Research Article

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Large Group Regression and the Emergence of Psychopolitical Criminality

Abstract: This article examines criminality that can emerge within the context of a political party's large group regression. The group behavior of the Democratic party after its loss in the 2016 United States Presidential election serves as a case that illustrates this concept. Psychoanalytic concepts discussed by Vamik Volkan are used as the framework for understanding the party's group behavior. Since its loss in the election, the Democratic party has demonstrated remarkable coherence in its hostility towards Republicans. The hostility has ranged from uncivil behavior to violence manifested across a range of socioeconomic statuses and locations. The steep decline in the Democratic party's civility towards its opponent is indicative of a large group regression. The loss of the 2016 Presidential election precipitated the party's regression, which has left its members responding in primitive psychological ways. A range of criminality has emerged within this regressed state, such as assault, battery, and false police allegations. The regressed state of the party leaves it vulnerable to malignant narcissistic leadership or dysfunctional ideologies, which can normalize the regressive behavior. The large group regression examined in this paper may apply to other Western societies that experience dramatic sociopolitical change.

Keywords: psychoanalysis, regression, groups, politics, crime

1 Introduction

The United States' political atmosphere is highly polarized. The polarization in American politics is nothing new considering that the major political parties have had pronounced differences since their realignment fifty years ago. At that time, social conservatives exited the Democratic party en mass for the Republican party, which left the Democrats the party of social liberals and the Republicans the party of social conservatives (Miller & Schofield, 2008). The social differences in party composition served as an ongoing catalytic agent for further polarization of the parties. This is seen in the departure of business interests from the Republican party, which have become frustrated by the party's emphasis on social issues, and, more recently, populism. Businesses have found a welcome environment among the Democrats, who continue to build coalition interests that share an aversion to Republican values (Miller & Schofield, 2008). Though the apex of today's polarization showed during and immediately after the 2016 Presidential election, acceleration of this division has occurred for at least a generation (Brooks & Manza, 1997). The cleavage between the parties continues along the lines of cultural beliefs and values (Layman & Carmines, 1997).

The differences between the parties may affect the fundamental understanding of political processes, including the nature of democracy itself. Dunn and Thorton (2018) found significant differences in the understanding of democracy between Republicans and Democrats. Democrats believe that wealth redistribution, unemployment security, and civil rights are main characteristics of a democracy, while Republicans believe that democracy requires religiously guided governance and punitive measures to maintain civil order (Dunn & Thorton, 2018). Though these differences are points on a continuum, the loss of a political center among elected representatives makes the differences appear categorically

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different. Certain tendencies within American politics, such as Orientalism, enhances these differences and works to create an "other" against whom a privileged identity and an aggrieved identity find natural opposites (Jansson, 2003). This political context hosts increasing incivility between followers of the different parties, who have become more active in representing not just their parties but the positions that undergird their parties.

Political participation has increased in degree and kind since the 2016 election (Liu, 2017), but it has not all been constructive. Some civic engagement has been exceedingly partisan and associated with harmful effects, individually, and for the United States' society as a whole. Politically engaged citizens have committed acts of aggression against their fellow citizens and against their country. The acts all have a common denominator: politics. The acts of aggression have ranged from hostile sentiments to physical violence. The acts are not all committed by career criminals, however, who would have engaged in some form of violence irrespective of political context. In some cases, hostility and violence emanate from upstanding citizens or public figures.

The political hostility is disconnected among those who perpetrate it, yet a remarkable coherence exists among the acts. Volkan (2013) suggests large groups that experience stress sufficient to threaten the group's identity become acutely aware of a "we-ness" among group adherents that causes members to rally around the group. A sense of an "other" correspondingly increases along with an exaggerated and unrealistic belief in the group's superiority over the other (Volkan, 2013). Affiliation with the group is discerned by what Volkan (2013) terms large-group identity markers, which are concrete or abstract identifiers for a group. In American politics, certain political positions have become large-group identity markers. Where a person stands on his or her position on gun rights and abortion, for example, serve as large-group identity markers that may reveal an American's political affiliation.

An acute awareness of group threat and political identity may motivate individuals to take actions intended to protect their threatened identity. Individual awareness of group identity was elicited for the Democratic party after the loss of the 2016 Presidential election. The conventional analysis leading up to the election was that the Democrats were expected to win handily. One prominent forecasting group projected that the Democratic candidate had a 71.4% chance of winning ("Who Will Win the Presidency, 2016). The election occurred against the backdrop of eight years of a Democratic party administration. The opposition in the election, the Republican party, was seen as an insurgent outlier in American politics (Mann & Ornstein, 2016). A sense of Democrat inevitability and pervasive Republican folly was promulgated throughout the mass media.

