<u>Disclaimer</u>

The following is a class assignment, a "position paper" for a "Hate Groups and Groups Violence" course. It is a balancing between following the class assignment, such as being a certain page length, format, and to answer the question prompt to discuss three of ten pathways into ethnoviolence according to Howard Ehrlich, along with trying to start a discussion with the Colorado Municipal League on where local governments and hate groups/violence intersect. This should not be mistaken for a fully vetted scholarly article in an official journal, but instead as research done over the span of a few months with limitations in both time and resources.

With this in mind, the value I find in this paper is it explores some initial questions and considerations into how local governments have a large role in reducing ethnoviolence in their respective communities. In truth, it is a deep, complex topic that can include all departments and services, this paper offers a broader, more general review.

Social Heritage, Denial, and Bureaucracy as Causes of Ethnoviolence in Local Governments

Matthew Hirschinger

Hate Groups and Group Violence

November 2021

Howard J. Ehrlich identifies ten pathways that have led America to its current environment of ethnoviolence. For the purpose of this paper, we use Ehrlich's definition that "Ethnoviolence is an act or attempted act motivated by group prejudice with the intention to cause physical or psychological injury". As pointed out by Ehrlich, it differs from the concept of "hate crime" in that it does not have to be tied specifically to the emotion of hate, and it can occur legally (Ehrlich, 2009). For this essay, we focus not on society as a whole, but on local governments at the municipal, county, and special district level. We focus on three of the ten pathways that tie most closely with these governmental entities, their responsibility, and potential remedies. The three pathways are the social heritage of prejudice and discrimination, the culture of denial, and bureaucracy.

"[G]roup violence often occurs when states are ineffective. Yet, we should recognize the curvilinear nature of this relationship…the relationship between state centralization and violence is U-shaped" (Hawdon, 2014). Within the essays in "The Causes and Consequences of Group Violence", we see that violence occurs both directly from government as well as from the absence of government. Whereas too little power means that group violence goes unchecked, too much power means that governments are unchallenged in their own acts of violence. This dynamic exists within the context of local governments and contributes to the social heritage of prejudice and discrimination.

One current weakness, or absence, within local governments is a general lack of knowledge and awareness in prejudice and discrimination. An example of a group trying to make up for the lack is the Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF) who "points to lingering systemic problems – law enforcement officers who lack adequate training, police departments that fail to track hate crimes and report them to the FBI" (Thompson, 2017).

Failures to even properly recognize and track acts of ethnoviolence has both a micro and macro level effects. Individuals acts go comparatively unpunished as those laws meant to add additional punishments for hate crimes are unutilized. On a larger scale we are denied quality data to understand the full scope of the historical and current problem, the Federal government unable to accomplish this without local support.

Similarly, local governments have historically committed several intentional acts in ethnoviolence. As before, ethnoviolence includes both physical and psychological violence. "While many *de jure* segregation policies aimed to keep African Americans far from white residential areas, public officials shifted African American populations away from downtown business districts so that white commuters, shoppers, and business elites would not be exposed to black people" (Rothstein, 2017). Though supported by Federal policies and allowances, many of the infamous and also less-well-known actions during periods of slavery, segregation, and the systemic inequities today are implemented on the local level. The example of segregation in business districts is just one of countless ways that unchecked power within local governments have led to abuse and discrimination.

The social heritage of prejudice and discrimination is a legacy of which local governments are a part of, and therefore can be part of the solution. Some action is already being taken. "ICMA has made a focused commitment to Race, Equity, and Social Justice in all forms, as a means to achieving thriving communities. ICMA works to achieve equity and social justice, to affirm human dignity, and to improve the quality of life for the individual and the community" (ICMA, 2021). The International City Management Association for one is taking strides to offer resources, trainings, as well as make a verbal commitment towards progress.

It is a matter of local governments becoming strong enough, knowledgeable enough to take action against ethnoviolence. Local government must also refrain from abusing their own power to commit physical and psychological damage. It is a difficult path as the opportunities and pitfalls of law enforcement will be different than planners, which in turn will be different than to recreation professionals, and so on, each aspect of local government has a similar yet distinct role to play. Each has been part of America's heritage and will continue to be either for good, for bad, or for both.

Ehrlich's "culture of denial" pathway describes the social phenomenon where many Americans do not have even a basic understanding of past discrimination let alone the continued systemic inequities today. It is why many Americans characterize affirmative action and similar measures as disadvantaging Caucasians as opposed to uplifting minority groups (Ehrlich, 2009). This omission of past wrongs, of a more celebratory and deferential treatment to past generations extends to local government.

Few local government entities wish to associate themselves with the mistakes of the past whether because of branding purposes, of community pride, or even from the general lack of awareness as mentioned above. Even when past wrongs are recognized, they're done so typically in a way that is matter-of-fact and brief. One example is the University of Colorado Denver's land acknowledgement. It is short, it is tucked away in a corner of the website not easily found, and there are no words of taking personal responsibility let alone action (University of Colorado Denver, 2021). The mere stating of the existence of Native Americans in the current land of the campus is viewed as a victory over the culture of denial. In a very small and limited way, it is.

However, the culture of denial is not just a matter of historical dates and numbers. It is also a matter of power and perspective. Two famous works within postcolonial discourse offer

challenges to Western denial that run far deeper than surface level acknowledgements. In Edward Said's "Orientalism", he states that "[Orientalism] is rather a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts…" (Said, 1978). In essence, the idea of orientalism, as well as other concepts, is not rooted in any essential, objective truth, but is instead a concept rooted in political goals and biases.

