A Statistical Analysis of Hate Crimes in the State of New York before and during the Trump

Administration (2015 - 2019)

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Abstract

The Trump Administration and campaign has been touted as one of the most controversial political eras in recent memory. During his years of prime influence (2015 - 2020) there were notable instances in which he used strong language to inflict hurt onto different minority ethnic groups. This study poses the question if there is a direct correlation between Trump's rhetoric and the number of incidents of hate related crimes; specifically in the state of New York between the years of 2015 - 2019. The study takes data from the FBI database, producing information regarding the crime types, counties within New York, and the groups that experienced hate-crimes. Due to the overwhelming amount of information, the data used for our research was adjusted to look at three main components: the type of crime, Pre-Trump & During-Trump Era(s), and the three predominant groups that experienced hate crimes (Asian, Black, and Hispanic). Our statistical analysis involved performing regressions and bar charts to show the effect Trump may have had on hate crimes. The primary goal was to uncover if Trump's words really did push his followers to cause such crimes to increase. But our results proved that hate crimes had "decreased." Which led us to believe that other factors could be at play, thus explaining why it is that we see a "decrease" in hate crimes against the Asian, Black, and Hispanic population.

Literature Review

Today it is abundantly clear and well known that Trump has immense influence over his followers. However, this wasn't foreseen, most people at the time of the 2016 election were confident that Trump wasn't even going to earn the GOP nomination. Multiple blogs, news outlets, and political scientists strongly believed that Trump would not win in 2016. This was further supported by the reaction to his election, where a lot of people were confused, upset, and most importantly, shocked. This is all to say that no one would have guessed the sphere of influence he has today. What is normal to us today, is something that would be deemed unbelievable to the majority of the country in 2016.

The years in which our data specifically lies is between 2015 - 2019. There are two main reasons for this. For one, we pinpointed that 2015 is when Trump was beginning to garner attention politically – remember, he was a famous businessman before all the politics, so he had some popularity already. However, there is a difference between fame and political power. Thus, with his campaign getting more and more attention in 2015, it's one of the main factors for starting our analysis in that year. Second, 2015 is when some of his hurtful, race-filled rhetoric showed publicly for the first time. One of the most infamous incidents was during his campaign launch speech, where he outwardly stated that Mexican immigrants are "rapists" (Phillips, 2017). On top of this, through the work of Canizales and Vallejo, credible professors within the UC system, argue that although the racial discrimination intensified during the Trump administration due to Trump's indirect support to violence committed by white nationalists against Latinos (Canizales and Vallejo 2021 156). The study of Canizales and Vallejo does have its limitations due to the fact that this study emphasized the topic in the Southwest United States, but it can also be taken to show how far Trump's words have spread. Furthermore, the study traced the issues

between Latinos and white nationalists as far back as the inclusion of Puerto Rico as a U.S territory, leaving us to think that Trump may not have caused this hate against Latinos, but rather put fuel to the fire.

The last study mentioned brought up the idea of Trump having influence even in Southwest areas in the United States. Yet, it has been argued and studied that Trump's words have had an even greater impact due to the rise in fear within college students during his presidency. In a journal titled, "Marginalization and Fear? Concealed Carry and Campus Climate in the Trump Era." The study's research population included racial minorities, religious minorities, LGBTQ+, and international students. Their research did not account for 6 international students regarding their country, leading to a clear gap in the data. Their thesis of how these policies lead to feelings and potentiality for fear was present. The researchers found, "In addition to the overall tension, marginalized students in our sample expected to be targeted at higher rates by the new policy" (Watt, Candal, Quiason, 2018, 129) which perpetuates a mindset among marginalized groups of survival and fear.

A number of critics predicted that President Donald Trump's rhetoric during the presidential campaign and his subsequent election would embolden hate crime perpetrators, leading to an increase in hate crimes—a phenomenon dubbed the Trump Effect by media commentators. Authors Griffin Edwards and Stephen Rushin, both professors of Business and Law, evaluate the relationship between President Trump's rise to power and the recent increase in reported hate crimes. Using time series analysis and panel regression techniques, the study examines hate crime trends at the national and local levels from 1992 through 2017. The results indicate a statistically significant surge in reported hate crimes across the United States following Trump's election, even after controlling for alternative explanations (Edwards, Rushin, 2018).

Notably, counties that voted for Trump by the widest margins experienced the largest increases in reported hate crimes(Edwards, Rushin, 2018). While the data from this study suggest a correlation with Trump's election/rhetoric, it does not specify which particular groups were most affected by his hateful rhetoric that targeted specific groups.