The awareness that the party and its undergirding values were not as preeminent as believed was threatening to the group. The loss of the election pierced the inflated sense of superiority held by Democrats. The group was ill-prepared for such a defeat, resulting in widespread decompensation. The Democrat loss to the Republicans in the 2016 election was therefore a narcissistic injury that threatened the integrity of the group identity and fostered a large group regression.

The Republican party, on the other hand, did not experience a narcissistic injury during the 2016 election; rather, it had a reparative experience. Yet, all is not well with this repair. Fringe right-wing groups that have narcissistic dynamics have grown in prominence around the party, particularly as it becomes more populist in nature. The pathological narcissism of this group process has been examined elsewhere (Umbrasas, 2017). It is not examined in this article because right wing narcissism associated with the Republican party is not attributed to a large group regression. This paper examines the large group regression seen in the Democratic party after its loss in the 2016 Presidential election using theoretical models found in psychoanalysis.

2 Politically Driven Hostility, Misconduct, and Violence

Hostile sentiment in American politics today is a type of aggression borne out of political context. The political context is important to consider because the hostility that is the focus of examination is not a mere expression of anger. The hostility is precipitated by political information and it is refined and directed only towards the political. The actor appears to receive gratification from the hostile activity. Indeed, many acts are accomplished proudly and in the open. A sense of superiority, righteousness, and even self-sacrifice appears amid the hostility. There is no remorse for the hostility and apologies, if they occur, appear to be mere retractions of one's statement rather than genuine attempts

to repair relations. Conceivably, the hostile act does not evoke cognitive dissonance because it is consistent with the actors' mental representation of themselves and others.

It is difficult to quantify today's political incivility. Yet, indicators of hostility grounded in everyday politics are prevalent. One opinion poll suggests that 80% of Americans fear the ongoing political incivility will lead to actual violence (Kurtzleben, 2018). Tuholski (2018) suggests that Republicans and Democrats significantly reduced the degree to which each party likes the other between the years 1980 and 2016. Numerous individual examples exist where ill-will is wished upon someone of the opposite political party and where followers of a party rationalize the hostility that emanates from their party. The political hostility occurs out in the open and is not confined to halls of civic engagement.

Several officials of the current administration experienced such targeted hostility during public outings. A more notable example of this hostile sentiment occurred when the Press Secretary, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, was asked to leave a restaurant in Lexington, Virginia, by the establishment's owner because Sanders worked for the administration (Boyer & Blake, 2018). The desire to expel one's ideological opponent superseded any business ramifications that might occur from such an act of hostility. A reasonable assumption is that refusing service to customers based on political affiliation may cause those with the political affiliation in question to avoid the establishment. The Press Secretary for the President has one of the biggest megaphones in the United States, so a high probability existed that the act would gain attention. Eschewing any ramifications her behavior would have on her business, or her employees, the owner asked the Press Secretary to leave her establishment based on nothing more than political affiliation.

A number of notable public figures have made statements that carried hostile sentiment towards their political opponents. After the 2016 election, the singer Madonna and the actress/comedian Kathy Griffin made statements that appeared to sympathize with political violence. Other actors such as Robert de Niro and Alec Baldwin made similar statements. Political commentator Joy Reid rationalized the 2016 violent assault on Republicans, where Representative Steve Scalise was shot and seriously wounded. In other contexts, such hostility would be seen as uncouth at best, yet hostility of this type erupts spontaneously and in disparate locations without any group sanction.

A cyclist rendered the middle finger to the President's motorcade in October 2017. This act occurred in broad daylight on the open road in full view on and off the road. The act was politically driven as the cyclist stated that it "felt great" to render the gesture because she was overcome by frustration with the administration (Today, 2017). Motivation for her cause is evident in her statement that "He should see some resistance" if entering her neighborhood (Hess, 2018). Her act of solidarity with her political resistance movement is associated with further political participation as she announced intention to run for local political office in her county (Hess, 2018).

