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Community Risk Factors for Hate Crimes: Race/Ethnic and Economic Change

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Community Risk Factors for Hate Crimes:  
Race/Ethnic and Economic Change

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### Abstract

Research on the relationship between community race/ethnic and economic change and the base rates of hate crimes has been rarely studied in the social sciences. The present study examined the role of race/ethnic and economic change in Los Angeles between 1990 and 2000 to determine their relationship to hate crime occurrence. Data collected from Los Angeles hate crime reports, including victim and offender race/ethnicity, the level of severity, and the level of bias, were combined with census data for the 1990 and 2000 censuses for race/ethnic and economic change in the corresponding census tract in which the hate crime/incident occurred. No relationship was found between economic change and hate crimes. While differences among victim race/ethnicity (White, African American, and Hispanic) and their corresponding race/ethnic change (decreasing, stable, or increasing) were largely not significant, there were significant differences between African American and White offenders and their corresponding change in race/ethnic population.

This study seeks to extend the research of Nikolova (2004) by looking at the changes in ethnic populations that led to the Los Angeles hate crimes in 1999. While Nikolova was able to draw some conclusions about a community's risk for hate crimes based on the ethnic composition around the time of the 1999 hate crimes, her study only looks at the demographics at one point in time. This study attempts to test whether Nikolova's findings still hold when taking into account the changes in a community's demographics over the ten years prior to the hate crime occurrences. While Nikolova's study was only able to lend partial support for the defended-neighborhood hypothesis, further investigation is needed to test the conflicting theories relating ethnic change to hate crime occurrence. Whether minorities are at greater risk when their numbers remain small, as the power-differential hypothesis predicts, or if their risk increases when their numbers increase, as the power-threat and defended-neighborhood hypotheses suggest, is still open to debate. This study attempts to test the varied hypotheses regarding ethnic change and hate crime occurrence.

Existing studies focus on the relationship between hate crime victims and their racial/ethnic position (see references). Most analyses concentrate on areas where Whites are the predominate group and thus make conclusions about White hate crime offenders only. The present study examines offender race/ethnicity separately in relation to hate crime occurrence. Los Angeles is a diverse city in which some areas are predominately African American or Hispanic. This allowed for the examination of African American and Hispanic offenders committing hate crimes in areas in which their race/ethnicity is in the majority. This study also looked specifically at White offenders in relation to White population change rather than making assumptions about White offenders based on minority victims.

Further, much controversy continues to follow the findings of Hovland and Sears (1940). While Hovland and Sears's study concluded a strong link between economics and hate crimes, studies such as those done by Green, Glaser, and Rich (1998) have since questioned the validity of the frustration-aggression hypothesis. The present study extends Green's study by looking at the relationship between economic change and hate crimes occurring in Los Angeles. This will help to determine whether Green's findings in New York City apply in this setting as well.

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

- (1) Is there a relationship between economic change and hate crime occurrence? Specifically, what is the relationship between changes in the percent below poverty level and the unemployment rate between 1990 and 2000, and the levels of severity and bias in hate crimes/incidents occurring in Los Angeles in 1999?
- (2) Is there a relationship between the race/ethnicity of victims of hate crimes/incidents and changes (decreasing, stable, or increasing) in their race/ethnic population between 1990 and 2000? For example, are White victims of hate crimes/incidents more likely to be victimized in areas in which their population is decreasing compared to areas in which the white population is stable or increasing?
- (3) Is there a relationship between hate crime/incident offenders' race/ethnicity and changes (decreasing, stable, or increasing) in their racial/ethnic population between 1990 and 2000? For example, are White offenders more likely to commit hate crimes in areas in which the White population is decreasing rather than areas in which the White population is stable or increasing?

Method

Sample

Five hundred and fifty-seven hate crimes and hate incidents reported to the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) during the calendar year 1999 were used for this study (see Figure 1 for a map of these hate crimes/incidents). Cases identified as bias-motivated were collected by the Criminal Conspiracy Section of the LAPD. These cases were subsequently reviewed by a University of California, Los Angeles research team led by Edward Dunbar and coded on multiple measures.

Hate Crime/Incidents in Los Angeles 1999

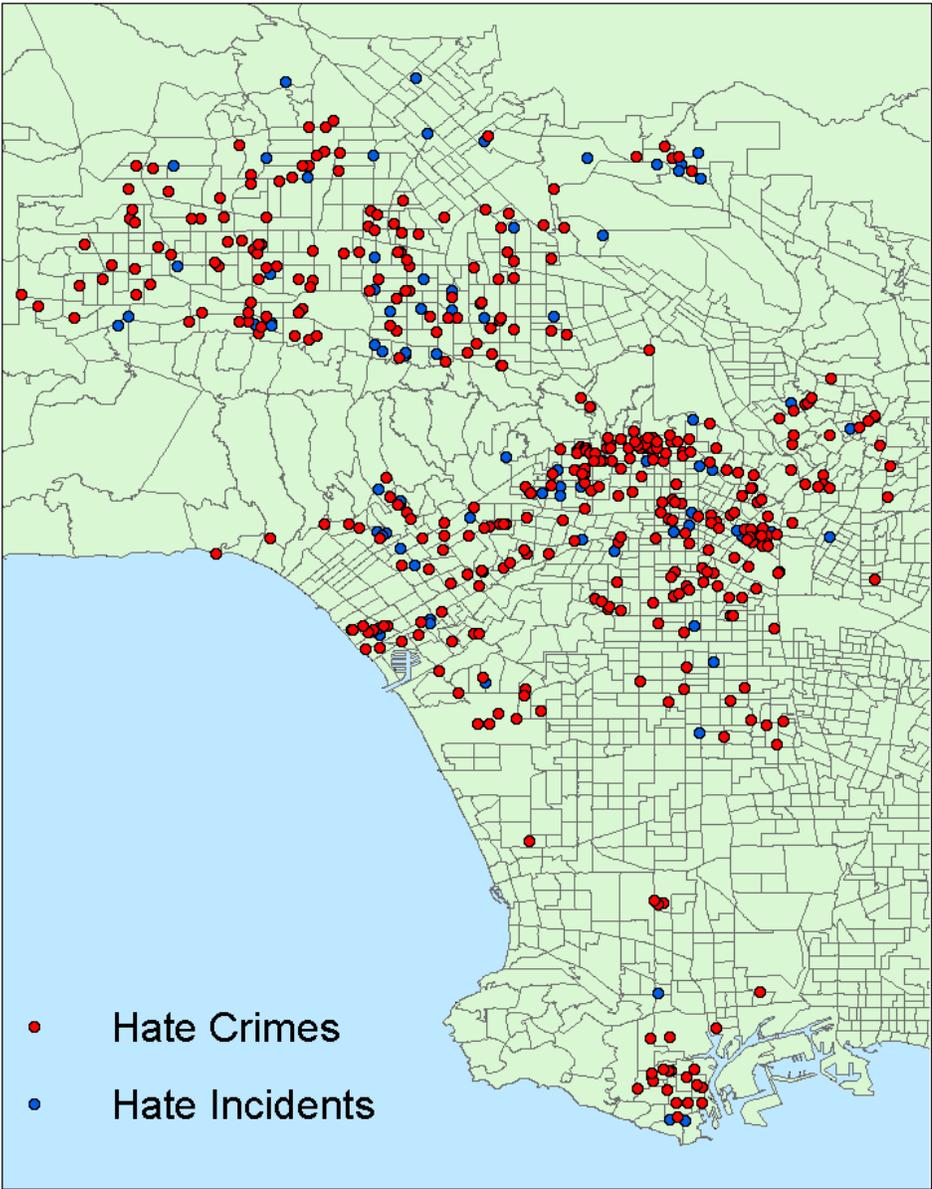


Figure 1. Hate crimes and incidents reported to the LAPD in 1999.

