines the motivations and goals of the various American domestic right-wing extremist groups, and tests the hypothesis advanced by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that the current social, economic, and political environment is likely to lead to a violent confrontation between right-wing extremist groups and government authorities.

B. WHAT IS RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM?

DHS defined right-wing extremism in two of its recent documents. In mid-April 2009, it issued a report titled “Right-Wing Extremism: Current Economic and Political

⁴ PBS, “Citizens Respond to Hate: Sacramento, CA; Flames Ignite a Community,” http://www.pbs.org/niot/citizens_respond/sacramento.html (accessed September 2, 2009); Southern Poverty Law Center, *The Second Wave*, 17.

⁵ Thompson, “10 Years After,” 7.

⁶ Southern Poverty Law Center, *The Second Wave*, 23–24.

Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment” that characterized right-wing extremism as primarily “based on hatred of particular religious, racial, or ethnic groups” that advocate the rejection of government authority.⁷ On May 5, 2009, DHS released its “Domestic Extremism Lexicon” that included single-issue groups—such as those that oppose abortion and immigration—in its definition of right-wing extremism. Although these two documents were designed to facilitate a greater understanding of the nature and scope of the threat posed by domestic, non-Islamic extremism,⁸ they became targets of public outrage. DHS was charged with insinuating that several legal social groups were terrorist organizations and was accused of “equating conservative views to right-wing terrorism.”⁹ DHS immediately pulled its lexicon from circulation, stating it had been released without authorization. DHS claims the definitions contained in its lexicon are not being used by law enforcement agencies.¹⁰

The public outcry against the two DHS reports indicates a need to characterize correctly the phenomenon known as “domestic right-wing extremism.” Without the appropriate frame, the government will remain unable to communicate to the public—without being accused of infringing upon American civil liberties—the threat posed by domestic right-wing extremist groups. Accordingly, this thesis clarifies the use of the terms “far right” and “right-wing extremism,” carefully differentiating mainstream conservatives and their Constitutionally-protected activities from the terrorist actions of the far right.

The term “extremism” implies that attitudes can be arranged on a continuum, with “normal and acceptable” views positioned in the center, and with the breadth of

⁷ Department of Homeland Security, *Right-Wing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment* (Washington DC: Department of Homeland Security, 2009), 2.

⁸ Audrey Hudson, “Homeland Agency Pulled Back Extremism Dictionary: Black Power, White Supremacists, Abortion Foes Make List,” *Washington Times*, May 5, 2009, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/may/05/homeland-pulled-back-extremism-dictionary/> (accessed May 5, 2009); Mike Levine, “Homeland Security Warns of Rise in Right-Wing Extremism,” *FOX News*, April 14, 2009, <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/first100days/2009/04/14/homeland-security-warns-rise-right-wing-extremism/> (accessed May 27, 2009).

⁹ Mike Levine, “Homeland Security Warns.”

¹⁰ Audrey Hudson, “Extremism Dictionary.”

acceptable views varying over time.¹¹ In contrast, extremists advocate “fringe” positions¹² and their non-mainstream views are often thought of as “ridiculous, dangerous, or both” and as typically containing some degree of intolerance and sense of superiority.¹³ In his 2003 article titled “The American Far Right and 9/11,” Martin Durham differentiated mainstream conservatism from its extremist cousin by their preference for political violence. According to Durham, mainstream conservatives believe that “while liberalism represents a fundamental threat to the nation’s values, America has not yet lost either a free economy or a constitutional political system.”¹⁴ In contrast, he describes extremists as suspicious of free economy or of the political system, rejecting political compromise and believing “drastic action is needed.”¹⁵ Consistent with Durham’s differentiation, the term “extremism” is used in this thesis to distinguish between individuals and groups who conduct activities that can be characterized as political dissonance, which is protected under the U.S. Constitution and extremists who use violence for political and social gains. Accordingly, groups and individuals participating in rallies and protests would not fall under the category of “extremist,” but activists who bomb public venues for political objectives would.

The terms “right-wing” and “right,” are artifacts from the French National Assembly of 1789 wherein those who supported the *status quo* (i.e., the conservatives) sat on the right of the presiding officer, while those who called for change (i.e., the radicals) positioned themselves on the left.¹⁶ Thus, the Right originally defended the

¹¹ Christopher Hewitt, *Understanding Terrorism in America: From the Klan to al Qaeda*, Routledge Studies in Extremism and Democracy (London: Routledge, 2003), 19, 41; Peter H. Merkl, “Why Are They So Strong Now? Comparative Reflections on the Revival of the Radical Right in Europe,” in *The Revival of Right-Wing Extremism in the Nineties*, Cass Series on Political Violence, ed. Peter H. Merkl and Leonard Weinberg (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 18; Lyman Tower Sargent, *Extremism in America: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 3.

¹² John George and Laird M. Wilcox, *Nazis, Communists, Klansmen, and Others on the Fringe* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1992), 55.

¹³ Hewitt, *Understanding Terrorism*, 20–21.

¹⁴ Martin Durham, “The American Far Right and 9/11,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 15, no. 2 (2003): 97, <http://navynps.library.ingentaconnect.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed June 1, 2009).

¹⁵ Durham, “The American Far Right,” 97.

¹⁶ Michi Ebata, “Right-Wing Extremism: In Search of a Definition,” in *The Extreme Right: Freedom and Security at Risk*, ed. Aurel Braun and Stephen Scheinberg (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1997), 18; Sargent, *Extremism in America*, 3.

monarchy, the feudal economy, and the role of the Catholic Church while the Left focused on creating a more egalitarian distribution of wealth and privilege, the free market, and autonomy from religious and cultural authority. All other political views fell somewhere between the Left and the Right. Today, political commentators associate the far left of this spectrum with ideologies such as communism, Maoism, and anti-capitalism and identify the far right with nationalist, religious-extremist, and fascist groups. Current literature commonly uses the terms “right-wing extremism” and “far right” to refer to skinhead, white supremacist, and neo-Nazi gangs and to radical-right political parties.¹⁷ It has been argued that the Left-Right political spectrum is incompatible with today’s political environment. The political issues that had differentiated the Left from the Right—democracy, freedom, the role of Church and State, market economy, egalitarianism, pluralism, etc.—no longer correspond perfectly to either the Left or the Right.¹⁸ This left-right political dichotomy fails to capture the “multifaceted”¹⁹ nature of right-wing extremism and fails to acknowledge that it is “neither homogeneous nor self-contained.”²⁰

There is no single, agreed-upon definition of right-wing extremism. Instead, right-wing extremism is characterized by attributes and themes shared by right-wing social movements and organizations. These attributes and themes include (1) a sense of ethno-national, ideological, or religious superiority; (2) an extreme form of nationalism; (3) group suspicion against a strong central government; (4) a preference for militarism, order and authority; (5) a low regard for minority rights, egalitarian values, and political

¹⁷ Ebata, “Right-Wing Extremism,” 13.

¹⁸ Ibid., 18.

¹⁹ Hewitt, *Understanding Terrorism*, 41.

²⁰ Federal Office for Protection of the Constitution [Germany], “Right-Wing Extremism,” http://www.verfassungsschutz.de/en/en_fields_of_work/rightwing_extremism/ (accessed May 27, 2009).

and cultural pluralism; and (6) a conspiracy theory of history.²¹ These shared characteristics are not absolutes—different right-wing extremist movements emphasize them in distinct ways.²²

Accordingly, the terms “far right” and “right-wing extremism” in this thesis refer to individuals, groups, and social movements that exhibit these characteristics, albeit in varying degrees, and that are inclined to step outside the political system to engage in violent action in pursuit of their political or social objectives. Although this thesis does not deal with non-violent groups, it acknowledges that the “support for terrorism is linked with the existence of extremist movements”²³ and that non-violent groups may in the future resort to terrorist activities.

C. CAUSES OF RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM

There are differences between extremism, terrorism, political violence, political and social movements, and crime. Nevertheless, the theories and concepts within these disciplines overlap and provide a substantial foundation for conceptualizing the various factors that contribute to the emergence of right-wing extremism. This is appropriate as extremism is linked to terrorism; terrorism is a subset of political violence;²⁴ and political violence is an expression of political and social movements.²⁵ Extremism differs from crime due to its political and social motives, but both are driven by grievances or social pathologies. A study by Joshua Freilich and William Alex Pridemore mentions six interrelated theories in their attempt to explain why an extremist movement emerges in

²¹ Bernt Hagtvet, “Right-Wing Extremism in Europe,” *Journal of Peace Research* 31, no. 3 (1994): 241–242, <http://www.jstor.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed May 2, 2009); George Michael, *The Enemy of My Enemy: The Alarming Convergence of Militant Islam and the Extreme Right* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006), 12–13; Cas Mudde, “Right-Wing Extremism Analyzed,” *European Journal of Political Research* 27, no. 2 (1995): 209–218, <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed May 2, 2009).

²² Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York: Guilford, 1995), 7.

²³ Hewitt, *Understanding Terrorism*, 19.

²⁴ Anthony Oberschall, *Social Movements: Ideologies, Interests, and Identities* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1995), 26.

²⁵ Donatella Della Porta, “Introduction: On Individual Motivations in Underground Political Organizations,” in *Social Movements and Violence: Participation in Underground Organizations*, ed. Donatella della Porta (Greenwich, CT: JAI, 1992), 12.

particular societies. These theories are (1) relative deprivation theory, (2) social disorganization theory, (3) cultural and identity theory, (4) competition theory, (5) resource mobilization theory, and (6) political opportunity theory.²⁶

Relative deprivation and social disorganization theories assume that social structures, institutions, and control mechanisms influence behavior and, in certain instances, can sway individuals to adopt extremist views. Relative deprivation theorists believe that uneven power distribution, economic inequalities, and social problems may aggravate tensions among various groups in society.²⁷ The “primordial sentiments”²⁸ of these groups can often intensify and prolong an identity-based rivalry among groups, and if left unchecked, these rivalries may eventually lead to a struggle between groups over “power, resources, rewards, and collective identity.”²⁹ In his 1997 book *Harvest of Rage: Why Oklahoma City is Only The Beginning*, Joel Dyer noted that individuals “who cannot financially afford to live in [the American economic system]”³⁰ and who belong to economically weakened communities that blamed the government for their circumstances are “most susceptible to the violent antigovernment message”³¹ of the far right. These individuals are more inclined to join an American militia group in protest.

²⁶ Joshua D. Freilich and William Alex Pridemore, “A Reassessment of State-Level Covariates of Militia Groups,” *Behavioral Sciences and Law* 23, no. 4 (2005): 531–535, <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed May 2, 2009). Although Freilich and Pridemore specifically cite economic deprivation theory, this thesis consolidates it with other deprivation theories and instead uses the relative deprivation theory. Similarly, Freilich and Pridemore specifically cite political competition theory, but this thesis consolidates it with other competition theories and instead uses the more generic term “competition theory.”

²⁷ Steven M. Buechler, *Social Movements in Advanced Capitalism: The Political Economy and Cultural Construction of Social Activism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2.

²⁸ Primordial sentiments refer to one’s sense of identity and community, which are often based on common ancestry, racial characteristics, ethnicity, language, region, religion, or tradition. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 261–263.

²⁹ Moshe Semyonov, Rebeca Rajman, and Anastasia Gorodzeisky, “The Rise of Anti-Foreigner Sentiment in European Societies, 1988-2000,” *American Sociological Review* 71, no. 3 (2006): 428, <http://www.jstor.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed April 5, 2009).

³⁰ Joel Dyer, *Harvest of Rage: Why Oklahoma City Is Only The Beginning* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1997), 6.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

Social disorganization theory claims that failure of social institutions or social organizations (e.g., schools, businesses, law enforcement institutions) to “solve chronic problems”³² and the political crises that arise from such failures are likely to elicit extremist, anti-democratic responses.³³ If a community cannot maintain order and enforce legal and regulatory control, some individuals will test the social controls by expressing their dispositions and desires, often through delinquent behavior.³⁴ When this occurs, social disorganization ensues and individuals “naturally” search for a substitute, which may take the form of gangs, cults, and radical movements.³⁵ Although originally applied to explain crime, this theory is also extendible to extremist movements, albeit in a slightly different formulation. As social change disrupts traditional social groupings, social institutions, and social controls, and as “segments of the population are arbitrarily prevented from achieving their economic, political, and other goals,”³⁶ individuals are left “isolated, anxious, and powerless,”³⁷ and alienated from democratic political institutions. To alleviate their “internal tensions,”³⁸ these individuals join extremist movements that offer plausible, yet unrealistic solutions and that deny the legitimacy of the democratic political process for mediating conflict.³⁹ In explaining crime, social disorganization theory points to poverty, residential mobility and its effect on community

³² Charis E. Kubrin and Ronald Weitzer, "New Directions in Social Disorganization Theory," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 40, no. 4 (November 2003): 374, http://www.gwu.edu/~soc/docs/Kubrin_new_directions.pdf (accessed August 31, 2009).

³³ Joseph R. Gusfield, “Mass Society and Extremist Politics,” *American Sociological Review* 27, no. 1 (February 1962): 19, <http://web.ebscohost.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed September 1, 2009).

³⁴ Kubrin and Weitzer, "Social Disorganization Theory," 379.

³⁵ James Aho, “Christian Fundamentalism and Militia Movements in the United States,” in *The Making of a Terrorist: Recruitment, Training, and Root Causes*, ed. James J. F. Forest (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006), 1:223.

³⁶ Earl Conteh-Morgan, *Collective Political Violence: An Introduction to the Theories and Cases of Violent Conflicts* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 60.

³⁷ Richard F. Hamilton. *Mass Society, Pluralism, and Bureaucracy: Explication, Assessment, and Commentary* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001), 1–2.

³⁸ Freilich and Pridemore, “State-Level Covariates,” 534.

³⁹ Gusfield, “Mass Society,” 22.

social controls, ethnic heterogeneity, and weak social networks as factors contributing to delinquent (criminal) behavior.⁴⁰ Similar factors are used to explain the emergence of extremist groups.

Cultural and identity theorists posit that significant changes in society may create “feelings of estrangement from and anger towards society” and result in subcultural adaptations that promote extremist movements.⁴¹ The failure of custom and tradition to contain or explain changes or inequities in the social structure lead to the development of political and religious fundamentalisms that foster negative attitudes towards and support exclusionary policies against minorities who pose a threat to “the collective identity and the cultural, national, and ethnic homogeneity of the society.”⁴² According to Michael Arena and Bruce Arrigo, the perception of racist skinheads in the United States that those of Aryan descent are in danger of losing their racial purity allows them to justify their violent extremist activities.⁴³ Similarly, Freilich and Pridemore claim that the civil rights and feminist movements threatened some American white males and caused them to retreat to a subculture where American white male hegemony existed and where traditional racial, gender, and family relations were maintained.⁴⁴

Competition theorists focus on social conflict. Social conflict is defined as “a struggle over values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources”⁴⁵ in which “the parties are *aware* of the incompatibility of potential future positions and in which each party *wishes* to occupy a position that is incompatible with the wishes of the other.”⁴⁶ It

⁴⁰ Kubrin and Weitzer, "Social Disorganization Theory," 374.

⁴¹ Freilich and Pridemore, “State-Level Covariates,” 531.

⁴² Semyonov, Raijman, and Gorodzeisky, “Anti-Foreigner Sentiment,” 428; Stan C. Weeber and Daniel G. Rodeheaver, “Militias at the Millennium: A Test of Smelser’s Theory of Collective Behavior,” *Sociological Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (2003): 185. <http://web.ebscohost.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed May 25, 2009).

⁴³ Michael P. Arena and Bruce A. Arrigo, “Social Psychology, Terrorism, and Identity: A Preliminary Re-examination of Theory, Culture, Self, and Society,” *Behavioral Sciences and the Law* 23 (2005):485–506. <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed May 2, 2009).

⁴⁴ Freilich and Pridemore, “State-Level Covariates,” 531.

⁴⁵ Lewis A. Coser, *Continuities in the Study of Social Conflict* (New York: Free Press, 1967), 232.

⁴⁶ Kenneth Ewart Boulding, *Conflict and Defense: A General Theory* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), 5.

arises, according to competition theorists, when the political, economic, or social successes of a minority group threaten other groups.⁴⁷ Hence, economic, social, and political factors, as well as an identifiable antagonist, are necessary conditions for the emergence of extremist groups.⁴⁸

According to Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab, right-wing extremism is the “politics of backlash”⁴⁹ that emerges in response to economic and social changes, which have resulted in “the displacement of some population groups from former positions of dominance.”⁵⁰ The civil rights and feminist movements, for example, produced “an undercurrent of resentment against what was seen as the unfair advantages the government gives to people of color and women.”⁵¹ As the American political process made “traditional status privileges” increasingly accessible to minorities, groups of older, white, Protestant, straight, and male Americans became more inclined to support exclusionary policies and to mobilize “against equality, pluralism, and democracy.”⁵²

Resource mobilization and political opportunity theories both hinge on the assumption that there is a “steady supply of people” who are disenfranchised, and who have decided that the potential benefits of participation in a social movement outweigh the anticipated costs.⁵³ Resource mobilization theory posits that the success of a movement is dependent on the movement’s ability to mobilize these groups and individuals. Thus, pre-existing social networks or organizations are critical for creating

⁴⁷ Freilich and Pridemore, “State-Level Covariates,” 531.

⁴⁸ Khachig Tololyan, “Cultural Narrative and the Motivation of the Terrorist,” in *Inside Terrorist Organizations*, ed. David C. Rapoport (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 217; Richard E. Rubenstein, “The Noncauses of Modern Terrorism,” in *International Terrorism: Characteristics, Causes, Controls*, ed. Charles W. Kegley, Jr. (New York: St. Martin’s, 1990), 133; Alan E. Keesler and Gary P. Freeman, “Support for Extreme Right-Wing Parties in Western Europe: Individual Attributes, Political Attitudes, and National Context,” *Comparative European Politics* 2005, no. 3 (2005): 262, <http://web.ebscohost.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed May 30, 2009); Semyonov, Rajzman, and Gorodzeisky, “Anti-Foreigner Sentiment,” 426–428.

⁴⁹ Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab, *The Politics of Unreason: Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1970* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 3.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 485.

⁵¹ Weeber and Rodeheaver, “Militias at the Millennium,” 185.

⁵² Aho, “Christian Fundamentalism,” 224.

⁵³ Buechler, *Social Movements*, 35.

some degree of solidarity within marginalized groups and for mobilizing them into action.⁵⁴ Resource mobilization theorists also acknowledge that the organization of a social movement and mobilization of its supporters may not develop directly from societal grievances, but may emerge indirectly through the moves of political actors and “issue entrepreneurs” who may define, create, and manipulate the grievances and sources of strain.⁵⁵ According to this theory, Rosa Parks was not just an African-American woman who defied a white bus driver because her feet hurt. She was a social activist who had a long history of participation in local and state chapters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and whose friend—the president of the Montgomery NAACP—mobilized nineteen black ministers to initiate a protest against bus segregation in response to the incident.⁵⁶ Currently, conservative talk radio⁵⁷ and some American politicians⁵⁸ have been accused of fulfilling the role of “issue entrepreneur” and of instigating right-wing disturbances.

Political opportunity theorists focus on the relationship between social movements and the permissiveness of the political environment in which these movements occur. They claim that the success of a social movement depends on opportunities created by changes in the political structure that reduce the “power discrepancy between authorities and challengers” and improve the challengers’ “bargaining power.”⁵⁹ These opportunities include changes to major policy doctrines, electoral realignment, wars, landmark court cases, legislative reform, and efforts of the

⁵⁴ Weeber and Rodeheaver, “Militias at the Millennium,” 185.

⁵⁵ John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, “Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory,” *American Journal of Sociology* 82, no. 6 (1977): 1215, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/2777934.pdf> (accessed September 2, 2009).

⁵⁶ Lewis M. Killian, “Organization, Rationality and Spontaneity in the Civil Rights Movement,” *American Sociological Review* 49, no. 6 (1984), 772, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2095529> (accessed September 2, 2009).

⁵⁷ Letisia Marquez, “Preliminary Report Finds Extensive Use of Hate Speech on Conservative Talk Radio,” *UCLA Newsroom*, January 28, 2009, <http://newsroom.ucla.edu/portal/ucla/ucla-study-finds-extensive-use-79402.aspx> (accessed May 10, 2009); Bill Moyers, “Rage on the Radio,” PBS, September 12, 2008, <http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/09122008/profile.html> (accessed April 12, 2009).

⁵⁸ See Michael J. Sniffen, “Cheney Backs Limbaugh Over Power on GOP Future,” Associated Press, May 10, 2009, <http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5gMy6C2AiBsrQQ-jwPliAZANmi7kQD983HB282> (accessed May 10, 2009).

⁵⁹ Buechler, *Social Movements*, 37.

political elite to directly facilitate or repress social movements.⁶⁰ In addition, success is also dependent on the perception of movement members that the status quo is unacceptable, and can be changed through their own direct efforts.⁶¹ Accordingly, right-wing extremist groups are more likely to flourish when supported—implicitly or explicitly—by a legitimate political party.⁶² For instance, in 1998, Sean O’Brien and Donald Haider-Markel found there are fewer right-wing militia groups in American states with greater Democratic Party representation in state legislatures.⁶³ This finding is consistent with the perception that American militia groups are linked with the Republican Party. In 1992, when Ross Perot challenged the American two-party system by promoting non-centrist policies, right-wing extremist groups in the United States became increasingly more active.⁶⁴ Ross Perot’s presidential candidacy received relatively significant support in states where there were relatively more extreme-right groups.⁶⁵ It has also been found that American states with weaker gun control laws have more right-wing paramilitary groups. These states are viewed as providing a more hospitable environment for groups that stressed gun rights.⁶⁶

The various theories described above display a tendency to oversimplify reality in order to explain the emergence of extremist movements in terms of a particular slice of reality. Each theory, in its attempt to be parsimonious, struggles to explain a specific type of cause—be it very general or highly specific—at the expense of the complex social, economic, and political environment within which the object of their study emerges. For instance, relative deprivation theories fail to consider existing

⁶⁰ Diamond, *Roads to Dominion*, 10.

⁶¹ Buechler, *Social Movements*, 37.

⁶² Semyonov, Raijman, and Gorodzeisky, “Anti-Foreigner Sentiment,” 429.

⁶³ Sean P. O’Brien and Donald P. Haider-Markel, “Fueling the Fire: Social and Political Correlates of Citizen Militia Activity,” *Social Science Quarterly* 79 (1998): 463, <http://web.ebscohost.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed May 20, 2009).

⁶⁴ Seymour Martin Lipset, “The Radical Right: A Problem for American Democracy,” *British Journal of Sociology* 6, no. 2 (June 1955): 177–179, <http://www.jstor.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed April 15, 2009).

⁶⁵ Joshua D. Freilich, *American Militias State-Level Variations in Militia Activities* (New York: LFB Scholarly Pub, 2003), 127.

⁶⁶ Nella Van Dyke and Sarah A. Soule, “Structural Social Change and the Mobilizing Effect of Threat: Explaining Levels of Patriot and Militia Organizing in the United States,” *Social Problems* 49, no. 4 (2002): 507, <http://www.jstor.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed May 9, 2009).

counterterrorism measures that may inhibit terrorist groups from forming. Similarly, a strong charismatic leader could still fail to mobilize a population if it believes social change can be accomplished through peaceful means through the political system. In other words, these over-parsimonious theories may miss the forest for the trees.⁶⁷ Critics readily point out that these theories consistently fail to explain why, when a population is exposed to the same stimuli, only a few individuals turn to extremism while relatively more individuals do not.⁶⁸

In an attempt to overcome this deficiency, DHS recently turned to an amalgamation of theories to warn against the possible resurgence of domestic right-wing extremism. In its April 2009 report, DHS asserts that certain social, economic, and political circumstances may eventually lead to “confrontations between [right-wing extremist groups] and government authorities similar to those in the past.” To support its claim, DHS points to similarities between the current socio-economic and political climate and that of the early 1990s when right-wing extremism grew popular due to “an economic recession, criticism about the outsourcing of jobs, and the perceived threat to U.S. power and sovereignty by other foreign powers.” More specifically, DHS cites the following factors as presently encouraging right-wing extremist activity in the United States:⁶⁹

- economic hardship, as measured by real estate foreclosures, unemployment, and the inability to obtain credit;
- perceived lack of government action on illegal immigration;
- perceived suppression of individual liberties as represented by proposed gun control;
- disgruntled military veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan;

⁶⁷ Ebata, “Right-Wing Extremism,” 28.

⁶⁸ Rex A. Hudson, *Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why: The 1999 Government Report on Profiling Terrorists* (Guilford, CT: Lyons, 2002); Alan B. Krueger, *What Makes a Terrorist: Economics and the Roots of Terrorism; Lionel Robbins Lectures* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); Charles A. Russell and Bowman H. Miller, “Profile of a Terrorist,” *Terrorism: An International Journal* 1, no. 1 (1977):17–34.

⁶⁹ Jeanne Meserve, “Right-Wing Extremism May Be On Rise, Report Says,” *CNN*, April 15, 2009, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/04/14/extremism.report/index.html> (accessed April 15, 2009).

- economic rise of other countries; and
- election of the first African-American president.

Critics of the DHS report argue that the factors identified in the report have been present in the U.S. for a considerable amount of time and yet the domestic far right has been relatively dormant. They also argue that these identified developments do not necessarily encourage or trigger violent right-wing activities. Recent surveys support the arguments against DHS's assessment of the current socio-economic and political milieu. In July 2008, a Gallup survey revealed that Americans were less likely to take an anti-immigration stance despite current economic downturn.⁷⁰ In 2009, July and November polls showed that a majority of Americans believed the election of the country's first African-American president improved race relations.⁷¹ Critics cite two general reasons why DHS appears to have arrived at the wrong conclusion. First, its assessment was a result of analysis on data gathered after "an afternoon of surfing the Web."⁷² And second, DHS fails to establish a connection between the current social, economic, and political environment and the variety of right-wing extremist movements and their disparate motivations and goals.