Purposeful misconduct occurs when the individual has knowledge that certain acts will cause harm but he or she nonetheless engages in the harmful acts. Purposeful misconduct is contrasted with theories of civil disobedience that propose that civil disobedience is acceptable to bring about a change in law or policy. Rawls (1972) suggests civil disobedience must be guided and justified by the Constitution and social institutions. Purposefully engaging in misconduct, however, is malicious or reckless and has no social value.

Reality Winner provides a prime example of politically motivated purposeful misconduct. Winner held strong political views on the 2016 Presidential election. During the political discourse on Russian election-meddling that occurred after the election, Winner was consumed with the need to act for her affiliated political cause. She believed she had information that could harm the newly elected administration and felt compelled to act. She removed Top Secret documents related to Russian cyberattacks from her place of employment and released them to media outlets. Winner supposedly asked herself "why do I have this job if I'm going to just sit back and be helpless?" (Howley, 2017). Eschewing a good job, national security, and loyalty to her country, Winner believed she had to act to clarify matters pertaining to the Russian election-meddling discourse and illegally transmitted national security information.

 A group of mental health professionals published their beliefs about President Donald Trump against established norms for such action. In violation of Goldwater and associated mores, these individuals felt compelled to make a psychiatric assessment and publish the results for the world to see. They projected their views beyond their own professional circles and published a book available around the world. Their sense of dislike for the President and what they perceive he stands for was enough for them to violate ethical conventions.

Across college campuses, politically motivated violence is erupting in the United States. Oftentimes the violence is captured on video. One example is a University of California, Berkeley student who was assaulted while recruiting for his club on campus. Another example occurred in Texas during the 2018 midterm elections when a student verbally

accosted and threw a drink on a Republican student. In a separate instance, one Republican was attacked while wearing a "Make America Great Again" hat and had his ankle broken in four pieces (Gstalter, 2018).

Politically motivated assaults occur off college campuses as well. An eleven-year-old child was threatened with physical violence for wearing a costume of the President on Halloween (Arie, 2018). A professor encouraged people to harass Republicans at restaurants and to create unsanitary conditions for their food (Chasmar, 2018). These examples indicate that impulse control and reality testing is diminished. It is very important to note that these examples are not illustrations of career criminals; rather, these are everyday Americans. What can account for such a steep decline in functioning among everyday Americans? What motivates such ostensible criminal behavior?

3 The Psychology of Large Group Regression

Groups that have a large number of members (e.g., thousands or millions) can still share a sense of sameness with each other (Volkan, 2004). This sense of sameness, or we-ness, emerges from a tendency to externalize split-off all-good and all-bad self and object representations (Volkan, 1988; Volkan, 1997). The split object relations find reservoirs that are imbued with either all-good or all-bad externalizations. These externalizations are often accompanied by projections of thoughts, feelings, and fantasies, which further define the reservoir, and, by extension, the group against an "other." As a result of this process, groups invest a great deal of primitive, raw emotion along with malevolence and fear to the other group without awareness of doing so.

Large groups, such as nations, ethnicities, and political parties, share an identity through these mechanisms. The ethnic groups of Greeks and Turks on the Island of Cyprus, for example, became the reservoir for each group's negative externalizations and projections, while externalizing all-good attributes to their own group's ideas and symbols (Volkan, 1975). The psychological process of externalization and projection caused exaggerated and hostile interactions between the two groups. At best, the opposing group would merely have a latent sense of badness; at its worst, however, this process would lead the groups to see each other as evil and worthy of harsh remedies to correct the perceived evil.

The process of externalization has a lasting effect upon symbols, especially when other aspects of socialization reinforce the symbol's perception. A flag, or cultural symbols such as statues, receive good externalizations and projections, imbuing these reservoirs with all-good features, while symbols of an opposing group receive all-bad externalizations. These group symbols are often idealized or devalued by parents, peers, and society throughout the course of one's development, which supports the crystallization of these reservoirs as either good or bad (Volkan, 1988). This process leads groups to see their symbols as true and good and to see the opposing group symbols as alien and bad. Symbols often have a stabilizing function because primitive affect is placed in these reservoirs. When a group regresses, the symbols lose their representational quality and the group sees the thing more as a protosymbol, or the thing itself (Volkan, 2004).