In this sample, 532 cases include information about the victims (315 male, 154 female, 5 male and female, and 58 institutions). There were 192 White victims, 136 African American victims, and 88 Hispanic victims (See Figure 2). This subset of the sample was used in analyzing research question two; that is, cases in which the victim was of another race/ethnicity or was an institution, such as a church, were excluded from the analysis for this research question.

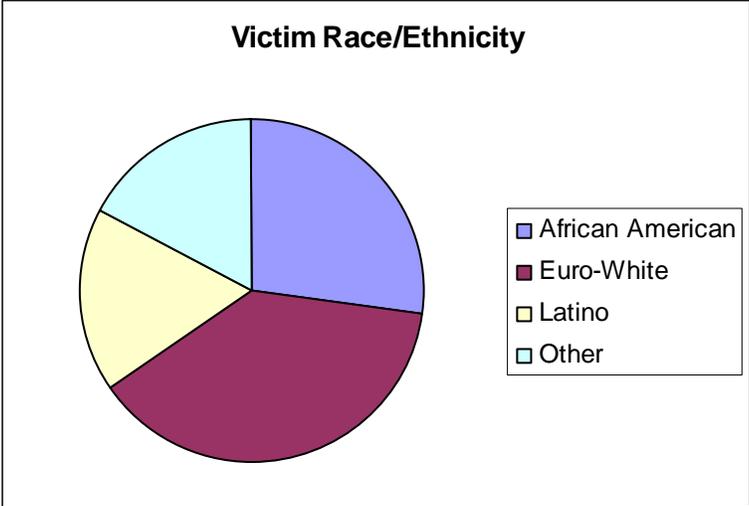


Figure 2. Hate crime/victim race/ethnicities.

Further, only 362 out of the 557 hate crimes had known offenders (307 male, 53 female, and two males and females). Of these cases, 150 hate crimes/incidents were committed by White offenders, 57 hate crime/incidents were committed by African American offenders and 92 hate crimes/incidents were committed by Hispanic offenders (see Figure 3). This subset of the sample was used in analyzing research question three.

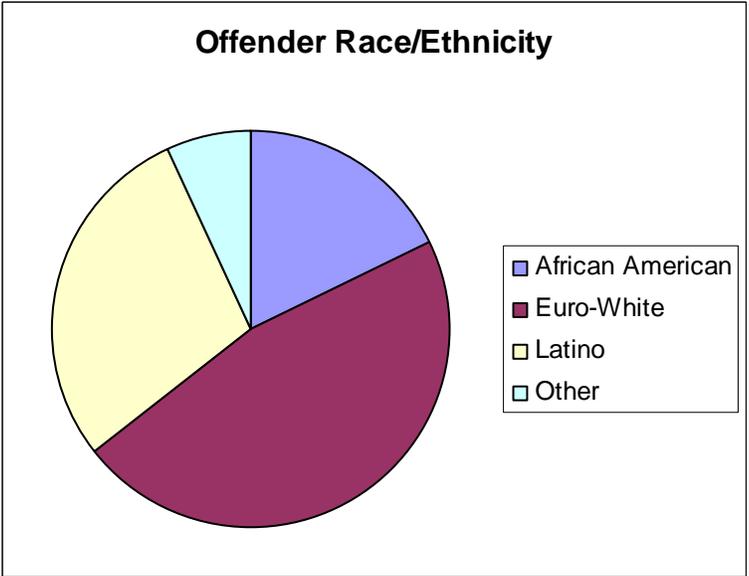


Figure 3. Hate crime/incident offender ethnicity.

### *Measures*

The following items were coded from the hate crime/incident reports:

*Crime Scene Variables:* The location of the crime, victim and offender demographics (including gender, age, race/ethnicity, and the number of victims and offenders), the bias intent (i.e. targeted victim group), the criminal charge (if any), event frequency, and presence or absence of drugs at the scene of the crime were recorded.

*Bias Motivation Profile* (Dunbar, 1999): The Bias Motivation Profile (BMP) measures the degree of bias the offender exhibits in the commission of the hate crime/incident. The BMP is coded on twelve items considered signifiers of bias motivation, such as “manifested hate speech during commission of offense” and “presence of hate paraphernalia/symbols.” These items are scored on a 3-point scale, in which a “0” signifies the absence of the intended bias element, a “1” indicates a possible or partial presence of the bias element, and a “2” indicates a clear presence of the bias element.

*Cormier-Lang Severity Scale* (Quincey, Harris, Rice, and Cormier, 1998): This scale measures the severity of a crime by coding for the specific events occurring during the crime (such as assault or petty theft). Each event is given a number indicating the magnitude of the severity in the act. The events are divided into two groups: group one consists of violent crimes, such as assault with a deadly weapon or robbery, and group two consists of non-violent crimes, such as trafficking narcotics or vandalism. These numbers are then summed (if more than one act occurred in the crime) to find the levels of severity for violent and non-violent events as well as the combined overall level of severity present in the crime.

*Census Data:* Demographic information was obtained from the U.S. census website ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)) for the unemployment rates and percent below poverty level for the 2000 census. In addition, the following demographic information was obtained from the Geolytics Neighborhood Change Database: non-Hispanic White, non-Hispanic African American, and Hispanic percent of the population for 1990 and 2000 by census tract for Los Angeles County, the percent below poverty level by census tract for 1990 and the unemployment rates by census tract for 1990. The exclusion of Asian demographics from this study was not an oversight. Unfortunately, the particular Geolytics Neighborhood Change Database used in this study did not have figures for the non-Hispanic Asian population by census tract for 1990. Though the exclusion of Asians in this study is regrettable, the hate crime data contained few Asian victims (33) and offenders (6).

### *Procedure*

The collection of hate crime reports begins with the recognition that a crime/incident was motivated by bias. Hate crimes/incidents are first identified as including bias motivation by the reporting officer. The report is then sent to the watch commander and Detective Headquarters Division. The presence of bias motivation in the crime is then evaluated by the watch commander, followed by a division hate crime coordinator. If the report is determined to contain a bias element, it is then sent to the Criminal Conspiracy Section, where a further review of the presence of bias in the crime is conducted. If they determine that the crime/incident was not motivated by bias, the report is declassified and no longer filed as a hate crime/incident.

Hate crime/incident reports collected during 1999 by the Criminal Conspiracy Section were reviewed by the research team onsite at the Criminal Conspiracy Section in downtown Los Angeles. Researchers reviewed the reports in teams of two. Each person

reviewed and coded one report on a variety of measures, then switched reports. After coding the two reports separately, the researchers discussed any differences in coding, and agreed on a value for the master datasheet. Thus, consensus among two researchers was achieved for each item measured.

The research team's hate crime data was then entered into an Excel file for further analysis. This study involved combining the crime scene indicators, the BMP, and the Cormier Lang scores from this dataset with U.S. census data for 1990 and 2000. This data was then mapped using the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) computer program ArcGIS.

In order to map the hate crime data, the crime locations for the hate crime and hate incidents occurring in 1999 were geocoded into the ArcView program, allowing the crime locations to be viewed on a map of Los Angeles. This was done by importing a shape file street map of the United States, as well as the census tracts for Los Angeles County, which were obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau website. The census tracts for the crime location addresses were also obtained from this website and entered into the dataset. The crime location addresses were then geocoded using an address locator which matched the addresses in the data set with those on the street map in ArcView. The crime locations appear as dots on the map of Los Angeles in the geographic area in which the hate crime/incident occurred.