D. THEORY OF COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR

Instead of using theories that tend to oversimplify the phenomenon of right-wing extremism, this thesis uses Neil Smelser's Theory of Collective Behavior. Within this framework, various theories drawn from terrorist studies, criminology, and the areas of political violence and social movement are employed to test the hypothesis that the

⁷⁰ Jeffrey M. Jones, "Fewer Americans Favor Cutting Back Immigration: Public As Likely to Favor Status Quo as to Favor Decreased Immigration," *Gallup*, July 10, 2008, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/108748/Fewer-Americans-Favor-Cutting-Back-Immigration.aspx> (accessed May 5, 2009).

⁷¹ *CBS News*, "Recent Polls Show Race Relations Have Gotten Better," July 23, 2009, <http://www.cbsnews.com/blogs/2009/07/23/politics/politicalhotsheet/entry5183336.shtml> (accessed November 19, 2009); Lydia Saad, "U.S. Waiting for Race Relations to Improve Under Obama," *Gallup*, November 9, 2009, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/124181/u.s.-waiting-race-relations-improve-obama.aspx> (accessed November 18, 2009).

⁷² Shannon Bream, "Evidence Supporting Claims in 'Rightwing Extremism' Report Lacks Depth, Group Says," *FOX News*, August 11, 2009, <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2009/08/11/evidence-supporting-claims-rightwing-extremism-report-lacks-depth-group-says/> (accessed October 25, 2009).

current social, economic, and political environment is likely to lead to a violent confrontation between right-wing extremist groups and government authorities.

The Theory of Collective Behavior claims that the collective behavior is determined by: (1) structural conduciveness; (2) structural strain; (3) growth and spread of a generalized belief; (4) precipitating factors; (5) mobilization of participants for action; and (6) the operation of social controls.⁷³ Structural conduciveness suggests that social conditions are permissive or conducive for certain types of collective behavior to occur. In general, structural conduciveness can be thought of in terms of societal values and norms, social organization or structures (e.g., families, churches, government agencies, associations, political parties), and opportunities for and limitations of action as presented by the environment.⁷⁴ For violence to arise in a society, society must either be permissive of violence, prohibitive of non-violent responses, or both. If alternative means for expressing dissatisfaction remain open, rational actors may not opt to use violence to pursue their political goals and instead, decide to undertake peaceful demonstrations, petition, and other actions allowed by due political process. Similarly, if political leaders ignore and marginalize aggrieved communities or fail to effectively address social issues, violent unrest may be perceived as a legitimate means to achieve rapid social change.⁷⁵ The theories of social disorganization and of political opportunity reflect this notion of conduciveness or permissiveness.

Structural strain asserts that rational actors collectively take action because something is wrong in their environment. Some form of strain must be present—in conjunction with structural conduciveness—for collective behavior to occur.⁷⁶ Appropriately, right-wing extremist movements are responses to social, economic, and political developments⁷⁷ that cause a group to perceive that it is systematically excluded

⁷³ Neil J. Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), 15–18.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 24–28.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 225.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 16, 48.

⁷⁷ Buechler, *Social Movements*, 20; Ebata, “Right-Wing Extremism,” 21; Oberschall, *Social Movement*, 16; Rubenstein, “The Noncauses of Modern Terrorism,” 133; Tololyan, “Cultural Narrative,” 217.

from or discriminated against something it believes is its entitlement.⁷⁸ Structural strain leaves the community vulnerable to “recruitment and manipulation by extreme political movements” that promise to excise the source of the strain.⁷⁹

In his 1963 treatise on collective behavior, Smelser noted that structural strain is also known as “conflict,” “deprivation,” “disorganization,” “pressure,” and “disintegration,” among others.⁸⁰ Strain is always expressed as a relation between an event or situation and certain cultural and individual standards. For example, unemployment is not necessarily perceived as a strain if the entire economy is in a recession. However, it may become a strain if one perceives his or her employment status is due to unfair competition from undocumented workers. As another example, the inequalities between the rich and the poor are potential sources of strain in the United States because they are in direct conflict with the cultural value of equality of opportunity. The relative deprivation, social disorganization, and the cultural and identity conflict theories share Smelser’s assertion that the social structure of a society must be conducive for extremist movements to emerge.

In addition to structural strain as a determinant for collective behavior, Smelser notes the need for a generalized belief or ideology that “identifies the source of the strain, attributes certain characteristics to this source, and specifies certain responses to the strain as possible or appropriate.” In short, collective action is not possible unless it is relevant and meaningful to potential actors.⁸¹ Competition theories examine the ethnic, religious, political, and economic cleavages that give rise to extremist movements.

Conduciveness, strain, and a generalized belief do not by themselves produce extremism, but produce the context in which extremism emerges. Collective behavior theorists also acknowledge the importance of precipitating events to serve as a catalyst

⁷⁸ Neil J. Smelser, *The Faces of Terrorism: Social and Psychological Dimensions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 16.

⁷⁹ Leonard Weinberg, “An Overview of Right-Wing Extremism in the Western World: A Study of Convergence, Linkage, and Identity,” in *Nation and Race: The Developing Euro-American Racist Subculture*, ed. Jeffrey Kaplan and Tore Bjørge (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 5–7.

⁸⁰ Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior*, 47.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

for action by providing the context toward which collective action can be directed.⁸² Precipitating events may or may not be a singular event. The antiwar movement grew out of response to increased military intervention in Vietnam. Similarly, the Pro-Life movement emerged after the Supreme Court determined that state laws banning most abortions were unconstitutional. In these instances, a single sequence of events provoked a response from a non-trivial group of people. In contrast, there are no single precipitating events associated with the civil rights movement of the 1950s and the women's movement of the 1960s. Instead of singular events, such as sharp increases in racial and sexual discrimination, collective behavior theorists believe these movements were stimulated by a gradual change in cultural beliefs, values, aspirations, and expectations; a gradual change in the capacity of a society to act collectively to effect change; a gradual change in the opportunities for successful action; or a combination of any of these factors.⁸³

In addition to precipitating events, collective behavior requires a mobilization mechanism to activate members of an extremist movement. Resource mobilization theories examine the various societal mobilization mechanisms that bring aggrieved segments of the population into action. They examine the social movement's leadership core and its organizational structure.

The last determinant of collective behavior looks at the operation (or failure) of social controls. Social controls "prevent, interrupt, deflect, or inhibit the accumulation of the [other collective behavior] determinants."⁸⁴ They either seek to minimize structural conduciveness and strain to minimize the possibility of collective action or are implemented after the collective behavior has erupted. Hence, social controls are closely coupled to, but are distinct from structural conduciveness and strain. The operation of social controls is important to political decision makers—they determine the scope, intensity, and duration of any collective behavior. If properly constructed, these social controls can also prevent any violent escalation of extremist movements. In this thesis,

⁸² Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior*, 16-17; Conteh-Morgan, *Collective Political Violence*, 55.

⁸³ Oberschall, *Social Movements*, 17.

⁸⁴ Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior*, 17.

social controls refer to the actions and policies of various social entities (e.g., the police, the courts, the press, the community leaders, and even the people themselves) that aim to deter the outbreak of right-wing extremist violence.

The framework provided the determinants of collective behavior avoids the shortcomings inherent to the reductionist theories of relative deprivation, social disorganization, culture and identity, competition, resource mobilization, and political opportunity. As mentioned previously, these theories, in their attempt to be parsimonious, struggle to explain a specific type of cause at the expense of other underlying conditions. In contrast, the theory of collective behavior acknowledges that social, economic, and political structures and conditions may facilitate the growth of organized movements that may engage in terrorism, but it also holds that certain combinations of these determinants do not guarantee that these movements would turn to political violence. This non-deterministic characteristic of collective behavior theory has been a source of criticism. Nevertheless, the inability of the reductionist theories to predict the emergence of terrorist movements reinforces the value of identifying multiple, interrelated causal factors to explain the emergence of a complex phenomenon like right-wing extremism. The theory of collective behavior provides the framework to do this.⁸⁵

Because it uses a framework that attempts to explain collective behavior, this thesis will exclude from its analysis the emergence of individual right-wing terrorists. The radicalization of these “lone wolf offenders”⁸⁶ deserves special consideration that is beyond the scope of this thesis.

E. METHODOLOGY AND ROAD MAP

Using the framework provided by the theory of collective behavior, this thesis investigates the current social, economic, and political environment of the United States in the context of the current health care reform debate, its influence on the domestic far right, and its homeland security implications.

⁸⁵ Smelser, *Faces of Terrorism*, 12.

⁸⁶ Gary Fields and Evan Perez, “FBI Seeks to Target Lone Extremists,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 15, 2009, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124501849215613523.html> (accessed November 18, 2009).

Chapter II looks across nations and their extremist groups to identify significant conditions and dynamics that appear correlated to manifestations of right-wing extremism. More specifically, this thesis examines the structural conduciveness, structural strain, precipitating factors, operative ideologies, resource mobilization, and the operation of social controls that account for the emergence of right-wing extremism in Italy during the 1970s, in the United States from the 1970s through the 1990s, and in Germany during the 1990s. Chapter II does not consider any case of right-wing extremism before the end of the Second World War. In contrast to the concerns of its equivalent in the inter-War and pre-War periods, the contemporary far right is not necessarily centered on the revival of fascist tradition. Instead, after the political landscape radically changed after the Second World War, “the crisis of representation of established parties” and “the general distrust of politics and the democratic system” fuel the current-day far right.⁸⁷

Chapter III examines the various right-wing extremist groups active in the United States today and explores the various ideologies that drive them. It looks at the far right’s xenophobic tendencies, the distrust it has towards the government, and the motivation it derives from Christian fundamentalism and American exceptionalism. The concepts introduced in Chapter III are critical in the subsequent analysis of the American far right.

Using the current efforts of the Obama administration to reform the health care system as a potential precipitating event, Chapter IV investigates the possible relationship between the conditions and dynamics present in contemporary United States and the hypothesis that it facilitates a potential resurgence in right-wing extremism. More specifically, it examines the structural conduciveness of the current social, economic, and political environment; the dynamics of various social conflicts currently pressuring American society; and the effectiveness of the American far right to employ its right-wing ideologies to broaden its public support and pursue its own agenda.

⁸⁷ Piero Ignazi, “The Extreme Right in Europe: A Survey,” in Merkl and Weinberg, *Revival of Right-Wing Extremism*, 57.

Chapter V continues with the application of the theory of collective behavior to domestic right-wing extremism in the United States. It also evaluates the operation of social controls on right-wing extremist mobilization and weighs their influence against the social structures examined in Chapter IV. Taking into consideration the interaction between these determinants of collective behavior, it tests the hypothesis that the current social, economic, and political environment is likely to lead to a violent confrontation between right-wing extremist groups and government authorities. Chapter V also examines the homeland security implications of this evaluation.

Information for this thesis is derived from unclassified literature on right-wing extremism, to include journal articles; articles published by scholarly think tanks; surveys;⁸⁸ books and book chapters; printed or broadcast news articles; and political blogs.

⁸⁸ For some surveys used in this thesis, there is one notable caveat. As the proportion of Americans who are only reachable by cell phone increases and as federal regulations makes it illegal to dial cell phone numbers automatically, there is an increasing concern that landline-only polls may not accurately measure public opinion. The demographics of those who are reachable by cell phone only are not equivalent to those who only have landlines or those who have both landlines and cell phones. The exclusion of “cell phone-onlys” in telephone surveys could introduce a bias into the data. “Cell phone-onlys” are typically in their early 30s, earn less than \$50,000 annually, are unmarried, are more geographically mobile, and—even when statistically controlling for these factors—have more distinctive political preferences than the norm. *Economist*, “Cutting the Cord: America Loses Its Landlines,” August 13, 2009, http://www.economist.com/businessfinance/displaystory.cfm?story_id=14214847 (accessed August 31, 2009).

II. RIGHT-WING EXTREMIST TERRORISM IN THE 1960s–1990s

Extremism is linked to terrorism. As terrorism expert Paul Wilkinson wrote, “Every international terrorist movement or group requires an extremist ideology or belief-system of some kind to nourish, motivate, justify, and mobilize the use of terror violence.”⁸⁹ Extremist organizations resort to terrorism believing these acts will help them achieve their political and social goals.⁹⁰ This chapter looks across nations whose right-wing extremist groups have used acts of terror in pursuit of their objectives. In doing so, this chapter attempts to significant configurations of social, economic, and political factors that appear to be correlated to manifestations of right-wing extremism. This chapter uses the framework provided by Neil Smelser’s theory of collective behavior, outlined in the previous chapter, to examine right-wing extremism and its emergence in Italy during the 1970s, the United States from the 1970s through the 1990s, and Germany during the 1990s.

Although these case studies examine particular periods in these countries’ histories, this chapter acknowledges that right-wing violence in these countries existed well before and after these periods of study in response to different socio-economic and political contexts. Nevertheless, the following case studies were chosen because of their different precipitators: right-wing extremism in Italy was a countermovement against the successes of the Italian communist party; the American right-wing extremist anti-abortion movement emerged from a conflict between judicial action and culture-religious norms; and German right-wing extremism was driven by xenophobic sentiments after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The analysis of these case studies provides a robust set of social, economic, political, and cultural variables with which to test the hypothesis that the

⁸⁹ Paul Wilkinson, “Support Mechanisms in International Terrorism,” in *Current Perspectives on International Terrorism*, ed. Robert O. Slater and Michael Stohl (New York: St. Martin’s, 1988), 95.

⁹⁰ Martha Crenshaw, “Decisions to Use Terrorism: Psychological Constraints on Instrumental Reasoning,” in Della Porta, *Social Movements and Violence*, 29; David C. Nice, “Clinic Bombings as Political Violence,” *American Journal of Political Science* 32, no. 1 (1988): 179, <http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed July 15, 2009).

conditions and dynamics in contemporary United States are likely to lead to a violent confrontation between right-wing extremist groups and government authorities.

A. ITALY, 1969–1982

Between 1969 and 1982, Italy endured what history professor Richard Drake refers to as “the worst epidemic of terrorist violence in the Western world.”⁹¹ Right-wing violence in Italy during this period differed from that of other western and industrialized democracies because racial, religious, or ethnic minorities were not the targets of right-wing extremist aggression. A large racial or religious minority group towards which far-right violence could be directed simply did not exist in Italy.⁹² Instead, right-wing extremism in Italy during this time period took place in a climate of political dissatisfaction, economic and social upheaval, and ideological confrontation. For the Italian far right, the extra-parliamentary wave of protests coming from the students and workers’ movement in the late 1960s and the eventual integration of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) in the mainstream political process posed a threat of communism and socialism.⁹³ Initially, neo-fascist reaction to these threats took the form of “stepped-up intimidation,”⁹⁴ but it soon escalated to a terrorist campaign that began with the Piazza Fontana massacre of December 12, 1969, in which 17 people were killed, and another 88 were wounded. By 1982, Italy had suffered 12,000 to 15,000 acts of political violence.⁹⁵ From 1969 to 1974, right-wing groups dominated terrorism, maintaining a sufficiently high level of tension and employing false-flag tactics in an attempt to shift the blame to leftist terrorist groups and legitimize a *coup d’état* by neo-fascist sympathizers among

⁹¹ Richard Drake, “The Red and the Black: Terrorism in Contemporary Italy,” *International Political Science Review* 5, no. 3 (1984): 279, <http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed June 14, 2009).

⁹² Leonard Weinberg, “Italian Neo-Fascist Terrorism: A Comparative Perspective,” in *Terror from the Extreme Right*. Cass Series on Political Violence, 1, ed. Tore Bjørgo (London: Cass, 1995), 221, 533.

⁹³ Leonard Weinberg and William Lee Eubank, *The Rise and Fall of Italian Terrorism*, New Directions in Comparative and International Politics, eds. Peter Merkl and Haruhiro Fukui (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1987), 31–32.

⁹⁴ Peter Fritzsche, “Terrorism in the Federal Republic of Germany and Italy: Legacy of the ’68 Movement or ‘Burden of Fascism’?” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 1, no. 4 (1989): 476, <http://web.ebscohost.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed June 16, 2009).

⁹⁵ Marco Rimanelli, “Italian Terrorism and Society, 1940s-1980s: Roots, Ideologies, Evolution, and International Connections,” *Terrorism: An International Journal* 14, no. 4 (1989): 251.

law enforcement and military establishments.⁹⁶ Right-wing terrorism faded in the background from 1975 to 1979 when the Marxist-Leninist left-wing terrorist group *Bigante Rosse* began its terrorist campaign to force Italy to leave the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance. However, it reemerged violently with the Bologna train station massacre of August 1980.⁹⁷ By January 1983, Italy's social controls, in the form of its repentance law and the "anti-terrorism apparatus"⁹⁸ put in place after the assassination of Christian-Democrat President and former Prime Minister Aldo Moro in 1978, ended Italy's epidemic of political violence.⁹⁹

The atmosphere in which Italy perceived right-wing extremist violence as a possible means to achieve social change emerged from its "blocked" political system and its inability to manage the country's rapid socio-economic transformation from 1958 to 1963, as well as the simultaneous rejection of democracy and socialism by a significant segment of its population.¹⁰⁰ Like its Axis partners in the Second World War, Italy had the democratic political system thrust upon it. By the 1970s, its population was profoundly dissatisfied with the system and its "scandal-prone, nefarious system of local patronage and corruption (*clientelismo*)."¹⁰¹ The inability of Italy's pro-Western, democratic regime to effectively manage the country's rapid transformation from largely rural and agrarian growth to urban and industrial, produced societal strains that included recurrent economic crisis, widespread unemployment, the transformation of the poor southern Italian peasantry into "an exploited urbanized proletariat in the industrial North," a failing educational system, the cultural-economic crisis of the "petite bourgeoisie," violent labor strikes, and deteriorating standards of living.¹⁰² Aggravating this dissatisfaction was the hegemonic position of the Italian Christian Democratic Party

⁹⁶ Leonard Weinberg and William Lee Eubank, "Neo-Fascist and Far Left Terrorists in Italy: Some Biographical Observations," *British Journal of Political Science* 18, no. 4 (1988): 534.

⁹⁷ Drake, "Terrorism in Contemporary Italy," 279.

⁹⁸ Weinberg and Eubank, "Neo-Fascist and Far Left Terrorists," 126–130.

⁹⁹ Rimanelli, "Italian Terrorism and Society," 252.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 253.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 252.

that blocked any significant effort to achieve much-needed social, economic, and political reform. Consequently, a significant minority—both the right- and left-wing extremists—believed they had the responsibility to change the system and that change could not be accomplished “within the context of the existing rules of the game.”¹⁰³

The dissatisfaction with democracy by a significant minority was not limited to its inadequacies in managing the country and introducing reform. It extended to democracy’s core values and political processes. Italy’s violent past¹⁰⁴ engendered a “philosophic-cultural exaltation”¹⁰⁵ of violence that ran counter to the democratic processes that sought the peaceful resolution of conflicts through compromise, negotiation, bargaining, and rational discussion. After its defeat in the Second World War, the “community of the vanquished” sought refuge in the fascist ideology that supported the view that violence is an acceptable instrument of social change.¹⁰⁶ At the strategic level, the writings of Giulio Cesare Evola, Adriano Romualdi, and Giorgio Freda inspired and formed the ideological backbone of the Italian far right. At the operational level, the “powerful lure of terrorism’s dark romanticism and action-packed lifestyle” and the inability of Italian social controls to punish terrorists attracted adherents and mobilized members.¹⁰⁷ The emerging neo-fascist groups embraced “the claim of the superiority of elites over faceless masses” and promoted the righteousness of “superman’s ethics”¹⁰⁸ over legal constraints and regulations of the existing democratic system. In the minds of the neo-fascist groups, they were the elite, “standing among the ruins” of post-war Italy and “defiantly challenging the surrounding world.”¹⁰⁹ These groups idealized the “heroism” and “self-sacrifice in a lost cause” of the Waffen SS, the

¹⁰³ Weinberg and Eubank, *Rise and Fall of Italian Terrorism*, 15–16.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 20–27.

¹⁰⁵ Rimanelli, “Italian Terrorism and Society,” 252.

¹⁰⁶ Franco Ferraresi, *Threats to Democracy: The Radical Right in Italy After the War* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), 32–33.

¹⁰⁷ Bruce Hoffman, *Right-Wing Terrorism in Europe* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1982), 5–6, <http://web.ebscohost.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed May 3, 2009); Rimanelli, “Italian Terrorism and Society,” 257.

¹⁰⁸ Ferraresi, *Threats to Democracy*, 32.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 33.

Islamic concept of Jihad, and the Japanese code of Bushido, and advocated a masculine leadership caste of elite warriors to protect the feminine society from chaos and disintegration.¹¹⁰

The Italian far right also rejected liberalism, mass democracy, socialism, and communism as the decadent manifestation of the spirit.¹¹¹ As capitalism spread and increasingly marginalized the labor force, and as the democratic government failed to manage the capitalist transformation of its society, the Italian far right and its supporters sought to reject “economic self-interest and other materialistic premises of middle class life.” Furthermore, a decline in the status of religion and of the Catholic Church, and the moral decline of society—as manifested in the willingness of the electorate to endorse civil divorce and abortion—produced a “value crisis” in Italian society. Consistent with social disorganization theory, as traditional Italian social institutions collapsed, “embattled believers in traditional institutions, symbols and ways of life” became vulnerable to the right-wing organizations that identified themselves as “defenders of European civilization threatened by the materialistic values of both Marxism and capitalism.”¹¹²

The integration of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) in national government, the labor/student demonstrations in 1968 and 1969, and the emergence of left wing terrorist groups such as the Red Brigades¹¹³ precipitated the violent emergence of Italian neo-Fascist extremist groups. As the French experiences in Indochina and Algeria and the growing American involvement in Vietnam reinforced the right-wing perception that the Communists were “fully capable of launching their schemes in Italy,”¹¹⁴ the Italian far right responded by violently countering “every street-action of the communists.”¹¹⁵ As the Left sought to “accelerate the inner disintegration of the Italian system” to produce a

¹¹⁰ Weinberg and Eubank, *Rise and Fall of Italian Terrorism*, 33–34.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 13.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 10, 17–18.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹¹⁵ James L. Newell, “Italy: The Extreme Right Comes In from the Cold,” *Parliamentary Affairs* 53, no. 3 (2000): 472, <http://web.ebscohost.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed June 5, 2009).

classic Marxist-Leninist proletarian insurrection,¹¹⁶ the Right countered with their indiscriminate terrorist bombing campaign to strengthen its call for a pro-Fascist military coup to eliminate all leftist threats.¹¹⁷ As Weinberg observed, “the more closely the [Italian Communist Party] approached the keys to national political power and the more threatening the Marxist subculture appeared to anti-communists, the more serious the manifestations of neo-Fascist violence.”¹¹⁸

Right-wing violence erupted in Italy in response to the violent, extra-parliamentary successes of left-wing groups and the rejection of the pro-Western, democratic government. Italy’s violent history and its glorification of violence to effect social change contradicted the principles of democracy and encouraged both left- and right-wing extremists to mobilize and seek redress of the deteriorating social, economic, and political conditions through violence. Right- and left-wing violence fueled one another until the assassination of Aldo Moro spurred “the unexpected emergence of national consensus and renewed sense of state” and made “organized and relentless counterterrorism finally effective and decisive.”¹¹⁹

B. THE UNITED STATES IN THE 1980s AND 1990s

The foundations of right-wing extremism in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s are significantly different from those of Italy. In contrast to Italy’s experience with communism, the communist threat in the United States was more of an “optical illusion” because the United States lacked a major domestic socialist movement. The absence of a socialist movement, however, did not stop Senator Joseph McCarthy and the American far right from “acting as if the country was in mortal danger.”¹²⁰ While the emergence of

¹¹⁶ Weinberg, “Italian Neo-Fascist Terrorism,” 230.

¹¹⁷ Rimanelli, “Italian Terrorism and Society,” 255.

¹¹⁸ Weinberg, “Italian Neo-Fascist Terrorism,” 222.

¹¹⁹ Rimanelli, “Italian Terrorism and Society,” 252.

¹²⁰ Leonard Weinberg, “The American Radical Right in Comparative Perspective,” in Merkl and Weinberg, *Revival of Right-Wing Extremism*, 231–233.

large communist political parties drove the rise in fascism in Italy, the American Right was stimulated only by its own paranoia, actively elicited by political elites.¹²¹

Similar to the right-wing violence in the Italian case study, the targets of the American far right were not racial, religious, or ethnic minorities. The United States has always been a nation of immigrants and although nativist groups sought to exclude “newer” immigrants in the 1800s, conduct, lifestyle, and “the appropriate outlook” are more salient in determining American national identity than race or country of origin.¹²² Moreover, while racial supremacists and separatists were popular in the 1960s and 1970s,¹²³ the American far right dropped the tenets of biological determinism to attract a wider base of support.¹²⁴ Thus, in the 1980s and 1990s, domestic terrorism was primarily driven by anti-government and anti-abortion ideologies.¹²⁵ This case study focuses on the anti-abortion movement as the issue of abortion drove the domestic terrorist campaign by right-wing extremist groups through the 1980s and 1990s.

Before *Roe v Wade*, 410 U.S. 113 (1973), which asserted that a woman’s right to obtain an abortion is constitutionally protected, the anti-abortion movement focused primarily to counter “a wave of permissive abortion laws” and consisted mainly of small, loosely connected Roman Catholic Church-sponsored groups of medical professionals and church leaders.¹²⁶ The anti-abortion movement, driven by both religious and secular ideologies, surged almost immediately after the 1973 Supreme Court decision. The movement initially moved into the legislative arena to attempt to overturn the Supreme Court decision and its initial extra-legislative activities remained “largely peaceful, involving picketing and other constitutionally-protected activities.”¹²⁷ The movement

¹²¹ Murray B. Levin, *Political Hysteria in America: The Democratic Capacity for Repression* (New York: Basic Books, 1971), 3–10.

¹²² Weinberg, “American Radical Right,” 231.

¹²³ Hewitt, *Understanding Terrorism*, 25–32.

¹²⁴ Diamond, *Roads to Dominion*, 307.

