

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY  
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

EFFECTS OF LEADERSHIP DECAPITATION  
ON SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, 1960-1995

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Spring 2012

A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements  
for baccalaureate degrees  
in Political Science and Global and International Studies  
with honors in Political Science

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## ABSTRACT

Since the end of the Cold War, political scientists' focus has toward the study of sub-state actors. Particularly in the post-9/11 world, significant attention has been devoted towards the study of terrorism: its causes, how to fight it, how to stop it. For centuries, "decapitation" tactics, arresting or killing opposing leaders, have been commonly used to fight groups. The question has recently arisen as to how successful these tactics are. In following with the post-9/11 interest in terrorist groups, significant quantitative research has been conducted into the effectiveness of these leadership removal tactics. These studies have found that decapitation is largely counterproductive in dissuading terrorist groups, but this research has not been expanded to social movements. With the recent international uprising in grassroots-based social movements (Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, etc.) not seen in this quantity since the Civil Rights and Cold War days, it is important to understand which tactics are effective for countries to use to potentially limit or dissuade these groups. This study takes a quantitative approach to determining the effects that decapitation has on social movement groups, looking at data from the United States from 1960-1995. Contrary to the findings in the terrorist literature, the data suggest that leadership removal imposed on social movements can be a successful and crippling tactic.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend a sincere and heartfelt thank you to my thesis supervisor, Professor James Piazza, who was there throughout this entire process to bounce ideas off of, and to guide me in the right direction. Without his optimism, guidance, and support this project would not have been possible. I would like to also thank Dr. Michael Berkman, and the rest of the Penn State Political Science Department. Finally, I wish to thank my father, who is always there for me throughout all of life's trials and tribulations.

## Introduction

*“Cut off the head of the snake and the body will die”  
- ‘Viva Zapata!’*

The question of how to control one’s enemies has always been of crucial concern for states and leaders. For as long as leaders have had opponents, and states have had dissidents, the tactic of leadership removal has been employed. The concept has always been to cut off the head of a group to kill the body, and this tactic has collectively come to be referred to as decapitation strategy.

The idea is simple; leaders are of crucial importance to a group. They are the founders, the recruiters, the ones who rally the followers around a cause. Without a leader, a group could not survive...or so those who employ decapitations would hope. In recent years, however, studies have found results that are often conflicting. While some have found that decapitation is a useful and productive tactic, removing crucial leaders from a group and severely hindering a group’s ability to act and coordinate, others would argue that leadership removal is in fact a counter-productive tactic. This viewpoint is gaining traction, particularly in the field of terrorist studies, which argues that decapitation strategy actually rallies a group around its fallen leader, and incites more action.

Only recently have these concepts been studied quantitatively. The impact of decapitation on terrorist activities has recently been scrutinized using empirical data, and the results have found that decapitation of terrorist groups is often counterproductive. While the field of terrorism has embraced the quantitative technique of looking at this phenomena, the field of decapitation of social movements remains largely untouched. There have been some theoretical, qualitative papers written, but nothing with the force of empirical data.

Social movements and terrorist groups are both fundamentally groups. They have leaders, members, and are often studied together in the fields of repression and group dynamics. However, it is important that not all findings from the field of terrorism studies be automatically applied to social movements. The same questions asked of terrorist groups should be specifically asked of social movements. It may be that the two types of groups act and react in the same ways, or it may be that there is something fundamentally different.

In this study, I approach the question of how leadership removal impacts social movements. I use a series of statistical regressions on data of social movements gathered in the United States from the time period of 1960-1995. I am interested in seeing if any sort of pattern emerges; were groups that were decapitated more likely to live longer? Were they likely to become more violent? Were they likely to engage in more activities? I hope that by using an empirical approach to consider these questions the results can shed light on a field that is relatively untouched and uncertain.