To compare the hate crime data with corresponding demographic information from the 1990 and 2000 census tracts, use of special software was required. This is because the designated census tracts for 1990 and 2000 differ, so a direct comparison is not possible. The Ralph and Goldy Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies kindly provided use of the Geolytics Neighborhood Change Database. This program contains the 1990 census tracts normalized to the 2000 census tracts allowing the demographic data for each census to be directly compared. From this program demographic information, including race/ethnicity for the 1990 and 2000 Los Angeles County census tracts and percent below poverty level and unemployment rates for the 1990 LA County census tracts, was compiled. This data was converted to an Excel file and combined with the hate crimes dataset by matching the demographic information with the corresponding crime location's census tract. It was subsequently imported into ArcView in order to map specific variables. The dataset was then converted to SPSS for statistical analysis.

### Results

The first research question examined the relationship between economic change and hate crimes. A direct measure of the effect of economic change on hate crime base rates was not possible because I did not have access to information about all crimes occurring in Los Angeles in 1999 to use as a comparison. Due to this, indirect measures of hate crime levels were used, specifically, the severity of the hate crimes and the level of bias present in the crime.

I first tested the relationship between the change in percent below poverty level between 1990 and 2000 and the severity of the hate crimes/incidents, measured by the Cormier Lang Scale (Quincey, Harris, Rice, and Cormier, 1998), for hate crimes/incidents occurring in the corresponding census tracts in Los Angeles. There was not a significant correlation between the change in percent below poverty level and the level of severity [ $r(542) = .011, p = .794$ ]. Further, when broken down into violent and non-violent hate crimes/incidents, there was still no relationship between the change in

percent below poverty level and the level of severity for each group of hate crimes/incidents.

Correlations between both the level of severity for violent hate crimes/incidents (Cormier Lang group one) and the level of severity for non-violent hate crimes/incidents (Cormier Lang group two) and the change in percent below poverty level were not significant,  $r(542) = .014$ ,  $p = .745$  for violent hate crimes/incidents and  $r(542) = .005$ ,  $p = .916$  for non-violent hate crime/incidents.

Similarly, no relationship was found between the change in percent unemployed between 1990 and 2000 and the level of severity present in the hate crimes/incidents occurring in the same census tract. A correlation between the change in percent unemployed and the level of severity (measured by the Cormier Lang Scale) was also not significant [ $r(542) = -.008$ ,  $p = .859$ ]. I also examined the relationship between unemployment rates and the severity of violent and non-violent hate crime/incidents separately. As expected, there was not a significant correlation between change in unemployment rates and the severity of violent hate crimes/incidents (Cormier Lang group one),  $r(542) = .017$ ,  $p = .692$ . Further, there was not a significant correlation between change in unemployment rates and non-violent hate crimes/incidents (Cormier Lang group two),  $r(542) = -.037$ ,  $p = .385$ .

Overall, no relationship between the measures of economic change and hate crime/incident severity was found. To examine this further, correlations between the measures of economic change and the level of bias present in the hate crime/incident, measured by the BMP (Dunbar, 1999), in the corresponding census tracts were computed. This analysis did not reveal a significant difference between the change in percent below poverty level and the BMP,  $r(471) = -.012$ ,  $p = .800$ . A correlation between the change in percent unemployed and hate crimes/incidents' BMP score also did not reveal a significant correlation,  $r(471) = -.004$ ,  $p = .930$ . In sum, no relationship was found between the level of bias or the level of severity for the hate crime and economic changes.

Research question two looked at the relationship between a hate-crime victim's race/ethnicity and the corresponding racial/ethnic change between 1990 and 2000. The original intent of this study was to examine changes between the specific levels of race/ethnicity present first described by the defensed-neighborhood hypothesis, i.e., 0-20% minority status, 20-30% in a race/ethnic tipping condition, 30-60% power-sharing status, and 60-100% in the majority. However, after assigning each crime's corresponding census tract a defensed-neighborhood status for each race/ethnicity (White, African American, and Hispanic) for both 1990 and 2000, it became apparent that to look at the groups in terms of change between categories would break the groups into sixteen categories, such as from minority to tipping, or tipping to power-sharing. Once computed, the number of groups in each category was often less than five, making chi-square analysis of differences among these groups not possible. Therefore, racial/ethnic change was divided into three groups: decreasing in population, stable population, and increasing population.

A further complication was not having a good baseline to compare race/ethnic victims to. Because I did not have data on all crimes reported to the LAPD, nor data on all census tracts under the LAPD's jurisdiction, each race/ethnic victim group was compared to all other victims of hate crimes in the dataset. For example, victims were

grouped into a categorical variable as either a White victim or non-White victims. These dichotomous variables were used for the following analyses.

Analysis of differences between White victims and non-White victims and the corresponding change in White population for the census tracts in which the victimization occurred found a marginally non-significant difference (see Figure 4). A chi-square of White victims (present or not present) and White change (decreasing, stable, or increasing) revealed  $\chi^2 (2, N=502) = 4.943, p = .084$ . The number of White victims in areas in which the White population decreased between 1990 and 2000 (128) was greater than the expected count (118.9). The number of White victims in areas where the White population was stable between 1990 and 2000 was less than expected (56 count compared to 66.9 expected count). The difference between the expected and present count for White victims was roughly the same for victimizations in areas where the White population is increasing, though the N was small; the expected count was 6.1 compared to 8 white victims present. These results were mapped to visually illustrate the presence of White victims in the census tracts in which the victimization occurred and the corresponding change in the White population (see Figure 5).

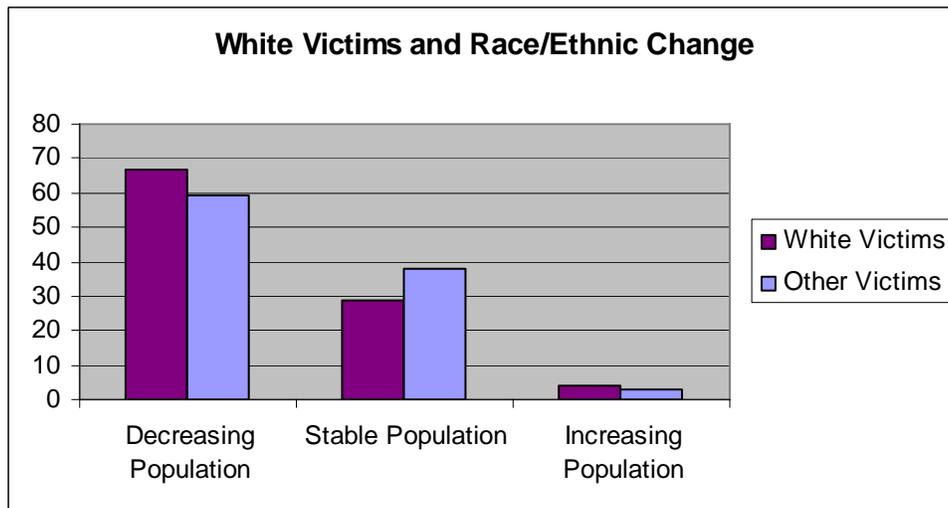


Figure 4. White victim and non-White victim percentage and corresponding change in White population between 1990 and 2000.

Differences among African American victims and non-African American victims and the change in African American population between 1990 and 2000 were not significant. Chi-square analysis between African American victims (present or not present) and African American change (decreasing, stable, or increasing) was found to be  $\chi^2 (2, N=502) = 3.541, p = .170$ . Finally, the difference between Hispanic victims and non-Hispanic victims and the corresponding change in Hispanic representation was also not significant. Chi-square analysis between Hispanic victims (present or not present) and Hispanic change (decreasing, stable, or increasing) were not significantly different,  $\chi^2 (2, N=502) = 4.322, p = .115$ .

