



Policing Hate Rallies

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1 Policing Hate Rallies

Hate groups are named entities that have an ideology “centered primarily, or substantially, on hatred or intolerance of specific target populations” (Blazak, 2009, p. 144). After declining for many years, hate crime activity in the United States has become more frequent in recent years (Edwards & Rushin, 2018; Feinberg et al., 2022; Hodwitz & Massingale, 2021). Hate groups have held public rallies in numerous cities to express

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their views, bring attention to their cause, and in some cases to instigate conflict with opposing groups. These rallies are often volatile and sometimes become violent. They also generate fear and anxiety within populations who are targeted by expressions of hate (Shodiya-Zeumault et al., 2021; Stephens, 2018; Williams et al., 2021). Policing these rallies raises numerous challenges, particularly when rival groups with opposing perspectives are present (Maguire, 2022a). Based on lessons learned from several such events in the United States, this chapter explores the challenges that arise for the police during hate rallies. Drawing on these lessons, as well as theory and research evidence from criminology and social psychology, the chapter discusses strategies that police can use to manage conflict, reduce violence, and minimize harm before, during, and after these events.

This chapter begins by discussing the meaning of hate in both interpersonal and intergroup contexts. It then discusses hate groups and the kinds of causes they embrace. It then discusses hate rallies, including their effects on communities and the challenges they pose for the police. The following section presents case studies of three hate rallies that occurred in the United States in 2021 and 2022. The case studies are useful for understanding the challenges that the police face when handling these types of events. The discussion section then reflects on the three case studies, together with research evidence from criminology and social psychology, and offers recommendations for research, policy, and practice.

2 Literature Review

Hate

What is hate and how does it compare to other negative emotions? Psychologists distinguish between two types of hate: interpersonal and intergroup. People feel *interpersonal hate* toward others due primarily to their perceptions of other people's words or actions. People feel *intergroup hate* toward others on behalf of their own group (the ingroup)

due primarily to other people's status as members of an outgroup.¹ The types of group membership that commonly elicit hate are associated with people's racial, ethnic, religious, tribal, political, or sexual identities. Intergroup hate often results when members of an ingroup feel threatened by an outgroup (Fischer et al., 2018). Intergroup hate is sometimes facilitated by the perception—usually inaccurate—that the outgroup is homogeneous. When people perceive an outgroup as being homogeneous in terms of its negative, adverse, or otherwise objectionable characteristics, they may believe that there “is no merit in trying to correct or improve the outgroup's behavior” (Fischer et al., 2018, p. 314).

Hate differs from other negative emotions such as anger, frustration, jealousy, and contempt (Fischer et al., 2018; Fitness & Fletcher, 1993; Rothenberg, 1971; van Doorn, 2018). For example, anger is premised on the assumption that someone else's behavior can be changed (Fischer et al., 2018). Hate makes no such assumption.² Hate implies “a stable perception of a person or group and thus the incapability to change the extremely negative characteristics attributed to the target of hate” (Fischer et al., 2018, p. 310). Hate involves demonizing an adversary, which “intensifies the sense that violence is justified and reduces inhibitions about violence and killing” (Beck & Pretzer, 2005, p. 72). Research shows that people who feel a sense of intergroup hate experience greater levels of emotional arousal than people who feel other negative emotions such as dislike, anger, and contempt. They also “feel more inclined toward attack-oriented behaviors” (Martínez et al., 2022, p. 46). Intergroup hate serves as the psychological foundation of hate groups.

¹ The terms *ingroup* and *outgroup* are used frequently in social psychology to refer to one's own group (the ingroup) and other people's groups (outgroups). As noted by Brewer (2007, p. 695), “group-based attitudes, perceptions, and behavior arise from basic cognitive categorization processes that partition the social world into ingroups and outgroups”.

² For example, van Doorn (2018, p. 321) argues that the goal of anger is “to restore or change the (unjust) situation” whereas the goal of hate is “to hurt or eliminate the hated target”.

Hate Groups

Determining what constitutes a hate group is sometimes contentious. Most hate groups in the United States are affiliated with right-wing extremist movements. Although there are many left-wing extremist movements, these tend not to fall within the typical definitions of hate groups.³ As a result, right-leaning critics tend to view hate group designations as biased against conservative causes and values. For example, some critics view the Southern Poverty Law Center as having a leftist bias in assembling its well-known list of hate groups in the United States (O'Neill, 2020; Swain, 2018). Right-wing pundits also argue that left-leaning groups like Antifa and Black Lives Matter should be designated as hate groups (Montgomery, 2018).