In order to make the correlation between Trump's administration and the frequency of hate crimes within New York state, we must understand how it's even possible for Trump to insight such behavior. The article titled, "...Exploring Trump's use of denigrating and deprecating speech to promote hatred and violence," utilized linguistic analysis to pinpoint Trump's words that signify how his rhetoric had undertones against minoritized groups. What makes this different from the other literature surrounding the topic is Trump's deliberate words, rather than the data of hate crimes. Instead of graphs, there were excerpts of speeches in which the researchers combine specific words into a particular group. It is important to focus on language rather than hate crime statistics as there is less of an analysis of actual data. This shows how Trump's rhetoric can be interpreted by the public. Concepts such as, "verbal-textual hostility," and "denigration," (Valcore, Asquith, and Rodgers, 2023) supports that Trump used his power to enable hate-fueled violence.

Through our collective research, it appears evident that the rhetoric in which Donald Trump used during his campaign and presidency may have caused an increase in hate crimes due to his influence on his followers. Yet, there is an insufficient amount of greater scale studies to back this claim. Which is why we are conducting a statewide statistical study via FBI data on New York state to see if there truly was a rise in hate crimes during Trump's prime of political control.
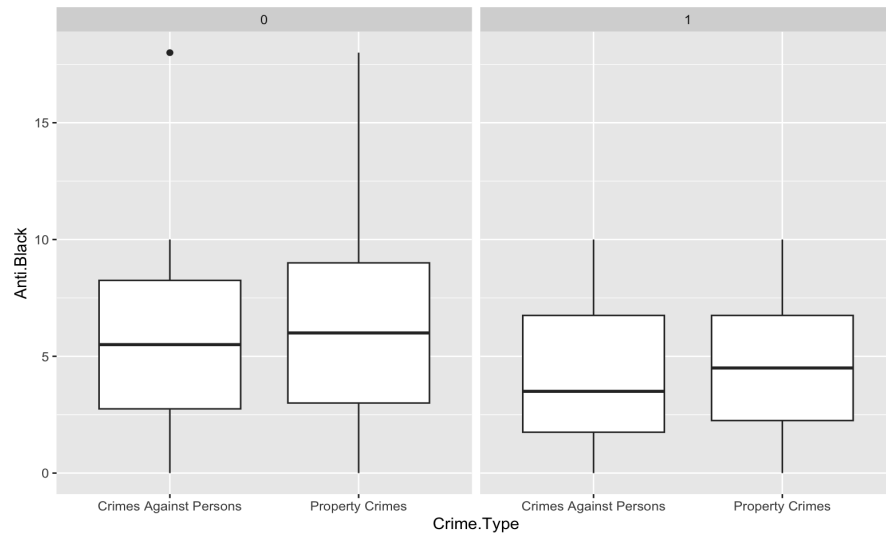
Figure 1: Regression Analysis of Hate crime against Black people in the state of New York. Left box plots represent the Pre-Trump era and the right reflect the post Trump era.
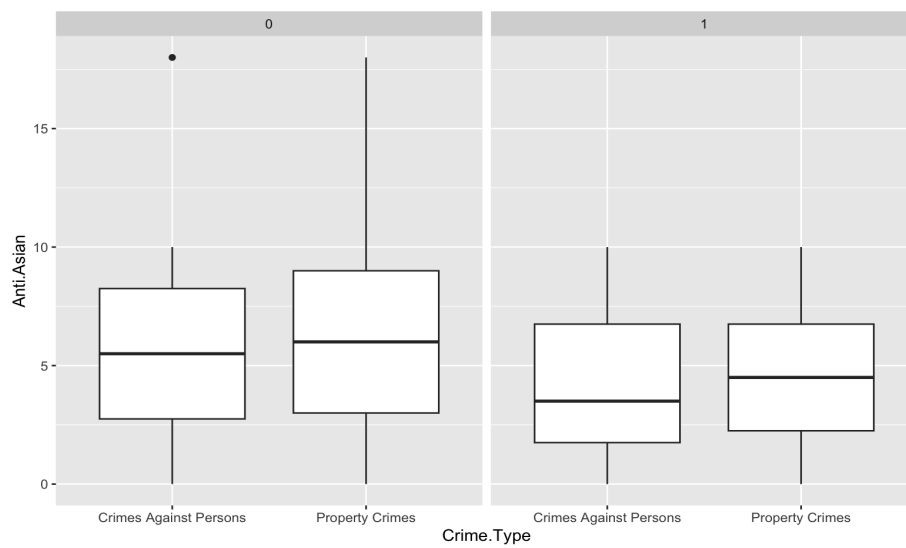