Large groups experience regression in circumstances that significantly threaten their identity (Volkan, 1997). Regressed groups behave in psychologically primitive ways. The group, for example, demonstrates a massive increase in splitting mechanisms (Volkan, 1988). As a result, its perception of people and events are extreme and polarized. Individual differences in thinking and feeling disappear because the juxtaposition of opposites required to entertain nuance found in experiences that are diametrically opposed does not exit. Free from nuance, the regressed group externalizes good self and object representations to ideas, people, and things favorable to the group, while externalizing bad self and object representations to those unfavorable to the group. The regressed group appears to have an astonishing similarity in thinking, feeling, and behavior despite having numerous members in disparate locations. The shared thoughts, feelings, and activities that emerge are based on a primitive psychological process that serves to protect the group's identity. The group's "other" becomes an evil enemy in the regressed state, while attributes of the threatened group become exaggerated and idealized.

The large group identity carries special significance to the group because of its closeness to the individual's identity (Volkan, 1997). The closeness to individual identity makes threats to the large group so personally disturbing. Group members are not mindful of the group identity until it is threatened (Volkan, 2004). When threatened, members become acutely aware of group identity and work vigorously to repair the group. The way the group protects its identity is the same way its individual members protected their identities in childhood—externalization (Volkan, 1988). This process

can make a regressed large group appear highly coherent. The coherence comes from the primitive psychological processes that may exist at varying degrees of accessibility in all people but are usually prioritized for higher functioning psychological processes. Under sufficient stress, all people may experience primitive psychological processes, hence the coherence among a group that experiences the same stress.

Regressed group members are obliged to act aggressively towards their perceived enemies. The group alienates those who do not comply. A group regression is especially malignant when group members engage in sadistic behavior with or without masochistic tendencies in defense of the group identity. The group ideology becomes sacralized, which leaves no flexibility to disagree with the group. Regressed large groups obsess about minor differences between them and their enemies. These groups ensure that a psychospatial border exists between them and their enemies so that a clear gap exists. This gap prevents any contamination by the "other." Regressed groups are more inclined towards magical thinking and experience deficits in rational thinking.

4 Regression of a Political Party

The Democrat party is a large group that shares a distinct identity. In the United States, Democrats are clearly distinguished from their main political opponent, the Republican party, by ideology. The Democrats adhere to a progressive ideology, while the Republicans adhere to a conservative ideology. The Democrats held the Executive branch of the US government from 2009 to 2017. The Democrats were the majority party in the Senate from 2007 to 2015. The Democrats held the House for fewer years during this time, but the party's preeminence corresponded with other majorities in government, which may have given the appearance that the Democratic party had widespread support across the US. Perhaps most important during this time was the election of Barack Obama to President of the United States. Barack Obama embodied progressive Democratic values and his election was considered historic. The Democratic party's rein from 2007 to 2016 was accompanied by favorable media coverage. Media coverage did not substantially challenge the administration or the Democratic majorities in Congress. Rather, the media used its self-appointed role as the "Fourth Estate" to portray the Democrat establishment as the new normal. The lack of skepticism among the media and positive framing of Democratic issues created a false perception of popular appeal for the Democrats that ignored the fact that a substantial portion of the country disagreed with the Democratic party. Favorable handling by the media also failed to prepare the group for real challenges.

The conditions surrounding the Democratic party around this time were favorable to facilitating group narcissism. The group narcissism led to unrealistic self-esteem based on a constructed narrative that their party (i.e., identity) was preeminent, the new normal, and superior to the fringe competitor. This perception did not comport with reality, however, and left the Democratic party vulnerable to group regression. Strong evidence to refute a perception of Democrat preeminence was readily seen in the Tea Party movement, which led to a Republican takeover of the House after the Democrats took control of the Executive branch. Similarly, the incredible fanfare surrounding the 2016 Donald Trump campaign suggested the Republicans had more than marginal interest within the country. Donald Trump's campaign attracted tens of thousands of people to his rallies, which brought a great deal of excitement to politics. The media, however, placed these political manifestations in a negative frame, making it easy to dismiss them as fringe events. The Democrat's regression may have been more profound because the party fell from a point of narcissistic elevation.