These debates hinge on the definition of “hate groups”. The Southern Poverty Law Center (2020) defines a hate group as “an organization or collection of individuals that—based on its official statements or principles, the statements of its leaders, or its activities—has beliefs or practices that attack or malign an entire class of people, typically for their immutable characteristics.” Woolf and Hulsizer (2004) define a hate group as an “organized group whose beliefs and actions are rooted in enmity towards an entire class of people based on ethnicity, perceived race, sexual orientation, religion, or other inherent characteristic” (p. 41). Blazak (2009, pp. 157–158), defines a hate group using the following four criteria:

1. A hate group is a collection of people who hold a common disdain for one or more large categorizations of people;
2. A hate group is a named entity;
3. A hate group desires the oppression of one or more large categorizations of people based on historical circumstances;
4. A hate group must act on its collective disdain of other groups.

³ Left-wing extremist movements are also significantly less violent. For example, according to Sullaway (2016), “right-wing and left-wing extremist groups are not comparable in the degree of risk created for human life ... left-wing extremist attacks tend to be directed toward property. In contrast, right-wing extremist attacks are frequently lethal” (p. 97).

All of these definitions involve a collective sense of intergroup hate for outgroup members based primarily on perceived differences between the hate group and those groups that it targets. The Southern Poverty Law Center (2022a) estimates that there were 733 hate groups in the United States in 2021. Although this is a large number, research by Chermak et al. (2013) finds that most groups are small and do not last very long. They tend to “struggle initially and die young” (p. 211).

The presence of hate groups is associated with a variety of negative outcomes. For instance, people exposed to hate speech can experience psychological and emotional harm (Hawdon et al., 2014; Leets & Giles, 1997; Shodiya-Zeumault et al., 2021; Stephens, 2018; Williams et al., 2021). In addition, research shows that counties with one or more far-right hate groups have more ideologically motivated far-right homicides (Adamczyk et al., 2014). Also, although the far-right claims to “back the blue”, several recent events have made it clear that some hate groups are willing to behave violently toward the police so as to achieve their objectives (Maguire, 2022b; Owen, 2021). According to Gruenewald et al. (2016, p. 217), many people on the far right “demonize police by characterizing them as governmental foot soldiers, enforcing policies that threaten Americans’ rights and liberties”. For that reason, police officers sometimes serve as “practical targets of extreme far-right violence” (p. 217).

Hate Rallies

In this chapter I use the term “hate rallies” to refer to two different types of events. The first is when hate groups decide to hold public events to showcase their viewpoints. The second is when such groups decide to “crash” public events held by other groups whose viewpoints they find objectionable. Both types of hate rallies are common and there is very little social science research on either of them. One study found that white supremacist rallies increase the rate of subsequent cross-burnings in the locales where the rallies are held. Since the suspects in these cross-burnings typically do not have ties to white supremacist groups, the

authors concluded that “white supremacist rallies encourage fellow travelers to engage in this form of racial intimidation” (Green & Rich, 1998, p. 263). The findings from this study suggest that hate rallies may inspire people not affiliated with hate groups to act out on their hateful impulses by behaving in a violent or destructive manner. If this is true, it suggests that limiting hate rallies may prevent subsequent hate crimes so inspired. Further research is needed to test this hypothesis.

Hate rallies tend to promote conflict and violence in other ways as well. For instance, such rallies often include clashes between attendees and counterprotesters. Daniels (1997) notes that “white supremacist rallies are often more heavily attended by [counterprotesters] than supporters, sometimes by ratios of 10 to 1” (p. 4). Violence between attendees and counterprotesters becomes especially worrisome when one or both groups is armed. As noted by Tirschwell and Lefkowitz (2018, p. 174), the presence of heavily armed attendees at the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville “terrorized peaceful protesters and made the job of law enforcement more difficult”. Recent hate rallies in the United States have also involved attendees and counterprotesters carrying a variety of weapons other than firearms, including chemical agents, paintball guns, sticks, and knives. These events represent a significant challenge for law enforcement agencies who are seeking to balance multiple objectives: honoring people’s First Amendment rights, preventing violence, and preserving officer safety.