### Hate Crime/Incidents in Los Angeles 1999

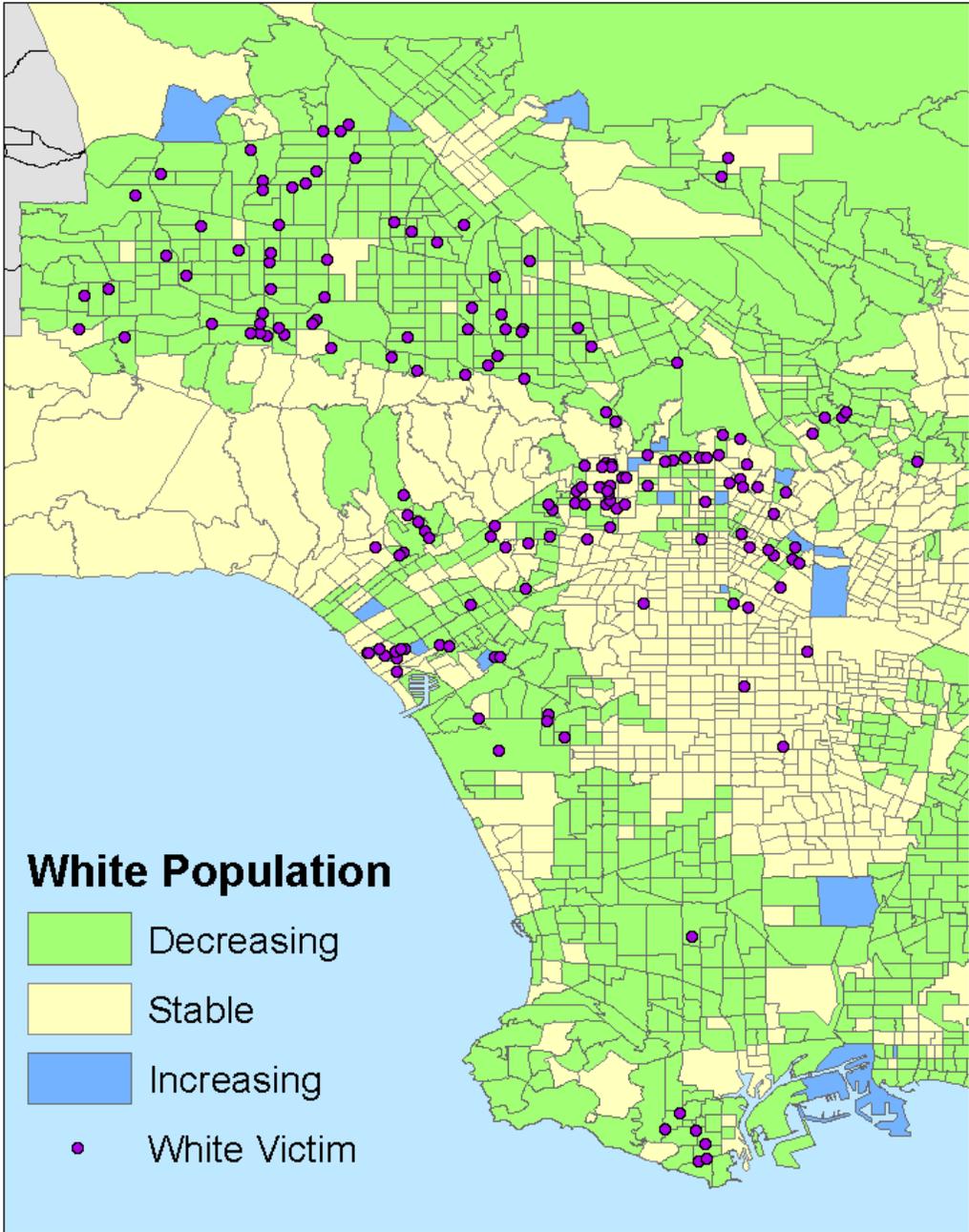


Figure 5. White victims and White population change between 1990 and 2000.

In sum, White victims showed a trend towards having a greater number of victimizations in areas where their population was decreasing between 1990 and 2000 rather than remaining stable. No differences were found among African American and Hispanic victims and their corresponding racial/ethnic groups' change.

Problems similar to those described above for the hate crime victims were also encountered for the hate crime offenders. The original intent of analyzing hate crime offenders in comparison to changes in defensed-neighborhood status was not possible, and groups categorized as decreasing, stable or increasing populations for ethnic change were used instead. Further, hate crime offenders of specific ethnicities (White, African American, and Hispanic) were individually compared to all other hate crime offenders as a baseline. For example, a dichotomous variable was created consisting of Hispanic or non-Hispanic offenders. The non-Hispanic offender category consisted of the cases of all other known offenders, not all other cases in the dataset. This was because for the many cases in which no offender was apprehended, it may be possible that the offender was Hispanic. This problem could make the comparison between Hispanic and non-Hispanic offenders inaccurate.

Analysis of the relationship between White offenders and non-White offenders and the change in White population between 1990 and 2000 found a significant difference between the two groups (see Figure 6). A chi-square analysis revealed a difference between White offenders (present or not present) and White population change by census tract (decreasing, stable, or increasing),  $\chi^2 (2, N=321) = 19.74, p=.000$ . The number of White offenders in census tracts with a decreasing White population was greater than the expected count (107 compared to 87.9 expected). In comparison, the number of White offenders present in the dataset who committed hate crimes/incidents in areas in which the White population was stable was less than the expected count; 38 White offenders present compared to the expected count of 57. The number of White offenders in areas in which the White population is increasing was as expected, with 5 offenders present and an expected count of 5.1. White offenders and changes in White population were mapped to illustrate this relationship (see Figure 7).

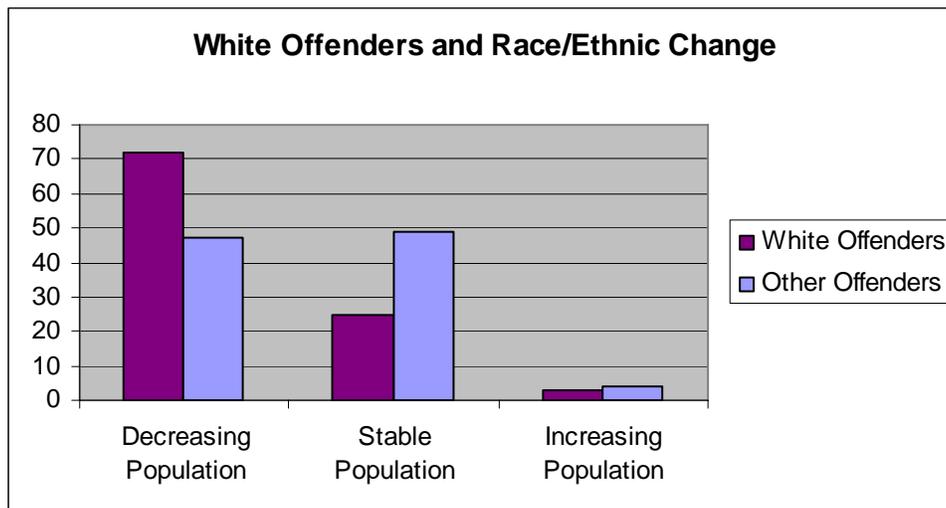


Figure 6. White and non-White offender percentages and corresponding change in White population between 1990 and 2000.