The loss of the 2016 election severely threatened the Democrat's identity. This threat caused a large group regression of the party, which led to an acute awareness of group identity and left the party behaving in psychologically primitive ways. The splitting mechanisms used by Democrats was, and still is, a highly visible feature of the group regression. Democrats refuse to compromise with the Republican administration, even on issues the Democrats are on record supporting in the past. Because of the regression, the group shows an all-good, all-bad split in its thinking. Democrats appear extreme and uncompromising in their governing. The party's constituency also demonstrates splitting mechanisms. They view the Republicans as all-bad, which justifies the Democrats' devaluing of Republicans. Those who voted for the current administration are considered racists by the Democrats. Yet, many of these voters voted for Barack Obama, twice. The President has Jewish family members, and ostensibly, one of his close friends is the Prime Minister of Israel. Nonetheless, Donald Trump is often referred to as a Nazi. Due to splitting, Democrats are unable to

integrate facts that contradict their perception. Their ability for nuance is lost resulting only in negative framing. This devaluing manifests in a range of behaviors, from incivility to violence.

Externalized split-off bad self and object representations, and attempts to control them, is seen in the Jussie Smollett incident. Smollett paid others to stage an attack on him and blamed the attack on Republican supporters of Donald Trump. He also wrote a hate mail letter to himself and blamed it on Trump supporters. This contrived event received unquestioned support by Democrats, and, when contradictory evidence emerged that disputed the allegations, Democrats did not respond to the change in facts as they did with the initial story. In this scenario, the Democrats externalized bad self-representations and attempted to control them by having them apprehended by the police.

Consider also the Democrat response to Virginia Governor Ralph Northam. Evidence shows his clearly racist past, yet the Democrats have not clamored against him as they do with President Trump, who has no such history. The Democrats lament that President Trump is racist but do nothing about a high-level member of their party who has a proven racist past. During Northam's election campaign he, his campaign, and Democrats lamented that Ed Gillespie (the Republican contender) and the Republicans were bigoted and racist. A State Senator supporting Northam told supporters, "What my colleagues didn't tell you is how dangerous it will be if the other side wins. They're evil, we're the good guys" (Crowe, 2019). Yet, it was Northam who fit the descriptions he and his campaign were attributing to the Republicans.

Magical thinking tends to emerge during regression. The Democrats exhibit an assortment of beliefs characteristic of magical thinking. The belief that President Trump must be impeached is one example of magical thinking. The Democratic party has been inveighing that it will impeach President Trump since the President's earliest days in office (indeed, even before he was sworn in). Faced with the reality that Donald Trump won the election, the Democrats were unable to integrate contradictory information in the form of their dislike for him, yet his legitimate victory. After being sworn into office, Democrats clamored that they wanted to make President Trump's presidency the shortest in history. This belief is seen as evidence of magical thinking because it is based on fantasy rather than hard evidence. Though impeachment is a possibility for any officeholder, such an action must be based on fact. Unlike Presidents who faced impeachment, such as Richard Nixon and Bill Clinton, the push to impeach Donald Trump occurred before any evidence was presented to warrant such an action. The widespread calls for impeachment before the commission of an offense is evidence of inability to repress aggression and fantasy.

The Democrats also manifest an increase in primary process thought. This regressive sign is perhaps most clearly seen in the allegations of a conspiracy between the Trump administration and Russia. The Senate Intelligence Committee found no evidence of a conspiracy between the Trump Administration and Russia. On its face, a claim of such a conspiracy is fanciful. Presidential candidates have layers of security; there would be no opportunity for secret meetings with foreign agents. The sophisticated protection received by candidates include more than armed guards; they also receive the security apparatus that goes along with high-level protection, including support from human and signals intelligence. Agencies not part of candidate security also actively work towards countering foreign agents who may be active in the US. Collusion between a Presidential candidate and a foreign power would have to evade all layers of security and other forms of counterintelligence activities. The persistent belief that collusion occurred appears detached from reality and evidence of primary process thought.

Projection occurs in regressed states. Democrats evinced this primitive psychological mechanism clearly in the group's approach to Republicans. Projection is evident in the treatment of the Covington high school children. Video shows the children having hateful epithets hurled on them, and, afterward adults walking up to them and provoking the children in a passive aggressive manner. However, these children were alleged to have been aggressors who provoked a group of Black Hebrew Israelites, and later, a group of Indigenous Peoples activists. These children were able to metabolize the hostile projections and respond with non-violent behavior. The tendency to project hostile impulses on the children further occurred by public figures who urged hostile acts against the children. Many of the acts, such as invasion of privacy and urging for physical violence, is suggestive of child abuse or child endangerment. Yet, these acts were advocated in a public forum (i.e., Twitter) and received support from others within the Democrat party. This form of sadism directed toward children is evidence of a malignant large group regression.