3 Three Case Studies

Phoenix, Arizona

On April 17, 2021, the National Socialist Movement (NSM) held a rally in Phoenix, Arizona. The Southern Poverty Law Center (2022b) describes the NSM as a neo-Nazi group that idolizes Adolf Hitler and embraces “violent antisemitic rhetoric” and racist views. It is one of several groups to embrace the well-known 14-word slogan: “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for White children” (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2022b). The NSM has grown smaller and

less active in recent years. For example, data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) Project show that from 2017 to 2021, the NSM held an average of 3.4 events per year. An earlier study of the NSM showed that it held 22 events in 2006 and 30 events in 2007, which suggests a reduction in the frequency of events (Anti-Defamation League, 2008). Although the NSM has a smaller footprint than it once did, its rallies still represent a significant threat to public safety and a challenge for the police. In 2010, the group held a rally in Phoenix that led to violence between attendees, counterprotesters, and police (Sayles, 2010).

The NSM applied to the state of Arizona for a permit to hold a march at the Arizona State Capitol in Phoenix on April 17, 2021. The permit request was denied because the group did not have the required insurance. Nonetheless, the group proceeded with its plans to hold an event. The NSM distributed flyers advertising the rally. The flyers contained a statement that announced: “Teaching Conservatives how to address violent Antifa—one event at a time”. Counterprotesters also distributed flyers containing statements like the following:

- Laugh these Nazis out of town.
- Bring your own tomatoes.
- No Nazi’s, no KKK, no fascist U.S.A.
- Unite against hate, stop the Nazis!
- Defend Phoenix.

One of these flyers featured a fist breaking a swastika, raising concerns about whether counterprotesters might behave violently during the rally.

The Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) worked closely with police and other partners to develop a carefully crafted set of responses to the rally. It and other religious organizations discouraged their members from counter-protesting at the rally. It also hosted a webinar to encourage local media to cover the event “in a way that wouldn’t escalate or amplify extremist messages” (Raz, 2021). Prior to the rally, the Phoenix Police Department assigned detectives from its Community Relations Squad (CRS) to coordinate with the JCRC and the NSM. The rally was expected to be held at the Arizona State Capitol.

The Arizona Department of Public Safety installed two layers of fencing (inner and outer layers) to keep rally attendees and counterprotesters away from the buildings on the Capitol grounds.

On April 17th, the day of the rally, counterprotesters began to mobilize at the State Capitol. However, the NSM changed the venue at the last minute, holding the rally at Eastlake Park instead. Eastlake Park is located about three miles east of the Capitol and is a notable landmark for the city's African American community. The city's website describes Eastlake Park as "the focal point of African American history in Phoenix for much of its existence".⁴ The park is located across the street from the Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church, which has been described as "the thriving heartbeat of the African-American Christian community in Phoenix" (Gilger, 2019). The change in venue meant that counterprotesters had mobilized to a different location to where the rally was held.

About 15–20 people attended the NSM rally. Many were wearing black Nazi uniforms with a red armband containing a swastika. They shredded an Israeli flag and spoke loudly about how whites are superior to blacks and Jews. Other than rally attendees and journalists, the park was relatively empty. A small group of African American men were sitting in the park when the rally began. Attendees shouted ethnic slurs and challenged the men to fight. Some of the men yelled back at the attendees, but there was no physical violence. CRS detectives stationed themselves near the park and observed the rally from within their vehicles to avoid drawing attention to themselves. The Phoenix Police Department also staged tactical officers nearby (and out of sight) in case violence erupted, but the event was peaceful and there was no need for them to mobilize. NSM members left the area after only about 40 minutes. Shortly after, counterprotesters began to arrive. Some of them were wearing costumes, with some dressed as superheroes. Many were wearing makeshift body armor and/or carrying shields, suggesting that they were prepared to defend themselves. They remained only briefly because the rally had ended and the attendees had already left. While CRS detectives remained in contact with NSM members before, during, and after the rally, they remained on the periphery during the entire event and did not

⁴ <https://www.phoenix.gov/parks/recreation-and-community-centers/centers-e/eastlake>.

make any arrests. State Troopers at the Capitol also did not make any arrests because the counterprotesters who mobilized there never came face-to-face with rally attendees and thus there was no conflict.