Figure 2: Regression Analysis of Hate crime against Asian people in the state of New York. Left box plots represent the Pre-Trump era and the right reflect the post Trump era.
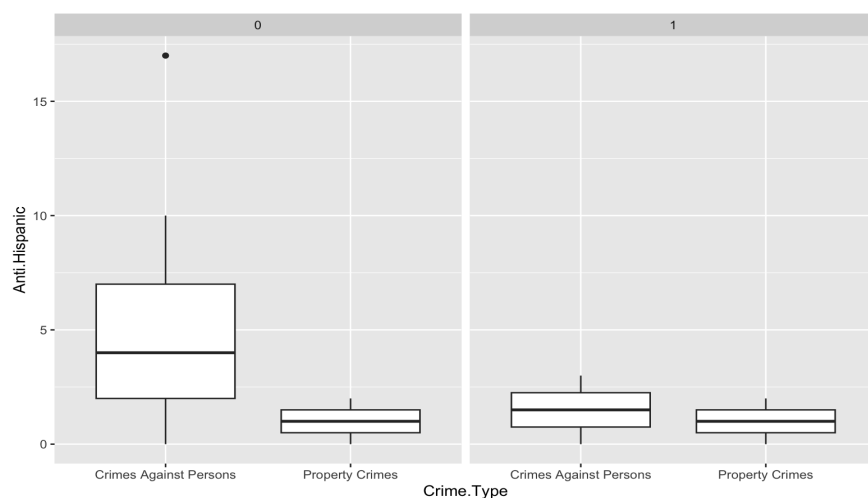
Figure 3: Regression Analysis of Hate crime against Hispanic people in the state of New York. Left box plots represent the Pre-Trump era and the right reflect the post Trump era.

In order to fully look at the scope of hate crimes experienced by Asian, Black, and Hispanic individuals over the years of 2015-2019, we decided to look at each group separately, comparing the Pre-Trump and During-Trump Era bar charts. But in order to do this, we needed to record the years so that we would be able to have the two separate eras of comparison. To do so, the years of 2015 to 2016 were Pre-Trump and 2017 to 2019 were During-Trump. Our first bar charts showed an even median for 5-6 hate crimes against the person for Black folks being reported before Trump. Yet during his time in office, the median decreased, now being between 3 to 4 crimes reported. Statistically, property crimes ranged higher in both eras. A similar occurrence we see repeated within the analysis of hate crimes against Asian individuals. Pre-Trump shows us that there are higher crimes reported versus During-Trump, where there are less. And following a similar pattern, we see that hate crimes against Hispanic individuals also experience a "decrease", but of importance note, there are higher hate crimes against the person reported over property crimes. Yet, the drastic change between both eras sheds light on the amount of crimes that are actually being reported as occurrences. As such, we begin to think about why that could be.

The results of our study came to surprise all of us collectively. However, we wanted to focus onto why that is, why was there technically a decrease when we're constantly reminded about such incidents? Through some research, we propose two explanations, one being how the media reports these incidents, and the second is the high probability of external factors getting in the way of people reporting their experiences.

According to a West Virginia University study, it's not the amount of hate crimes, but how the media portrays them for the consumer (you). Mainstream media wants to get attention from their consumers, and since most are white, they want to report on anti-white hate crimes. In this study they bring the example of how two Chicago newspapers reported more hate crimes when the victim was white and the offender black, even though the opposite is more likely to happen. The paper goes even further by stating, "However, news does not always reflect reality. News organizations must compete for audiences' attention and report on topics of interest to them) (Hatcher, 2002). Meaning that the media genuinely does have a say in how we, as a society, perceive an issue. If they want to emphasize a topic such as anti-white hate crimes for clicks, we are led to believe that it's a bigger issue than the title might make it seem. On the note of titles, many news outlets have used numbers such as "150% rise," or something along those lines. To recall what Professor Francisco said in the beginning of the semester, statistics can be used for good, but a lot of people use them to mislead people.. When hate crimes in states are already low, an increase from 1 to 3 can be labeled as a "300% increase." In essence, there should be more of a keen eye from the public before they are led to believe in something, it might just be blown out of proportion.

The second reason as to why rates of hate crimes may have decreased during the Trump Administration is a number of external factors that lead to people not reporting their experience.

Federal data captures 1 in 31 hate crimes in its statistics (Sill, Haskins, 2023), this can be due to the barriers within the process of reporting, diverging definitions of a hate crime, and a reluctance to report hate crimes. This is further supported by the fact that 85% of US law enforcement agencies participating in the hate crime statistics program report that they conducted zero hate crime investigations before 2019 (Smith, 2021). In order for someone to report such an incident there has to be a level of re-traumatization in order to give the most accurate information to authorities. This is enough for someone to not want to come forward and stay silent – to protect their own mental well being. The changing definition is also something that has been in question. This is because there must be sufficient evidence that the incident was motivated by hatred of a particular part of the victims identity. Thus, a lot of these incidents are reported as assaults more often than not. Another situation that data doesn't show is culture. For a lot of minority cultures, there is an element of shame to admit that something of this severity happened to them. This can cause fear in victims that their family will look at them differently or even lose respect for them. There are a number of reasons why these people don't report these kinds of incidents, but that shouldn't take away from the fact that these incidents are still as prevalent today.

Conclusion

To conclude, while our data may have not supported our hypothesis, this study is similarly built as an iceberg. While the statistics say one thing, there is still a lot going on underneath it all. What we do know for certain, is that the more hate is spewed by elected officials, the more tension there will be between the political elite and the everyday citizen, Whether that be because what they say has a direct implication on us directly, or because the media portrays it that way. In the end, no one is really winning from these sorts of disputes.

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