¹²⁵ Hewitt, *Understanding Terrorism*, 17–18.

¹²⁶ Dennis Jay Kenney and Melissa Reuland, “Public Order Policing: A National Survey of Abortion-Related Conflict,” *Journal of Criminal Justice* 30 (2002): 356. <http://web.ebscohost.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed July 15, 2009).

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

conducted educational efforts against abortion and organized political action committees to support anti-abortion candidates and to lobby for changes in abortion-related laws. Its efforts soon escalated to other forms of tactical action, including gluing clinic locks, setting off stink-bombs inside clinics, harassing clinic personnel, blockading entry to clinics, and staging sit-ins at the clinics.¹²⁸ According to the data compiled by the National Abortion Foundation, violence against abortion clinics and their personnel began in 1976 when Joseph Stockett set fire to a Planned Parenthood office in Oregon. Anti-abortion violence peaked in 1984 with 26 documented instances of clinic bombings and arsons, perpetuated by those who refused to accept incremental lobbying efforts and preferred direct-action tactics. It peaked again between 1989 and 1999 with an escalation of arson attacks and the threatened use of anthrax against clinic personnel. The first abortion provider was killed in 1993 when Michael Griffin shot to death Dr. David Gunn in Pensacola, Florida.¹²⁹ More recently, Dr. George Tiller, the “best-known provider of late-term abortions”¹³⁰ in the United States, was shot and killed in his church in Wichita, Kansas on May 31, 2009.

The permissiveness—or what collective behavior theorists would call “structural conduciveness”—of American society with regards to anti-abortion violence between 1970 and 2000 came in the form of the attitudes formed by religious norms and by implicit approval by politicians. Mainstream religion formed the backbone of legislative anti-abortion efforts with virtually all initial anti-abortion efforts driven by the leadership of the American Catholic Church.¹³¹ As religious doctrines stress the protection of life, it should be no surprise that individual religiosity influences abortion attitudes and such

¹²⁸ Dallas A. Blanchard and Terry J. Prewitt, *Religious Violence and Abortion: The Gideon Project* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993), 254–255.

¹²⁹ National Abortion Foundation, “History of Clinic Violence,” National Abortion Foundation, http://prochoice.org/about_abortion/violence/history_violence.html (accessed July 15, 2009).

¹³⁰ Nancy Gibbs, “George Tiller,” *Time*, June 15, 2009, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1902838,00.html> (accessed July 16, 2009).

¹³¹ In 1972, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops spun off the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC) to avoid the perception that the Catholic Church was engaged in direct political lobbying. James Risen and Judy Thomas, *Wrath of Angels: The American Abortion War* (New York: Basic Books, 1998), 19–20.

attitudes shape abortion restrictions and access.¹³² On the extreme, violent religious fundamentalists vowed to end legalized abortion by any means necessary.¹³³ Drawing on religious dogma, they justified their anti-abortion position as “sacred and just” and demonized pro-lifers as “evil and profane.” This Manichean mindset, which also equated abortion with the Nazi holocaust and women having abortions as “murderers” and “baby killers,”¹³⁴ made violence against abortion clinic personnel and pro-life supporters more likely.

The implicit approval of politicians towards anti-abortion violence also created a somewhat risk-free environment for anti-abortion extremists. After the 1973 Supreme Court decision, the legislative and executive branches appeared complicit to, and even supportive of, the anti-abortion movement’s aim to “erect as many obstacles as possible between a woman and a legal abortion.”¹³⁵ In 1976, the anti-abortion lobby achieved their first major victory when Congress passed the Hyde Amendment, which imposed restrictions on government funding for abortion and abortion-related services. Then in 1983, President Ronald Reagan penned an anti-abortion essay titled “Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation” in *The Human Life Review*. Some anti-abortion extremists interpreted this essay “as endorsement and legitimization of private law enforcement and vigilantism.”¹³⁶ Consequently, the essay promoted a “drastic increase”¹³⁷ in abortion-related violence. In the seven years prior to the publication, there had been a yearly average of less than three bombing and arson attacks against abortion clinics. The year

¹³² Amy Adamczyk, “The Effects of Religious Contextual Norms, Structural Constraints, and Personal Religiosity on Abortion Decisions,” *Social Science Research* 37 (2008): 657, <http://web.ebscohost.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed September 12, 2009).

¹³³ Matthias Beier, “On the Psychology of Violent Christian Fundamentalism: Fighting to Matter Ultimately,” *Psychoanalytic Review* 93, no. 2 (2006): 301, <http://proquest.umi.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed September 12, 2009).

¹³⁴ Sara Diamond, *Spiritual Warfare: The Politics of the Christian Right* (Boston: South End Press, 1989), 94.

¹³⁵ Janet Hadley, “God’s Bullies: Attacks on Abortion,” *Feminist Review* 48 (1994): 102, <http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed July 15, 2009).

¹³⁶ Blanchard and Prewitt, *Religious Violence*, 271.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 270.

after the essay was published, 26 such attacks were witnesses.¹³⁸ Not only did President Reagan fail to condemn the spike in violence, the Federal Bureau of Investigation was reluctant to label the bombings as “terrorism,” claiming that the acts of violence did not fit into their definition of terrorism. Very few people were arrested and prosecuted for clinic bombings, and no significant government efforts were made to investigate the church and anti-abortion groups, who contributed to the perpetrators’ violent attitude.¹³⁹ Moreover, pro-life leaders avoided condemning clinic bombers as extremists¹⁴⁰ and, in some cases, commented that although they did not approve of the violence, “[they were] glad it happened” because “violence begets violence.”¹⁴¹ Although one cannot prove a direct cause-and-effect relationship between the political and religious leadership’s failure to condemn anti-abortion violence and the rise of abortion-related violence, there is an evident correlation in the decline of violence following President Reagan’s eventual public condemnation of it on January 3, 1985.¹⁴²

When pro-choice President William J. Clinton assumed office in 1992, the structural conduciveness shifted from tacit political approval to political frustration. Once in office, President Clinton quickly lifted the abortion restrictions imposed by the anti-abortion administrations of Reagan and Bush. Consequently, as anti-abortionist activists concluded that they could not achieve their goals within the political process of a pro-choice administration, violence against clinics escalated.¹⁴³ At the same time President Clinton was elected into office, Randall Terry and other Operation Rescue doctors launched their violent “No Place to Hide” campaign against abortion clinic workers and their families. Militant anti-abortionists issued death threats and obtained abortion clinic workers’ home addresses, itineraries, and the location of their children with the intent of reducing the “supply” of abortion doctors.¹⁴⁴ In March 1993, abortion

¹³⁸ National Abortion Foundation, “History of Clinic Violence.”

¹³⁹ Diamond, *Spiritual Warfare*, 93.

¹⁴⁰ Diamond, *Roads to Dominion*, 241.

¹⁴¹ Blanchard and Prewitt, *Religious Violence*, 257.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 270.

¹⁴³ Freilich and Pridemore, “Politics, Culture, and Political Crime,” 326.

¹⁴⁴ Diamond, *Roads to Dominion*, 302–303.

doctor, David Gunn, was assassinated by activist Michael Griffin. In August 1993, George Tiller, another abortion doctor, was shot and injured by Rachelle Shannon. Eleven months later, Reverend Paul Hill, who defended Michael Griffin's use of lethal force against doctors, shot and killed John Bayard Britton and one of his clinic escorts.¹⁴⁵ Eventually, the direct action taken by militant anti-abortionists produced a backlash from the Supreme Court, Congress, and the executive branch. In 1994, Supreme Court issued a ruled that anti-abortion advocates who were "loosely connected" to the violent activists could be held legally liable.¹⁴⁶ Later that year, the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrance Act was passed into law and added federal civil and criminal penalties to the crimes of blockading or vandalizing clinics. As it became increasingly politically incorrect to attack *Roe v Wade*, the anti-abortionist movement found itself at a crossroads. Some members continued to advocate violence, while others quickly reevaluated their tactics.¹⁴⁷

The social conflict—also known as “structural strain”—produced by the abortion debate was driven by both religious and secular norms. According to Blanchard and Prewitt in their study of anti-abortion bombers and arsonists, “all were religiously ardent.”¹⁴⁸ However, the abortion issue transcended moral theology¹⁴⁹ and established, in some respects, stronger ties to the feminist movement. Kristen Luker's 1984 study of 200 pro-life and pro-choice activists reveals that anti-abortion women believe “men are best suited for the public world of work, and women to the private world of rearing children, managing homes, and caring for husbands.” In contrast, pro-choice women believe men and women are fundamentally equal in regards to rights and responsibilities. Thus, anti-abortion women are motivated by a concern maintaining their ability to rely on their husbands to support their social roles as mothers, while pro-choice women primarily

¹⁴⁵ National Abortion Federation, “Clinic Violence: History of Violence; Murders and Shootings,” http://www.prochoice.org/about_abortion/violence/murders.asp (accessed July 15, 2009).

¹⁴⁶ Diamond, *Roads to Dominion*, 303.

¹⁴⁷ Diamond, *Roads to Dominion*, 303–304; Hewitt, *Understanding Terrorism*, 40.

¹⁴⁸ Blanchard and Prewitt, *Religious Violence*, 208.

¹⁴⁹ Ted G. Jelen and Clyde Wilcox, “Causes and Consequences of Public Attitudes toward Abortion: A Review and Research Agenda,” *Political Research Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (2003): 492, <http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed September 12, 2009).

want to maintain their independent status.¹⁵⁰ In the view of political scientist Rosalind Petchesky, “abortion politics had more to do with compulsory heterosexuality, family structure, the relationship between men and women and parents and children, and women’s employment.”¹⁵¹ Consistent with the view that the feminist movement challenged male dominance in the family and the work place, anti-abortion violence was also found to be perpetuated by a small group of “abortion warriors”¹⁵² who belonged to a subculture that emphasized “traditional, patriarchal gender relations,” sought to “control women,” and tolerated violence against women.¹⁵³ In a sense, the anti-abortion movement can be seen as a response to the feminist movement in the same way the right-wing violence in Italy between 1969 and 1982 was a response to left-wing violence.

The far right has also adopted the pro-life rhetoric of mainstream religions, equating abortion as murder and equating it as “the American Holocaust.” In addition, its anti-abortion is supported by its linkage to race. On the one hand, the far right seeks to stop abortion “at least among white women” to increase the White birth rate. On the other, it declares that abortion is a tool to “eliminate the hundreds of thousands of illegitimate blacks.”¹⁵⁴ While not all anti-abortion activists are racists, the issue does motivate elements of the far right.

Right-wing violence against clinic personnel and facilities escalated after anti-abortion advocates failed to make substantial progress within the political process to reverse the Supreme Court’s assertion of a woman’s right to obtain an abortion. Initially, the violent anti-abortion activists were encouraged by what was interpreted as a tactic approval from the executive branch and complicit support of religious and secular

¹⁵⁰ Kristin Luker, “The War Between The Women,” *Family Planning Perspectives* 16, no. 3 (1984): 106–109, <http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed September 13, 2009).

¹⁵¹ Diamond, *Roads to Dominion*, 172.

¹⁵² Carol Mason, *Killing for Life: The Apocalyptic Narrative of Pro-Life Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 11.

¹⁵³ Joshua D. Freilich and William Alex Pridemore, “Politics, Culture, and Political Crime: Covariates of Abortion Clinic Attacks in the United States,” *Journal of Criminal Justice* 35 (2007): 333; Carol J. C. Maxwell, *Pro-Life Activists in America: Meaning, Motivation and Direct Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 175.

¹⁵⁴ Martin Durham, *White Rage: The Extreme Right and American Politics* (London: Routledge, 2007), 84, 86.

leaders. Anti-abortion violence subsided when the executive, judicial, and legislative branches of government installed effective social controls that forced anti-abortion activists to reevaluate their tactics.

C. REUNIFIED GERMANY IN THE 1990s

Prior to reunification, right-wing extremism was a “marginal phenomenon”¹⁵⁵ in western Germany for several reasons. First, the creation of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949 and its adoption of constitutional and institutional measures discouraged the re-emergence of far right extremism in Western Germany. Second, the economic boom facilitated by the Marshall Plan denied the “economic conditions for a thriving radical right-wing party.” Third, the Bonn party system was “flexible enough collectively” to accommodate most political views in the new Republic while rejecting both left- and right-wing extremism. And fourth, when radical right-wing political parties did emerge, they were subjected to factionalism that constrained their electoral potential.¹⁵⁶ In short, the social structures present in pre-unified Germany simply did not allow right-wing extremism to flourish.

Despite being marginalized after the end of the Second World War, the German far right did attempt to inject itself into the German political sphere before 1990. The far right first attempted to assert its views in 1949 with the formation of the far-right political parties. However, these political parties failed to garner the necessary electoral support to make a significant impact in German politics until fifty years later. In 1989, the political right finally gained traction when the *Republikaner* party grabbed six parliamentary seats as a result of a general rejection of established politics.¹⁵⁷ There were also other far-right initiatives that attempted social change outside of the democratic political process. In 1980, for example, in response to a wave of asylum seekers and ethnic German resettlers from East Europe, a “citizens initiative” attempted to stop the

¹⁵⁵ Wolfgang Kühnel, “Hitler’s Grandchildren? The Resurgence of a Right-Wing Social Movement in Germany,” in Kaplan and Bjørge, *Nation and Race*, 148.

¹⁵⁶ Geoffrey Roberts, “Right-Wing Radicalization in the New Germany,” *Parliamentary Affairs* 45, no. 3 (1992): 328–329.

¹⁵⁷ Christoph Rojahn, *Extreme Right-Wing Violence in Germany: The Political and Social Context*. Conflict Studies, no. 292 (London: Research Institute for the Study of Conflict and Terrorism, 1996), 2–4.

migration of non-natives to North-Rhine Westphalia. Then in 1982, a group of fifteen prominent scholars issued the Heidelberg Manifesto that called for the defense of German culture and society. These efforts received little public support.¹⁵⁸ The political and social environment, amid concerns that Germany might return to its Third Reich policies, simply did not permit an outward demonstration of discontent and hostility toward foreigners. Anyone who dared to criticize or question the policies governing immigration and guest workers were charged with *Fremdenfeindlichkeit*—xenophobic animosity toward strangers.¹⁵⁹

The “unparalleled”¹⁶⁰ rise in right-wing extremism in Germany in the 1990s is attributed to the extraordinary social changes brought about by the collapse of communism, the reunification of Germany on October 3, 1990, and the phenomenon of economic globalization.¹⁶¹ These events ushered in a social, economic, and political context that promoted xenophobia and racism and allowed right-wing extremism to flourish and find expression in violence against foreigners¹⁶²—German political leadership consistently failed to address emerging socio-economic issues effectively;¹⁶³ public discourse was inhibited by a lack of legitimate political forums that promoted open and honest debate;¹⁶⁴ and political leaders—in pursuit of their own political agenda—propagated and encouraged a belief that blamed foreigners and immigrant workers as the

¹⁵⁸ Wesley D. Chapin, *Germany for Germans? The Political Effects of International Migration*, Contributions in Political Science, no. 381 (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1997), 96; Peter Katzenstein, *Policy and Politics in Western Germany: The Growth of a Semi-Sovereign State* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 243–245.

¹⁵⁹ Chapin, *Germany for Germans*, 95.

¹⁶⁰ Ian J. Kagedan, “Contemporary Right-Wing Extremism in Germany,” in Braun and Scheinberg, *Extreme Right*, 113.

¹⁶¹ Hans-George Betz, “The German Model Reconsidered,” *German Studies Review* 19, no. 2 (1996): 308, <http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed May 15, 2009); Kühnel, “Hitler’s Grandchildren,” 158; McLaren, “Explaining Right-Wing Violence,” 167.

¹⁶² Werner Bohleber, “The Presence of the Past: Xenophobia and Right-Wing Extremism in the Federal Republic of Germany; Psychoanalytic Reflections,” *American Imago* 52, no. 3 (1995): 329, <http://muse.jhu.edu.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed June 10, 2009).

¹⁶³ Daniel Maier-Katkin, Susanne Stemmler, and Paul Stretesky, “Immigration and the Emergence of Right-Wing Violence in Unified Germany,” *Crime, Law, and Social Change* 24 (1995): 11, <http://web.ebscohost.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed June 16, 2009).

¹⁶⁴ Chapin, *Germany for Germans*, 96.

causes of unemployment, crime, rising social welfare expenditures, and other social and economic issues.¹⁶⁵ Within this context, affected Germans began to latch onto a “Germany for Germans”¹⁶⁶ sentiment and onto right-wing extremist organizations that acted as the protector of the threatened German community.¹⁶⁷ Consequently, incidents of proven or suspected right-wing violence quintupled from 209 in 1990 to 1,492 in 1991 and peaked at 2,693 incidents in 1992.¹⁶⁸ While most attacks targeted asylum seekers and immigrants, their property, and their residences, the attacks were also directed at Jewish synagogues and cemeteries, memorials to World War II and the Holocaust, left-wing groups, handicapped persons, homosexuals, and the homeless.¹⁶⁹

The constitutional ban on right-wing political parties, which served to restrain the activities of right-wing activists prior to reunification, may have encouraged the breakout of anti-foreigner violence. Without a political forum to openly discuss the immigration issue and because they were denied direct access to public media and to political parties, the German far right sought other means to attract attention.¹⁷⁰ As the German political right continued to fail to advance their objectives using politically acceptable means, extremist groups turned to German public media coverage to promote their movement via attacks against foreigners. Not only did German media provide an “ideal stage” to discount the stigma of and taboos against right-wing ideologies, it eventually forced politicians to confront the issues as it shaped public opinion and garnered public support

¹⁶⁵ Chapin, *Germany for Germans*, 66; Bruce Headey and Derek Headey, “Germany Reunification: Welfare Gains and Losses, East and West,” *Social Indicators Research* 64, no. 1 (2003): 107, <http://proquest.umi.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed June 12, 2009); Kessler and Freeman, “Support for Extreme Right-Wing Parties,” 263; Maier-Katkin, Stemmler, and Stretesky, “Immigration,” 11.

¹⁶⁶ Chapin, *Germany for Germans*, 102.

¹⁶⁷ Roberts, “Right-Wing Radicalism,” 339.

¹⁶⁸ Rojahn, *Extreme Right-Wing Violence*, 11.

¹⁶⁹ Ruud Koopmans and Susan Olzak, “Discursive Opportunities and the Evolution of Right-Wing Violence in Germany,” *American Journal of Sociology* 110, no. 1 (2004): 198, <http://web.ebscohost.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed June 12, 2009); Lauren M. McLaren, “Explaining Right-Wing Violence in Germany: A Time Series Analysis,” *Social Science Quarterly (University of Texas Press)* 80, no. 1 (1999): 166, <http://web.ebscohost.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed June 12, 2009).

¹⁷⁰ Kühnel, “Hitler’s Grandchildren,” 161–162.

by attributing some degree of legitimacy to the violence.¹⁷¹ As a measure of the prevailing anti-foreigner sentiment and of the dissatisfaction with the established political parties in handling the asylum and refugee issue, electoral support for political parties that maintained anti-foreigner positions and emphasized the importance of *Volksgemeinschaft*¹⁷² peaked at 8.7 percent in 1992.¹⁷³ Although this percentage is relatively small, the successes of the openly rightist political parties to steal votes away from the more moderate parties eventually forced the latter to adopt stricter anti-immigrant policies.¹⁷⁴

The social changes introduced by the collapse of the Soviet Union, the reunification of Germany, and globalization may have also encouraged right-wing extremist activism by producing structural strain in the form of high unemployment rates, increased job and housing competition, and failed social institutions and services. Daniel Maier-Katkin, Susanne Stemmler, and Paul Stretesky point to the East Germany city of Rostock to illustrate the effects of reunification on the former East Germany. Rostock was relatively prosperous but after reunification, its economy collapsed because its industries were not competitive.¹⁷⁵ This economic collapse triggered widespread unemployment, an increase in the demand for and reliance on welfare and unemployment compensation, and the deterioration of social institutions and services:

Many social clubs collapsed because of lack of funds and community support. New facilities, such as fitness centers and gambling clubs emerged, but these [were] expensive avocations. ... Public transportation became more expensive.... Income increased for those who continued to work; but the unemployed (including pensioners) lost purchasing power as prices rose to (or even beyond) Western levels.... Rents more than doubled. Overall, the quality of life ... declined substantially: residents

¹⁷¹ Koopmans and Olzak, "Discursive Opportunities," 202–206; Kühnel, "Hitler's Grandchildren," 160–161.

¹⁷² *Volksgemeinschaft* was the notion of "a natural, genetically determined, closed community of Germans, wherever they may live, bound up by a common culture and common values." Kagedan, "Contemporary Right-Wing Extremism in Germany," 118.

¹⁷³ Marcel Lubbers and Peer Scheepers, "Explaining the Trend in Extreme Right-Wing Voting: Germany 1989–1998," *European Sociological Review* 17, no. 4 (2001): 431.

¹⁷⁴ Chapin, *Germany for Germans*, 94; Rojahn, *Extreme Right-Wing Violence*, 4–5.

¹⁷⁵ Maier-Katkin, Stemmler, and Stretesky, "Immigration," 9.

lost work, social contacts, social services, familiar relationships, and leisure time activities. Housing, which had been adequate when supported by the social services of the old [communist] system, grew stark and became for young people a “prison without walls.”¹⁷⁶

West Germans were also negatively affected by reunification. Reunification increased the size of Germany’s labor force with the introduction of East German workers into the FGR. In addition, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the resulting migration of expellees and refugees from Eastern and Central Europe exacerbated the socio-economic situation. Also, aggravating the job market were the effects of globalization. In the early 1990s, globalization forced Germany to shift its manufacturing sector out of Germany and into lower-wage countries causing the German manufacturing sector to lose 1.2 million jobs. Between 1990 and 1993, the number of registered unemployed increased from roughly 250,000 to more than 1.1 million. In short, reunified Germany industry could not absorb the “excess of relatively skilled and disciplined labor.”¹⁷⁷ These events raised job competition between native Germans and migrants and led to tax increases to offset the costs of unification¹⁷⁸

As the social and economic consequences of reunification became apparent, the German populace began to harbor antagonistic sentiments against asylum seekers, immigrant workers, and ethnic German migrants who they believed were depriving native Germans of jobs, housing, social services, and economic benefits. The demonization of foreigners and the emergence of xenophobic tendencies against them were reinforced by the release of government studies that clearly correlated the foreign population with crime, unemployment, and welfare recipients.¹⁷⁹ By September 1991, 69 percent of West Germans and 64 percent of East Germans supported harsher immigration laws.¹⁸⁰ Fifteen months later, 75 percent of Germans believed asylum and foreigner problems were the most important issues confronting Germany.

¹⁷⁶ Maier-Katkin, Stemmler, and Stretesky, “Immigration,” 10.

¹⁷⁷ Betz, “The German Model Reconsidered,” 308, 315–316.

¹⁷⁸ Roberts, “Right-Wing Radicalism,” 340.

¹⁷⁹ Chapin, *Germany for Germans*, 54–63; Kühnel, “Hitler’s Grandchildren,” 158.

¹⁸⁰ Chapin, *Germany for Germans*, 62.

The failure of German social controls to contain the violent, anti-foreigner riots as they broke out reinforced the permissiveness of German society towards right-wing extremism. In the “most dramatic incident of the period,”¹⁸¹ which involved the southeastern German industrial town of Hoyerswerda, the far right saw “for the first time” that “violence could be used as an efficient means of asserting political goals:”¹⁸²

Eight skinheads assaulted several Vietnamese in the downtown area. After the police intervened, thirty-two more skinheads joined in. They proceeded to the nearby asylum hostel, where approximately seventy guest workers from Mozambique and Vietnam were staying, and began throwing Molotov cocktails. As the conflict continued into the next day, the skinheads were encouraged by the applause of local residents. In the following days, the skinheads continued their attacks.... Under the pressure of the ongoing violence, the asylum-seekers were evacuated in buses.¹⁸³

The instrumental value of violence against foreigners demonstrated by the Hoyerswerda incident emboldened the far right. It reinforced their belief that they had the power and ability to dislodge foreigners from their communities. In addition, despite most Germans opposing the direct action taken against immigrants, violent German right-wing extremist groups were encouraged by what could have been considered tacit approval and support for their actions—a lackluster police action against the perpetrators, applause from local residents, and the failure of German politicians to condemn the violence.¹⁸⁴ Consequently, the experience of Hoyerswerda was repeated in other cities during the rest of the year, including Zittau, Halle, and Cottbus.¹⁸⁵

Subsequent changes to Germany’s asylum policy to address the immigration issue dramatically decreased in the flow of asylum seekers into Germany, which in turn placated those who had been taking aggressive action against foreigners. The formation of special police units to protect immigrants, special commissions to synchronize

¹⁸¹ Kagedan, “Contemporary Right-Wing Extremism in Germany,” 113.

¹⁸² Kühnel, “Hitler’s Grandchildren,” 154.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Chapin, *Germany for Germans*, 106–107; Kagedan, “Contemporary Right-Wing Extremism in Germany,” 114.

¹⁸⁵ Kagedan, “Contemporary Right-Wing Extremism in Germany,” 114.

government efforts against anti-foreigner violence, and the strengthening of criminal law to deter neo-Nazi activity also reduced the structural conduciveness that fostered right-wing extremist violence. Moreover, mainstream political parties took measures to publicly tie the right-wing *Republikaner* political party to the anti-foreigner violence and to identify it as extremist. As *Republikaner*'s national socialistic tendencies and antidemocratic nature were emphasized and as the established political parties began taking a firmer stance on immigration and immigration-related issues, public support for the right-wing political parties and violence against foreigners dropped.¹⁸⁶

Right-wing extremism flourished in Germany after the precipitating events of German reunification, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the advancement of globalization. These events created social, economic, and political strain on the German populace who eventually identified asylum seekers and immigrant workers as the cause of their domestic troubles. In addition, the lack of political and cultural forums to address the immigration issue and effectively reduce the strain felt by the populace also facilitated the decision of right-wing activists to mobilize and resort to violent attacks against foreigners in order to achieve social change. Their initial success, brought about by lukewarm police action and coupled by the failure of politicians to condemn the violence, reinforced their perception that desirable social change could be attained through their actions. The eventual implementation of stronger social controls reduced the anti-foreigner violence and diminished public support for right-wing activists.