Portland, Oregon

On August 22, 2021, the Proud Boys held a “Summer of Love” rally in an empty K-Mart parking lot in Portland, Oregon. The Anti-Defamation League (2022b) describes the Proud Boys as a “right-wing extremist group with a violent agenda. They are primarily misogynistic, Islamophobic, transphobic and anti-immigration. Some members espouse white supremacist and antisemitic ideologies”. The Proud Boys often hold controversial rallies that attract counterprotesters. These rallies frequently involve violence between participants and counterprotesters, and in some cases between participants and police. The Proud Boys played a key role in the attack on the US Capitol in Washington, DC on January 6, 2021. On June 6, 2022, a federal grand jury in Washington, DC indicted five members of the Proud Boys for seditious conspiracy and other charges associated with their role in breaching the Capitol (USDOJ, 2022).

The Summer of Love rally was scheduled on the one-year anniversary of violent clashes between far-right activists and counterprotesters at a “Back the Blue” rally in downtown Portland the previous year (Shepherd, 2020). Before the Summer of Love rally, Police Chief Chuck Lovell and Mayor Ted Wheeler issued statements encouraging counterprotesters to stay away. Mayor Wheeler, who also serves as police commissioner, noted that police would take a hands-off approach to the rally: “You should not expect to see police officers standing in the middle of the crowd trying to keep people apart. People need to keep themselves apart and avoid physical confrontation.” Chief Lovell added that “it’s not necessarily the best tactical approach to have officers wading into situations where groups are clashing with each other” and that police would conduct follow-up investigations and make arrests later as needed.⁵

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWBLnFFykDk>.

In the absence of police, violence erupted between rally attendees and counterprotesters. According to an affidavit filed later by prosecutors, “several members of the crowd were wearing tactical, armored vests and other equipment and were openly carrying paintball guns and other weapons including baseball bats, explosive devices, bear spray, firearms, and other blunt weapons” (Oregon v. Toese, 2022). Rally participants used these weapons to assault counterprotesters and vandalize vehicles. One participant fired a handgun at counterprotesters in downtown Portland, one of whom returned fire (Haas & Levinson, 2021; Mackey, 2021). Though police did not intervene in the intergroup conflict as it unfolded, they did make some arrests later.

According to one journalist, in adopting a hands-off approach to the event, the Portland Police Department:

abandoned its duty to secure the streets and officers made no effort to stop assaults on residents by members of the far-right Proud Boys gang, many of whom had traveled from around the country to live out their fantasies of attacking anti-fascist protesters. (Mackey, 2021)

Despite widespread criticism of the Portland Police Bureau’s approach to the event, Mayor and Police Commissioner Ted Wheeler initially defended the approach, arguing that with “strategic planning and oversight” he and the police department “mitigated confrontation between the two events and minimized the impact of the weekend’s events to Portlanders” (Bernstein, 2021). Following significant backlash from the public and the media, Mayor Wheeler later acknowledged that they had chosen the wrong approach (Koch, 2021).

Coeur d’Alene, Idaho

On June 11, 2022, members of the Patriot Front planned to disrupt the North Idaho “Pride in the Park” event in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center (2022c), the Patriot Front is a “white nationalist hate group that formed in the aftermath of the deadly ‘Unite the Right’ rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, of August

12, 2017”. The group advocates for the creation of a white ethnostate that embraces the identity of its European founders and excludes others “who are not of the founding stock of our people”.⁶ One group that tracks extremist activity notes that the Patriot Front increased its training in “close-quarter” combat and related activities five-fold in 2021 (ACLED, 2022). The planned attempt to disrupt the event in Coeur D’Alene was part of a more general upsurge in right-wing extremism targeting the LGBTQ community in the United States (ACLED, 2022; Hart et al., 2022; Romano, 2022).

On the day of the Pride in the Park event in Coeur D’Alene, a concerned citizen called 911 to report a group of men engaged in suspicious activity. According to police reports, the caller reported “a large group of similarly dressed masked individuals armed with shields entering the back of a U-Haul van heading toward downtown Coeur D’Alene”. Acting on this information, Coeur D’Alene police stopped the truck and discovered 31 Patriot Front members inside. Police also discovered a smoke grenade, shields, metal sticks, helmets, and an operational plan outlining what the group planned to do at the event (Edwards, 2022). Based on their investigation, they arrested all 31 occupants and charged them with conspiracy to riot, a misdemeanor (CPD, 2021).