## Literature Review

### Repression

In the study of state-group interactions, the question of the effectiveness and consequences of state repression often arises. Repression is commonly defined in this sense as obstacles imposed by the state on group collective action (McPhail, McCarthy, 2005). State repression is not a dichotomous relationship, and is often perceived as existing on a range. This range varies from police presence at rallies, to active persecution of group members. From a theoretical point of view, the goal of repression is to increase the cost of action for groups, and to dissuade group members from participating. Extensive research has found, however, that the end result is not always what the state would hope for. Rather than a single interaction, what results is often a repeated interaction of repression and mobilization (McPhail, McCarthy, 2005). In reality, harsh repression is often followed by surge of support and activity. The intention of the repression is often not carried out effectively, and the leadership of the group stays intact, or are replaced quickly and the new leaders are left with the pre-existing communication network (Francisco, 2004). These group leaders often find themselves with a renewed sense of purpose and moral righteousness. In these instances, the group may be able to turn the initially repressive incident into what Hess and Martin term a “transformative event” (2006). Most instances of repression are followed by some level of backfire, or negative reactions to the behavior. This occurs when citizens perceive the repression as unjust. For this to happen, Hess and Martin assert that an audience must be present and that information must be communicated about the event. Observers (both direct and indirect) who perceive the actions as unjust may be more sympathetic to the

cause, and more willing to mobilize. In many cases, observers reported that the deterrence would not deter them, and that in the future they planned to participate with the victim group (Opp, Roehl, 1990). Given the proper circumstances, the backfire surrounding these “transformative events” can result in turning points in a group’s history. A group that up until that point may have received little attention could receive a public perception of being victims of injustice, therefore giving them credence. Repression has been shown to have successful uses. In nondemocratic countries extreme repression is often an effective tactic used to quash groups quickly, while in democratic countries repression often leads to escalation (Gupta et al, 1993). This study looks specifically at the extreme form of repression that is leadership removal, or the “decapitation” tactic.

### **Charismatic Leader**

The fundamental theory behind the effectiveness of leadership decapitation stems from the concept of the charismatic leader. Weber defines charisma in this context as “a quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities” (358). The idea is that for the group’s success, they rely on these charismatic leaders to recruit and maintain supporters. Individuals will only join and support a group if there is some incentive for them, and it falls on the leadership to ensure that selective incentives exist to encourage participation (Oots, 1989). Nepstad and Bob expand this idea further into a system of “leadership capital”: qualities that leaders possess that help them lead a successful organization (2006). Specifically, this

leadership capital is composed of cultural capital (knowledge, skills, etc), social capital (ties to communities and mobilizing networks), and symbolic capital (charisma, respect, moral authority) (Nepstad, Bob, 5). Leaders with more leadership capital will be more successful at structuring and leading their group to success. Theoretically, however, groups that are based around charismatic leaders will be extremely susceptible to leadership removal. If a group's success is dependent on a leader's abilities, the removal of that leader will significantly impact the group's future successes. This theory is the basis for leadership decapitation.

### **Terrorism Decapitation**

Leadership removal is extensively studied in the field of counterterrorism. Governments often use targeted attacks against leaders of terrorist groups in an attempt to harm the organization (Byman, 2006). In the recent post-9/11 world the question has arisen as to how effective these tactics are. Various cases have been looked at to determine the effectiveness of decapitation, with differing results. In an early study, Hosmer finds that, "an examination of past cases shows that direct attacks on leaders rarely produce unwanted policy changes, often fail to deter unwanted enemy behavior, sometimes produce harmful unintended consequences, and frequently fail to kill the leader" (1). The problem is that decapitation, even when successful, can often create a martyr effect (Byman, 2006). Potential supporters may rally around the newly justified cause, in an example of the previous discussed backfire effect. The results are not necessarily always predictable, which would appear to be the inherent problem with undertaking decapitation (Langdon et al, 2004). The basic distinction that the literature

on terrorism makes is regarding Social Network Analysis. Social Network Analysis asserts that in understanding the functioning of an organization it is necessary to look at the social ties between group members (Wasserman, Faust). The distinction with terrorism is that terrorism groups tend to be horizontally structured in nature. That is, rather than having a vertical, hierarchical structure there is a decentralized structure, often composed of cells. Rather than relying on a system of leaders (as a vertically structured group would) terrorism groups rely on “hubs.” The stated leaders of terrorism groups are often symbolic in nature, and have less organizational impact than a hierarchical group’s leaders would.