D. SUMMARY

When the determinants of collective behavior—structural conduciveness, structural strain, growth and spread of a right-wing extremist ideology, precipitating factors, mobilization of participants for action, and the operation (or failure) of social controls to minimize or counter the other determinants—produce an appropriate set of conditions and dynamics, right-wing extremism emerges and flourishes. As shown in the case studies, societal permissiveness towards right-wing extremism may take different forms. In Germany and Italy, the lack of political and social forums to address legitimate

¹⁸⁶ Chapin, *Germany for Germans*, 113–119.

grievances drove a significant minority of their society to seek social change through violent means. The refusal of German politicians to acknowledge and address their immigration problem prompted right-wing extremists to violently eject foreigners from their communities. The blocked Italian political system forced left- and right-wing groups to initiate social change through political violence. In the United States, a perverse interpretation of religious and civil norms provided theological and legal justification for right-wing violence against abortion clinics and their personnel. And in all three countries, the complicity of politicians and reluctance of law enforcement agencies to prosecute the perpetrators of right-wing violence provided a relatively risk-free environment that permitted right-wing extremists to execute their operations. When these countries employed the appropriate social controls in the form of specialized police units, legislative measures to criminalize right-wing violence, and public outreach campaigns and public condemnation by significant community leaders, the structural conduciveness in their societies was reduced and the spread of far right violence was inhibited.

Right-wing extremism also emerges in society as a response to social, economic, and political developments that leaves the society vulnerable to the appeal of extremist rhetoric. Societal strain, produced by either internal or external circumstances, may take the form of frustrations resulting from non-responsive, inefficient, or repressive government policies. Economic hardships and social disorganization can also produce societal strain. In the cases of Italy and Germany, political dissatisfaction and the absence of redress of social and economic grievances or frustration motivated right-wing extremism. In the United States, the passage of legislation that conflicted with the norms of a significant minority provoked a right-wing extremist response.

Before structural conduciveness and strain foment into right-wing extremism, a generalized belief or ideology must make it meaningful to the potential actors. This ideology identifies the source of the strain and identifies appropriate and possible responses to the strain. In the case studies, this ideology or generalized belief manifested itself in the form racist ideologies, in religious or cultural norms, and in the formation of the demonized “other.” In Italy, the far right demonized the failing democratic

government and the Italian left in order to mobilize its members and pursue its own social and political agenda. In the United States, clinic personnel and their supporters were targeted for their role in abortions by activists who equated abortion to murder. And in reunified Germany, foreigners were perceived as the cause of social ills experienced by the far right. In each study, violence against the other was perceived to be an effective and rational instrument to reduce the strain.

Each case of right-wing extremism was triggered by a precipitating event or by a set of conditions that pushes a significant minority into action. In the cases of Germany and of Italy, the precipitating event occurred outside society's control. In the American context, the trigger took the form of the 1973 Supreme Court decision. Once society found itself beyond the "tipping point," the right-wing extremism emerged with the mobilization of right-wing adherents. In Germany and in Italy, this was achieved by the mobilization of the countries' historic fascist groups. In the United States, religious institutions provided the backbone of non-violent support, but their condemnation of abortion using apocalyptic terminology prevented them from controlling the action of a violent sub-movement.

The chosen case studies support the assertion that the theory of collective behavior is valuable to understanding how right-wing extremism emerges and flourishes in a particular society. They also provide insight as to how the determinants of collective behavior can be manifested in society. These insights will be useful in Chapter IV when the thesis explores the contemporary United States and tests the hypothesis that the current social, economic, and political environment is likely to lead to a violent confrontation between right-wing extremist groups and government authorities.

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III. RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM IN THE UNITED STATES

The attacks against landmarks of American economic and military strength on September 11, 2001, brought terrorism to the forefront of the American psyche. For many Americans, the terrorist attacks seemed unprecedented; but in reality, terrorism is nothing new to the country. There have been over 3,000 terrorist incidents and more than 700 terrorism-related fatalities within the United States and Puerto Rico since 1954.¹⁸⁷ However, the 9/11 attacks were unprecedented in terms of the number of civilian deaths and the amount of destruction produced. Moreover, these terrorist attacks triggered “the most comprehensive reorganization ever taken by the federal government,”¹⁸⁸ resulting in the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the alteration of the socio-economic and political environment within which the country combats terrorism.¹⁸⁹

This chapter takes a look at the far right in contemporary United States. As the previous case studies noted, right-wing extremist groups resorted to violence against certain groups of people when legitimate forms of redress failed to produce the change they desired. Right-wing extremists, through the lenses of their ideologies, identified the source of their social woes and established violence as an effective and rational instrument capable of redressing their grievances. This chapter examines the various right-wing extremist groups in contemporary United States and explores the various ideologies that drive them. These ideologies will be used in the subsequent chapter, in conjunction with the framework provided by the theory of collective behavior and the insights gleaned from the cases studied in Chapter II, to test the hypothesis that the current conditions and dynamics present in the United States may lead to a violent confrontation between right-wing extremist groups and government authorities.

¹⁸⁷ Hewitt, *Understanding Terrorism*, 12.

¹⁸⁸ Jane A. Bullock, et al., *Introduction to Homeland Security*, 2nd ed. Butterworth-Heinemann Homeland Security Series (Burlington, MA: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, 2006), *xiii*.

¹⁸⁹ Hewitt, *Understanding Terrorism*, 1–11.

A. THE AMERICAN FAR RIGHT

In his book *White Rage: The Extreme Right and American Politics*, conflict analyst Martin Durham asserts that there is “no one moment that the modern extreme right came into existence.”¹⁹⁰ Nevertheless, the history of violent right-wing extremist movements in the United States is long and well-documented. In the 1800s, it was a struggle against Catholics during the Irish immigration. Chinese-Americans were first excluded in 1882 and then were massacred in Rock Springs, Wyoming, in 1885. After the Civil War, right-wing extremism manifested itself as a predominantly anti-black movement in the South, championed by the Ku Klux Klan. Then during World War I, it reemerged in the form of anti-Semitism, reaching a high point as did hostility against German-Americans.¹⁹¹ Racial supremacy and separatism were popular in the 1960s and 1970s. However, after the American far right reduced its emphasis on the tenets of biological determinism to attract a wider base of support,¹⁹² domestic right-wing extremism became primarily driven by anti-government and anti-abortion ideologies.¹⁹³ More recently, centralized and big government has been the focus of the far right, although racism still influences the far right.¹⁹⁴

The study of American right-wing extremism is complicated, because the phenomenon is not monolithic. Right-wing extremist organizations do not necessarily subscribe to only one ideology and a right-wing extremist does not necessarily belong to only one group.¹⁹⁵ Some turn to the Bible, some to the Constitution, and others to *Mein Kampf*. Some extremists “see a tyrannical and corrupt government and a bureaucracy run

¹⁹⁰ Durham, *White Rage*, 4.

¹⁹¹ Henry L. Feingold, “Finding a Conceptual Framework for the Study of American Antisemitism,” *Jewish Social Studies* 47, no. 3/4 (1985): 316, <http://web.ebscohost.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed September 17, 2009).

¹⁹² Diamond, *Roads to Dominion*, 307.

¹⁹³ Hewitt, *Understanding Terrorism*, 17–18.

¹⁹⁴ Walter Laqueur, *The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 107; Michael Barkum, *Religion and the Racist Right: The Origins of the Christian Identity Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 75–101, 173–196.

¹⁹⁵ Jeffrey Kaplan, “Right-Wing Violence in North America,” in Bjørge, *Terror from the Extreme Right*, 46; Stanislav Vysotsky, “Understanding the Racist Right in the Twenty First Century: A Typology of Modern White Supremacist Organizations,” *Conference Papers – American Sociological Association* 1 (2004): 2.

wild as their enemy,” others target homosexuals or racial and ethnic minorities.¹⁹⁶ Furthermore, a right-wing extremist organization may consist of factions that may or may not profess the same ideology. To illustrate this point, investigative journalist Chip Berlet and historian Matthew Lyons note that although some militia groups are openly racist and anti-Semitic, others are simply extremist patriots.¹⁹⁷ In his study of American right-wing violence, history professor Jeffrey Kaplan cites a 1990 narrative that illustrates the factions within the racist skinhead movement:

The skins [skinheads] are really split up right now. There are COTC [Church of the Creator] skins... And there are Odinist skins and there are Atheist skins. And then comes the two factions I don't agree with. I don't consider these two as anything but confused. Identity skins, they are contradictive idiots that don't deserve to wear our clothing or haircuts... And then the biggest enemy under the code of skins: SHARP (Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice).¹⁹⁸

Despite the divisive and competitive factions within extreme right-wing organizations, literature continues to treat these organizations as cohesive units and examine the far right along organization lines. Kaplan, for example, categorizes the extreme right into Ku Klux Klan groups, Christian Identity believers, Neo-Nazi groups, Reconstructed Traditions (i.e., Odinism and Ásatrú), Idiosyncratic sectarians (i.e., COTC and assorted Survivalists), and the “catch-all” Single Issue Constituencies.¹⁹⁹ History professor Stephen Scheinberg looks at the Militia, the Liberty Lobby, Christian Extremists, Jewish Extremists, and Black Extremists, as well as the Klan and the Skinheads.²⁰⁰ Law enforcement veteran Timothy Baysinger treats the American far right as a constellation of the Christian Identity Movement, Militas, Sovereign Citizens, Ku

¹⁹⁶ Laqueur, *The New Terrorism*, 113.

¹⁹⁷ Chip Berlet and Matthew N. Lyons, “Militia Nation,” *The Progressive* 59, no. 6 (June 1995): 24, <http://proquest.umi.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed September 18, 2009); Manuel Castells, Shujiro Yazawa, and Emma Kiselyova, “Insurgents Against the Global Order: A Comparative Analysis of the Zapatistas in Mexico, the American Militia, and Japan’s AUM Shinrikyo,” *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 40 (1996): 37.

¹⁹⁸ Kaplan, “Right-Wing Violence,” 73.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 46.

²⁰⁰ Stephen Scheinberg, “Right-Wing Extremism in the United States,” in Braun and Scheinberg, *Extreme Right*, 58–79.

Klux Klan, Neo-Nazis, and Skinheads.²⁰¹ Undeniably, there are academic benefits to study individual right-wing organizations. Depending on the particular issue being considered, for example, these groups do maintain predictable positions on what they believe government agencies and elected officials ought to accomplish.²⁰² However, these typologies ignore the shared beliefs and the shared members of these organizations. They also fail to consider that, as society evolves, these organizations struggle for influence and attempt to attract a broader base of support by reshaping their ideologies to explain their success and failures, by harmonizing its ideological base with the new conditions, and by mobilizing its current members.²⁰³

Although the American far right involves numerous organizations, a multitude of committed activists, and many more supporters, they are unified by a set of attributes and themes, albeit to varying degrees. Since overt racism became stigmatized by popular culture, according to sociologist Sara Diamond, the preoccupations of the “modern” American far right have been with protecting “free market” or “libertarian” capitalism; promoting anticommunism and U.S. military hegemony over the rest of the world; and preserving traditional morality and supreme status for native-born white male Americans and for the nuclear family.²⁰⁴

B. RIGHT-WING EXTERMIST IDEOLOGIES

Every violent extremist movement or group requires an ideology or belief system “to nourish, motivate, justify, and mobilize [its] use of terror violence.”²⁰⁵ As perceptions of the social, economic, and political milieu are filtered and shaped by this ideology, what terrorists believe affects their decision to employ violence as a means to achieve their social and political goals.²⁰⁶ According to sociologist Neil Smelser, an

²⁰¹ Timothy G. Baysinger, “Right-Wing Group Characteristics and Ideology,” *Homeland Security Affairs* II, no. 2 (2006), <https://www.hsdl.org> (accessed April 19, 2009).

²⁰² Diamond, *Roads to Dominion*, 6.

²⁰³ Smelser, *Faces of Terrorism*, 59.

²⁰⁴ Diamond, *Roads to Dominion*, 6–7.

²⁰⁵ Wilkinson, “Support Mechanisms,” 95.

²⁰⁶ Martha Crenshaw, “The Subjective Reality of the Terrorist: Ideological and Psychological Factors in Terrorism,” in Slater and Stohl, *Current Perspectives on International Terrorism*, 12.

ideology performs a variety of functions. First, it identifies and explains what is wrong or what is being threatened. Second, an ideology identifies an entity (individual or group) as being responsible for the dangers to and suffering of a given group. It also portrays this entity as having distinctive characteristics (e.g., of a different race or ethnicity), motives, and hostile intentions. Third, an ideology offers a vision of a better society and better life. Fourth, it portrays the enemy as both omnipotent and weak. It characterizes its adherents as weak victims of the powerful enemy, but acknowledges their potential “to destroy even the most powerful enemies.” And fifth, an ideology harmonizes seemingly contradictory events within a consistent framework. It justifies decisions to employ violence “through the glorification of the moral, political, or religious cause” and through the vilification of the enemy. It also reconciles events and situations that appear contradictory to its worldview.²⁰⁷

A right-wing ideology is necessary, but not sufficient, to produce and nurture right-wing extremism. A large part of a community may be exposed to right-wing ideology, but only a few individuals act upon it. Ideology is just one of the determinants of collective behavior. It provides meaning to the social conflicts (aka structural strain) experienced by society and—if permitted by inadequate or absent social controls—facilitates and justifies action, both violent and non-violent. Functional ideologies within right-wing extremist movements also provide an insight as to what mechanism government and law enforcement agencies can be employed to preempt any violent outburst. Thus, it is essential to analyze the content and structure of the belief-system of right-wing extremist organizations.²⁰⁸ The following discussion will focus on three major schools of thought found in a variety of American right-wing extremist organizations: racism; distrust in the government; and Christian fundamentalism and its secular cousin, American exceptionalism. To be fair, it must be noted that these ideologies do not necessarily advocate violence and may be shared by non-violent groups and individuals who, because of their rejection of violence as a means to social change, cannot be classified as associated with the American far right.

²⁰⁷ Smelser, *Faces of Terrorism*, 63–80.

²⁰⁸ Crenshaw, “Ideological and Psychological Factors,” 14–20.

The first right-wing ideology to be discussed is racism. Racism is a belief that race is the “primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race.”²⁰⁹ There are two categories of right-wing extremist movements that are predominantly based on a racial ideology: racial supremacism and racial separatism. Racial supremacist movements revolve around the notion that one’s race is inherently superior to other racial and ethnic minorities.²¹⁰ They argue that the enemy, who is external to one’s own racial group, must be subjugated socially, economically, and politically. Accordingly, supremacist adherents seek social change through a struggle for supremacy of one nation or race over others and their efforts, both violent and non-violent, are justified as a means to achieve and safeguard racial dominance. They see power as the ultimate goal and as achievable by seizing “control of the state.”²¹¹ Organized white supremacist groups in the United States evolved from their historic base of various predecessor Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazi organizations.²¹² Over time, they devolved into a wide range of competing forms and ideologies. Historical and contemporary white supremacist groups include National Alliance, White Aryan Resistance, National Socialist Movement, White Revolution, Volksfront, and National Vanguard.²¹³ Other supremacist groups include the New Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, Nation of Yahweh, and the Israelite Church of God in Jesus Christ.

²⁰⁹ Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary, “Racism,” <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/racism> (accessed September 17, 2009).

²¹⁰ Chip Berlet and Stanislav Vysotsky, “Overview of U.S. White Supremacist Groups,” *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 34, no. 1 (2006): 14, <http://web.ebscohost.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed May 27, 2009).

²¹¹ Vysotsky, “Understanding the Racist Right,” 14.

²¹² For a comprehensive discussion of the historical development of the white supremacist movement, refer to David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The First Century of the Ku Klux Klan, 1865-1965* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1965); William H. Schmalz, *Hate: George Lincoln Rockwell and the American Nazi Party* (Washington DC: Brassey’s, 1999); Allen W. Trelease, *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).

²¹³ Berlet and Vysotsky, “White Supremacist Groups,” 11, 22.

In contrast to racial supremacists, racial separatist movements reject the notion of racial superiority. Instead, they advocate the territorial separation of their race from others to “save” and develop their own distinct cultural identity.²¹⁴ Separation—not segregation, which is seen as a temporary solution—is accomplished by “carving out a separate state.”²¹⁵ Separatists do not consider themselves as part of the broader population, but as a separate entity. Additionally, they believe that their values are the only ones of real significance and criticize others who do not support them. They foster in-group love and demonstrate hatred toward the out-group. Furthermore, separatists emphasize the significance of their racial purity, condemn interracial marriage, and display symbols of pride and of a “glorious past.”²¹⁶

The first recorded proposals for relocating black Americans to “separate lands” either within the United States or in a separate country were made by white Americans in the 18th and 19th centuries. Both Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln advocated territorial separation and proposed that black Americans “leave the country and settle elsewhere.”²¹⁷ In a speech on December 1, 1963, Malcom X echoed the same proposal and suggested that if it was infeasible, then “America must set aside some separate territory here in the Western Hemisphere, where the two races can live apart from each other.”²¹⁸ The Nation of Islam and the Black Panthers are examples of black separatist organizations.

Supremacy and separatism are related in the sense that they are both race-centric and share historic origins.²¹⁹ The distinction between the two movements blur when members of separatist groups possess supremacist beliefs. For example, the Ku Klux

²¹⁴ Berlet and Vysotsky, “White Supremacist Groups,” 51.

²¹⁵ Dobratz and Shanks-Meile, “Strategy of White Separatism,” 56.

²¹⁶ Tamotsu Shibutani, Kain M. Kwan, and Robert H. Billigmeier, *Ethnic Stratification: A Comparative Approach* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 518.

²¹⁷ Theodore Draper, *The Rediscovery of Black Nationalism* (New York: Viking Press, 1970), 4–7.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 90.

²¹⁹ William E. Barker, *Aryan America: Race, Revolution, and the Hitler Legacy* (St. Maries, ID: Falcon Ridge, 1993), vii-xii; Howard L. Bushart, John R. Craig, and Myra Barnes, *Soldiers of God: White Supremacists and Their Holy War for America* (New York: Kensington, 1998), 3; Betty A. Dobratz and Stephanie L. Shanks-Meile, *The White Separatist Movement in the United States: “White Power, White Pride!”* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 34.

Klan has historically supported separatist proposals, albeit for supremacist reasons.²²⁰ However, in the United States, white separatist groups tend to expand their influence not by appealing to racial distinctions, but through “argument and rational discourse aimed at [white Americans] who have become embittered or aggrieved over what they perceive to be a host of racial double standards.”²²¹ Moreover, although white separatists reject violence and intimidation tactics of supremacists,²²² the xenophobic tendencies of white separatists can manifest as “defensive hate crimes.”²²³ In their view, when their community, their employment status, or their cultural identity is threatened by outsiders, they are thusly justified and obligated to remove the ethnic minorities from their perceived domain.²²⁴ Sociologists Betty Dobratz and Stephanie Shanks-Meile cite the following factors that have contributed to white separatist activity: (1) increase of nonwhite immigrants, (2) decline in high wage jobs for unskilled labor, (3) white resentment over affirmative action policies, (4) continuing high black-on-white violent crime rates, (5) growing acceptance of multiculturalism, (6) rising expectations of minorities, and (7) the growth of the use of the Internet.²²⁵

The racist ideology of the far right has not been able to get much traction in mainstream America, at least not overtly. The racist attitudes held by segments of the domestic far right clash with the multi-culturalistic worldview held by the majority of Americans.²²⁶ While the racist right feels the need to engage in identity-based opposition, the “strong [social] codes against the direct expression of racist views”²²⁷ acts

²²⁰ Joe R. Feagin, “White Separatists and Black Separatists: A Comparative Analysis,” *Social Problems* 19, no. 2 (Autumn 1971): 169, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/799482> (accessed August 4, 2009).

²²¹ Carol M. Swain, *The New White Nationalism in America: Its Challenges to Integration* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 3–4; see also Dobratz and Shanks-Meile, *White Separatist Movement*, 4–17.

²²² Swain, *The New White Nationalism*, 3–4.

²²³ Jack Levin and Jack McDevitt, *Hate Crimes Revisited: America’s War Against Those Who Are Different* (Boulder, CO: WestView, 2002), 77.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 77–89.

²²⁵ Dobratz and Shanks-Meile, “Strategy of White Separatism,” 57.

²²⁶ Pete Simi and Robert Futrell, “Negotiating White Power Activist Stigma,” *Social Problems* 56, no. 1 (2009): 89, <http://web.ebscohost.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed September 17, 2009).

²²⁷ Michael Billig, “Humour and Hatred: The Racist Jokes of the Ku Klux Klan,” *Discourse and Society* 12, no. 3 (2001): 270.

as a restraint against their actions, threatening them with “constant ire and indignation”²²⁸ from the public if they openly reveal their beliefs. Even those who subconsciously hold stereotyped images of minority groups tend to distance themselves from individuals who are openly racist and who they view as either uneducated or psychologically disturbed.²²⁹ Nonetheless, while the stigma associated with racism has limited the public’s acceptance of it as a normal and legitimate ideology, a hate crime has been committed every hour of every day over a span of a decade.²³⁰ In response to the social constraints against overt racism, far right adherents to white supremacist or white separatist beliefs mask their actions with a form of American exceptionalism wherein “American” becomes synonymous with “white.”²³¹

The second ideology that drives right-wing extremists is a distrust in centralized authority, as embodied by a strong federal government. Underlying this mistrust of the federal government is an extreme libertarian ideology. In their view, the government is only tolerated as the “direct expression of the citizens’ will.”²³² The government should not intervene in or regulate the economic transactions of individuals, should not attempt to distribute wealth among social classes, and should simply allow “whatever distribution pattern” emerges through natural market forces. Right-wing groups can be either oppositional or system-supportive, depending on the policy issue and its relationship with the group’s ideology. For example, libertarians are generally opposed to any protectionism policies, but have supported state intervention when it benefited the upper class.²³³ In addition, the American Right has always been opposed to anti-discrimination measures to protect the civil rights of ethnic minorities and homosexuals, but has been a reliable supporters of the state in the realm of foreign and military policy.²³⁴

²²⁸ Simi and Futrell, “Negotiating White Power Activist Stigma,” 90.

²²⁹ Joe Feagin and Hernan Vera, *White Racism: The Basics* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 161.

²³⁰ CNN, “Obama Signs Hate Crimes Bill Into Law,” October 28, 2009, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/10/28/hate.crimes/index.html> (accessed October 30, 2009).

²³¹ Simi and Futrell, “Negotiating White Power Activist Stigma,” 92.

²³² Castells, Yazawa, and Kiselyova, “Insurgents,” 36.

²³³ Diamond, *Roads to Dominion*, 8.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 10–11.

Right-wing extremists insist that the federal government seeks to deprive its citizens of their fundamental rights. Gun control legislation, for example, is perceived to threaten the right to own and possess firearms as protected by the Second Amendment and is considered to be the federal government’s attempt to “disarm the American people.”²³⁵ In their early years, right-wing militia groups were preoccupied with the danger of an “imminent” communist invasion and the certainty of a communist takeover from within the United States.²³⁶ Today, they are fueled by a conspiracy theory that claims “a master plan exists to undermine U.S. sovereignty, confiscate the people’s firearms, and impose a United Nations-directed dictatorship on the world.”²³⁷ Accordingly, most militias are created as “citizen defense organizations” under the auspices of the Second Amendment with the mission to “protect their communities against federal law enforcement agents, the United States military [and] foreign soldiers who will invade the United States.”²³⁸

Certain groups within the far right do not recognize any federal or state authority and claim they “are not subject to any laws to which they have not specifically consented.”²³⁹ These groups (e.g., sovereign citizen groups and constitutional fundamentalists) claim believe the Fourteenth Amendment, which provided a broad definition of citizenship, created “an entirely new class of citizens”²⁴⁰ that people could voluntarily join. As the members of these groups did not consent to the federal or state government, they resist—sometimes violently—nearly every form of governmental authority. Sovereign citizens, for example, are often charged with driving without a license or registration, filing bogus liens, harassing their opponents using “rulings” by

²³⁵ John George and Laird M. Wilcox, *American Extremists: Militias, Supremacists, Klansmen, Communists and Others* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1996), 250

²³⁶ Laqueur, *The New Terrorism*, 112.

²³⁷ O’Brien and Haider-Markel, “Fueling the Fire,” 457.

²³⁸ Eugenia K. Guilmartin, “Rejection of Political Institutions by Right-Wing Extremists in the United States,” in Forest, *The Making of a Terrorist*, 3:95.

²³⁹ USLaw.com, “Sovereign Citizen,” USLaw.com, http://www.uslaw.com/us_law_dictionary/s/Sovereign+Citizen.

²⁴⁰ Harvey W. Kushner, *Encyclopedia of Terrorism* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003), 291.

fabricated judicial bodies, and resisting any authority above the level of county sheriff.²⁴¹ Although this use of non-violence is their preferred method of resisting the government, sovereign citizens also use intimidation tactics and occasionally resort to violence against federal officials.²⁴² For instance, Terry Nichols—a member of the sovereign citizen movement—became notorious as Timothy McVeigh’s co-conspirator in the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City.²⁴³

Right-wing extremist groups also perceive the Liberal Left as a threat to their version of the traditional American way of life. Thus, they oppose taxation that they perceive to be used to implement a liberal agenda.²⁴⁴ They have opposed state initiatives to distribute civil rights and liberties among “traditionally subordinate groups,”²⁴⁵ including affirmative action legislation, anti-discrimination bills, and women’s rights.²⁴⁶ Sex education in the public schools and “social workers who think they know better than parents” are also opposed. One far right organization named “Angry White Males” appears to have emerged in response to perceived relative economic deprivation, the reaffirmation of traditional values and privileges, and cultural backlash.²⁴⁷ Right-wing groups that adhere to the anti-government ideology include the *Posse Comitatus*, Militia of Montana and other militia organizations, The Covenant, The Sword, and the Arm of the Lord and other survivalist groups, and the various Common Law courts.