During a press conference held after the arrests, Coeur D’Alene Police Chief Lee White noted that his agency had received numerous anonymous phone calls from people angry about the arrests and threatening his life and the lives of his officers. Chief White emphasized that, in making these arrests, his agency was not taking sides; instead they were attempting to behave in a neutral manner in an effort to promote public safety:

It’s not our jobs here as law enforcement to take sides or support one viewpoint or the other. We are required to remain completely apolitical and neutral. And that’s what we do in our jobs, and that’s what we did in this enforcement action. I would tell you that whether the van was loaded full of people who are part of that far right hate group, or if it was

⁶ <https://patriotfront.us/manifesto>.

loaded with people from Antifa, for instance, who wanted to come here and riot. It would be handled exactly the same.⁷

As this chapter was being finalized, five of the defendants had already been convicted and criminal cases against the remaining defendants were still in process. (Che, 2023).

4 Discussion

Intergroup hate serves as the glue that binds together hate group members and gives them a sense of mission. That hate is typically targeted toward outgroups based on their racial, ethnic, religious, tribal, political, or sexual identity. Intergroup hate often results when an ingroup feels threatened by one or more outgroups (Fischer et al., 2018). For instance, research evidence shows that, in the United States, the number of hate crimes rose substantially during President Donald Trump's administration. Feinberg et al. (2022) found that President Trump's divisive rhetoric "activated attentive whites' sense of threat and prejudice toward racial, ethnic, and religious minorities and encouraged a number of people to act on that threat" (p. 263). Research has also found that white supremacists react to perceived "threats in their environment that challenge traditional white privilege" by mobilizing in the form of rallies, marches, protests, and riots (Boutcher et al., 2017, p. 697; also see Hubbard, 2005; Pardy, 2011; van Dyke & Soule, 2002). The Anti-Defamation League (2022a) estimates that there were 109 "white supremacist events" in the United States in 2021, up from a mean of 75 over the previous four years.

These types of events have a variety of deleterious effects. They promote fear and anxiety among the targets of hate, they bolster hate crimes perpetrated by people unaffiliated with hate groups, they often turn violent, and they represent a significant challenge for law enforcement. This chapter has presented three brief case studies of recent hate rallies held in the United States by different groups. They include an

⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gy9JZ6OTWro>.

NSM rally in Phoenix, Arizona; a Proud Boys rally in Portland, Oregon; and a planned Patriot Front mobilization in Coeur D'Alene, Idaho. The nature of these events, and the police response to them, differed widely. But all three events involved hate groups seeking to express their sense of intergroup hate in public settings. Together with theory and research from the study of crowds, these case studies are useful for deriving lessons about policing hate rallies.

Theory and Research from the Study of Crowds

When police respond to crowd events, they often rely on generic civil disorder or riot control *tactics* that tend to inflame tensions rather than de-escalate conflict and prevent violence. In focusing so intently on tactics, police often do not rely on carefully thought-out *strategies* for handling crowd events (Maguire & Oakley, 2020; Maguire, 2022a). Strategy development involves establishing clear goals and planning how to achieve them (Slevin & Pinto, 1987). In other settings, such as business and the military, it is well known that tactics should flow from strategies (Larsdotter, 2019; Nutt, 1989; Slevin & Pinto, 1987). One of the principal shortcomings in the response of US law enforcement agencies to crowd events, including hate rallies, is a tendency to focus on tactics in the absence of clear and coherent crowd management strategies (Maguire & Oakley, 2020; Maguire, 2022a). Thinking strategically about these events involves determining the optimal level of *accommodation* to provide to groups seeking to express their speech and assembly rights. Research shows that too little accommodation can increase the likelihood of conflict because crowds may rebel against what they perceive as an unjust or oppressive exercise of authority by the police. At the same time, too much accommodation can result in an overly permissive environment in which crowd members believe they can violate the law with impunity (for a discussion of the concept of accommodation as applied to crowd events, see Maguire, 2022b).

The most important goal when policing hate rallies and other types of crowd events is the preservation of life. This includes the lives of rally

attendees, counterprotesters, police officers, and bystanders. To accomplish this goal, the police must be thoughtful about how best to prevent violence and the injuries that are likely to result from it. Violence at these events often erupts between different groups, including attendees, counterprotesters, and the police. It is well known that violence is more likely when rival protest groups are present. The presence of multiple groups with different identities, interests, and perspectives—including a hate group, a rival group, and the police—dramatically increases the likelihood of violence between one or more of the dyads involved in the event (Maguire, 2022a). Another fundamental goal when policing crowd events is to preserve and protect people's speech and assembly rights, which in the United States are enshrined in the First Amendment to the Constitution. Put differently, the police must not only be seen as tolerating, but as actively seeking to *facilitate* these rights (Maguire & Oakley, 2020). Depending on the setting, other strategic goals may also be relevant, including preventing crimes against property (vandalism, theft, and arson), ensuring the flow of traffic for emergency vehicles (police, fire, and emergency medical services), and other goals associated with maintaining public safety and public order.

To accomplish these goals, the police can draw on a large body of scientific evidence from the study of crowd psychology and behavior (e.g., Drury & Reicher, 2000, 2009; Stott & Drury, 2000). For instance, they can build thoughtful, multifaceted strategies based on the evidence-based framework developed by Reicher et al. (2004) for policing crowd events. The framework includes four elements: education, facilitation, communication, and differentiation. *Education* refers to the need for the police to educate themselves about the social identities, behaviors, and goals of the groups expected to attend the event, including hate groups and those who are there to protest against them. This often means developing a greater capacity for intelligence gathering to ensure that they are not taken by surprise by crowd events, including hate rallies. *Facilitation* refers to the need for the police to be viewed by groups attending the event as actively seeking to help them observe their right to assemble and speak their mind in a peaceful and lawful manner. Any attempt by the police to stand in the way of people's speech and assembly rights will trigger conflict and potentially violence. *Communication* refers to the

need to communicate with the various segments of the crowd before, during, and after an event. *Differentiation* refers to the need for the police to customize their response to crowd events, treating those who are breaking the law differently from those who are behaving in a peaceful and lawful manner. A common mistake is for the police to take enforcement action against an entire crowd in response to the illegal conduct of only a few crowd members. This is a recipe for escalating tensions and triggering conflict and violence. The four-part approach recommended by Reicher et al. (2004) provides a useful strategic framework for developing thoughtful police strategies for handling crowd events, including hate rallies.

Lessons from the Three Case Studies

The three case studies that I provided earlier in this chapter provide a useful context for thinking about how the police should respond to hate rallies. In Phoenix, the police attempted to communicate with various stakeholders prior to the rally. They worked closely with local faith-based groups, including the Jewish community, to help these groups plan their response to the rally. To help prevent violence, the Phoenix Police Department's CRS actively encouraged these groups not to attend the rally and not to engage in face-to-face counter-protest activity. CRS detectives also sought to reach out to other groups, including anti-fascists, but were unsuccessful in doing so. They contacted members of the NSM prior to the event to make sure they understood the group's plans and could respond accordingly. This outreach very likely helped prevent violence on the day of the rally. For example, when the rally ended and the NSM members had left the area, one of them realized he had lost his telephone. He notified a CRS detective that he was coming back to the park to find his phone. Because counterprotesters had already begun to arrive at the park, the CRS detective encouraged the NSM member not to come back. Instead, the detective told him that the police would find the phone and bring it to him. This decision prevented NSM members and counterprotesters from coming face-to-face with one another and likely prevented conflict.

In Portland, the mayor and police chief chose not to deploy officers at a Proud Boys rally where counterprotesters planned to mobilize. The two groups ended up in a violent conflict with one another that resulted in injuries and property damage. Members of both groups fired handguns at one another in downtown Portland. Fortunately, nobody was hit. The dangerous decision not to deploy police to this event violates one of the most basic principles of policing rival protests, which is ensuring that opposing groups remain physically separated from one another (Maguire, 2022a). This is a lesson that was learned most dramatically during the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville and has been applied to good effect in many cities since then. The decision not to deploy officers to the rally also raises a compelling ethical issue. The decision appears primarily motivated by concerns about officer safety. While officer safety is a vital consideration, choosing not to deploy officers to an event that is likely to turn violent is tantamount to saying that officer safety is *more* important than public safety. The decision not to prioritize public safety is why the mayor and police chief faced such intense backlash after the rally.

In Coeur D'Alene, police did not have intelligence ahead of time to indicate that the Patriot Front was planning to disrupt an LGBTQ pride event. Yet, a concerned citizen noticed the group mobilizing at a nearby hotel and notified the police, who responded quickly, making a vehicle stop that resulted in 31 arrests and which clearly prevented violence. The Patriot Front is known to engage in flash demonstrations “in which group members appear and protest quickly, then leave” (Bombard, 2022). This approach often takes local officials by surprise. It is difficult for the police to prepare properly for events like this when they do not have sufficient intelligence that violence may be imminent. Thus, one question that arises is to what extent federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies could adopt more robust intelligence-gathering and intelligence-sharing practices on hate groups to enable local officials to prepare for such events.