Most of the literature regarding leadership removal of terrorism groups looks to explain results of case studies. However, Jordan uses a unique quantitative study to address the question of decapitation effectiveness. In her study at the effectiveness of leadership removal, Jordan uses an empirical data set of group activities, and looks at comparisons between groups that were the subject of decapitation with those who were not. Using quantitative techniques, she concludes that groups who were not targeted actually had a *higher* decline rate, suggesting that decapitation strengthened these groups. She also found that younger groups were more susceptible to the effects of decapitation, as were ideological groups, while religious groups were resilient to these effects (Jordan, 2009).

This study looks to emulate in the field of social movements the empirical approach taken by Jordan in the field of terrorism.

## **Social Movement Decapitation**

The study of the specific effects of leadership removal in social movements is a generally new and unexplored field. Despite laying fundamental hypotheses in their 2007 article, Bob and Nepstad acknowledged that their work lacked the strength of empirical data, and asserted: “We hope our article serves as a basis on which other researchers can test these hypotheses using a variety of methods” (1372). In this study I look to do that. Bob and Nepstad’s work relied on two cases, which were picked based on the outcomes, or the dependent variable. Specifically, they laid the hypotheses that backfire mobilization can occur within two relevant sources in social movements: within their potential recruitment pool (which would lead to further participation), or within third parties (which would lead to further external support). Bob and Nepstad ultimately conclude that decapitation is likely to increase levels of militancy within a group, and that it will imbibe members with a sense of empowerment and justification. They find that the efficiency and final success of decapitation will depend upon various elements of the group type, and the leader (Bob, Nepstad, 2007). In this study, I look to test some of these hypotheses using empirical data available from during, and following, the U.S. Civil Rights era (1960-1995)

## **Civil Rights Era**

This study looks at the historically significant time period surrounding the U.S. Civil Rights era. Specifically, I am looking at the time period 1960-1996. It is inarguable that there have been few times in the history of the United States with equal or more social movement activity. The period starts with African-American Civil Rights

protests, with significant student involvement. This period was characterized by high levels of activity, large numbers of groups, and radical behavior (Soule, Earl, 2005). This period was also significant for high levels of government response and repression to the Civil Rights actors. This repression existed on a wide range, from police presence at events to protestors being actively shot and killed (McPhail et al, 1998). From an institutional point of view, several government agencies were actively used to deter social movements during this time period. Despite nationally mandated integration, the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission (MSSC) and Alabama State Sovereignty Commission (ASSC) were created by their respective governors to oppose integration and to spy on civil rights workers and other subversives (Lehman, 2006). On a national level, the government was going after everyone who could be marked as a threat. COINTELPRO (Counter Intelligence Program) was an FBI program existing between 1956 and 1971 intended to disrupt or neutralize radical groups, whether left-wing, right-wing, Communist, black, or white. COINTELPRO was autonomous of any other government agency, and operated using spy tactics, misinformation, and arrests (Cunningham, 2003). The mid to late 70s marked a turning point, bringing with them the end of fierce student activism (Lehman, 2006). These years also saw the end of government-mandated anti-Civil Rights organizations (COINTELPRO, MSSC, ASSC). However, social action was still present, albeit at a more moderate pace. While the 70s marked the end of the African American Civil Rights era, they brought the start of women's right movements and anti-Vietnam (Lehman, 2006).