In addition to racism and a distrust of strong government, the third major strand of ideology found in right-wing extremism is an intolerant affirmation of the superiority of Christian (American) values to the extent that it is a form of fundamentalism. Its strict

²⁴¹ Kushner, *Encyclopedia of Terrorism*, 291.

²⁴² Robert Chamberlain and Donald P. Haider-Markel, “Lien On Me: State Policy Innovation in Response to Paper Terrorism,” *Political Research Quarterly* 58, no. 3 (September 2005): 449, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/3595614.pdf> (accessed September 17, 2009).

²⁴³ Robert L. Snow, *Terrorists Among Us: The Militia Threat* (Reading, Mass: Perseus, 2002), 188.

²⁴⁴ Joshua D. Freilich, Jeremy A. Pienik, and Gregory J. Howard, “Toward Comparative Studies of the U.S. Militia Movement,” *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 42, no. 1 (2001): 171, <http://web.ebscohost.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed May 20, 2009).

²⁴⁵ Diamond, *Roads to Dominion*, 9.

²⁴⁶ Berlet and Lyons, “Militia Nation,” 24; Castells, Yazawa, and Kiselyova, “Insurgents,” 37.

²⁴⁷ Castells, Yazawa, and Kiselyova, “Insurgents,” 37.

and narrow fundamentalist interpretations of morality places the Christian Right²⁴⁸ squarely in this category of right-wing ideology and differentiates it from other Christian religions and organizations that adhere to a more pluralistic approach to morality.²⁴⁹ The more moderate, non-violent Christian Right is generally concerned with “morality policies”²⁵⁰ aimed at regulating the “moral conduct of all Americans.”²⁵¹ Their efforts include a push for mandatory prayer in public schools and the censoring of libraries and the media for anti-Christian or anti-family values.²⁵² Other major issues involve being against abortion, divorce, and homosexual rights. Auxiliary issues concern gambling and home schooling.²⁵³ The moderate Christian Right prescribes the enforcement of Christian values and rituals by social institutions, viewing the federal government as the “enforcer of a religious moral code.”²⁵⁴ In contrast, violent anti-abortion activists are a notorious expression of the Christian Far Right. These elements of the far right step outside the bounds of legitimate and acceptable behavior with their use of violence to achieve social change that reflect their absolutist perspective of morality.

Known for their perceived moral superiority, the Christian fundamentalists are offended that they are perceived as “depraved minority underclass lifestyles” that produce “social evils” such as births to unwed mothers, street crime, and other “deviant” acts.²⁵⁵ Accordingly, government policies and programs directed at protecting,

²⁴⁸ The Christian Right is a loose connection of people and organizations that share a socially conservative religious, moral, and social agenda that adheres to “Christian” values. Scott L. Feld, Katherine Brown Rosier, and Amy Manning, “Christian Right as Civil Right: Covenant Marriage and a Kinder, Gentler, Moral Conservatism,” *Review of Religious Research* 44, no. 2 (2002): 175, <http://web.ebscohost.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed October 16, 2009).

²⁴⁹ Feld, Rosier, and Manning, “Christian Right as Civil Right,” 174.

²⁵⁰ Kenneth J. Meier, *The Politics of Sin: Drugs, Alcohol, and Public Policy*. Bureaucracies, Public Administration, and Public Policy (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1994), 3–19.

²⁵¹ Mark J. Rozell and Clyde Wilcox, “Conclusion: The Christian Right in Campaign ’96,” in *God at the Grass Roots: The Christian Right in the 1994 Elections*. Religious Forces in the Modern Political World, ed. Mark J. Rozell and Clyde Wilcox (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1995), 267.

²⁵² Castells, Yazawa, and Kiselyova, “Insurgents,” 37; Diamond, *Roads to Dominion*, 165-172.

²⁵³ Feld, Rosier, and Manning, “Christian Right as Civil Right,” 175.

²⁵⁴ Diamond, *Roads to Dominion*, 9.

²⁵⁵ David Jacobs and Daniel Tope, “Race, Crime, and Republican Strength: Minority Politics in the Post-Civil Rights Era,” *Social Science Research* 37 (2008): 1121, <http://web.ebscohost.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed September 28, 2009).

extending, and enforcing rival “non-Christian” values have to be opposed.²⁵⁶ Christian fundamentalists opposed the Equal Rights Amendment, claiming it would make same-sex marriage legal and would make it impossible for the Supreme Court to reverse its 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision.²⁵⁷ Likewise, the Christian fundamentalists opposed the feminist movement, portraying it as “a socialist, anti-family political movement encouraging women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism, and become lesbians.”²⁵⁸ And when it comes to social welfare programs, Christian fundamentalists are “strongly suspicious of the true need of welfare recipients” and oppose any social program designed to help the “undeserving” poor.²⁵⁹ Christian fundamentalists view social misfortunes as the result of non-adherence to Christian values and will thus advocate evangelicalization over welfare programs.²⁶⁰ In a shocking display of Christian fundamentalism that illustrates this point, television evangelists Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson suggested that liberal civil liberties groups, feminists, homosexuals, and abortion rights supporters were partially responsible for the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The actions of these groups, according to the two evangelists, “have turned God’s anger against America.”²⁶¹ For Christian fundamentalists, bad things happen to people when they abandon Christian values.

Christian fundamentalism can also be found in the relatively more secular notion of American exceptionalism. American exceptionalism is the belief that “America’s canonical commitments to liberty, equality, individualism, populism, and laissez-faire exempt it from the historical forces that have led to the corruption of other societies.” Its

²⁵⁶ John C. Green, “The Christian Right and the 1996 Elections,” in Rozell and Wilcox, *God at the Grass Roots*, 2.

²⁵⁷ Diamond, *Roads to Dominion*, 170.

²⁵⁸ Kimberley Blaker, *The Fundamentals of Extremism: The Christian Right in America* (New Boston, MI: New Boston Books, 2003), 82.

²⁵⁹ John R. Belcher, Donald Fandetti, and Danny Cole, “Is Christian Religious Conservatism Compatible with the Liberal Social Welfare State?” *Social Work* 49, no. 2 (2004): 270, <http://web.ebscohost.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed October 16, 2009); Martin Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 60–79.

²⁶⁰ Belcher, Fandetti, and Cole, “Christian Religious Conservatism,” 273.

²⁶¹ John F. Harris, “God Gave U.S. ‘What We Deserve,’ Falwell Says,” *Washington Post*, September 14, 2001, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A28620-2001Sep14> (accessed October 17, 2009).

roots are attributed to Alexis de Tocqueville, who claimed the United States stood apart from other countries because of its unique historical evolution, national credo, and distinctive political and religious institutions.²⁶² Adherents to this notion hold a supernaturalist perception that God selected the United States for the rest of the world “to admire and emulate”²⁶³ and that the country was intended by God to play a unique and superior role in the world.²⁶⁴ During the Cold War, the role of the United States came in its task to protect the world from the evils of communism. Communism, with its class struggle equivalent to the gospel’s “good news to the poor,” was perceived as a God-less religion²⁶⁵ and thus, a threat to the Christian faith. Thus, it was an intolerant belief of the superiority of Christian values, supported by a Manichean view that pitted righteousness Christian Americans against communist atheists, that drove the Christian Right’s support for anticommunism.²⁶⁶

On the extreme right, the form of nationalism displayed by hardcore American exceptionalists tends to mimic religious devotion with an intolerance of and contempt for dissent towards the extreme right’s concept of America. This “superpatriotism,” a term coined by progressive political analyst Michael Parenti, demands that the country has not only the right, but also the “duty to do whatever it deems necessary”²⁶⁷ to protect itself and its interests. Anything less would be un-American. During the Cold War, this ideology manifested in those who believed in the superiority of democracy and the right to free speech while dutifully denying communists, atheists, and doubters of the American foreign policy the podium.²⁶⁸ More recently, President Barack Obama has

²⁶² Harold Hongju Koh, “America’s Jekyll and Hyde Exceptionalism,” in *American Exceptionalism and Human Rights*, ed. Michael Ignatieff (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 112.

²⁶³ Rick Tilman, “Thorstein Veblen’s Views on American ‘Exceptionalism’: An Interpretation,” *Journal of Economic Issues* 39, no. 1 (2005): 177, <http://web.escohost.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed October 12, 2009).

²⁶⁴ Michael Parenti, *Superpatriotism* (San Francisco: City Lights Book, 2004), 65.

²⁶⁵ Joel Kovel, *Red Hunting in the Promised Land: Anticommunism and the Making of America* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 158–159.

²⁶⁶ Diamond, *Roads to Dominion*, 9. See also Kovel, *Red Hunting*, xi–xii, 1–13.

²⁶⁷ Parenti, *Superpatriotism*, 73.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 66.

been criticized by the far right for displaying “a sense of humility”²⁶⁹ when he offered his opinion regarding American leadership in world politics.²⁷⁰

C. SUMMARY

According to the theory of collective behavior, right-wing extremism cannot emerge and flourish in a society unless there is a generalized belief or ideology that identifies the source of existing social conflict, attributes certain characteristics to this source, and specifies certain responses to alleviate the social conflict. In short, collective right-wing extremist action is not possible unless it is relevant and meaningful to potential actors. This chapter explored the ideologies that motivate the American far right and justify its use of violence in pursuit of its social and political agenda. It looked at the far right’s xenophobic tendencies, distrust it has towards the government, and the motivation it derives from Christian fundamentalism and American exceptionalism. The following chapter uses these ideologies together with the other determinants of collective behavior to test the hypothesis that the conditions and dynamics present in contemporary United States may likely lead to a violent confrontation between right-wing extremist groups and government authorities.

²⁶⁹ Roger Cohen, “Obama’s American Idea,” *New York Times*, December 10, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/10/opinion/10cohen.html> (accessed November 4, 2009).

²⁷⁰ Michael Scherer, “Obama Too Is An American Exceptionalist,” *Time*, April 4, 2009, <http://swampland.blogs.time.com/2009/04/04/obama-too-is-an-american-exceptionalist/> (accessed November 4, 2009).

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IV. DOMESTIC RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM IN THE HEALTH CARE DEBATE

In April 2009, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) warned against the possibility of right-wing extremist violence and suggested that the worsening domestic economic environment and the election of the first African-American president could lead to violent confrontations between right-wing extremists and law enforcement agencies.²⁷¹ This chapter examines the relationship between the conditions and dynamics in today's socio-economic and political climate and their influence on right-wing extremism. It sets the stage by providing a short history of health care reform efforts in the United States. The debate on health care reform may be the precipitating event or part of a sequence of precipitating events from which right-wing extremism emerges. The chapter then progresses by using the determinants of collective behavior to examine the conditions and dynamics present in today's American society. More specifically, under the context of the current health care reform efforts of the Obama administration, this chapter examines the structural conduciveness of the current social, economic, and political environment; the various social conflicts currently pressuring American society; and the effectiveness of the American far right to employ its right-wing ideologies to broaden its public support, extend its political influence, and pursue its social, economic, and political agenda. In short, this chapter discusses the social structures that are *supportive* of right-wing extremism. Two determinants of collective behavior are not examined in this chapter. The mobilization infrastructure of the domestic far right and the operation of existing social controls in the United States are currently not supportive of a surge in domestic right-wing extremism and will be addressed in Chapter V.

²⁷¹ See footnote 7.

A. HEALTH CARE REFORM AS A PRECIPITATING EVENT

In 1945, President Harry Truman made the first sustained effort to pass a national health insurance plan in order to protect 15 million uninsured Americans.²⁷² His 10-year plan proposed compulsory coverage, increased hospital construction, and doubled the number of doctors and nurses nationwide. However, after the American Medical Association and other critics capitalized on the public fear of Communism and warned of the dangers of “socialized medicine,”²⁷³ the initiative was defeated in Congress. Focus returned to health care reform in the 1960s; and on July 30, 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson created the Medicare and Medicaid programs, providing comprehensive health care coverage for the elderly, the poor, and the physically-challenged.²⁷⁴ Inefficiencies and misplaced incentives soon caused health care costs to increase faster than the general cost of living and politicians have since struggled to compromise on proposals that would control costs and keep the number of uninsured Americans in check. In 1994, President William Clinton failed to pass a comprehensive national health care reform package that guaranteed universal health insurance, despite it being a priority of his administration.²⁷⁵ And although in 2003, President George W. Bush successfully expanded Medicare to give prescription drug coverage to the elderly,²⁷⁶ this expansion rapidly accelerated Medicare spending to its fastest growth rate since 1981. By 2006, health care costs exceeded \$2.2 trillion, or 16.2 percent of the economy.²⁷⁷ According to the Government

²⁷² Marc Yacht, “Health Care Reform Has Been Opposed for Decades,” *TampaBay.Com*, August 2, 2009, <http://www.tampabay.com/opinion/columns/article1023887.ece> (accessed October 2, 2009).

²⁷³ Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, “This Day in Truman History: November 19, 1945; President Truman’s Proposed Health Plan,” National Archives and Records Administration, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/anniversaries/healthprogram.htm> (accessed October 23, 2009).

²⁷⁴ *New York Times*, “A History of Health Care Reform,” July 19, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2009/07/19/us/politics/20090717_HEALTH_TIMELINE.html (accessed October 1, 2009).

²⁷⁵ Henry S. Webber, “The Failure of Health-Care Reform: An Essay Review,” *Social Service Review* 69, no. 2 (June 1995): 310, <http://web.ebscohost.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed October 1, 2009).

²⁷⁶ David E. Rosenbau, “Bush Signs Law To Cover Drugs For the Elderly,” *New York Times*, December 9, 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/12/09/us/bush-signs-law-to-cover-drugs-for-the-elderly.html> (accessed October 1, 2009).

²⁷⁷ Robert Pear, “Health Spending Exceeded Record \$2 Trillion in 2006,” *New York Times*, January 8, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/08/us/08health.html> (accessed October 1, 2009).

Accountability Office, by 2010, the growth in health care spending will render “public [health care] program obligations... unsustainable for future generations of Americans.”²⁷⁸

Currently, health care reform dominates President Obama’s domestic agenda.²⁷⁹ The current administration seeks to cover approximately 40 million Americans who are currently uninsured by reducing the cost of health care and making the health care system more efficient.²⁸⁰ Most Americans support many of the essential elements of legislation being considered, although almost five in ten Americans currently oppose the health care reform proposal currently in Congress.²⁸¹

B. STRUCTURAL CONDUCTIVENESS TOWARDS RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM

There are a number of necessary conditions that need to be present for any kind of collective behavior to emerge. One determinant refers to the permissiveness of a particular environment towards a particular type of collective behavior. Structural conduciveness can be thought of in terms of societal values and norms, social organization or structures (e.g., families, churches, government agencies, associations, political parties), and opportunities for and limitations to action as presented by the environment. As political commentator Thomas Powers notes, “the United States offers an alternative to the hardships of life underground in political war against the system: polls, press agents and political-action committees get results where bombs only get attention.”²⁸² Legitimate instruments for expressing dissent and effecting change exist

²⁷⁸ Government Accountability Office, *Comptroller General’s Forum: Health Care; Unsustainable Trends Necessitate Comprehensive and Fundamental Reforms to Control Spending and Improve Value* (Washington DC: Government Accountability Office, May 2004), 3–4, <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d04793sp.pdf> (accessed October 9, 2009).

²⁷⁹ John Whitesides, “U.S. Healthcare Debate: It’s Only the Beginning,” *Reuters*, October 1, 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/newsOne/idUSTRE59071G20091001> (accessed October 1, 2009).

²⁸⁰ H.R. 3200, 111th Cong. (2009), <http://www.opencongress.org/bill/111-h3200/text> (accessed October 8, 2009).

²⁸¹ Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, “Mixed Views of Economic Policies and Health Care Reform Persist,” October 8, 2009, <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1372/public-conflicted-on-health-reform-and-economy> (accessed October 8, 2009).

²⁸² Thomas Powers, “American Violence Does Not Contribute to Domestic Terrorism,” in *Urban Terrorism*, ed. A. E. Sadler and Paul A. Winters (San Diego, CA: Greenhaven, 1996), 35.

and are available to Americans. However, if these legitimate instruments succumb to pressures, they may eventually fail—as their German equivalents did after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1990—leaving the American society vulnerable to the appeal of right-wing ideologies.

This section focuses on three embodiments of societal permissiveness towards right-wing extremism: (1) the American two-party political system and its relation with the socio-economic fragmentation in American society; (2) the radicalizing nature of conservative media and the failure of the American political elite to denounce extremist rhetoric; and (3) the pressures being exerted to suppress, intentionally or unintentionally, political and social forums that are traditionally employed to discuss and address legitimate grievances.

Although the American bipartisan political system has been flexible enough to accommodate the demands of a multicultural society, it can also be polarizing. From a social aspect, the Republican Party has traditionally been seen as the “white people’s party.”²⁸³ Although the party’s demographic composition²⁸⁴ may partially explain this perception, the moniker can also be explained by the Republican Party’s notorious political strategy of exploiting racial conflict. Initially, this strategy was employed to attract Southern whites to the party after the Democratic Party embraced the Civil Rights movement.²⁸⁵ However, journalists and political analysts still observe Republicans conducting political campaigns that focused on racially-dividing issues (e.g., street crime, poverty, welfare benefits) to exploit public anxieties regarding “the menace of underclass minority populations”²⁸⁶ to broaden their support base. In 1968, Richard Nixon stressed

²⁸³ Michael Omi, “Shifting the Blame: Racial Ideology and Politics in the Post-Civil Era,” *Critical Sociology* 18, no. 3 (1991): 79, <http://web.ebscohost.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed October 16, 2009).

²⁸⁴ 63 percent of Republicans are non-Hispanic, white conservatives. Frank Newport, “Republican Base Heavily White, Conservative, Religious,” *Gallup*, June 1, 2009, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/118937/Republican-Base-Heavily-White-Conservative-Religious.aspx> (accessed October 2, 2009).

²⁸⁵ Mike Allen, “RNC Chief to Say It Was ‘Wrong’ to Exploit Racial Conflict for Votes,” *Washington Post*, July 14, 2005, <http://www.washingtonpost.com> (accessed October 2, 2009); Diamond, *Roads to Dominion*, 65; Thomas B. Edsall, “For the Modern GOP, It’s a Return to the ‘White Voter Strategy,’” *Huffington Post*, August 3, 2009, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/08/03/for-the-modern-gop-its-a_n_250560.html (accessed October 2, 2009).

²⁸⁶ Jacobs and Tope, “Race, Crime, and Republican Strength,” 1119.

race and its connection with crime to gain electoral votes.²⁸⁷ Former president Ronald Reagan allegedly polarized the American public with race-driven issues, using ostensibly race-neutral political language to avoid the stigma of racism.²⁸⁸ After losing control of the executive and legislative branches of government, the Republican Party may likely continue with this strategy and attempt to transform the “mass hostility against what the public sees as the predatory acts of the minority underclass”²⁸⁹ into political clout. This feature of the bipartisan political system may fuel racial tensions in the health care reform debate as Republicans and Democrats line up on opposite sides of the issue.²⁹⁰

From an economic class perspective, most Americans agree that the Republican Party favors the rich and Democrats favor the middle and lower class.²⁹¹ Indeed, the Republican Party is viewed as a coalition of business and upper-income voters that favors lower taxes, less government spending, and minimal economic regulation. In comparison, the Democratic Party is viewed as the party of labor, favoring economic redistribution via higher taxes, social welfare spending, and government regulation.²⁹² This divide is particularly significant if one considers the possibility, or at least the perception, of class conflict in the health care debate. The two-party political system may

²⁸⁷ Jacob and Tope, “Race, Crime, and Republican Strength,” 1116. For a comprehensive treatment of the relationship between Republican political influence and race and crime, see Katherine Beckett, *Making Crime Pay: Law and Order in Contemporary American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 28-61; Thomas Edsall and Mary Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991), 137-153.

²⁸⁸ Edsall and Edsall, *Chain Reaction*, 139.

²⁸⁹ Jacob and Tope, “Race, Crime, and Republican Strength,” 1126.

²⁹⁰ According to a 2008 poll, Americans are indeed split on health care reform, with their support or objection to it falling generally along political party identification. According to this poll, 70% of Republicans were against health care reform and 70% of Democrats were supportive of it. Independents were more evenly split. Harris Interactive, “Poll Finds Americans Split by Political Party Over Whether Socialized Medicine Better or Worse Than Current System,” February 14, 2008, <http://www.harrisinteractive.com/NEWS/allnewsbydate.asp?NewsID=1278> (accessed October 2, 2009).

²⁹¹ Pew Research Center, *Inside the Middle Class: Bad Times Hit the Good Life* (Washington DC: Pew Research Center, April 9, 2009), 73, <http://pewsocialtrends.org/assets/pdf/MC-Middle-class-report.pdf> (accessed October 2, 2009).

²⁹² Stephen Ansolabehere, Jonathan Rodden, and James M. Snyder Jr., “Purple America,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 20, no. 2 (Spring, 2006): 98, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30033652> (accessed October 2, 2009).

thus render health care reform vulnerable to class issues, potentially turning it from an issue of “fundamentally moral importance”²⁹³ into a proxy conflict between capitalism and socialism.

Augmenting the structural conduciveness provided by the American bipartisan political system is the polarizing nature of conservative media and political personalities. Immediately after the Obama administration assumed power, influential conservative media celebrities and politicians targeted the Democratic-led government’s efforts to address various socio-economic challenges confronting the United States. Although those opposing the government should be given adequate avenues to air their grievances, instead of engaging in substantive policy analysis and critique, a number of these conservative personalities have fueled conspiracy theories and have employed rhetoric reminiscent of the far-right campaign of militia movement leaders in the early 1990s. Central to their opposition are the claims that “the evil liberal president literally intends to destroy our country”²⁹⁴ and that the far right has the duty to stop him.²⁹⁵

According to political journalist and author David Neiwert, the current far right rhetoric advocates what he calls “eliminationism,” defined as “a politics and a culture that shuns dialogue and the democratic exchange of ideas in favor of the pursuit of outright elimination of the opposing side, either through suppression, exile, ejection, or extermination.” It favors the dehumanization and vilification of opponents and suggests their excision at the expense of an honest and productive dialogue.²⁹⁶ In the current political climate, examples of this eliminationistic rhetoric include:

²⁹³ Norman Daniels, “The Articulation of Values and Principles Involved in Health Care Reform,” *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 19, no. 5 (1994): 426.

²⁹⁴ Rick Perlstein, “In Bill O’Reilly’s Sights: Run Afoul of the Conservative Commentator, and Feel the Wrath of His Avid Army,” *Newsweek*, July 21, 2009, <http://www.newsweek.com/id/207836> (accessed October 1, 2009).

²⁹⁵ Stanley B. Greenberg, James Carville, Karl Agne, and Jim Gerstein, “The Very Separate World of Conservative Republicans: Why Republican Leaders Will Have Trouble Speaking to the Rest of America,” *DemocracyCorps.Com*, October 16, 2009, 10–18, <http://www.democracycorps.com/wp-content/files/TheVerySeparateWorldofConservativeRepublicans101609.pdf> (accessed October 30, 2009).

²⁹⁶ David Neiwert, *The Eliminationists: How Hate Talk Radicalized the American Right* (Sausalito, CA: PoliPoint, 2009), 11.

- Four days before President Barack Obama’s inauguration, conservative talk show host Rush Limbaugh claimed he hoped what he considered the president’s socialist policies to fail.²⁹⁷
- In his April 2, 2009 article, Quin Hillyer of the *American Spectator* compared the Obama administration’s policies to that of fascist Italy, suggested President Obama was the American version of Italy’s fascist dictator Benito Mussolini, and thus justified—in an interesting leap of logic—opposing any government-sponsored program.²⁹⁸
- From early to mid-April 2009, the Fox News Channel heavily promoted²⁹⁹ anti-government “tea party” events at which speakers “joked” about a coup against “the communist Muslim Barack Obama.”³⁰⁰ On September 29, 2009, a blogger at conservative media outlet Newsmax suggested that a military coup is necessary to resolve the “Obama problem.”³⁰¹
- South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford refused a \$700 million stimulus for his state, declaring “you can’t wear the [Republican] jersey and play for the other team!”³⁰² His declaration connotes an opposition to any government action that is not initiated by his political party, regardless of the potential benefits to his constituency.
- Ahead of President Obama’s back-to-school speech to school children on September 8, 2009, Florida Republican Chairman Jim Greer accused the

²⁹⁷ Sean Hannity, “Rush Limbaugh’s Shocking Words for President Obama,” *Fox News*, January 22, 2009, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,481484,00.html> (accessed October 29, 2009); Rush Limbaugh, “Limbaugh: I Hope Obama Fails,” *RushLimbaugh.Com*, January 16, 2009, http://www.rushlimbaugh.com/home/daily/site_011609/content/01125113.guest.html (accessed October 29, 2009).

²⁹⁸ Quin Hillyer, “*Il Duce*, Redux?” *American Spectator*, April 2, 2009, <http://spectator.org/archives/2009/04/02/il-duce-redux> (accessed October 21, 2009).

²⁹⁹ From April 6 to April 15, Fox aired at least 107 commercial promotions for its coverage of tea party protests as “citizens are standing up, saying ‘no’ to more taxes and demanding real economic solutions.” Media Matters for America, “On the House: Fox Aired 107 Ads for Its Coverage of Tea Party Protests Over 10 Days,” <http://mediamatters.org/research/200904170011> (accessed October 3, 2009).

³⁰⁰ Rick Perlstein, “Beyond Palin: Why the GOP is Falling Out of Love with Gun-Toting, Churchgoing, Working-Class Whites,” *Newsweek*, July 10, 2009, <http://www.newsweek.com/id/206098> (accessed October 1, 2009).

³⁰¹ Newsmax Media has since removed the article from its site, although the full text is available at http://www.talkingpointsmemo.com/news/2009/09/full_text_of_newsmax_column_suggesting_military_co.php (accessed October 22, 2009). Newsmax Media, “Statement from Newsmax Regarding Blogger,” September 29, 2009, http://www.newsmax.com/john_perry/obama_military_coup/2009/09/29/266012.html (accessed October 22, 2009).