For African American offenders, a significant difference was found between African American offenders and other offenders and the corresponding change in African American population for the census tracts in which the crimes occurred (see Figure 8). A

chi-square analysis comparing African Americans (present or not present) and change in African American population (decreasing, stable, or increasing) revealed a significant

### Hate Crime/Incidents in Los Angeles 1999

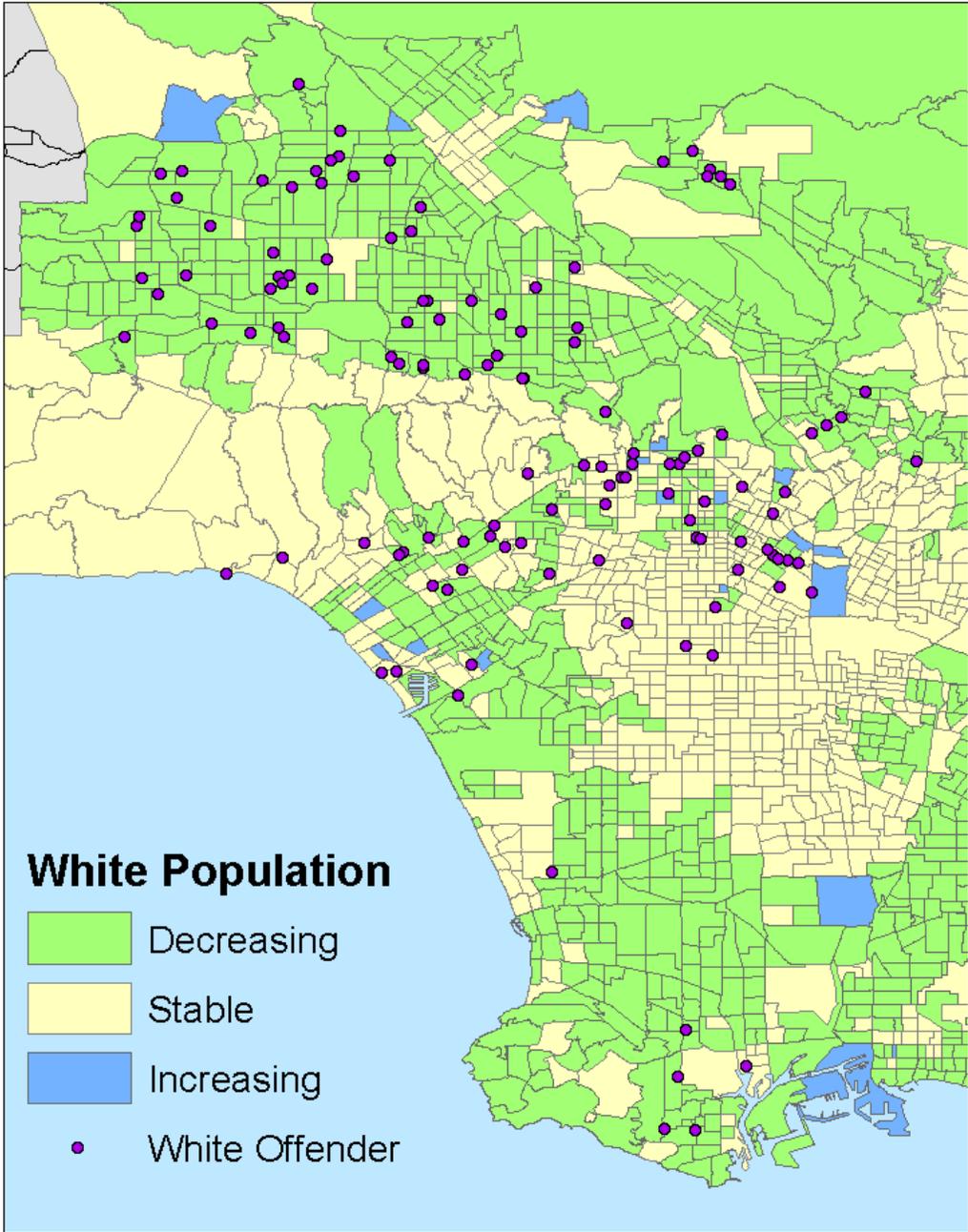


Figure 7. White offenders and White population change between 1990 and 2000.

difference,  $\chi^2(2, N=321)=22.12, p=.000$ . A greater number of African American offenders than expected committed hate crime/incidents in areas where the African

American population was decreasing; there were 21 African American offenders present compared to an expected count of 9.2. Also, there were fewer than expected African American offenders in areas where the African American population remained stable between 1990 and 2000; there were 29 African American offenders in stable populations compared to the expected 40.3. Finally, the number of African American offenders in areas in which the African American population was increasing (very few) as expected; seven African American offenders were present in stable populations and the expected count was 7.5. The hate crimes/incidents perpetrated by African American offenders and the corresponding change in African American population were mapped to illustrate this relationship (see figure 9).

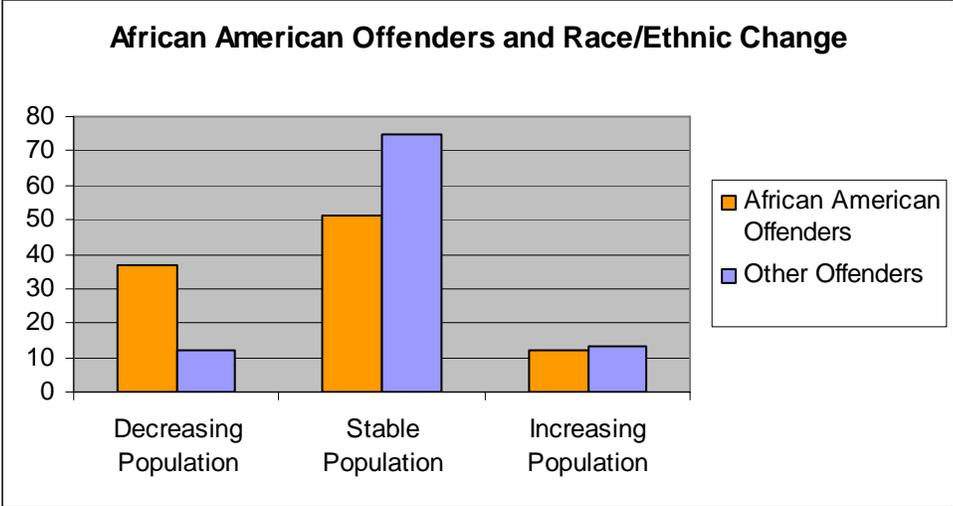


Figure 8. African American and non-African American hate crime offender percentages and corresponding change in African American population between 1990 and 2000.