## **Data and Methodology**

### **Dataset Preparation**

This study takes a quantitative approach to the relatively untouched field of social movement decapitation. While other studies (Bob, Nepstad, 2007) have set forth theoretical hypotheses on the effects that leadership removal has on social groups, this study aims to use empirical data to test these hypotheses. Relatively few cumulative databases have been created regarding the activities of social movements throughout any point of time, let alone a universal set. This study uses the Dynamics of Collective Action database out of Stanford. The database covers the time period from 1960-1995, and is coded at the event level. The New York Times archive was used to find events that could be classified as being collective action. Extensive details of the events were coded, including group type, activity type, participants, claims, etc. For this study, only groups that undertook at least ten events were of interest. Engaging in this specification ensured that a proper study sample persisted with adequate data. After sorting by group naming, cleaning up the data, and finding the groups that had more than ten events, 66 groups remained, containing a combined 3,266 events (see Appendix for Table of Groups). This modified data set made up the basis for this study's original dataset. Before looking for instances of decapitation, the groups were researched to find basic information about them: their founding year, "death" year, whether there was an identifiable leader, and what type of organization it was. I then coded for each group's age at each specific event. This was done to be able to test the general theory that older groups will tend to be more developed, have a stronger internal infrastructure, and be more resistant to leadership removal.

The Stanford database contained detailed observations and coding of the event types, participation, group types, etc., but to convert it to be suitable for the purposes of this study, I needed to code for decapitations. In order to maintain consistency across the database, I used the New York Times online archive system, the same source that was initially used for the Stanford database. What I was interested in was any incident in which one of my group's leaders was arrested or killed. To find these events, I used the archive's search function which allows to search under multiple keywords. What I needed to find were any instances involving the group, involving a leader, and involving a leadership removal. I restricted my search to the years that the study is interested in (1960 – 1995) and searched using the following key words:

- “(group name)”, AND
- [“leader” OR “prominent member”]. AND
- [“killed” OR “assassinated”, OR “arrested” OR “sentenced”]

In instances where a group had a commonly used acronym, I searched under both the acronym as well as the full name. In instances where I was able to identify a significant leader in my initial research phase, I searched directly under the leader's name, as well as for the more generic [“leader” OR “prominent member”].

After running my search parameters for all of my study's 66 groups, I was able to find 21 significant cases of leadership removal, across 12 of my groups. While there were more articles than this that were a result of my search, I excluded those in which a leader was arrested, but did not serve any jail time, or in which the charges were dropped after an insignificant time (e.g. arrests that occurred as part of mass arrests at a protest).

One of this study's primary goals is to look at how a group's behavior changes after being the subject of leadership removal. The Stanford database coded for the form of an event, choosing out of 18 possible types. To be able to look at a group's change in radical behavior, I broke these 18 types into four groups in increasing levels of radical nature. I have included those below, with the original categories from the Stanford database in parentheses.

1. General organizational action (ceremonies, dramaturgical demonstrations, information distributions, symbolic displays, press conferences, organization formation announcements)
2. Large-scale organization display (rallies, marches, vigils, pickets, motorcades, lawsuits/legal maneuvers)
3. Large-scale collective action (civil disobedience, strikes/slow downs/sick-ins, boycotts)
4. Violent Action (Attacks, riots/melees/mob violence, conflicts/clashes)

Having at this point a database of detailed events, and a database of lists of decapitation, it was necessary to combine the two. The Stanford database's unit of measurement was the event level, however this study is interested in a group's activities and changes over time. Therefore, I converted the unit of measurement from the event level to the group-year level. All 66 of my groups were coded for each year from 1960-1995. I coded for the number of events for that year, and a running tally of how many decapitations the group had experienced. I also coded for the highest level of radical behavior in that year, as well as how close to "death" the group was in the form of a

“death” countdown variable. Finally, I used the Events variables and the RadicalBehavior variables to code for the change in these variables from year to year.

### **Independent Variables**

Pursuant to the previously documented findings of terrorism decapitation research (Jordan, 2009), and the proposed hypotheses of social movement researchers (Bob, Nepstad, 2007), this study is interested in several independent variables. