We are Part of an International Human Rights Movement

But what does that mean during a time when around the world human rights activists are being out-organized? In country after country right-wing, ethnocentric, and exclusionary religious movements have been eroding basic human rights. Movements to secure social, economic, cultural, civil, and political rights for all are struggling to defend their gains. Many countries see large networks of political and social movements gaining power. These right-wing movements are too often seen only in a narrow perspective with a focus on religious pluralism, abortion, gay rights, or immigrant rights. A more useful perspective is to see a broad set of cooperative right-wing projects to defend, extend, and restore unfair hierarchies of power involving race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, national origin, language, class, and more.

At the same time, we need to step back and see how in some countries basic governmental policies are being modified in a way that assists the erosion of basic human rights.

A progressive human rights perspective sees liberty, freedom, laws, and rights as an essential framework, but envisions justice as the goal.

Rights – basic for healthy human survival, inalienable
Liberty – from governmental or autocratic restraints
Freedom – to do things: it is derived from liberty
Laws – establish the basic rules and procedures of a society
Justice – based on notions of equity, fairness, and a harmonious society

Democracy is a process, not a specific set of institutions. Democracy is a process that assumes the majority of people, over time, given enough accurate information, and the ability to participate in a free and open public debate, reach constructive decisions that benefit the whole of society, and preserve liberty, protect our freedoms, extend equality, and defend democracy. Democracy thrives where human rights are defended and justice is honored as a collective goal of society.

Many right-wing movements are continuously organizing to limit human rights and justice by using laws and distorted notions of how liberty and freedom function in a society. Their underlying thesis is that property rights trump human rights and that government attempts to build human rights intrinsically infringe upon liberty and freedom.

In the United States the idea of human rights is often segmented into concerns for human rights abuses in foreign lands; or concerns that human rights abuses inside the United States are primarily limited to members of right-wing "hate" groups. These organized supremacist groups do not cause prejudice in the United States--they exploit it. What we clearly see as objectionable bigotry surfacing in Extreme Right movements, is actually the magnified form of oppressions that swim silently in the familiar yet obscured eddies of "mainstream" society.

**Coming to Terms with Right-Wing Movements**

Racism, sexism, heterosexism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, and antisemitism are major forms of supremacy that create oppression and defend and expand inequitable power and privilege; but there are others based on class, age, ability, language, ethnicity, immigrant status, size, religion, and more. These oppressions exist independent of the Extreme Right.

Bigotry and prejudice are easy to find in the texts of various right-wing movements in the United States, but they occur in varying degrees in different groups and can change over time. Between the hate-mongering groups of the Extreme Right and the reform-oriented groups in the Conservative Right are a series of Dissident Right social movements. Examples include the Christian Right and the Patriot Movement (which includes the armed citizens militias).

Some scholars study the Dissident Right and Extreme Right and treat them as a single entity for analytical purposes. In one sense this is fair: both the Dissident Right and Extreme Right have stepped outside the electoral system where the political movements and institutions of the Conservative Right are most active. Many scholars and activists refer to all right wing movements outside the electoral system as the Far Right or the Hard Right. This study will use the term Hard Right in this manner, to cover both the Dissident Right and the Extreme Right.
While it is sometimes appropriate to discuss similarities in the various movements in the Hard Right, too often very real differences are minimized, ignored, or dismissed. The terminology and definitions used to describe Hard Right groups are sometimes applied in an overbroad or confusing manner. Some of the work conflating the Dissident Right with the Extreme Right uses guilt by association or fallacies of logic in ways that would be more obvious (and raise more objections) if the groups being examined were not held in such low esteem in academia and the general public.

This is not to apologize for supremacist bigotry in Political Right groups, but to argue that the specific ideology and the types and degrees of prejudice, supremacy and oppression are important distinctions to be observed since they vary greatly depending on the sector of the Hard Right under inspection. This variance is so significant, that the Christian Right, Patriot Movement, and Extreme Right should be studied as autonomous social movements. Later in this study the commonalities and differences among these three sectors of the right will be examined in detail.