On another front is Gayatri Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak". "How can we touch the consciousness of the people, even as we investigate their politics? With what consciousness can the subaltern speak?" (Spivak, 1999). Her focus is on those who have so little power and influence as to be virtually invisible. Her question is how can such people even have the chance to speak, to be heard?

Going back to the example of land acknowledgment, we can apply Said's lesson to understand that the land acknowledgement neatly fits into the political goals and interests of the university, not of the original inhabitants. Although part of the land acknowledge was written by a Lakota individual, it was also written through and by the university as an institution. In consideration of Spivak's lesson, how many of the over forty mentioned Indigenous Nations even have the ability to speak, to be heard, even if they were sought out? The culture of denial remains intact even if there is surface-level recognition.

Another aspect of denial is the belief that hate crimes and ethnoviolence is a national issue, and that it is for the Federal government to solve. The Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville, VA is one prime case that suggests otherwise. It was not merely a rally that became violent. There was a concerted campaign of harassment and threats against public officials, there were cyberattacks against the local government, and when a second rally a year later was denied it became a legal lawsuit (Blout and Burkart, 2021). Charlottesville was a city

unprepared for an organized, violent demonstration, which can happen in any local jurisdiction. If or when similar hate-based attacks occur, local governments cannot reasonably expect they can shift full responsibility to, and be given limitless resources by, state or federal agencies.

Local governments deny the past and deny their current responsibilities at their own detriment. It is difficult to accept hard truths of the past, and even harder to accept current responsibilities. It is the only way to be part of the solution.

Ehrlich's take on bureaucracy as a pathway into ethnoviolence is twofold. He takes exception to some people being allowed to have power over others as well as the overall depersonalization associated with bureaucracies, where people are treated as "objects". He goes on further that participation within the bureaucracy "validates inequality" (Ehrlich, 2009).

However public servants, or bureaucrats, or however local government professionals label themselves, though Ehrlich's strong condemnation can be argued against, there is no denying the negative stigma of the profession.

"On one hand, red-tape-bound civil servants are viewed as inefficient, unresponsive, negative, bored, impolite, and unhelpful to citizens seeking services. On the other hand, bureaucracy is feared for housing all-too-efficient officials who have amassed tremendous power and who arbitrarily decide matters without due process" (Kettl, 2015).

Those who work in local government are caught facing public scrutiny for being too effective and not effective enough, sometimes simultaneously. Ehrlich is not alone in his criticism of bureaucrats and bureaucracy. It serves local governments to reflect hard on what causes such public unrest, whether this frustration by those being served is truly inevitable or not.

"[Public, frontline] workers make it clear that policies, rules, and administrative oversight

pervade their work and are ever present in their calculations about what to do. Whether

on a patrol beat, in the offices of social services, or at the front of public school

classrooms, street-level workers' beliefs about people continually rub against policies and

rules" (Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003).

In one collection of examples, "Cops, Teachers, Counselors: Stories from the Front Lines

of Public Service" offers a full array of examples where individual public sector workers bend,

break, navigate, and/or capitulate to bureaucracy in cases where they disagree with their own

regulations. Even insiders who work as part of governmental entities find struggles with current

systems and operations.

Local governments should not easily dismiss the popular and philosophical criticisms

towards bureaucracy. It should humble local governments to know that bureaucracy itself is seen

as the problem. Whereas the previous two pathways can be mitigated through more targeted

trainings and programs, this final pathway demands a deeper self-reflection by the industry of

local government. It is a matter of questioning if the base assumptions made when public

administration became professionalized and standardized into its current, modern form still make

sense today.

There are deep fault lines in American society that are interconnected. Local

governments have their own role to play to both recognize their own part in ethnoviolence, as

well as to become better aware and engaged with solutions. Just as local governments are full of

diverse professions and services, so too must be the actions taken to reduce ethnoviolence

community by community. Whatever path forward there is, addressing the social heritage of

prejudice and discrimination, the culture of denial, and bureaucracy is part of the greater whole.

Bibliography

Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2006). Edward Said "Orientalism" and Gayatri Spivak "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (pp. 24-37). London u.a.: Routledge.

Blout, E., & Burkart, P. (2021). White Supremacist Terrorism in Charlottesville: Reconstructing 'Unite the Right'. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism,* 1-22. doi:10.1080/1057610x.2020.1862850

Ehrlich, H. J. (2009). *Hate Crimes and Ethnoviolence: The History, Current Affairs, and Future of Discrimination ... in America*. ROUTLEDGE.

Hawdon, J., Ryan, J., & Lucht, M. (2014). *The Causes and Consequences of Group Violence: From Bullies to Terrorists*. Lanham: Lexington Books.

ICMA (2021). Race, equity, and Social Justice. Retrieved November 1, 2021, from https://icma.org/race-equity-and-social-justice

Kettl, D. F. (2015). *Politics of the Administrative Process Sixth Edition*. Los Angeles: SAGE/CQ Press.

Maynard-Moody, S. W., & Musheno, M. C. (2003). *Cops, teachers, counselors: Stories from the front lines of Public Service*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Rothstein, R. (2017). *The color of law: A forgotten history of how our government segregated America*. New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W. W. Norton & Company.

Thompson, A. (2017, August 04). Sikhs in America: A history of hate. Retrieved October 3, 2021, from https://www.propublica.org/article/sikhs-in-america-hate-crime-victims-and-bias

University of Colorado Denver (2021). Auraria Campus Lack Acknowledgement. Retrieved November 1, 2021, from https://www.ucdenver.edu/offices/diversity-and-inclusion/our-offices/center-for-identity-inclusion/land-acknowledgement#ac-land-acknowledgement-2