### Hate Crime/Incidents in Los Angeles 1999

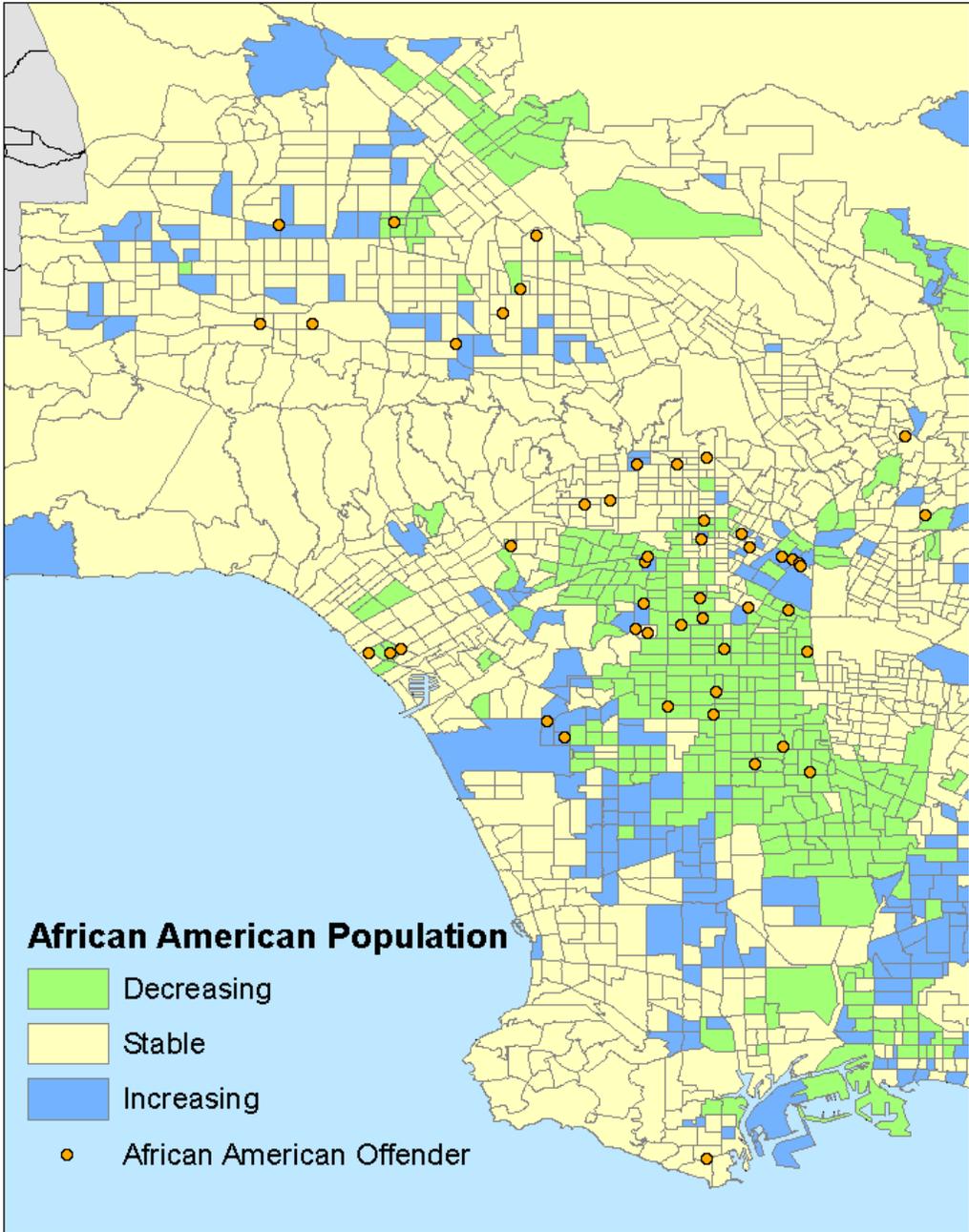


Figure 9. African American offenders and corresponding change in African American population.

Differences between Hispanic hate crime/incident offenders and non-Hispanic hate crime/incident offenders and changes in the corresponding census tract’s Hispanic population between 1990 and 2000 were marginally non-significant (see Figure 10). A

chi-square analysis between Hispanic offenders (present or not present) and corresponding Hispanic change (decreasing, stable, or increasing) revealed a marginally non-significant difference,  $\chi^2 (2, N=321)=5.16, p=.076$ .

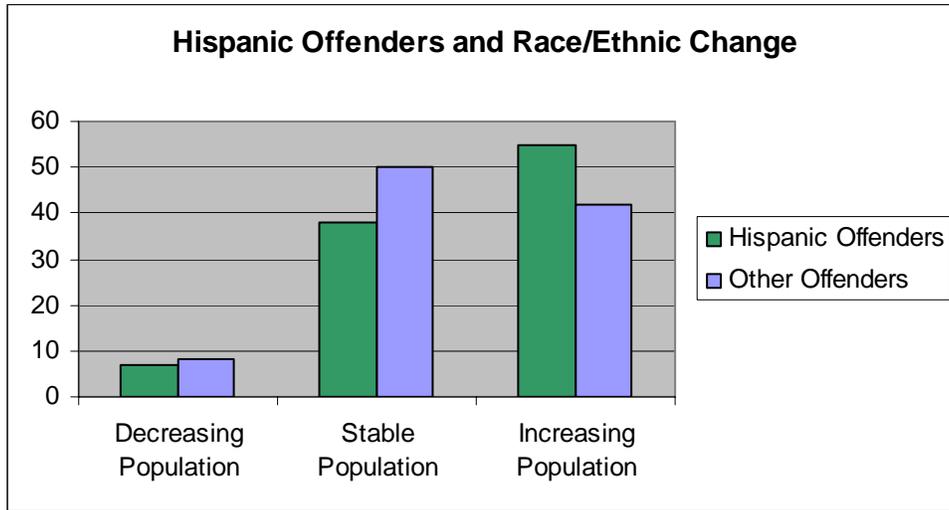


Figure 10. Hispanic and non-Hispanic hate crime offender percentages and corresponding change in Hispanic population between 1990 and 2000.

Though not significant, these results suggest a trend in which there was a greater than expected number of Hispanic offenders in areas of increasing Hispanic population; there were 51 Hispanic offenders in increasing populations compared to an expected count of 41.8. Fewer than expected Hispanic offenders committed hate crime/incidents in areas in which the Hispanic population was stable; 35 Hispanic offenders compared to 43 expected Hispanic offenders. The number of offenders in areas in which the Hispanic population is decreasing was about as expected (6 present compared to 7.2 expected

### Hate Crime/Incidents in Los Angeles 1999

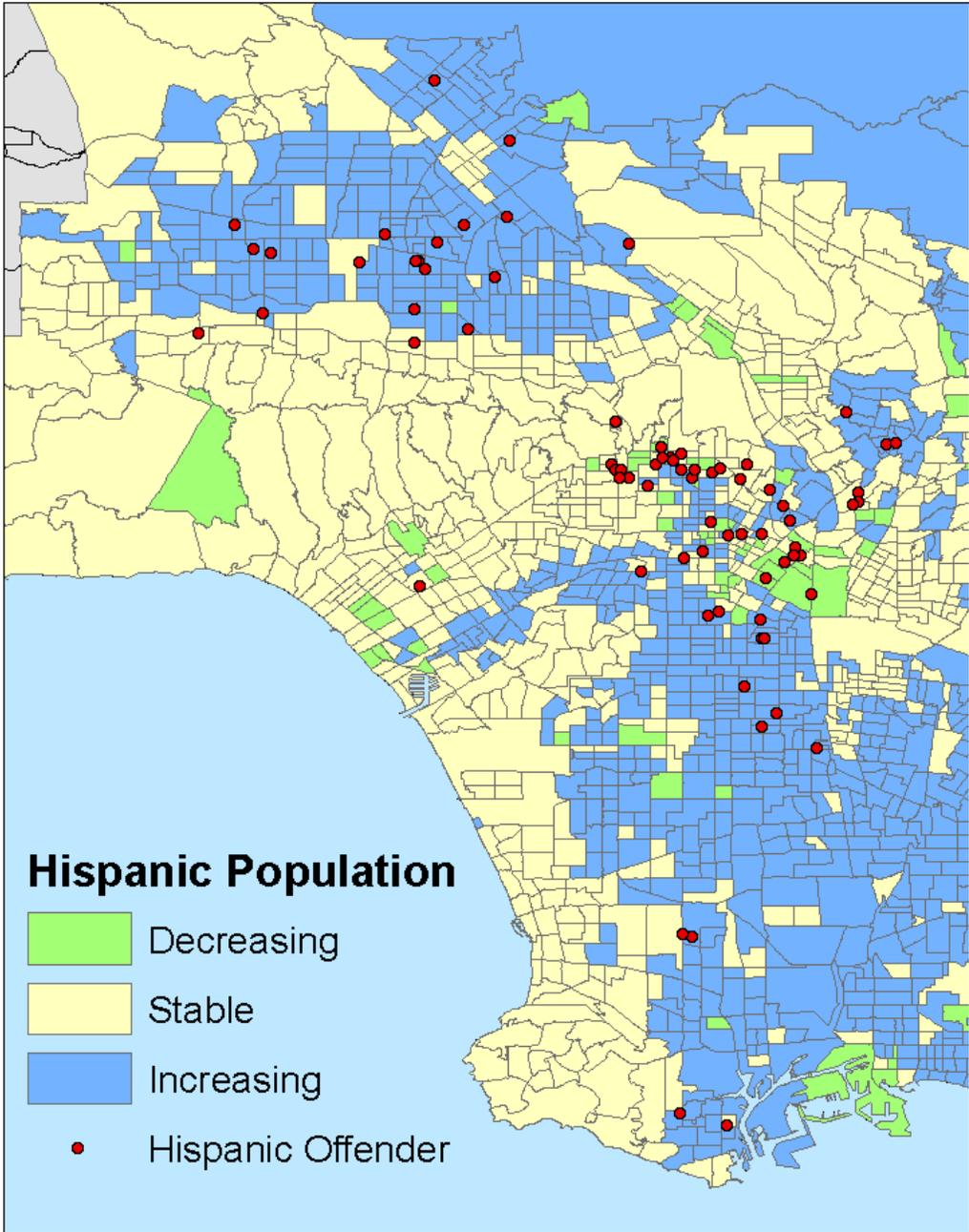


Figure 11. Hispanic hate crime offenders and corresponding Hispanic population change. (see figure 11).

In sum, both White and African American offenders were significantly more likely to offend in areas in which their racial/ethnic population was decreasing between 1990 and 2000. White and African American offenders were significantly less likely to commit hate crimes/incidents in areas in which their corresponding racial/ethnic population remained stable between 1990 and 2000. There was little difference between the expected and actual numbers of White and African American offenders in areas in which their racial/ethnic population was increasing, though for both groups these numbers were small. Finally, for Hispanic offenders, a trend in the opposite direction was observed. Hispanic offenders show a greater number than the expected count in areas where their population was increasing, compared to a similar number of expected and present offenders when their population was decreasing, though the number was small. Similar to White and African American offenders, the number of Hispanic offenders in areas in which the Hispanic population remained stable was less than expected.

#### Discussion

Although hate crimes and incidents constitute a small percentage of crime overall (.25% of all crimes occurring in Los Angeles in 1999), the widespread harm of hate crimes and hate incidents on communities warrants their study. Prejudicial acts have been present since the birth of our country and continue to harm relations between the diverse communities who live here. Identifying the factors that put a particular community at risk for hate crime victimization is an important step in finding solutions that will decrease the occurrence of hate crimes.

Research on the relationship between economics and hate crimes is surrounded by controversy. While a longstanding belief in the frustration-aggression hypothesis persists to this day, several studies have since discredited the findings of Hovland and Sears (1940) linking Southern lynchings to fluctuations in the cotton industry in support of the frustration-aggression hypothesis (such as Green, Glaser, and Rich, 1998). Common sense suggests that when people are struggling economically, they will lash out in anger against those who make an easy target. However, scientific research does not rely on common sense to answer its queries. When common sense is not supported by statistical findings, it must be questioned regardless of how intuitive it may seem.

The present study sought to question the prevailing view concerning economic hardships and hate crime occurrence. Recent studies such as Donald Green's (1998) have opened the debate for a theory that was once considered a very solid argument. This study continues this debate by presenting further evidence that the frustration-aggression hypothesis does not seem to explain the occurrence of hate crime in Los Angeles. I found no relationship between changes in economics, measured by percent below poverty level and unemployment rates, and the level of severity present in hate crimes. While using crime severity was an indirect measure of hate crime rates, these findings lend tentative support to the findings of Green, Glaser, and Rich. It may be that economic downturn does lead people to commit more crime, but possibly in a more indiscriminate manner rather than picking on specific groups out of prejudice. It may also be that economic frustrations lead not to hate crimes but to economic crimes such as robbery or burglary-crimes that could possibly lead to an improvement in the criminal's economic position. Finally, if Hovland and Sears' (1940) findings are correct, and there was a relationship between economic conditions in the South and the occurrence of lynchings, this

relationship may not carry over to areas outside of the South, such as New York City and Los Angeles. It may be that other factors in these non-Southern areas lead to the occurrence of hate crimes, such as race/ethnic change, rather than economic change.

My second and third research questions examined the relationship between race/ethnic change and hate crime occurrence. Research on the relationship between ethnic groups and hate crimes is relatively new. Few studies question the existence of a relationship between ethnic groups and the level of hate crime; however, many recent studies have tried to find out the exact nature of this relationship. Donald Green's study (Green, Strolovitch, and Wong, 1998) in New York found that minorities were more likely to be victimized when their population was increasing to roughly 25%. In contrast, Nikolova (2004) found that African American and Asian victims were more likely to be victimized when they were in the minority (below 20%), whereas Whites and Hispanics were more likely to be victimized when they had a power-sharing status, comprising of 30-60% of their community. The power-threat hypothesis predicts that hate crime victimization occurs when minority populations are increasing. This theory is contrasted by the power-differential theory, which predicts that minorities are more likely to be victimized when their population remains small. In sum, while most researchers are sure that race/ethnic change is related to hate crime occurrence, it remains unclear whether it is increasing or decreasing a population and minority or power-sharing status that leads to more victimization.

While the present study was not able to examine the specific relationship between changes in the defended neighborhood categories (minority, tipping, power-sharing, and majority) and hate crime occurrence due to an insufficient sample size, it was able to look at both offenders and victims of multiple race/ethnic groups in relationship to changes in their corresponding race/ethnic population (decreasing, stable, or increasing). Differences among African American and Hispanic victims and their corresponding change in racial/ethnic representation were not significant. Nikolova's analysis of the same dataset found that African Americans were most likely to be victimized when their ethnic group was in the minority, whereas Hispanics were most likely to be victimized in areas in which they held a power-sharing percentage of the population (30-60%). While Nikolova's results suggest a relationship between racial/ethnic compositions and hate crime occurrence for African American and Hispanic victims, the present study could not verify how changes in their populations might affect hate crime occurrence. Had the sample been large enough to look at race/ethnic change in the specific defended-neighborhood categories used in Nikolova's analysis, an understanding of the exact nature of race/ethnic change and hate crime victimization for African Americans and Hispanics may have been possible.

There was a trend for White victims to be more likely to be victimized in areas in which the White population was decreasing, and less likely to be victimized in areas in which the White population was stable between 1990 and 2000. This trend suggests that as the White population decreases, the other racial/ethnic groups may be more likely to commit hate crimes against Whites. These other racial/ethnic groups may feel more empowered to attack Whites as the White population decreases and there are less Whites in the neighborhood to defend themselves. This finding differs from previous findings for minority victims who are more likely to be victimized when their population is increasing, as the defended-neighborhood hypothesis predicts (Green, Strolovitch, and

Wong, 1998). Further, this finding may help explain Nikolova's (2004) finding that Whites are more likely to be victimized when they comprise 30-60% of the population. The White population may be decreasing from a majority to a power-sharing percentage, increasing their likelihood to be victimized.

The present study next examined the relationship between hate crime offenders and race/ethnic change, something that was overlooked in the previous studies described above. By conducting the research in Los Angeles, I was able to look at hate crimes/incidents in which the offenders were African American and Hispanic as well as White. Many of the previous studies, particularly those in the South, were not able to study these groups because the majority of the offenders and the populations in which the hate crimes occurred were predominately White. It is important to look at different racial/ethnic groups because in order to form a general theory about hate crime occurrence it needs to apply to the general population rather than one group of people. Also, it is through research that examines the differences among these racial/ethnic groups that a more complete picture of the phenomena can arise.

Research question three first examined the relationship between White offenders and the corresponding change (decreasing, stable, or increasing) in the White population between 1990 and 2000. A significant difference among White offenders and other offenders and the corresponding change in White population was found. White offenders were more likely to commit hate crimes in communities in which the White population was decreasing. Further, they were less likely to commit hate crimes/incidents in communities in which the White population was stable. This suggests that as the White population loses its standing in the community when other groups move in and Whites move out, they are more likely to commit biased acts against other groups whom they may perceive as taking over their community. This finding fits in with the defended-neighborhood hypothesis in that the White offenders may be attempting to defend their neighborhood as it increasingly becomes less and less a White neighborhood.

Similar to the White offenders, African American offenders were found to be significantly more likely to commit hate crimes/incidents in areas in which the African American population decreased between 1990 and 2000 compared to non-African American offenders. African Americans were less likely to commit hate crimes/incidents in areas in which their population was stable, and no more likely to commit hate crimes in areas in which their population was increasing compared to non-African American offenders. These findings suggest that like White offenders, African American offenders who are losing their racial/ethnic position in their community are more likely to strike out against other groups in an attempt to defend their neighborhood from those they consider to be unwelcome in their community.

While not significant, analysis of Hispanic hate crime/incident offenders and their corresponding change in population did show a trend that differs from non-Hispanic offenders. Hispanic offenders showed a trend towards being more likely to offend when their population was increasing between 1990 and 2000. This finding differs from the African American and White offenders, suggesting that a different relationship between racial/ethnic position and hate crime occurrence exists for Hispanics. Since, overall, the Hispanic population is increasing in Los Angeles, it may be that the Hispanic offenders are feeling more empowered to commit hate crimes against groups they feel bias toward.

These results give partial support for the defended-neighborhood hypothesis, suggesting that as one group increases, other groups whose populations are decreasing and are therefore losing their positions in the community are more likely to commit hate crimes in an effort to defend their neighborhood. This relationship holds for only the White and African American offenders. White and African American populations in Los Angeles communities have overall been decreasing while the Hispanic community has for the most part increased between 1990 and 2000. This may explain the difference. As the Hispanic population moves into the communities, the African American and White populations are more likely to commit hate crimes as they lose their majority. In response, the Hispanics whose population is increasing may be more likely to offend in retaliation.

Finally, I would like to mention that for all victim and offender groups, there was a smaller than expected number of victims and offenders when their corresponding racial/ethnic group remained stable between 1990 and 2000. This finding lends support to the contention that it is race/ethnic change which is related to a higher occurrence of hate crimes. This is not to suggest that ethnic change is bad or should be avoided, because it is through this race/ethnic change that understanding and tolerance of diversity can come about and strengthen the community.

There are many problems inherent in the study of hate crimes. Accurate figures of hate crime occurrence are very difficult to obtain for a number of reasons. As in any crime, victims do not always report their victimization to the police. This may be because they do not think it is worth the trouble to report it or that the police will not do anything about it. Also, victims might fear future victimization from the offender if they come forward and the offender is caught and prosecuted. Hate crime victim reportage is further confounded by the fact that many victims are ashamed to report what happened and fear further victimization from prejudicial police. They may believe that the police will not take their victimization seriously due to the nature of the bias element (Herek, et al. 1999). In cases in which the police officer is in fact biased himself, a related problem arises in which the police officer will either fail to report the crime or fail to accurately report the bias element of the crime. A further problem with gathering data from hate crime reports is that the reports can often be incomplete or illegible. This flaw in archival research can be further compounded by coding errors by the researchers themselves.

In this study in particular, a major problem was not having access to all of the relevant data that could have made the analysis more complete and accurate. Base rates for crime level by census tracts for Los Angeles would have served as a useful comparison to hate crime levels. Access to information regarding which census tracts are under the jurisdiction of the Los Angeles Police Department would have also served as a useful measure to compare to hate crime occurrence. Census data in 1990 normalized to 2000 census tracts for non-Hispanic Asians as well as the median income level would have allowed for a more complete analysis of race/ethnic and economic changes. Finally, an ideal study would have included hate crime data for 1990 in order to better compare how the ethnic and economic changes related to changes in hate crime occurrence.

Despite these problems, use of archival data such as hate crime reports is still a valuable method in the study of hate crime occurrence, given that other types of research, such as experimental and for the most part, observational, are not possible. Supplementing police reports with reports from community organizations and surveys of

hate crime victims can be useful, but are beyond the resources of the present study. Future studies might make use of these other methods to more fully examine hate crime occurrence.

The present study focused on two specific factors that put a community at risk for hate crimes: economic and race/ethnic change. This is not to say that other factors do not also contribute to the occurrence of hate crimes. Other community factors may increase the level of hate crime occurrence such as the availability of alcohol and other drugs, highly publicized occurrences of racial or perceived racial injustice, and the proliferation of gang activity in the area. Alternately, other community factors may act as mitigating factors for the occurrence of hate crimes, such as religious groups, afterschool programs, and community organizations that strengthen relations among different community groups. Examination of these factors was beyond the scope of this study, but this is not to say that they do not potentially play an important role in affecting hate crime occurrence as well.

Understanding the factors that lead to hate crime occurrence is crucial in order to develop strategies to decrease biases and strengthen relations among different members of a community. Organizations such as the Human Relations Committee of Los Angeles County are working hard to develop programs to decrease hate crimes and strengthen communities. While ideally these programs could be implemented in all communities for the benefit of the whole county, these organizations may lack the resources to support programs in all communities. For this reason, it is important to locate the communities which are most at risk for hate crimes and are highly in need of programs to improve race relations. While this study is far from conclusive about the precise relationship between race/ethnic changes, it can suggest that community organizations should focus their efforts to curb hate crime occurrence in neighborhoods experiencing an influx of racial/ethnic groups that differ from the previous majority. As the minority continues to grow, racial strife between groups can become particularly harmful for the entire community.

Future studies should examine the relationship between race/ethnic changes further, perhaps by including a larger sample in order to look specifically at race/ethnic change among the defended-neighborhood categories. Use of the overall crime rate in an area as a base rate to compare to hate crime rates would also be helpful in determining more accurately how hate crimes differ from other crimes, particularly in relation to economic and race/ethnic change. Other methods such as survey and hate crime data collected from community organizations would allow a more accurate picture of hate crime occurrence than solely relying on police reports. Finally, future studies should look at changes in hate crime levels as well as changes in community risk factors to better determine their relationship.

In conclusion, hate crime occurrence can threaten entire communities. An understanding of what puts a community at risk for hate crime victimization is a crucial step in making communities safer for all members of the community. While economic change may or may not play a part in hate crime occurrence, it is clear that race/ethnic changes are associated with increases in hate crime occurrences. Though race/ethnic change can put a community at risk, it can also lead to positive changes if members can learn to accept and embrace their cultural differences and come together as a supportive, tolerant community.

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