It is not useful to lump together all right-wing dissident groups outside the mainstream as "far right hate groups" or "religious political extremists." If scholars presume to study demonization as socially dysfunctional, we should scrupulously avoid it in our own work. Not all forms of prejudice rise to the level of hate. Not all scapegoating calls for genocide. Not all forms of sexism qualify as misogyny. Not every group that defends heterosexism is a hate group. To some observers the Christian Right, the Patriot Movement and the armed militias may seem far to the right; but it is neither accurate nor fair to claim they are identical to neonazis or other race hate terrorists.

When talking about the Hard Right we need to discuss as shared attributes only those attributes that are actually shared by all the different sectors. It is true that scholars can often find some similarity in the ideologies, styles, tools, frames, narratives, or targets utilized across the Hard Right. What is neither useful nor accurate is the tendency to discover a distinct aspect of one movement, such as the Extreme Right, and then extrapolate it across all movements in the Hard Right. If the same features are identical in the Extreme Right, Patriot Movement, or the Christian Right, then some evidence needs to be presented. In addition, all sorts of people occasionally make prejudiced statements. Locating one prejudiced statement by an individual is not convincing evidence that the statement represents the ideological worldview of the individual. In the same way, finding a member of a movement or group who utters prejudiced or hateful statements is not convincing evidence that the member represents the ideological worldview of the group itself or even most of its members. Maybe it does, maybe it does not--evidence is required.

When writing about the social evils of prejudice and oppression, the devil is in the details. Many older studies of prejudice had a "tendency to collapse distinctions between types of prejudice..." observes Young-Bruehl. They assumed "that a nationalism and racism, an ethnocentric prejudice and an ideology of desire, can be dynamically the same..." Furthermore, she writes "there is a tendency to approach prejudice either psychologically or sociologically without consideration for the interplay of psychological and sociological factors." In a complementary fashion, Buechler notes that issues of class, race, and gender are "omnipresent in the background of all forms of collective action" and reflect "institutional embeddedness within the social fabric at all levels." But
he adds that these are distinct yet overlapping structures of power that need to be assessed both independently and jointly. To do this it is important "to theorize the different, specific, underlying dynamics that distinguish one structure from another." Ultimately, the successful assertion of "collective human rights" or "group rights" depends on the "linking of ethnicity/race, class, gender, and sexuality," argues Felice, because this linkage "mutes supremacist tendencies by denying the right of any one group to assert supremacy over a different group". For brevity, this constellation of identities sometimes is referred to as race, gender, and class.

To unravel systems of oppression involving race, gender, and class we need a more complex formula that is better at mapping out the dynamics of societal oppressions in ways that resonate with the everyday experiences of our colleagues, students, neighbors, and families. This is especially important in an era of open hostility to discussions of supremacy, domination, and oppression. Developing a concept of "racial formation," Omi and Winant argue that "racial projects" that are "racist" entail a linkage between "essentialist representations of race and social structures of domination." They further argue that "racial ideology and social structure" act in an interconnected and dialectical manner to shape racist projects. Applying these concepts to racism, sexism, and heterosexism, I think it is useful to define societal oppression as the result of a dynamic process involving ideas, acts, and a hierarchical position of dominance that is structural. The dominance enshrined in "social structures of domination" involves both unequal power and privilege. The resulting formula is as follows:


In studying groups that promote oppression, scholars need to identify discrete components of ideology, methodology, and intent in order to accurately classify and explain how different social movements function. Increased attention to specificity in language, categorization, and boundaries can assist our analysis of oppressions promoted by the Hard Right. By tracing the similarities and differences among Hard Right movements; and charting the dynamic relationships among the various sectors; we not only better understand movement dynamics, but also learn how to construct a more effective counter-strategy to defend and extend freedom and equality.

Terminology and Boundaries

A number of scholars who have studied the contemporary Hard Right already use a range of careful distinctions. However, Durham has called for scholars to pay even greater attention to precision in terminology when analyzing right-wing political groups. Many analysts, especially in Europe, see the landscape of the Political Right as involving three major sectors: with some sort of dissident (often populist) sector between the Conservative Right and the Extreme Right. This following chart shows how these sectors interact in terms of the conspiracist scapegoating found in forms of right-wing populism. While it is specific to the United States, the dynamics are similar in many different countries.
Note that Christian Nationalists & Dominionists are closer to the Conservative Right (an example would be the legislation-oriented Free Congress Foundation), as opposed to Christian Theocrats (such as the group Concerned Women for America), which promote more antidemocratic agendas. The most militant and doctrinaire Christian Right groups, such as those that embrace Christian Reconstructionism, actually fit best under the banner of the Extreme Right.¹²

The term Extreme Right refers to militant insurgent groups that reject democracy, promote a conscious ideology of supremacy, and support policies that would negate basic human rights for members of a scapegoated group. The terms Extreme Right and Racist Right are often used interchangeably, although for some groups on the Extreme Right gender is also a major focus, and racism exists in various forms and degrees in all sectors. Extreme Right ideologies of overt White supremacy and antisemitism envision a United States based on unconstitutional forms of discrimination. Extreme Right groups are implicitly insurgent because they "reject the existing political system, and pluralist institutions generally, in favor of some form of authoritarianism."¹³ In contrast, Dissident
Right groups still hope for the reform of the existing system, even when their reforms are drastic, and the dissidents are skeptical that their goals will be reached. The term "hate group" describes an organization in any sector that overtly and aggressively demonizes or dehumanizes members of a scapegoated target group in a systematic way. The term "extremist" is of dubious value and not used in this study. As Himmelstein argues, "At best this characterization tells us nothing substantive about the people it labels; at worst it paints a false picture."

When analyzing a movement or group, we must ask a whole series of questions. What are the main public issues and what are the subtexts? What is overt and what is covert? What is intentional and what is unintended? What is conscious and what is unconscious? What are the degrees of prejudice and what are the degrees of discrimination? How different are the ideologies and actions from those of "mainstream" society? This last question is especially important when looking at historic movements because while it is fair to judge these earlier movements by today's standards, it also is necessary to locate the group in its historic context.

Commonalities

One reason that differences and boundaries within the Hard Right are often overlooked is that Hard Right groups not only can share the same targets for scapegoating, but also can use common styles, frames, and narratives. In addition, since the late 1970s, mobilization by the Hard Right in the United States has been assisted by a widespread heteropatriarchal identity crisis. Before I argue the differences, I need to examine the commonalities.

Common Styles and Frames

Particular styles of expressing ideology are used in creating collective action frames used by movements to mobilize support. Styles used frequently by US right-wing movements include:

Dualism

Dualism is a form of binary thinking that divides the world into good versus evil with no middle ground tolerated. There is no acknowledgment of complexity, nuance, or ambiguity in debates; and hostility is expressed toward those who suggest coexistence, toleration, pragmatism, compromise, or mediation. Dualism generates three related processes: demonization, scapegoating, and conspiracism. Demonizing and scapegoating a subordinated "Other" is one way to defend White and male privilege.

Apocalyptic Aggression

The word "apocalypse" refers to an approaching confrontation, cataclysmic event, or transformation that marks the end of an epoch. A handful of people have been given a warning so they can make appropriate preparations. Apocalyptic (and millenialist or millenarian) social movements often combine demonization, scapegoating, and conspiracism with a sense that time is running out so that quick action is needed.
Conspiracist Scapegoating

Goldberg traces the concept of conspiracy thinking back to the "Latin word \textit{conspirare}--to breathe together" which implies a dramatic scenario.\textsuperscript{20} Conspiracism is a particular narrative form of scapegoating that frames demonized enemies as part of a vast insidious plot against the common good, while it valorizes the scapegoater as a hero for sounding the alarm.\textsuperscript{21} Apocalyptic conspiracism across the Hard Right is a masculinist narrative that engenders confrontation. Damian Thompson argues that the conspiracy theories that Richard Hofstadter described as the "paranoid style" in right-wing movements are really derived from apocalyptic beliefs.\textsuperscript{22} According to Mark Fenster, conspiracy theories are a misdirected attempt to figure out how power is exercised in a society.\textsuperscript{23} Exposing alleged conspiracies of elites is one way to gain status in certain sectors of the Hard Right. There are real conspiracies whereby groups of people secretly organize to enforce or challenge the status quo, but in the long run, these conspiracies do not control the broad sweep of history.\textsuperscript{24} Governments can engage in conspiracism as well, which often leads to political repression by state agencies.\textsuperscript{25}

Populist Anti-elite Rhetoric

Populism is a rhetorical style that seeks to mobilize "the people" as a social or political force. Populism appears in both left wing and right wing movements. It can challenge or defend the status quo. It can promote or undermine democratic civil society.\textsuperscript{26} The central motif of many historic right-wing dissident movements is a form of populist anti-elitism that portrays the current government regime as indifferent, corrupt or traitorous.\textsuperscript{27} These episodes of right-wing populism are often generated by economic, social, or cultural stress that assists right-wing organizers in the mass mobilization of alienated cross-class sectors of a population.\textsuperscript{28} Populism plays different chords in each sector of the right--but the recurring melody is a particular form called producerism. Producerist narratives portray a noble middle class of hard-working producers being squeezed by a conspiracy involving secret elites above and lazy, sinful, and subversive parasites below.\textsuperscript{29} Producerist White supremacy helped fuel the attack on newly gained Black rights after The Civil War.\textsuperscript{30} Producerist antisemitism was central to the success of German Nazi ideology in attracting an alienated audience for a mass base.\textsuperscript{31} With the collapse of Communism in Europe, the Hard Right turned its attention to generating populist resentment over federal government policies.\textsuperscript{32}

Authoritarian Assertion of Dominance

Assertion of dominance refers to the relative perceived need for authoritarian enforcement of hierarchical and hegemonic control. Dominance involves both power and privilege. Dominant power need not require a majority in a population, such as in White control of colonial India or South Africa. Groups that lack dominance can still see it as their ultimate goal. The justification for asserting dominance is frequently based on the self-perceived supremacy of the group making the assertion. This supremacy can be articulated in biological or cultural terms.

These styles often appear like a nested set of Russian dolls. Dualistic demonization, scapegoating, and conspiracism are regular components of the apocalyptic style.
Apocalyptic dualism is a common component of populist anti-elitism. And anti-elite conspiracism, apocalyptic dualism, and populist rhetoric are often found in the most Extreme Right insurgent groups in which dominance is asserted in an authoritarian manner. According to Quinby, among some Hard Right groups "the reassertion of masculinist hierarchy is being cast in terms of apocalyptic avowals of (heterosexist) family values and the New World Order." Kintz notes this "linkage between God, the Constitution, and masculinity provides a powerful foundation of emotion."33

Common Sparks: Alienation and Identity Crisis

The Dissident Right and Extreme Right are able to exploit the same historic economic, cultural, and political opportunities as more mainstream movements. A significant factor in shaping these movements is alienation generated by a gender and race driven identity crisis.35 Women certainly can play significant roles in Hard Right movements.36 Yet, when placed in a larger context of economic, social, cultural, and political grievances, it is angry straight White Christian men who seem to comprise a large pool of potential recruits for right-wing movements.37

Social movements are built around some claim or grievance.38 The various segments and groups of the Hard Right in the United States embrace a core narrative which argues that straight White Christian men have been "dispossessed" from their proper place in the nation.39 Several questions immediately arise. Who are the agents of dispossession? From whom is America to be taken back? To whom is it to be restored? We can easily round up the usual suspects: Blacks, Jews, immigrants, liberals, welfare mothers, secular humanists, corrupt politicians, government bureaucrats, feminists, gays and lesbians, etc. These suspects populate a producerist frame that paints a picture of betrayal and subversion of the "American Dream" by parasites above and below.40 Some mainstream politicians have been eager to exploit these scapegoats to attract votes.

People from all walks of life seem to be active in Hard Right movements, but most of the participants seem to be in the middle class or working class. Of course, that's also a picture of the general population in the United States. There are far more people angry with big government, bloated corporate leaders, and blustering politicians than participants in the Hard Right.41 In fact, much of the middle class has been primed to be what Ehrenreich has called a "bludgeon for the right".42 More research in the area of demographics is needed.

The Christian Right

While they often complain about the government and political system, the primary focus of the Christian Right is gender. Christian political activism reaches back to the early settlers, and has always had a profound effect on the U.S. political scene.43 Christian political and social movements have oscillated between progressive and reactionary poles. The mobilization of Christian activists during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s echoed the progressive reform aspects of Abolitionism, the Social Gospel movement, and the Temperance movement.44 Right-wing Christian activism is no less creative and adaptive than that of its progressive siblings.
The Christian Right is a series of groups that compose both a social movement and a political movement. It has components that stretch from the Conservative Right to the Hard Right. Here we concentrate on that sector of the Christian Right that is part of the Dissident Right. A number of studies have found that people with above average income, education, and social status populate the organizations of the Christian Right in the United States. Many are managers and small business owners. When studying the contemporary Christian Right it is easy to find evidence of apocalypticism, conspiracism, and populist anti-elitism. Much of the populist rhetoric reflects alienation caused by the shifting sands of gender, sexual identities, and class positions.

“The rise of the Christian Right, with its emphasis on ‘family values,’ gender roles, and a muted, cultural form of Eurocentric racism, was one of the most significant features of politics in the 1980s and 1990s.” Nonetheless, the Christian Right should not be lumped together with the militias or the Extreme Right.

Starting in the early 1900s, the major scapegoat for the Christian Right was godless communism. After the collapse of European communism, around 1990, a new scapegoat was found. The new mobilizing focus for the Christian Right was an umbrella concept called the Culture War; launched against the scapegoat of secular humanism. For the Christian Right the apocalyptic demon of secular humanism had three heads: liberal moral relativism; the feminist movement and its demands for reproductive rights; and the gay and lesbian rights movements. As a result of this analysis, the Christian Right launched campaigns aimed at policing "traditional" gender roles. According to Clarkson, abortion and homosexuality are both a "permanent, defining issue for the movement." In part as a payback for Christian Right voter turnout, and in part due to ideological and theological agreement, George W. Bush embraced several items from the Christian Right agenda on gender. Kaminer warns that the "current regime envisions an ideal world in which heterosexual couples can't divorce and gay couples can't marry, women cannot get an abortion, and even contraception is scarce, especially for teens."

Gender is not the only issue for the Christian Right, but it is often the prism through which other issues are surveyed. Kintz develops the idea of "structures of resonance" that span different sectors of the Christian Right, link it to free market capitalism, but ultimately embed it in the idea of "natural" roles for women and men.

Conclusions

Feagin points out that it does not matter if racism is conscious or unconscious, verbal or violent; "oppression is not less serious because it is more subtle". This holds true for sexism, heterosexism, antisemitism, and all forms of oppression. Even if an organized hate group is small in number, or an act of ethnogolence is carried out by a handful of unaffiliated vandals, the direct victims feel the same pain, and the whole community in which the attack took place suffers. The negative outcome of a public act or utterance that spreads prejudiced or hateful ideas is the same, no matter what the motivation or intent. This is why there is a need for visible and forceful public displays of disapproval and attempts at healing by leaders in political, religious, ethnic, business, and labor sectors.
Scholars, activists, and government officials, however, need to maintain their own perspectives, even if at times it is appropriate to work in concert. A high level of analytical nuance may not seem necessary to many activists and policymakers constructing a public frame. Sometimes activists or government officials make political decisions about language and categorization that may not be appropriate for use by scholars. Oversimplification might help create catchy poster slogans, but it encourages faulty scholarship. Furthermore, in the long run, activists but they can use complex analytical research to develop more effective strategies to challenge oppression as it appears in a variety of forms.

In *Racism, Sexism, Power and Ideology*, Guillaumin argues that the great irony of the rise of modern egalitarianism and democracy was the ascendance of the idea that "human groups were no longer formed by divine decree or royal pleasure, but an irreversible diktat of nature." This "served to justify the system of oppression which was being built at the same time. By proposing a scheme of immanent physical causality (by race, colour, sex, nature), that system provides an irrefutable justification for the crushing of resourceless classes and peoples, and the legitimacy of the elite."  

In analyzing the oppression of women, she calls for consideration of the material fact of the power relation between men and women; as well as the ideological effect of the idea that nature "is supposed to account for what women are supposed to be." It is in the teasing apart of the ideological and material practice that Guillaumin finds the most revealing critique of the essentialist naturalism that is the bulwark of many oppressive ideologies:

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[It is very necessary to do this, for naturalism is the only mode of thought that allows the binding together in an intangible way of characteristics which if analysed--that is, forcefully dissociated--would as a matter of fact cause their relationship to become obvious. In other words, the fact would become obvious that they have a history, that they are born of specific relationships, of the links which exist between mental activities and material activities; between slavery (a material practice) and skin colour (a mental practice), between domestic exploitation (a material practice) and sex (a mental practice). From the moment that the mechanisms which create the one (mental practices) from the other are made visible, these revealed links make obvious the syncretism which merges the relationships into the deeds and shatters the affirmation that the deed and the discourse on it are one and the same thing.]

According to Guillaumin "introducing the wedge of doubt into this tight block of 'law immemorial' is no small matter." She says we must "shatter the notion of instinct" that creates the syncretism of "body/slave/property" named "black" and the syncretism of "body/domestic work/property" named "women". When we look at the densely interwoven forms of oppression, subordination, and exploitation in the United States our task is to explore the links between the ideological and the material practice, not merely as an intellectual exercise that increases the subtlety of our analysis, but as a way to rip away the curtain to reveal the unfair power and privilege hiding backstage.

When analyzing the Political Right we must move to a more detailed and sophisticated level of work, where the establishment of boundaries, categories, and terminology that map differences of degree allows us to increase the nuance in our
analysis. Blee makes a similar argument about studying the racist movement: "We need to go further, to lay aside untested assumptions about beliefs and attitudes of activists and ideologies of groups "and begin to systematically catalog the ideological frictions" so that "we can discern - and exploit - its weaknesses." This challenge awaits us, whether we are studying the race hate groups of the Extreme Right; the anti-elite anti-government conspiracism of the Patriot Movement; or the gender-driven campaigns of the Christian Right.

In doing so, we must always recognize that theories, acts, and systems of oppression based on gender, race, sexuality, class, ethnicity, (and much more) exist throughout our society, not just in dissident or insurgent movements of the Political Right.

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1 Guillaumin, 1995; Goldman, 1996; Pharr, 1996a; Fraser, 1997; Wing, 2000; Rothenberg, 2001.
2 Young-Bruehl, 1996: 23, 460.
5 Omi and Winant, 1994: 72. They point out that some racial projects are racial supremacist but not all—for example "an association…of black accountants," 71.
6 Omi and Winant, 1994: 74-75.
7 Here we are focusing on broad societal oppression and not narrower interpersonal forms.
8 Along the way I criticize some of my earlier work.
11 Betz, 1994, Betz and Immerfall, 1998; Mudde, 2000. Usually the middle sector is called the "Radical Right," but here I will use the term Dissident Right. Not all Dissident Right groups are populist, but in the United States even elitist groups will sometimes use populist rhetoric. The Christian Right and the Patriot Movement both use populist rhetoric extensively.
19 Boyer, 1992; O'Leary, 1994; Kovel, 1994; Strozier, 1994; Fuller, 1995; Lamy, 1996; Barkun 1997. Scholars debate distinctions among apocalyptic, millennialist, and millenarian social movements, but they share enough similarity for this discussion to lump them together.
23 Fenster, 1999.
24 Curry and Brown, 1972; Cumings, 1990: 767.
Durham, on the other hand, argues that the situation is far more complex than can be explained by just blaming angry White men (2000: 24-42).