The Democrats appear to have lost the ability to relate to symbols and see hitherto symbols as the real thing. This is seen in the group's relation to the "Make America Great Again" hat. Rather than symbolizing the negative affect the Democrats externalized to the hat, the hat itself is perceived as some form of hostility that justifies violence. The hat serves as a trigger for the group that results in loss of emotional modulation. Democrats have even lost the ability to

relate to the symbolism of the Pledge of Allegiance. One California community college banned the Pledge of Allegiance because its board determined that it stood for racism. The board lost its ability to see the important positive symbolism inherent in the American Pledge and viewed it in a unidimensional manner.

5 Conclusion

The Democrat party's identity was threatened after its loss in the 2016 Presidential election. This loss precipitated a large group regression and a corresponding increase in sameness and cohesion among the Democrats. The large group regression left the party using psychologically primitive mechanisms for viewing its group and others, particularly the Republicans. As a result, the Republican party was seen as all-bad and the Democrat party was seen as all-good by the regressed group. This primitive splitting manifested as hostility and violence. Other primitive psychological processes were evident in the group's regressed state, including magical thinking and primary process thought.

The Democrat's large group regression is a vulnerability for further deterioration of the group. The party may find affiliation with a malignant narcissistic leader, whose primitive psychological organization may resonate with the group's regressed state. This may further inflame the group's aggression and perpetuate its decompensation. Yet, the group's regressed state offers opportunity for rehabilitation if it finds a reparative leader, who can heal the group's psychological wounds by directing it toward appropriate ideals. The current group environment, however, is not favorable for the emergence of such a leader. A leader who talks about compromise and civility may be seen as anathema to the group's all-good, all-bad mental representations. The absence of an identified leader leaves the group's direction open to caprice or opportunities that resonate with its regressed state.

The Democrats' leaderless vacuum presents an opportunity for ideology to fill its void. The regressed group may gravitate toward an ideology that empowers it against its perceived enemy. The Democrat's current affinity towards socialism suggests that this economic system, and its attendant grievance framework, may become a real possibility for the group. This possibility is significant considering that even most Democrats strongly opposed socialism in the recent past. Socialism has proven ineffective, and quite destructive, around the world. Yet, the inherent grievance ideology associated with socialism may appeal to the Democrats in a regressed state. Socialism offers a way to harm the perceived "other" by taking wealth and status and giving it to the wounded group. The incompatibilities of socialism with the American governmental framework and way of life make socialism a fanciful possibility. Its appeal nonetheless exemplifies the group's regressed state as Democrats seek to accentuate a psychospatial border with its "other" and ensures minor differences (e.g., sharing an affinity to the American governmental structure) are made large.

Though this analysis considered the Democratic party in the United States, the conditions that fostered the party's large group regression are not confined to the United States. Challenges to the prevailing order are manifest around the world, and notably in Europe. How will the political parties that held power respond to the increase in popularity of neophyte populist movements, or the reemergence of long dormant political parties? Are these established political parties prepared for real challenges? Or, as in the United States, will surprise lead to large group regression and its attendant misbehavior and violence?

The seeds for violence already exist among opposing groups in the form of externalizations of self and object relations. A breakdown in the political process can lead to failures of institutional tension management and activation of the latent seeds of violence between groups. Those groups that are sure of their place of prominence in the political system may be most vulnerable to a large group regression because their group identity would be threatened by loss of power. A large group regression is dangerous anywhere. However, every country does not have the same tension management capabilities that the US has. A functional justice system and economic prosperity, for example, may mitigate extreme forms of systematic violence. For countries without these mitigators, the threat from a political large group regression should be considered greater.

The hostility and violence described above has important criminological implications. A large group regression associated with a political party, and, by extension, its followers in society, may bring forth uncommon criminal actors and offenses. The incivility, and in some cases criminal behavior, described above have group identity as their motivators. Those who committed these acts did not have economic motivations, and were not suffering from some group alienation. In many cases, these were middle- or upper-class Americans who perceived were part of the in-group

that was under assault by a perceived "other." These individuals took great risks in the name of their group, such as in public displays of hostility and violence towards others. The possibility of group-based hostility within the context of large group regression should be further studied in its current context. This type of criminality may become more common with the proliferation of social media, as group identity can be shaken more readily via the internet. Similarly, group retaliation may also benefit from the internet, which can become a platform for the violation of others' rights. This social phenomenon may require greater awareness of individual group membership, realistic appraisal of self and group in relation to others, and strong group leaders that can prevent group regression.

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