³⁰² Michael Grunwald, “Republicans in Distress: Is the Party Over?” *Time*, May 7, 2009, <http://www.time.com/time/politics/article/0,8599,1896588,00.html> (accessed October 30, 2009).

President of using taxpayer money to “indoctrinate” children and push the President’s “socialist ideology” on impressionable young minds.³⁰³

- On September 28, 2009, a presenter at the “How To Take Back America” conference, which was attended by former Arkansas Republican Governor Mike Huckabee and Minnesota Republican Congresswoman Michele Bachmann, drew parallels between President Obama and the rise of Adolph Hitler.³⁰⁴ In the same conference, Republican Congressman Trent Franks of Arizona stated that President Obama is an “enemy of humanity.”³⁰⁵

Amplifying the eliminationist tone of conservative spokespersons is the failure of other political elites to unequivocally denounce this type of rhetoric. When Republican elites have denounced inflammatory conservative spokespersons, they quickly found themselves backpedaling. When Republican Party Chairman Michael Steele called Rush Limbaugh’s rhetoric “incendiary” and “ugly,” he hastily professed his “enormous respect” for the talk show host.³⁰⁶ When Republican House representative Phil Gingrey of Georgia attempted to distance his party from the antics of conservative pundits Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, and Newt Gingrich,³⁰⁷ he quickly apologized to the “conservative giants” for what he referred to as his “stupid comments.”³⁰⁸ The absence of an outright rejection of this eliminationistic rhetoric may be interpreted as tacit approval to those who would operationalize it.

³⁰³ Alan Silverleib, “Many Conservatives Enraged Over Obama School Speech,” *CNN*, September 5, 2009, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/09/04/obama.schools/index.html> (accessed October 21, 2009).

³⁰⁴ Rachel Slajda, “Right-Winger Compares U.S. To Nazi Germany, Says ‘Buy More Guns,’” *Talking Points Memo*, September 28, 2009, <http://tpmlivewire.talkingpointsmemo.com/2009/09/right-winger-compares-us-to-nazi-germany-says-buy-more-guns.php> (accessed October 21, 2009).

³⁰⁵ According to Franks spokesman Bethany Haley, the congressman was referring to “unborn humanity” and should have been more clear. Brian Montopoli, “Rep. Trent Franks: Obama is ‘Enemy of Humanity,’” *CBS News*, September 29, 2009, <http://www.cbsnews.com/blogs/2009/09/29/politics/politicalhotsheet/entry5350756.shtml> (accessed October 21, 2009).

³⁰⁶ *CNN*, “GOP Chairman Steele Backs Off Limbaugh Criticism,” March 3, 2009, <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/03/02/gop.steele.limbaugh/> (accessed October 26, 2009).

³⁰⁷ Jonathan Martin, “House GOP Member to Rush: Back Off,” *Politico*, January 27, 2009, <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0109/18049.html> (accessed October 24, 2009).

³⁰⁸ Rush Limbaugh, “Congressman Phil Gingrey to Rush: ‘I Regret Those Stupid Comments,’” *RushLimbaugh.Com*, January 28, 2009, http://www.rushlimbaugh.com/home/daily/site_012809/content/01125107.guest.html (accessed October 24, 2009).

Both parties in the American political system and their supporters have traditionally demonized their political adversaries. Eliminationism arguably takes it a step further by creating cultural and psychological conditions that promote a permissive environment that enables subsequent right-wing political violence.³⁰⁹ By not denouncing eliminationist rhetoric under the guise of free speech, American media personalities and politicians send a message to their audience that such talk, its accompanying hateful worldview, and its eventual associated political violence are acceptable. As noted in the German case study in Chapter II, the media provides an ideal stage to discount the stigma of and taboo against extreme right-wing ideologies. If it is characterized by unbalanced reporting and sensationalism, the media can shape public perceptions by attributing some degree of legitimacy to extremist ideologies and their associated violence. Similarly, as concluded after the analysis of both the American and German case studies in Chapter II, the failure of political elites to denounce extremist rhetoric advocating violence, as well as extremist violence itself, provides a relatively risk-free environment for right-wing violent activists.

The combination of the polarizing nature of the American political system and of influential conservative personalities produces substantial pressure on legitimate practices of democracy. Public debate and civil discourse has been a cornerstone of the American political system, but in the summer of 2009, highly vocal pundits attempted to suppress legitimate forms of democratic practices by thwarting attempts by moderates to correct what Associated Press contributor Charles Babington calls “confusing claims and outright distortions”³¹⁰ and to engage in honest debate on health care reform. On one side of the political aisle, Republican political elites and supporters claimed Obama’s health care plan would create “death panels” that would ration care for “the sick, the elderly, and the disabled,”³¹¹ a claim adamantly denied by President Obama during his

³⁰⁹ Neiwert, *Eliminationists*, 14.

³¹⁰ Charles Babington, “Fact Check: Distortions Rife in Health Care Debate,” Associated Press, August 2, 2009, <http://www.ap.org> (accessed August 19, 2009).

³¹¹ Sarah Palin, “Concerning the ‘Death Panels,’” August 12, 2009, http://www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=116471698434 (accessed October 6, 2009).

speech to a joint session of Congress.³¹² On the other side, Democrats characterized the Republican health care plan as one that calls for sick people to “die quickly,” which falsely portrayed Republicans as having no alternative health care reform proposal.³¹³ The inability of the political elites to moderate an honest debate in Congress may cause the American public to question its ability to affect comprehensive and much-needed social change.

Outside of Congress, Americans have witnessed health care reform protestors who have disrupted and halted any meaningful discussion at public forums and town hall meetings. At a town hall meeting in Tampa, Florida, protestors resorted to “banging on doors and windows” until police and organizers were forced to end the event.³¹⁴ In Lebanon, Pennsylvania, Democrat senator Arlen Specter was repeatedly booed and heckled as many of the attendees expressed “broad if unspecified disdain” for the government and for President Obama.³¹⁵ Consequently, these forums have become “rude and disrespectful”³¹⁶ and have devolved into a shouting match where “vocal extremists” dominate the floor.³¹⁷ In the words of political blogger Jeffrey Feldman, in these public

³¹² White House, “Health Care: The President’s Plan,” http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/health_care/ (accessed October 8, 2009).

³¹³ CNN, “Democrat Stands Ground After ‘Die Quickly’ Health Care Remark,” September 30, 2009, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/09/30/house.floor.controversy/index.html> (accessed October 16, 2009).

³¹⁴ FOX News, “Health Care Town Halls Turn Violent in Tampa and St. Louis,” August 7, 2009, <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2009/08/07/health-care-town-hall-turns-violent-tampa/> (accessed October 3, 2009).

³¹⁵ Katharine Q. Seelye, “Eruptions at Sen. Specter’s Town-Hall Meeting,” *New York Times*, August 11, 2009, <http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/08/11/eruptions-at-sen-specters-town-hall-meeting/> (accessed October 6, 2009).

³¹⁶ In a poll conducted September 11-13, 2009, 53 percent of the respondents said the tone of the debate over health care has been generally rude and disrespectful while 31 percent said it has been generally polite and respectful. Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, “Health Care Debate Seen as ‘Rude and Disrespectful,’” September 16, 2009, <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1343/health-care-debate-seen-as-rude-disrespectful-high-interest> (accessed October 7, 2009).

³¹⁷ Liz Sidoti, “Analysis: ‘You Lie!’ Further Erodes Discourse,” Associated Press, September 11, 2009, <http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5iVzzBtWxsxZ2tUFGDxxGTlc-e9fwD9AKVRHOQ> (accessed October 7, 2009).

town halls, “a violent mob silenced the voices of every American” and “trampled underfoot...the most basic act of our democracy: civic conversation with an eye towards problem solving.”³¹⁸

Verbal and physical altercations are not the only tactics employed to disrupt public discussions concerning health care reform. Protestors have also used intimidation tactics, threatening the First Amendment right by the Second Amendment, as political journalist David Sirota alleges.³¹⁹ On August 8, 2009, a concealed gun fell out of its owner’s holster at a “Congress on Your Corner” event in Sierra Vista, Arizona, presumably to threaten Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords with violence for her stance on health care reform.³²⁰ In Portsmouth, New Hampshire, William Kostric took advantage of state law permitting the open carry of firearms and stood outside a town hall meeting on health care held by President Obama with a loaded firearm strapped to his leg and a sign saying, “It is Time to Water the Tree of Liberty”—a reference to Thomas Jefferson’s quote that “the tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants”³²¹ and to domestic terrorist Timothy McVeigh who wore a t-shirt bearing the Jefferson quote on the day he bombed the Murrah Building in Oklahoma City.³²²

As the case studies in Chapter II illustrated, the lack of honest debate and intelligent discussion in appropriate forums and the eventual perception that social change is not possible through legitimate political means may precede a rise in right-wing

³¹⁸ CBS5.Com [San Francisco], “Health Care Town Hall Meetings Getting Ugly,” August 7, 2009, <http://cbs5.com/health/town.hall.meeting.2.1118947.html> (accessed October 3, 2009); Jeffrey Feldman, “Fists Pounding on Glass, Right-Wing Violence Stops Tampa Town Hall,” *FrameshopIsOpen.Com*, August 6, 2009, <http://frameshopisopen.com> (accessed September 30, 2009).

³¹⁹ David Sirota, “Freedom from Fear,” *OregonLive.Com*, August 21, 2009, http://www.oregonlive.com/opinion/index.ssf/2009/08/freedom_from_fear.html (accessed October 7, 2009).

³²⁰ *Arizona Daily Star*, “Political Notebook: Giffords’ Following of Conservative Activists Grows,” *AZStarNet.Com*, August 8, 2009, <http://www.azstarnet.com/sn/printDS/304149> (accessed October 6, 2009).

³²¹ Mark Thompson, “When Protesters Bear Arms Against Health-Care Reform,” *Time*, August 19, 2009, <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1917356,00.html> (accessed October 6, 2009).

³²² Josh Horwitz, “Thomas Jefferson and ‘The Blood of Tyrants,’” *Huffington Post*, September 1, 2009, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/josh-horwitz/thomas-jefferson-and-the_b_273800.html (accessed October 6, 2009).

violence. Unless the legitimate leadership of the political parties can regain control of the health care debate and reassure to the American public that “good government happens when opposing views can confront each other in the political process”³²³ and unless the political establishment successfully counters the far right’s strategy of intimidation and violence, the health care reform and the American public may remain hostage to the potentially-violent fringe.

C. STRUCTURAL STRAIN IN AMERICAN SOCIETY

Sociologists, terrorism experts, and criminologists almost universally agree that groups and individuals respond collectively to “something [that is] wrong in their social environment.”³²⁴ Although structural conduciveness in itself may positively influence right-wing extremism, structural strains that align with the conditions of conduciveness must also be present. Structural strain in contemporary American society primarily takes the form of a culture of distrust towards the government, a social conflict between immigrants and native-born Americans, and a class struggle between the rich and the poor.

Examining polls conducted in 1964–1965, the Pew Research Center concludes that the present broad opposition to health care reform can be significantly attributed to a broad distrust of government, a distrust that was not evident in the 1960s when the social-welfare program Medicare was being debated. In 1958, 65 percent of Americans reported “they trusted the [federal] government... to do the right thing just about always or most of the time.”³²⁵ Since then, subsequent polls have never seen such trust in the federal government by a majority of Americans.³²⁶ In May 2009, while most Americans believe that the government is run “for the benefit of all people” and that it is the

³²³ John Parisella, “Why Beck and Limbaugh are Bad for the Republicans,” *Macleans.ca*, September 21, 2009, <http://www2.macleans.ca/2009/09/21/why-beck-and-limbaugh-are-bad-for-the-republicans/> (accessed October 11, 2009).

³²⁴ Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior*, 47.

³²⁵ Andrew Kohut, “Would Americans Welcome Medicare If It Were Being Proposed in 2009?” Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, August 19, 2009, <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1317/would-americans-welcome-medicare-if-proposed-in-2009> (accessed October 10, 2009).

³²⁶ Kohut, “Would Americans Welcome Medicare?”

government's responsibility to "take care of people who cannot take care of themselves," many worried about excessive government involvement in health care.³²⁷

Structural strain is also manifested in the perceived "strong conflicts"³²⁸ between immigrants and people born in the United States. According to the statistics provided by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, there is a general upward trend in reported hate crimes against Hispanics and other ethnic groups since 1995.³²⁹ In 2007, the Federal Bureau of Investigation reported about 62 percent of ethnically-motivated hate crime offenses were committed against Hispanics (775 out of 1,256 ethnically-motivated offenses incidents), with over half (405 incidents) committed by whites and with 20 percent committed by blacks.³³⁰ CivilRights.Org, a coalition of civil rights organizations, argues that a recent marked increase in hate violence against Hispanics "correlates closely with the increasingly heated debate" over comprehensive immigration reform and an escalation in anti-immigrant rhetoric on radio, on television, and on the Internet. The group claims that xenophobic animosity towards immigrants, combined with the country's current economic downturn and the election of the country's first African-American president, is responsible for a surge in the activity of racist groups.³³¹

³²⁷ Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, "Views of Government and the Social Safety Net: Mixed Views on Government and Health Care," May 21, 2009, <http://people-press.org/report/?pageid=1517> (accessed October 10, 2009).

³²⁸ In a September 2009 survey, 55 percent of Americans agree that there are social conflicts between immigrants and native-born Americans, with 68 percent of Hispanics characterizing this social conflict as "very strong" or "strong." Rich Morin, "What Divides America?" Pew Research Center, September 24, 2009, <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1354/social-conflict-in-america> (accessed October 10, 2009).

³²⁹ Federal Bureau of Investigations, "Uniform Crime Reports: Hate Crime Statistics," <http://www.fbi.com/ucr/ucr.htm> (accessed October 27, 2009).

³³⁰ Federal Bureau of Investigations, "Known Offender's Race by Bias Motivation, 2007," October 2008, http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/hc2007/table_05.htm (accessed October 12, 2009). FBI statistics only include crimes that are reported to the police. The National Institute of Justice points out that victims of hate crime "may be reluctant to report for fear of insensitivity and abuse" and that only 44 percent of alleged hate crime incidents were reported to the police. Michael Shively and Carrie F. Mulford, "Hate Crime in America: The Debate Continues," *National Institute of Justice Journal* 257 (June 2007), <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/journals/257/hate-crime.html> (accessed October 12, 2009).

³³¹ CivilRights.Org, "Confronting the New Faces of Hate: Hate Crimes in America, 2009; Executive Summary," <http://www.civilrights.org/publications/hatecrimes/executive-summary.html> (accessed October 12, 2009).

The health care debate has refocused animosity towards immigrants through concerns that undocumented workers may be able to access health care benefits at taxpayers' expense.

Another source of strain is perceived in conflicts between blacks and whites. Thirty-nine percent of Americans believe there is a serious conflict between the two races, with 53 percent of blacks being more likely to see “very strong” or “strong” conflicts.³³² Unlike the upward trend in hate crimes against immigrants, hate crimes against blacks and against whites have been trending downward after a spike in 1996. However, in 2007, hate crimes against blacks accounted for more than a third of all hate crimes, with 91 percent of the cases where the race of the assailant was known were perpetrated by whites. Similarly, 65 percent of racially-based hate crimes against whites were committed by blacks.³³³

A fourth source of strain is the perceived class struggle between rich and poor people. Forty-seven percent of Americans perceive a “very strong/strong” conflict between the rich and the poor.³³⁴ This is in contrast to analysis conducted in 2005 that concluded that despite the reality of widening inequalities in income and wealth, many still believed in the American Dream—“though you may start poor, if you work hard, you can make pots of money”³³⁵—and blamed “poor foreigners,” not their rich fellow Americans, for their economic woes.³³⁶ The shift in perception is probably due to the current economic crisis, which is hitting poor America particularly hard with

³³² Rich Morin, “Black-White Conflict Isn’t Society’s Largest” Pew Research Center, September 24, 2009, <http://pewsocialtrends.org/pubs/744/social-divisions-black-white-conflict-not-society-largest> (accessed October 27, 2009).

³³³ Figures reflect only single-biased hate crimes wherein the race of the offender is known. To put these figures in perspective, 41 percent of all hate crimes against blacks and 31 percent of all hate crimes against whites were committed by “unknown race” or “unknown offender.” Federal Bureau of Investigations, “Known Offender’s Race by Bias Motivation, 2007.”

³³⁴ Morin, “What Divides America?”

³³⁵ *Economist*, “Inequality in America: The Rich, The Poor, and the Growing Gap Between Them,” Jun 17, 2009, <http://proquest.umi.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed October 12, 2009).

³³⁶ *Ibid.*

unemployment creeping towards ten percent in September 2009.³³⁷ The highest rates of unemployment were concentrated in working class occupations (e.g., production; transportation; construction and extraction; and farming, fishing, and forestry) at a rate of 15.5 percent. In contrast, management, professional, and related occupations only experienced an unemployment rate of 9.5 percent.³³⁸ Furthermore, the recent housing bubble pushed national homeownership rate down to levels last seen in 2000³³⁹ and the continuing decline in home prices may have wiped out any equity some Americans might have had in their homes.³⁴⁰ As the economic downturn threatens their economic status, Americans may tend to identify themselves with the “poor” and become more sensitive to efforts by the political elite to protect the interests of their wealthy constituents and lobby groups.

The social conflicts perceived in American society, combined with the societal conduciveness towards right-wing extremism, present opportunities that the far right can exploit by focusing their pursuit of their political agenda along these social faults. Correspondingly, the far right can build its support base by targeting the government, its “socialist” policies, and undocumented immigrants and other minority groups in the health care reform debate.

³³⁷ Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Economic Situation Summary,” October 2, 2009, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.nr0.htm> (accessed October 12, 2009). The “real unemployment rate,” which includes “marginally attached” and “discouraged workers,” stood at 17.0 percent in the same reporting period. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Table A-12. Alternative Measures of Labor Underutilization,” October 2, 2009, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t12.htm> (accessed October 12, 2009).

³³⁸ Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Table A-10. Employed and Unemployed Persons by Occupation, Not Seasonally Adjusted,” October 2, 2009, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t10.htm> (accessed October 12, 2009).

³³⁹ Robert R. Callis and Linda B. Cananaugh, “Census Bureau Reports on Residential Vacancies and Homeownership,” U.S. Census Bureau, <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/housing/hvs/qtr209/files/q209press.pdf> (accessed October 12, 2009).

³⁴⁰ 66 percent of Americans have seen home values falling in their local real estate markets, with 23 percent of those estimating declines of more than 30 percent over the past two years. *Reuters*, “As Home Values Decline, Credit Tightens, Americans Appear to Wait Out Crisis Before Seeking to Buy or Sell,” April 16, 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/pressRelease/idUS120579+16-Apr-2009+BW20090416> (accessed October 12, 2009).

D. RIGHT-WING IDEOLOGY IN THE HEALTH CARE DEBATE

Opposition against social welfare programs is not new in American politics. Granting social security benefits, legitimating labor unions, and legislating civil rights and other social programs have always elicited “great cries about looming socialism.”³⁴¹ The current health care reform debate is no different. However, collective right-wing extremist behavior can only emerge if an appropriate belief system motivates the far right to take action.³⁴² This ideology must identify persons or entities considered “responsible for the evils at hand”³⁴³ and provide concrete actions that excise them. The American far right’s ideological mistrust of government, its historical crusade against Communism, and its xenophobic and racist tendencies align with the previously-discussed conflicts present in the contemporary United States. These belief systems significantly influence the far right’s opposition against the Obama administration and their attacks against immigrants and the poor.³⁴⁴

On one front, the far right attempts to invoke the same fears that turned anticommunism into an American religion³⁴⁵ during the Cold War. During the 2008 presidential campaign, opponents of Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama attempted to portray him as dangerously anti-American. In 2008, Iowa Republican

³⁴¹ James A. Morone, “The Bias of American Politics: Rationing Health Care in a Weak State,” *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 140, no. 5 (May, 1992): 1925, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3312436> (accessed October 8, 2009).

³⁴² Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior*, 79.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 101.

³⁴⁴ Although the Christian Right and its anti-abortion supporters have mobilized against health care reform, they are not addressed in this thesis simply because the social conflict around the abortion issue is relatively muted. First, American views of health care reform are driven primarily by political ideology and partisanship, not by religious affiliation. Second, the nation as a whole is evenly split on the abortion issue and the majority in both the pro-Choice and pro-Life movements believe that the nation should find a middle ground. Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, “Religious Groups Weigh In on Health Care Reform,” October 8, 2009, <http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=449> (accessed October 10, 2009); Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, “Support for Abortion Slips: Overview,” October 1, 2009, <http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=441> (accessed October 10, 2009); Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, “Support for Abortion Slips: Most Want Middle Ground on Abortion,” October 1, 2009, <http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=444> (accessed October 10, 2009).

³⁴⁵ In a poll conducted in 1988, 70 percent of the respondents identified themselves as anticommunist, as opposed to 49 percent who considered themselves to be “religious.” Norman Ornstein, Andrew Kohut, and Larry McCarthy, *The People, the Press and Politics* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1988), 113 in Kovel, *Red Hunting in the Promised Land*, 4.

Representative Steve King concluded that President Obama was “even more extreme than a socialist” and would turn the United States into a totalitarian dictatorship.³⁴⁶ On multiple occasions during the 2008 presidential campaign, then-Republican vice presidential nominee Sarah Palin implied that Obama was a socialist.³⁴⁷ These attacks have continued after President Obama assumed office and while he advocates for comprehensive health care reform. In this regard, the basic elements of opposition to health care reform by the far right closely parallels those that drove its anticommunism campaign during the Cold War. At that time, the far right believed there was a conspiracy to undermine free capitalism, to bring the economy under the direction of the federal government, and to pave the way for socialism or communism. Moreover, it claimed that upper echelon of government was infiltrated by communists who were “selling out” American national interests.³⁴⁸ Indeed, the effort by conservatives to get parents to pull their children out of school on the day President Obama was scheduled to give a speech to schoolchildren³⁴⁹ was reminiscent of 1935 when drugstore magnate Charles R. Walgreen pulled his niece from the University of Chicago “to save her from Communist indoctrination.”³⁵⁰

Consistent with its past opposition to Communism, the far right views support for any policy deemed to be “socialist”—regardless of its social benefits—as “un-

³⁴⁶ Douglas Burns, “King: Electing Obama Could Lead to ‘Totalitarian Dictatorship,’” *Iowa Independent*, October 25, 2008, <http://iowaindependent.com/7522/king-electing-obama-could-lead-to-totalitarian-dictatorship> (accessed October 13, 2009).

³⁴⁷ ThinkProgress.Org, “Palin: ‘I’m Not Going to Call’ Obama ‘A Socialist,’ But He Believes in Socialism,” October 21, 2009, <http://thinkprogress.org/2008/10/21/palin-obama-socialist/> (accessed October 13, 2009).

³⁴⁸ Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), 25–26.

³⁴⁹ Silverleib, “Enraged Over Obama School Speech.”

³⁵⁰ Richard M. Fried, *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 101.

American.”³⁵¹ For the far right, it is one’s patriotic duty to oppose any policy advocated by the “Radical Leftist Obama.”³⁵² Although there are legitimate concerns held by health care reform opponents (e.g., those who have health care insurance are worried that universal coverage will adversely affect the quality of their own care³⁵³), the far right advocates opposition to health care reform because it is simply “socialist.”

Also consistent with anticommunist tendencies is a perception that health care reform is a form of class conflict. Because the current proposal entitles all Americans—regardless of their employment status and their ability to pay³⁵⁴—to a comprehensive package of benefits, it may invoke fears that the upper and middle classes would be required to substantially subsidize coverage for the lower class through additional taxes³⁵⁵ or through cost-passing.³⁵⁶ While this is a natural reaction and is not necessarily confined to right-wing extremists, it does appeal to the anti-socialist sectors of the far right. In addition, not only does opposition to universal health insurance appeal to those who oppose any form of government-directed wealth distribution, it also appeals to those who possess degrading views of those living in poverty. Unlike mainstream conservatives who believe those who are poor possess the capability of improving their

³⁵¹ House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer committed a political faux pas when they penned an opinion column that called health care reform opponents “un-American.” Although she was referring to the “ugly campaign” to disrupt public meetings and prevent members of Congress from “conducting a civil dialogue,” the far right used the opinion article to justify their opposition against an administration that itself was un-American for suppressing “patriotic dissent.” Nancy Pelosi and Steny Hoyer, “‘Un-American’ Attacks Can’t Derail Health Care Debates,” *USA Today*, August 10, 2009, <http://blogs.usatoday.com/oped/2009/08/unamerican-attacks-cant-derail-health-care-debate-.html> (accessed October 9, 2009).

³⁵² Looking at the Left, “Dissent Against Radical Leftist Obama is Patriotic,” November 2008, <http://www.lookingattheleft.com/2008/11/dissent-against-obama-is-patriotic/> (accessed October 9, 2009).

³⁵³ Kevin Sack and Majorie Connelly, “In Poll, Wide Support for Government-Run Health,” *New York Times*, June 20, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/21/health/policy/21poll.html> (accessed October 8, 2009); Ceci Connolly and Jon Cohen, “Most Want Health Reform But Fear Its Side Effects,” *Washington Post*, June 24, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/23/AR2009062303510.html> (accessed October 8, 2009).

³⁵⁴ White House, “The Obama Plan: Stability and Security for All Americans,” http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/health_care/plan/ (accessed October 8, 2009).

³⁵⁵ Ryan J. Donmoyer and Kristen Jensen, “House Plans to Tax Millionaires to Fund Health Care,” *Bloomberg*, July 15, 2009, http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601087&sid=aUVZeh_GVBYM (accessed October 8, 2009).