The three case studies are useful for thinking about some of the challenging issues that arise when policing hate rallies. Whenever possible,

police should educate themselves about the groups that plan to mobilize in their communities, including hate groups and those that plan to engage in counter-protests. This is easier when groups announce their planned events publicly (as in Phoenix and Portland) and more difficult when groups engage in flash demonstrations (as in Coeur D'Alene). When the police are aware that hate rallies are being planned, they should work closely with rally organizers and counterprotesters to facilitate their speech and assembly rights, while also clearly articulating what types of behaviors will not be tolerated. The goal is to establish an optimal level of accommodation that seeks to avoid undesirable outcomes. Under-accommodating these groups may generate a defiant reaction that increases the likelihood of conflict. Over-accommodating these groups (as in Portland) may create an overly permissive environment and send an implicit message that anything goes. The goal, as explained well by Chief White in Coeur D'Alene, is for the police to be seen as neutral. Otherwise, rally attendees and/or counterprotesters are likely to turn their wrath toward them. This increases the likelihood of conflict and violence and magnifies officer safety concerns.

Whenever possible, the police should seek to communicate with hate rally and counter-protest groups before, during, and after the event. One of the questions that arises frequently in the police response to crowd events is *who* will be responsible for this communication. Many police departments do not have this function built into their organizational structure. In the Phoenix Police Department, however, the CRS is responsible for communicating with community groups, including protest groups and event organizers. Thus, when the NSM announced its rally in Phoenix, experienced CRS detectives reached out to the NSM and other community groups in an effort to learn about their plans. This enabled the police to develop a more informed response to the event. All police departments should have a structure in place that makes it clear who is responsible for communicating with protest organizers. Communication is one of the most effective means for preventing conflict and violence between police and crowds (Maguire & Oakley, 2020; Reicher et al., 2004).

5 Conclusion

Hate groups hold public rallies to express their views, bring attention to their cause, and, in some cases, to engage in violence against groups holding opposing views. These events have a variety of deleterious effects on communities and the police. For communities, they run the risk of becoming violent and they generate fear and trauma among those who are targeted by expressions of hate. For the police, hate rallies raise numerous challenges, including officer safety issues. These challenges are intensified when crowd members are armed and rival groups are present. This chapter has presented three case studies of hate rallies held recently in the United States. Drawing on these studies, as well as theory and research on the study of crowds, we have discussed how the police can develop more informed, strategic responses to hate rallies. Such responses are crucial for preventing conflict and violence and honoring people's speech and assembly rights.

Key Takeaways

Police Officers

- Adopt a neutral stance toward hate rally attendees and counterprotesters.
- Try to avoid engaging in any behaviors that turn the animus of rally attendees or counterprotesters toward the police.
- Try to establish an optimal level of accommodation for rally attendees and counterprotesters. Under-accommodating them may instigate conflict and violence. Over-accommodating them may establish an overly permissive environment and foster a sense of lawlessness.

Conflict Management Trainers

- Teach officers how to communicate with hate rally attendees and counterprotesters in a neutral manner;
- Teach officers how to avoid instigating unnecessary conflict with hate rally attendees and counterprotesters;

- Teach officers about basic crowd psychology principles to help them make good choices when working at crowd events, including hate rallies.

Police Decision-Makers

- Assign a specific unit with the task of communicating with groups involved in crowd events. Ensure that the people selected for this function are calm, emotionally intelligent, and skilled at interpersonal and intergroup communication. These people will serve as the bridge between the police agency and the crowd.
- Drawing on principles from crowd psychology and lessons learned from previous events, develop comprehensive strategies for responding to crowd events, including hate rallies. Ensure that all tactics used for handling these events are consistent with the underlying strategies.
- Set a clear tone for the agency about the importance of accommodating groups participating in crowd events. Ensure that personnel understand the importance of finding a middle ground between under-accommodating and over-accommodating. Under-accommodation can promote unnecessary conflict and violence between police and groups seeking to express their speech and assembly rights. Over-accommodation can establish an overly permissive environment that promotes a sense of lawlessness.

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