³⁵⁶ Associated Press, “Tax Health Care to Pay for Health Care?” *Fox News*, May 13, 2009, <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/elections/2009/05/13/tax-health-care-pay-health-care/> (accessed October 8, 2009).

status if given the necessary tools, segments of the far right associate poverty with race and racial inequality or with non-adherence to religious (i.e., Christian) norms and values. As such, poverty is a result of one's genetically-induced lack of work ethic³⁵⁷ or is a manifestation of God's punishment for a transgression.³⁵⁸

On another front, right-wing extremist opposition to health care reform has been motivated by a racist ideology that provokes animosity towards the African-American president. As former President Jimmy Carter points out, the antagonism displayed by opponents of and protestors against health care reform "[are] not casual outcomes of a sincere debate over [health care reform]... [It] is based on the fact that [President Obama] is a black man."³⁵⁹ The American right has consistently denied charges that it is injecting racism into the health care debate.³⁶⁰ Nevertheless, the portrayal of President Obama as a witch doctor³⁶¹ and as a dead primate,³⁶² the claim that health care reform is a tool to provide reparations to the African-American community,³⁶³ and incidents of

³⁵⁷ C. Emory Burton, *The Poverty Debate: Politics and the Poor in America* (New York: Greenwood, 1992), 24.

³⁵⁸ Ted M. Brimeyer, "Research Note: Religious Affiliation and Poverty Explanations: Individual, Structural, and Divine Causes," *Sociological Focus* 41, no. 3 (August 2008): 234, <http://web.ebscohost.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed October 27, 2009).

³⁵⁹ Garance Franke-Ruta, "Carter Cites 'Racism Inclination' in Animosity Toward Obama," *Washington Post*, September 16, 2009, http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2009/09/15/carter_cites_racism_inclination.html (accessed October 7, 2009).

³⁶⁰ In a focus group study conducted by Democracy Corps and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, groups of older, non-college, white conservative Republican base voters barely raised race as a central element for their opposition against President Obama. However, they did view the charges of racism as being used to prevent them "from fulfilling their duty to stand up to Obama and his agenda." Greenberg et al., "World of Conservative Republicans," 3-4.

³⁶¹ *CNN*, "Obama as Witch Doctor: Racist or Satirical?" September 18, 2009, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/09/17/obama.witchdoctor.teaparty/index.html> (accessed October 13, 2009).

³⁶² Oliver Burkeman, "New York Post in Racism Row Over Chimpanzee Cartoon," *guardian.co.uk*, February 18, 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/feb/18/new-york-post-cartoon-race> (accessed October 13, 2009).

³⁶³ Glenn Beck, "Is Massive Health Care Plan Reparations?" *Glenn Beck Program*, July 23, 2009, <http://www.glennbeck.com/content/articles/article/198/28317/> (accessed October 8, 2009); Media Matters for America, "Limbaugh Discussing Health Care Reform Bill," June 29, 2009, <http://mediamatters.org/research/200906290028> (accessed October 8, 2009).

race-tinged crimes³⁶⁴ suggests that the health care debate is being used to exploit latent racial sentiments to elicit the support of the racist right, defeat health care reform, and expand the far right's political influence at the expense of the American public.

Opposition against health care reform is also based on degrading perceptions regarding immigrants and the poor. Republican Representative Joe Wilson of South Carolina's shout of "You lie!" during President Obama's health care address to Congress³⁶⁵ drew focus to the undocumented immigrant issue in health care reform. Undocumented immigrants and their children account for 17 percent of the one-in-six Americans who are uninsured;³⁶⁶ and in the past, Medicare has been criticized for using taxpayer dollars to subsidize their emergency room treatments.³⁶⁷ While Americans are not concerned with immigrants who are here through legal immigration, they are understandably concerned that taxpayers will be forced to finance an even more comprehensive health care package for undocumented immigrants. Opposition to subsidizing health care for undocumented immigrants and their children is not necessarily racist. However, it does appeal to and mobilize the racist elements of right³⁶⁸ who view racial minorities as "illegitimate trespassers"³⁶⁹ who threaten to reduce the rights and privileges they currently enjoy.

³⁶⁴ CNN, "Congressman: Hate mail, Nazi Graffiti Follow Health Care Protests," August 18, 2009, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/08/12/congressman.swastika/> (accessed October 27, 2009); Jason Hanna, "Hate Groups Riled Up, Researchers Say," CNN, June 11, 2009, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/US/06/11/hate.groups/index.html#cnnSTCText> (accessed October 13, 2009); Paul Harris, "Far-Right Shootings Raise Fear of Hate Offensive in America," *guardian.co.uk*, June 14, 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jun/14/rightwing-extremists-racists-us> (accessed October 30, 2009).

³⁶⁵ CNN, "Rep. Wilson Shouts 'You Lie' to Obama During Speech," September 10, 2009, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/09/09/joe.wilson/index.html> (accessed October 10, 2009).

³⁶⁶ Jeffrey S. Passel and D'Vera Cohn, *A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States* (Washington DC: Pew Hispanic Center, April 14, 2009), 18–19, <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/107.pdf> (accessed September 21, 2009).

³⁶⁷ Alec MacGillis, "Shout Draws Focus to Illegal-Immigrant Issue," *Washington Post*, September 11, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/10/AR2009091004276.html> (accessed October 9, 2009). Under Section 10111, the federal government is required to reimburse emergency health services furnished to undocumented immigrants. Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act, 2003, Public Law 108-173, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 117 (2003), http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=108_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publ173.108.pdf (accessed October 9, 2009).

³⁶⁸ James Rosen, "Wilson's Shout Reopens South Carolina's Racial Wounds," *Miami Herald*, September 18, 2009, <http://www.miamiherald.com/692/story/1240808.html> (accessed October 10, 2009).

³⁶⁹ Jacobs and Tope, "Race, Crime, and Republican Strength," 1117–1118.

However, while there are legitimate concerns that fuel opposition to health care reform, right-wing ideologies offer a worldview that appeals and mobilizes the opposition of the far right. Though racists, anticommunists, anti-immigrants, and religious fundamentalists “tend to be on the fringes of the right”³⁷⁰ and do not comprise the majority of health care opponents, their history of violent activities to advance their social agenda is cause for concern.

E. SUMMARY

This chapter explores the possible relationship between today’s socio-economic and political climate and right-wing extremism, using the framework provided by the theory of collective behavior. Using the context of the current health care reform efforts as a possible precipitating event around which the domestic far right may mobilize, this chapter explores the social structures present in today’s socio-economic and political environment that exert a positive influence on right-wing extremism. In particular, this chapter examines the polarizing potential of the American political system, the prevalence of eliminationistic rhetoric by conservative spokespersons, and the pressures on legitimate forms of democracy. It identifies the various social conflicts present in American society and explores the efforts of domestic right-wing extremists to align these conflicts with right-wing ideologies. This partial application of the theory of collective behavior gives the impression that the current social, economic, and political environment in contemporary United States is conducive to violent domestic right-wing extremist activity.

Chapter V continues the application of the theory of collective behavior and examines the mobilization infrastructure of the domestic far right and the operation of existing social controls in the United States.

³⁷⁰ Howard Fineman, “Obama Speech Quiets Some Critics,” *Countdown with Keith Olbermann*, September 8, 2009, <http://video.newsweek.com/#?c=40211&l=1785302026&t=38061650001> (accessed October 7, 2009).

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V. ASSESSMENT OF DOMESTIC RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM IN CONTEMPORARY UNITED STATES

In its warning against a potential rise in right-wing extremist activities, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) pointed to similarities between current sociopolitical circumstances and those of the early 1990s and concluded that these similarities were likely to lead to violent confrontations between right-wing extremist groups and government authorities.³⁷¹ Chapter IV examined these factors in a partial application of the theory of collective behavior. Despite the similarities between the United States in the early 1990s and today's society, the domestic far right has avoided violent actions—notwithstanding verbal attacks and intimidation tactics—in expressing its discontent and in attempting to achieve change in pursuit of its social agenda. In light of the global recession and the current American financial crisis, Anti-Semites appear contented to simply blame former Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan and his successor, Ben Bernanke, both of whom are Jewish.³⁷² In addition, while they were quick to point out that Bernard Madoff, the “extraordinary evil”³⁷³ mastermind of a \$50 billion Ponzi scheme,³⁷⁴ was also Jewish,³⁷⁵ they appear unenthused to take further action. Furthermore, while instances of white persons being physically abused by

³⁷¹ See footnote 7.

³⁷² Brad A. Greenberg, “Blaming the Jews... Again,” *Jewish Journal*, April 8, 2009, http://www.jewishjournal.com/cover_story/article/blaming_the_jews_again_20090408/ (accessed October 2, 2009).

³⁷³ Grant McCool and Martha Graybow, “Madoff Gets 150 Years for Massive Investment Fraud,” *Reuters*, June 29, 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/ousiv/idUSTRE55P6O520090629> (accessed October 21, 2009).

³⁷⁴ Securities and Exchange Commission, “SEC Charges Bernard L. Madoff for Multi-Billion Dollar Ponzi Scheme,” December 11, 2008, <http://www.sec.gov/news/press/2008/2008-293.htm> (accessed October 2, 2009).

³⁷⁵ Laurence Leamer, “Bernard Madoff and the Jews of Palm Beach,” *Huffington Post*, December 12, 2008, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/laurence-leamer/bernard-madoff-and-the-sh_b_150624.html (accessed October 1, 2009).

minorities³⁷⁶ prompted conservative talk show host Rush Limbaugh to attempt to connect President Obama with the rise of hate crimes against white Americans,³⁷⁷ rage on the right appeared to quickly dissipate. In these instances, the responses of the far right to emerging events appeared to be less severe and less coordinated than what DHS predicted.

The domestic far right's avoidance of violent action highlights the Department of Homeland Security's failure to consider factors in American society that deter a surge in activity by the domestic far right. This chapter examines the remaining determinants of collective behavior—the mobilization infrastructure of the domestic far right and the operation of existing social controls in the United States—and the hypothesis that the social, economic, and political conditions and dynamics in contemporary United States may lead to a violent confrontation between domestic right-wing extremists and government agencies. It also considers the homeland security implications of this evaluation.

A. MOBILIZATION INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE DOMESTIC FAR RIGHT

Collective behavior theory assumes that there is a group of individuals who perceive themselves to be marginalized and who mobilize after concluding that potential benefits of participation in collective behavior outweigh anticipated costs.³⁷⁸ In the case of the domestic far right, the “attacks they suffer” are meaningless unless they are able to mobilize and defeat President Obama and his “hidden agenda.”³⁷⁹ The theory also posits that successful mobilization is dependent on the movement's ability to manage these

³⁷⁶ Edmund DeMarche, “Father Wants Son's Beating Treated as a Hate Crime,” *CNN*, September 7, 2009, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/CRIME/09/07/new.york.beating/index.html> (accessed October 21, 2009); Leah Thorsen, Nicholas J.C. Pistor, and Elizabeth Holland, “Dispute Over Seat Sparked Attack on School Bus, Student Says,” *STLToday.Com*, September 15, 2009, <http://www.stltoday.com/stltoday/news/stories.nsf/illinoisnews/story/60D37B6EC5FF4711862576320011605B?OpenDocument> (accessed October 21, 2009); Phil Trexler, “Akron Police Investigate Teen Mob Attack on Family,” *Ohio.Com*, July 7, 2009, <http://www.ohio.com/news/50172282.html> (accessed October 21, 2009).

³⁷⁷ Rush Limbaugh, “From Kids on Bus to Kanye West: Race Rules All in Obama's America,” *RushLimbaugh.Com*, September 15, 2009, http://www.rushlimbaugh.com/home/daily/site_091509/content/01125106.guest.html (accessed October 21, 2009).

³⁷⁸ Buechler, *Social Movements*, 35.

³⁷⁹ Greenberg et al., “World of Conservative Republicans,” 14.

groups and individuals. Hence, leadership, organization, and resources are taken into consideration. In the health care reform debate, the far right's failure to effectively mobilize may be due to the lack of a supportive infrastructure. Although Chapter IV notes that conservative media personalities and politicians have given voice to extremist views, there has been the absence of a unifying political actor—an individual or group—with enough influence to consolidate and direct the far right. Hence, the mobilization of the domestic far right is hampered by its lack of leadership.

The American right has been in a leadership vacuum³⁸⁰ since the Republican Party fell out of favor when views of President George W. Bush and the war in Iraq turned negative.³⁸¹ Since then, the political party has found itself in “warlord status,”³⁸² with various factions within the Republican Party turning to different leaders who are pulling the party in different directions. Consequently, the power struggle turns every faction against one another:

- After announcing his plans for a public relations offensive to attract younger voters, especially blacks and Hispanics, Republican National Committee Chairman Michael S. Steel was told by elected congressional Republicans to refrain from “attempting to establish party policy.”³⁸³
- In April 2009, House Republican whip Eric Cantor from Virginia, with the blessing of both the House and Senate Republican leadership,³⁸⁴ launched the National Council for a New America to “have a dialogue with the

³⁸⁰ In a March 2009 poll, 73 percent of Americans said they did not know who led the Republican Party or thought “nobody does.” Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, “The Republican Party’s Doldrums: A Leaderless Party?” March 16, 2009, <http://people-press.org/report/?pageid=1486> (accessed October 29, 2009).

³⁸¹ Jeffrey M. Jones, “GOP Losses Span Nearly All Demographics,” *Gallup*, May 18, 2009, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/118528/GOP-Losses-Span-Nearly-Demographic-Groups.aspx?CSTS=alert> (accessed October 29, 2009).

³⁸² Kristi Keck, “GOP Needs Power Player to End ‘Warlord Status,’ Expert Says,” *CNN*, October 9, 2009, <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/10/13/republican.brand/index.html> (accessed October 29, 2009).

³⁸³ Manu Raju and Jonathan Martin, “GOP Leaders to Michael Steele: Back Off,” *Politico*, October 5, 2009, <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1009/27898.html> (accessed October 29, 2009).

³⁸⁴ John King, “GOP Set to Launch Rebranding Effort,” *CNN*, April 29, 2009, <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2009/04/29/gop-set-to-launch-rebranding-effort/> (accessed October 29, 2009).

American people.”³⁸⁵ Social conservatives criticized this effort for not being “conservative enough,”³⁸⁶ as it did not address abortion, immigration, and same-sex marriage.³⁸⁷ On his talk show, Rush Limbaugh called the council a “scam” that pandered to Americans to get their votes.³⁸⁸

- Former secretary of state Colin Powell and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich blame the decline of the Republican Party on conservative extremists because they were alienating moderate conservatives as well as undecided and independent voters.³⁸⁹ In contrast, conservatives like former vice president Dick Cheney blame the moderates, declaring it would be a “mistake” for the Republican Party to be moderate.³⁹⁰ For these conservatives – who include former Republican vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin, Minnesota governor Tim Pawlenty, former House Majority Leader Dick Armey, and former Republican presidential candidate Steve Forbes – the only way for the party to return to power is to cater more to the biases of its conservative base.³⁹¹

These clashes have kept the far right from throwing its support behind the Republican Party and have weakened the party’s electoral support. In 2001, 32 percent of Americans identified themselves as Republican.³⁹² By October 2009, Republican identification fell to 20 percent, the lowest percentage since 1983.³⁹³ Despite 40 percent

³⁸⁵ *FOX News*, “Republican Leaders to Launch Outreach Initiative to Revive Party Image,” April 30, 2009, <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2009/04/30/republican-leaders-launch-outreach-initiative-revive-party-image/> (accessed October 29, 2009).

³⁸⁶ Keck, “GOP Needs Power Player.”

³⁸⁷ Andy Barr, “GOP Base Rips Cantor’s National Council for a New America,” *Politico*, May 7, 2009, <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0509/22242.html> (accessed October 29, 2009).

³⁸⁸ Rush Limbaugh, “The Left is Afraid of Us, Folks,” *RushLimbaugh.Com*, May 5, 2009, http://www.rushlimbaugh.com/home/daily/site_050509/content/01125106.guest.html (accessed October 29, 2009).

³⁸⁹ Jonathan Martin, “Colin Powell Fires Back at Rush Limbaugh, Dick Cheney,” *Politico*, May 24, 2009, <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0509/22902.html> (accessed October 30, 2009).

³⁹⁰ Ben Smith, “Cheney to GOP: ‘It Would Be a Mistake For Us to Moderate,’” *Politico*, May 7, 2009, http://www.politico.com/blogs/bensmith/0509/Cheney_to_GOP_It_would_be_a_mistake_for_us_to_moderate.html?showall (accessed October 29, 2009).

³⁹¹ Grunwald, “Republicans in Distress;” Janet Hook, “New York Race at Epicenter of a GOP Mutiny,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 27, 2009, <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-gop-identity-crisis27-2009oct27,0,3534419.story> (accessed October 29, 2009).

³⁹² Jones, “GOP Losses.”

³⁹³ While only 20 percent of adults identify themselves as Republicans, independents continue to make up the largest group at 42 percent of respondents. 33 percent consider themselves Democrats. Dan Balz and Jon Cohen, “Public Option Gains Support,” *Washington Post*, October 20, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/10/19/AR2009101902451.html> (accessed October 21, 2009).

of all Americans describing themselves as “conservatives,”³⁹⁴ polls revealed that 54 percent of American viewed the Republican Party negatively³⁹⁵ and only 19 percent expressed confidence in the Republicans in Congress “to make the right decisions for the country’s future.”³⁹⁶ In addition to mainstream Americans, the far right has expressed disappointment towards Republican Party as well, viewing it as “ineffective and rudderless” and led by “political professionals” who are disconnected with the conservative base and its values.³⁹⁷ Although they have no intention of changing their party affiliation, they have little confidence in the Republican Party’s current direction or leadership.³⁹⁸

The political leadership struggle within the Republican Party has implications for the mobilization of the domestic far right. As noted in the case studies, complicity of the part of the political elite with regards to political violence encourages extremists to pursue their social goals outside legitimate political processes. Conversely, public condemnation of extremist violence by political leaders restrains violent extremist activities. In the current health care reform debate, on one front, moderate Republican elites—among them former Senators Bob Dole³⁹⁹ and Bill Frist, California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, and New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg⁴⁰⁰—have been working with Democrats to pass major healthcare reform. They have also denounced

³⁹⁴ Lydia Saad, “Conservatives Maintain Edge as Top Ideological Group,” *Gallup*, October 26, 2009, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/123854/Conservatives-Maintain-Edge-Top-Ideological-Group.aspx> (accessed October 29, 2009).

³⁹⁵ Paul Steinhauser, “CNN Poll: GOP Favorable Rating Lowest in a Decade,” *CNN*, October 23, 2009, <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2009/10/23/cnn-poll-gop-favorable-rating-lowest-in-25-years/> (accessed October 29, 2009).

³⁹⁶ Balz and Cohen, “Public Option Gains Support.”

³⁹⁷ Greenberg et al., “World of Conservative Republicans,” 15.

³⁹⁸ Greenberg et al., “World of Conservative Republicans,” 15; Barr, “GOP Base Rips Cantor’s National Council.”

³⁹⁹ Katharine Q. Seelye, “Dole, Politics Aside, Pushes for Health Care Plan,” *New York Times*, September 11, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/12/health/policy/12dole.html> (accessed October 30, 2009); Tony Romm, “Dole Criticizes GOP on Healthcare,” *TheHill.Com*, October 8, 2009, <http://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/62247-dole-criticizes-mcconnell-on-healthcare> (accessed October 30, 2009).

⁴⁰⁰ Michael D. Shear and Ceci Connolly, “Reform Gets Conditional GOP Support,” *Washington Post*, October 7, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/10/06/AR2009100601602.html> (accessed October 30, 2009).

Republican obstructionists⁴⁰¹ as being “irresponsible”⁴⁰² for opposing healthcare reform for short-term political motives. On an opposing front, more conservative Republican elites have been catering to the biases of the more extreme conservative base and have called for an “orderly revolution”⁴⁰³ against the Obama administration. Mixed signals from Republican politicians may be causing it right-wing extremist supporters to hesitate.

B. OPERATION OF SOCIAL CONTROLS AGAINST RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM

Social controls seek to minimize the contributing factors to structural permissiveness and social conflict in order to decrease the possibility of collective action or to restrain the escalation of collective action after its outbreak. According to how the various agencies of social control (e.g., the police, the courts, the press, the community leaders, and even the people themselves) behave in the face of a potential outbreak of extremist violence, they can deter or advance its development. In the Chapter II German case study, it was noted that the flexibility of its political system to accommodate the wide range of political views, as well as the social taboo against an outward demonstration of discontent and hostility towards foreigners, successfully marginalized the German far right until Germany society became more permissive with regards to anti-foreigner violence. The United States after *Roe v Wade* was the reverse—the complicity of society towards violence against abortion clinic personnel and facilities, as well as the distortion of religious and civil norms to legitimize anti-abortion violence, encouraged the right-wing activities. It was only after the government implemented the appropriate

⁴⁰¹ In a September 2009 poll, 35 percent of Americans responded that Republicans were being obstructionist “for mostly political reasons.” *CNN*, “CNN/Opinion Research Poll—September 11–13, 2009—Health Care,” September 14, 2009, 6, <http://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2009/images/09/14/re114b2.pdf> (accessed October 30, 2009).

⁴⁰² Michael O’Brien, “Former Sen. Hagel: GOP Being ‘Irresponsible’ On Healthcare,” *TheHill.Com*, October 23, 2009, <http://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/64511-former-sen-hagel-gop-being-irresponsible-on-healthcare> (accessed October 29, 2009).

⁴⁰³ Chris Steller, “Bachmann: Revolt Against ‘Economic Marxism,’” *Minnesota Independent*, March 27, 2009, <http://minnesotaindependent.com/30299/bachmann-economic-marxism-revolution-hannity> (accessed October 16, 2009).

social controls that the activists were deterred. Therefore, although major social structures in the United States may create a social disposition permissive with respect to right-wing extremist violence, society itself can deter its emergence.

This section examines the operation of social controls within the context of the health care debate and how they decrease the possibility of an outbreak of collective right-wing violence. More specifically, it explores the operation of social controls in the American bipartisan political system, the health care town halls, and in the existing social conflicts in American society.

Chapter IV established that the American bipartisan political system has the potential to polarize the American society and be conducive to the emergence of right-wing extremism. Demographically and economically, the bipartisan political system may promote a binary worldview that prevents compromise for the greater good. If the two parties are allowed to grow further apart from each other on matters relating to race, cultural concerns, and economic equality—for example, with the Democratic Party becoming more liberal and the Republican Party becoming more conservative—the political environment may become less centrist and either the far left or the far right or both may feel the need to exert themselves.⁴⁰⁴ This is similar to the structural conduciveness manifested in Italy in the 1960s and in Germany in the 1980s when their governments lost their centrist appeal and weakened. In Italy, both the right and left responded by seeking to establish their political influence. In Germany, the right sought to assert itself.

In the current health care debate, influential conservative media personalities and politicians have been generating opposition to health care reform by exploiting latent hostilities between races, engendering xenophobic animosity against immigrants, and imposing absolutist interpretations of religious, as well as civic, norms and values. They also attempted to frame the debate as a struggle between democracy and socialism. Attempts of the moderate political elite to denounce eliminationistic rhetoric have met

⁴⁰⁴ Mark D. Brewer, “The Rise of Partisanship and the Expansion of Partisan Conflict within the American Electorate,” *Political Research Quarterly* 58, no. 2 (2005): 227–228, <http://web.ebscohost.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed October 2, 2009).

limited access, but have also avoided a blocked political system similar to that discussed in the Chapter II case study of Italy. While the Democratic-majority legislature advances the health care reform bill, influential conservatives are still pulling the Republican Party further to the right end of the political spectrum.

Nonetheless, some Republican elites have already begun to move away from the more conservative elements of their party. In an opinion editorial in the *New York Times*, moderate Republican Olympia Snowe singled out right-wing extremists as the reason for the decline of the Republican Party. Snowe pointed out that when the Republican Party began emphasizing social issues (e.g., abortion rights, undocumented immigration, welfare) that it encountered “an electoral backlash.”⁴⁰⁵ Echoing the words of President Ronald Reagan, Snowe emphasized that the conservative party must return to what fundamentally constitutes a Republican (e.g., restrained government spending, pro-growth policies, tax reductions, sound national defense, individual liberty) and tolerate disagreement on issues “that draw on the deep springs of morality and emotion.”⁴⁰⁶ When Republican Pennsylvania Senator Arlen Specter found himself “increasingly at odds with the Republican philosophy”⁴⁰⁷ due to the Republican Party’s shift further to the right of the political spectrum, he switched affiliation and joined the Democratic Party. More recently, Republican Senator Lindsey Graham and Republican insider David Frum publicly denounced the antics of conservative talk show hosts Rush Limbaugh and Glen Beck as counterproductive to the conservative movement and as exploiting a “market of cynicism.”⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁵ Olympia Snowe, “We Didn’t Have to Lose Arlen Specter,” *New York Times*, April 28, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/29/opinion/29snowe.html> (accessed October 29, 2009).

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ *CNN*, “Longtime GOP Sen. Arlen Specter Becomes Democrat,” April 28, 2009, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/04/28/specter.party.switch/index.html> (accessed October 30, 2009).

⁴⁰⁸ David Frum, “Why Rush is Wrong,” *Newsweek*, March 7, 2009, <http://www.newsweek.com/id/188279> (accessed October 11, 2009); Brian Montopoli, “Lindsey Graham Hits Glenn Beck and Bill O’Reilly,” *CBS News* October 1, 2009, <http://www.cbsnews.com/blogs/2009/10/01/politics/politicalhotsheet/entry5356087.shtml> (accessed October 11, 2009).

It is unclear if the more moderate Republicans can draw the rest of their party towards the political center. For now, while the struggle for the Republican Party leadership ensues and with moderate Republicans moving towards the center, the potential of the American bipartisan political system supporting the emergence of right-wing extremism has been minimized. If the Republican Party loses more political influence—especially after the congressional elections in 2010—the political right may have to jettison their more extreme rhetoric, risk alienating those demanding ideological purity,⁴⁰⁹ and move closer to the center to appeal to like-minded Democrats and independent voters.

The United States has also seen vocal extremists suppressing honest and intelligent exchange of ideas in various political and social forums. On the one hand, forums such as town hall meetings are designed to enable constituents to provide their congressional representative input regarding public policy issues. On the other hand, these forums allow members of Congress to gain support for their policy decisions. In the health care debate, these town halls, to a certain extent, were used by right-wing extremists to espouse their ideologies, to intimidate their opponents, and to create confusion as to the nature and intent of health care reform.

Though in-person health care town hall meetings were frequently hijacked by vocal extremists and though vocal conservative pundits and politicians have flooded the media with their eliminationistic attacks, moderate congressional representatives and elected officials have had other avenues to connect with their constituents and address their legitimate concerns. Internet town halls and social networking sites provided a critical link between elected officials and their constituents. A study sponsored by the National Science Foundation and Harvard's Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation concluded that Internet events hosted by elected officials, in general, avoided "posturing without content, collisions of opposing views, [and] strident domination of a single perspective." Moreover, they encouraged and produced

⁴⁰⁹ Naftali Bendavid, "Tea-Party Activists Complicate Republican Comeback," *Wall Street Journal*, October 16, 2009, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB125564976279388879.html> (accessed October 29, 2009).

“thoughtful, respectful, fact-filled” and high-quality deliberation.⁴¹⁰ Not only did President Obama turn to Internet events to engage Americans directly and advocate for health care reform, the White House Office of Health Reform and the Department of Health and Human Services hosted events to address health care concerns.⁴¹¹ Hence, political elites were still able to engage the American public and overcome efforts of extremists to suppress open and honest debate. In turn, the pressures exerted on the processes that ensure “good government happens when opposing views can confront each other in the political process”⁴¹² have been relieved and the need to resort to violence to achieve much-needed reform has been obviated.

Inarguably, social conflicts exert pressure on American society and provide social tinder that may be exploited by domestic extremists, especially if mainstream America begins to adopt right-wing extremist ideologies. But in the current health care debate, although right-wing extremist ideology unquestionably supports the opposition of the far right, mainstream Americans refuse to accept the lenses with which right-wing extremists perceive the world. While most right-wing extremists view health care reform as a victory for President Obama and his Democratic Party and thus must be opposed, most Americans welcome any reform of the health care system as a social benefit.⁴¹³ Additionally, the inability of far right conservatives and their supporting Republican politicians to have a moderate discussion “without engaging in a paranoia that [President]

⁴¹⁰ David Lazer, Michael Neblo, Kevin Esterling, and Kathy Goldschmidt, *Online Town Hall Meetings: Exploring Democracy in the 21st Century* (Washington DC: Congressional Management Foundation, 2009), 24, <http://nposoapbox.s3.amazonaws.com/cmfwweb/Online-Town-Hall-Meetings-Report.pdf> (accessed November 20, 2009).

⁴¹¹ Louis Jacobson, “Cabinet Secretaries, White House Officials Roll Out Internet Town Halls,” *PolitiFact.Com*, October 1, 2009, <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/promises/promise/236/require-cabinet-officials-to-host-internet-town-ha/> (accessed November 20, 2009).

⁴¹² See note 322.

⁴¹³ Greenberg et al., “World of Conservative Republicans,” 10. According to a July 24, 2009 survey, 85 percent of Americans disagree with the claim that the United States has the best health care in the world. Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, “Few See U.S. Health Care as ‘Best in the World,’” July 24, 2009, <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1293/health-care-public-gives-lukewarm-rating-to-american-system> (accessed October 8, 2009).

Obama is out to get them”⁴¹⁴ has made the political party intellectually unattractive to the average American. With the exception of the distrust of government, right-wing ideologies simply do not appeal to the general public. In Chapter III, three right-wing ideologies were identified as being potentially operative in the health care reform debate: xenophobic and racist beliefs; (2) a distrust of government; and Christian fundamentalism and American exceptionalism. In a survey conducted September 11–13, 2009, Gallup reveals that major opposition aligns with a concern against big government while fear of socialized medicine, anti-immigrant concerns, and abortion-rights opposition are relegated to the fringe.⁴¹⁵

Compared to apprehension produced by right-wing racist and anticommunism ideologies, Americans are more concerned that the healthcare legislation could adversely affect the cost and quality one’s current health insurance and that could hurt the current Medicare program.⁴¹⁶ Thus, attempts to capitalize on fears of communism and socialism have not moved mainstream America to the right. According to a September 2009 survey, most Americans agree that it is the government’s responsibility to provide health care benefits to those in need,⁴¹⁷ even if tax increase is needed.⁴¹⁸ While most right-wing extremists “fully embrace the ‘socialism’ attacks on [President] Obama,” Democrats and independents largely dismiss these criticisms as “overblown partisan rhetoric” that avoids intelligent and honest dialogue.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁴ Lola Adesioye, “Paranoid Style in Republican Politics,” *guardian.co.uk*, April 17, 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2009/apr/16/republicans-right-wing-extremism-obama> (accessed October 29, 2009).

⁴¹⁵ *Gallup*, “Healthcare System,” <http://www.gallup.com/poll/4708/healthcare-system.aspx> (accessed October 30, 2009).

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁷ Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, “Views of Government.”

⁴¹⁸ Sixty-three percent of Americans are willing to pay for healthcare reform. Support for an increase in taxes to support universal health insurance crossed political affiliation – 78 percent of Democrats, 64 percent of independents, and 48 percent of Republicans are willing to accept higher taxes. David Morgan, “Americans Willing To Fund Healthcare Reform: Poll,” *Reuters*, September 30, 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/GCA-HealthcareReform/idUSTRE58T0MY20090930> (accessed October 31, 2009).

⁴¹⁹ Greenberg et al., “World of Conservative Republicans,” 10.

As discussed in Chapter III, the racist ideology of the far right has also failed to get much traction in mainstream America, at least not overtly, due to the strong social controls against the direct expression of racist views. When viewed against recent history, these social controls may have been weakened during the administration of President George W. Bush when it decided to employ National Guardsmen on the border⁴²⁰ and conduct a series of raids by Immigration and Custom Enforcement agents.⁴²¹ In a CBS News poll, 62 percent of Americans supported the Bush administration's decision to militarize the U.S.-Mexico border.⁴²² Additionally, outrage over the immigration raids has been muted⁴²³ despite the unintentional arrests of legal immigrants⁴²⁴ and American citizens.⁴²⁵ The public responses to these policies possibly emboldened the far right to at least probe public sentiment in the context of the health care reform debate. The public backlash after the portrayal of President Obama as a witch doctor and as a dead primate appears to have pushed overt racism out of the health

⁴²⁰ *FOX News*, "Bush to Use Thousands of National Guard Troops to Secure Border," May 15, 2006, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,195484,00.html> (accessed November 1, 2009).

⁴²¹ Ynonne Abraham, "As Immigration Raids Rise, Human Toll Decried," *Boston Globe*, March 20, 2007, http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2007/03/20/as_immigration_raids_rise_human_toll_decried/ (accessed November 1, 2009); Claire Heining, "Law School, Newspaper Seek Documents On Immigration Raids," *NJ.Com*, January 28, 2008, http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2008/01/law_school_newspaper_seek_docu.html (accessed November 1, 2009); Immigration and Customs Enforcement, "Largest-Ever ICE Operation Targeting Criminal Aliens and Illegal Alien Fugitives Nets More Than 1,300 Arrests in Los Angeles Area," October 3, 2007, <http://www.ice.gov/pi/news/newsreleases/articles/071003losangeles.htm> (accessed November 1, 2009); Donna Leinward, "Immigration Raid Linked to ID Theft, Chertoff Says," *USA Today*, December 13, 2006, http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2006-12-13-immigration_x.htm (accessed November 1, 2009).

⁴²² Joel Roberts, "Poll: Border Plan Gives Bush a Boost," *CBS News*, May 18, 2006, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/05/18/opinion/polls/main1631566.shtml> (accessed November 1, 2009).

⁴²³ Albor Ruiz, "Study Shows Immigration and Customs Enforcement Raids Leave Dissenters Cold," *New York Daily News*, July 23, 2009, http://www.nydailynews.com/ny_local/bronx/2009/07/23/2009-07-23_study_shows_immigration_and_customs_enforcement_raids_leave_dissenters_cold.html (accessed November 1, 2009).

⁴²⁴ Justin Rood, "Union: DHS Raids Grabbed Legal Workers," *Talking Points Memo*, December 13, 2006, <http://tpnmuckraker.talkingpointsmemo.com/archives/002139.php> (accessed November 1, 2009).

⁴²⁵ Emily Bazar, "Citizens Sue After Detentions, Immigration Raids," *USA Today*, June 25, 2008, http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-06-24-Immigration-raids_N.htm (accessed November 1, 2009); Andrew Becker and Patrick J. McDonnell, "U.S. Citizens Caught Up In Immigration Sweeps," *Los Angeles Times*, April 9, 2009, <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/apr/09/nation/na-citizen9> (accessed November 1, 2009); Dianne Soli, "Immigration Raids Catch Citizens and Legal Residents," *Dallas Morning News*, May 11, 2008, <http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/news/nationworld/stories/051008dnnatraits.3c69dea.html> (accessed November 1, 2009).

care reform debate. The advocacy of white Republican “wise men”⁴²⁶ and public acknowledgement that the major healthcare reform is necessary⁴²⁷ may also be restraining racist opposition.

Even corporate America has been distancing themselves from outspoken and extreme conservative pundits who inject racism into their rhetoric. After conservative talk show host Glenn Beck called President Obama a racist with a “deep-seated hatred for white people or the white culture”⁴²⁸ during his a guest appearance on the “Fox & Friends” morning show on July 28, 2009, at least 57 companies “who will not tolerate Beck’s race-baiting comments” directed that their advertisements not be run during Beck’s time slot.⁴²⁹ Similarly, in October 2009, the overwhelmingly conservative⁴³⁰ National Football League (NFL) barred conservative pundit Rush Limbaugh from team ownership.⁴³¹ Limbaugh’s bid to buy the St. Louis Rams drew opposition from a number of NFL players, owners, and executives because of his “unending line of insults against blacks and other minorities.”⁴³² These developments, plus the recent passage of a new

⁴²⁶ Stanley Greenberg et al., “Voters Tiring of Republican Partisanship on Healthcare,” *DemocracyCorps.Com*, October 9, 2009, 1, <http://www.democracycorps.com/wp-content/files/GOPHealthCareObstruction100909.FINAL.pdf> (accessed October 29, 2009).

⁴²⁷ Michael Scherer, “TIME Health-Care Poll: Americans Back Reform, Worry Over Details,” *Time*, July 29, 2009, <http://www.time.com/time/politics/article/0,8599,1913426,00.html> (accessed October 31, 2009).

⁴²⁸ Associated Press, “Glenn Beck: Obama Is a Racist,” *CBS News*, July 29, 2009, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/07/29/politics/main5195604.shtml> (accessed October 21, 2009).

⁴²⁹ Corky Siemaszko, “Advertisers Continue to Abandon Glenn Beck After Pundit Had Called President Obama a ‘Racist,’” *New York Daily News*, September 3, 2009, http://www.nydailynews.com/money/2009/09/03/2009-09-03_advertisers_.html (accessed October 21, 2009).

⁴³⁰ Jonathan D. Salant, “NFL Owners Belie Limbaugh ‘Not Wanted’ by Giving to Republicans,” *Bloomberg*, October 21, 2009, http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601079&sid=ao1V_8tUCeDw (accessed October 21, 2009); Center for Responsive Politics, “Politicians Score Significant Cash From NFL Owners, Coaches, and Players,” *OpenSecrets.Org*, September 17, 2009, <http://www.opensecrets.org/news/2009/09/politicians-score-significant.html> (accessed October 21, 2009).

⁴³¹ Don Banks, “Sources: Limbaugh Dropped From Group Seeking to Purchase Rams,” *Sports Illustrated*, October 14, 2009, <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/2009/football/nfl/10/14/limbaugh/index.html> (accessed October 21, 2009).

⁴³² *CBS Sports*, “Sharpton: ‘Anti-NFL’ Limbaugh Should Be Blocked From Bidding On Rams,” *CBS Sports*, October 12, 2009, <http://www.cbssports.com/nfl/story/12352252> (accessed October 21, 2009).

hate crime bill,⁴³³ send a message that American institutions and society will not tolerate racially-motivated rhetoric and antics.

Attempts to “whip up hate and anger” towards immigrants, portraying them as costly and burdensome on any taxpayer-supported health care system,⁴³⁴ have also failed to generate opposition to health care reform. Concerns that undocumented workers would be given access to a comprehensive health package appear to have been allayed by the inclusion of specific language in the healthcare legislation that prohibits federal payment “for affordability credits on behalf of individuals who are not lawfully present in the United States.”⁴³⁵ Furthermore, pro-immigration groups have clearly stated that they are not advocating that those who have unlawfully immigrated should have access to the benefits of broad healthcare reform. Instead, their main focus is to ensure that the verification schemes of the reformed system are not “so stringent and so onerous” that it denies access to citizens, lawful residents, and legal resident aliens.⁴³⁶ Healthcare legislation requiring proof of citizenship would be unacceptable as millions of American citizens—primarily poor, elderly, and minorities—do not possess readily-available,

⁴³³ The deliberation over the new hate crime bill may have muted the racist voices in order for their advocates to argue that the proposed law was duplicative and unnecessary due to the effective deterrence provided by current law. It is unclear whether the extension of hate crime legislation on October 28, 2009, will continue to restrict the racist actions of the far right or will be used as “evidence” of President Obama’s “secret agenda” of “getting [Americans] against each other.” *CNN*, “Obama Signs Hate Crimes Bill Into Law,” October 28, 2009, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/10/28/hate.crimes/index.html> (accessed October 30, 2009); Jim DeMint, “DeMint Speech Against Hate Crimes Legislation Attached to Defense Authorization,” October 23, 2009, http://demint.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=PressReleases.Detail&PressRelease_id=81da21e0-b409-76ba-cdc9-42b7df029e3d (accessed October 31, 2009); Greenberg et al., “World of Conservative Republicans,” 6.

⁴³⁴ Daphne Eviatar, “Anti-Immigration Activists See Opportunity in Health Care Debate,” *Washington Independent*, August 14, 2009, <http://washingtonindependent.com/55044/anti-immigration-activists-see-opportunity-in-health-care-debate> (accessed October 31, 2009).

⁴³⁵ H.R. 3200, 111th Cong. sec. 246 (2009), <http://www.opencongress.org/bill/111-h3200/text> (accessed October 8, 2009).

⁴³⁶ Michel Martin, “Health Care Overhaul Has Tough Implications For Immigrants,” *National Public Radio*, October 14, 2009, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=113786046> (accessed October 24, 2009).

government-issued photo identification.⁴³⁷ Also easing concerns that undocumented immigrants impose a burden on American society is the reality that undocumented immigrants pay taxes, but do not collect benefits. The Social Security Administration reported that “three quarters of the other-than-legal immigrants pay payroll taxes,” generating about \$1.5 billion in Medicare taxes,⁴³⁸ which is equivalent to a 0.3 percent raise of the payroll tax.⁴³⁹

In the previous chapter, the anti-abortion ideology was not identified as a major player in health care reform because the social conflict around abortion is relatively muted outside of religious circles.⁴⁴⁰ Nevertheless, not only is there specific language in the current healthcare legislation that prohibits abortion coverage from being a part of the minimum benefits package,⁴⁴¹ but there appears to be a healthy amount of both abortion-rights supporters and opponents in Congress to keep public interest in mind.⁴⁴²

The only right-wing ideology that resonates with the majority of those opposing health care reform is the far right’s ideological distrust of government. However, the difference between the average American and right-wing extremists lies in the trust that the checks and balances of the American political system will prevent radical changes from endangering the common good. This is somewhat reflected in the September 2009

⁴³⁷ Brennan Center for Justice, “Citizens Without Proof,” New York University of Law, November 28, 2006, http://www.brennancenter.org/content/resource/citizens_without_proof_a_survey_of_americans_possession_of_documentary_proof/ (accessed October 31, 2009); Robert Greenstein, Leighton Ku, and Stacy Dean, “Survey Indicates House Bill Could Deny Voting Rights to Millions of U.S. Citizens,” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, September 22, 2006, <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=671> (accessed October 31, 2009).

⁴³⁸ Eduardo Porter, “Illegal Immigrants Are Bolstering Social Security With Billions,” *New York Times*, April 5, 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/05/business/05immigration.html> (accessed October 9, 2009).

⁴³⁹ Social Security Administration, *The 2008 Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance and Federal Disability Insurance Trust Funds* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2008), 69–71, <http://www.ssa.gov/OACT/TR/TR08/> (accessed October 9, 2009).

⁴⁴⁰ See note 344.

⁴⁴¹ H.R. 3200, 111th Cong. sec. 122 (2009), <http://www.opencongress.org/bill/111-h3200/text> (accessed October 8, 2009).

⁴⁴² Scott Simon, “Abortion Rises to Threaten Health Care Bill,” *National Public Radio*, October 24, 2009, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=114130235&ft=1&f=1003> (accessed October 30, 2009).

Gallup survey that revealed that out of the 56 percent of Americans who oppose the healthcare legislation, only 30 percent express sentiments against “big government” or “too much government involvement.” The remaining opponents disagreed with the manner in which health care reform would be executed.⁴⁴³ While right-wing extremists oppose health care reform because of their belief that a strong government will intrude in individual liberties, most Americans believe the government has a role in regulating free markets⁴⁴⁴ and healthy skepticism keeps the general welfare in mind.

The government has a reputation for being inefficient, ineffective, and detrimental to the market.⁴⁴⁵ Amid the credit liquidity crisis in 2008, the government reinforced this negative reputation by preventing car manufacturer General Motors from declaring bankruptcy. After using taxpayers’ monies to prop up the car manufacturer, the government subsequently succumbed to electoral pressures and began interfering with the car manufacturer’s “good business decisions.”⁴⁴⁶ Despite its “hands off” approach to its ownership of General Motors,⁴⁴⁷ lawmakers consistently sought decisions favorable to their constituents, even if it meant countermanding the decisions made by car manufacturer.

To address public concern regarding excessive government involvement, Congress is taking steps to ensure future government action is not detrimental to free market forces. In addressing the government’s tendency to micromanage the automobile manufactures it assisted during the 2008 credit liquidity crisis, Republican senator Bob Corker of Tennessee and Democrat senator Mark Warner of Virginia are sponsoring legislation that would “shield the car companies from lawmakers’ impulses,”⁴⁴⁸ by creating an independent trust to hold shares of companies where the government’s

⁴⁴³ Gallup, “Healthcare System.”

⁴⁴⁴ Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, “Business, Wall Street and Labor: Free Market and Regulation,” May 21, 2009, <http://people-press.org/report/?pageid=1518> (accessed October 31, 2009).

⁴⁴⁵ Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, “Views of Government.”

⁴⁴⁶ Neil King, Jr., “Politicians Butt In at Bailed-Out GM,” *Wall Street Journal*, October 30, 2009, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB125677552001414699.html> (accessed October 31, 2009).

⁴⁴⁷ Victoria McGrane, “Congress Pushes Back on GM Bankruptcy,” *Politico*, June 3, 2009, <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0609/23299.html> (accessed October 31, 2009).

⁴⁴⁸ King, “Politicians Butt In.”

ownership exceeds ten percent. Although this legislation is not directly related to health care reform, it demonstrates the government's commitment to limit its influence in economic markets and, implicitly, its commitment to limit its influence on health care decisions.

C. DISCUSSION AND HOMELAND SECURITY IMPLICATIONS

Although major social structures in the contemporary United States create a societal disposition within which right-wing extremism can emerge and flourish, the lack of an influential leader to unify the far right and the effective operation of existing social controls, including the rejection of right-wing ideologies by mainstream Americans, hinder the mobilization of the domestic far right. Hence, this thesis disagrees with the Department of Homeland Security's April 2009 assessment that the current social, economic, and political environment is could very likely to lead to a violent confrontation between right-wing extremist groups and government authorities. This does not imply that the domestic far right poses no threat to American society. It is inherent to right-wing extremists to resort to, or threaten the use of, some form of violence when they feel they cannot advance their social agenda through legitimate political processes. Accordingly, there is always a probability that a lone wolf terrorist—the radicalization process of whom is beyond the scope of this thesis—will commit a horrendous act of violence, independent of any right-wing organization, in an attempt to bring about social change. However, unless all the determinants of collective behavior create a vicious cycle that promotes right-wing extremism, it is unlikely that the far right will collectively pursue its agenda using violence.

It is undeniable that social controls are critical in preventing the outbreak of collective extremist violence, regardless of political orientation. In the case of the domestic far right and from a homeland security perspective, it is critical to ensure that these hindrances remain in place and that new social controls are employed to address the structural conduciveness, social conflicts, and right-wing ideologies already present. However, without argument, the outcome of the power struggle among conservatives is in the hands of the conservatives. The government has no authority to suppress beliefs

and activities protected by the Bill of Rights. Besides, outright persecution of the extreme right—and even just the outright public dismissal of their grievances—may reinforce their perception that they are an “oppressed, mocked minority” that has been “targeted by a popular culture.”⁴⁴⁹ Being in the minority may actually strengthen their resolve, as witnessed by the far right’s adoption of “persecution politics,”⁴⁵⁰ which accuses opponents of discriminating against and persecuting white Christian conservatives. Consequently, the threat from the far right comes not from an inability to restrain the spread of its ideologies, which is currently being rejected by mainstream Americans. Paradoxically, it is in the far right’s isolation in public discourse.⁴⁵¹ This is akin to the conclusion of the case studies in Chapter II that the lack of political and social forums to address legitimate grievances drove the significant minority in their society to seek social change through violent means.

Instead of attempting to suppress right-wing extremists, the government can direct its efforts to decrease the possibility of a violent outburst of right-wing violence in two ways: (1) by reducing the social structures that create an environment in which right-wing extremism can emerge and flourish and (2) by encouraging and ensuring the effective operation of social controls. Therefore, the challenge facing homeland security experts is not merely preventing the spread of right-wing ideologies with specialized police units or legislative controls, but providing a mechanism to address legitimate grievances, albeit without agreeing to the underlying ideologies, and to allay fears of gross government interference and promote the operation of democratic institutions through honest and open discourse.

The present administration is already conducting a campaign along these lines. For example, President Obama has refused to see fierce opposition against health care reform as provoked by purely racist motives.⁴⁵² While acknowledging that racism is not

⁴⁴⁹ Greenberg et al., “World of Conservative Republicans,” 11.

⁴⁵⁰ Dagblog, “Persecution Politics: Paranoia Rules the Right,” October 16, 2009, <http://networkedblogs.com/p14812026> (accessed November 21, 2009).

⁴⁵¹ Swain, *The New White Nationalism*, 6-7.

⁴⁵² Jeff Zeleny, “Obama Rejects Race as Lead Cause of Criticism,” *New York Times*, September 18, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/19/health/policy/19obama.html> (accessed November 2, 2009).

totally responsible for the opposition, the Obama administration sends the message that it is willing to consider and address legitimate grievances. Similarly, in his health care speech to Congress on September 9, 2009 and made evident in the subsequent progress made in healthcare legislation, the Obama administration has also sought to reassure Americans that despite the inherently polarizing bipartisan system, the United States does not have a blocked political system. In contrast, the Obama administration has portrayed the government as “bring[ing] the best ideas of both [political] parties together” and working towards the common good.⁴⁵³ As healthcare legislation proceeds through the political process, the message to put forward is that much-needed social change is possible through non-violent means.

The efforts of the government to counter domestic right-wing extremist rhetoric are similar to international efforts to counter radical Islamic extremism. This should come as no surprise—extremism is extremism, regardless of its underlying ideology. It also should not be a surprise that the two strategic recommendations of the Presidential Task Force on Confronting the Ideology of Radical Extremism address the social structures that create the environment in which right-wing extremism can emerge and flourish. One strategic recommendation was to empower mainstream voices that compete with extremists; the other recommended addressing legitimate grievances to ensure that the extremist’s “narrative does not resonate with individuals’ day-to-day lives.”⁴⁵⁴ The functional recommendations of the task force were in line with the effective operation of social controls, and included recommendations to promote reform and democracy; emphasize the “bankrupt ideology” of extremists; and exploit and amplify ideological fissures between extremists and their supporters and potential supporters.⁴⁵⁵ Future studies should explore how these counter-radicalization approaches can be tailored and, if possible, applied in compliance with domestic law. It is important,

⁴⁵³ White House, “The President’s Plan.”

⁴⁵⁴ J. Scott Carpenter, Michael Jacobson, and Matthew Levitt, *Rewriting the Narrative: An Integrated Strategy for Counterradicalization* (Washington DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2009), 13, <http://washingtoninstitute.org/pubPDFs/PTF2-Counterradicalization.pdf> (accessed March 26, 2009).

⁴⁵⁵ Carpenter, Jacobson, and Levitt, *Rewriting the Narrative*, 13–20.

for example, that concerns that the incumbent administration is attempting to push its ideology on its constituents are appropriately addressed.

D. CONCLUSION

This thesis disagrees with the Department of Homeland Security's April 2009 assessment that the current social, economic, and political environment is likely to lead to a violent confrontation between right-wing extremist groups and government authorities. Using the framework provided by the theory of collective behavior, this thesis examined the current social, economic, and political environment of the United States—in the context of the current health care reform debate—and its influence on the domestic far right. Although major social structures (i.e., structural conduciveness, structural strain, and ideology) in contemporary United States create a climate within which right-wing extremism can emerge and flourish, the lack of an influential leader to unify the far right and the effective operation of existing social controls—including the rejection of right-wing ideologies by mainstream Americans—hinder the mobilization of the domestic far right.

To counter right-wing extremism in the United States, the government should avoid dismissing outright the grievances of the far right, as this may actually strengthen their belief that the multicultural American society is discriminating against and persecuting white Christian conservatives. Instead, the government should direct its efforts to decrease the possibility of a violent outburst of right-wing violence by (1) reducing the social structures that create an environment in which right-wing extremism can emerge and flourish and (2) by encouraging and ensuring the effective operation of social controls. Efforts along these lines would be similar to those countering radical Islamic extremism. Further studies are needed to explore how counter-radicalization approaches against Islamic extremists can be tailored and, if possible, applied in compliance with domestic law.

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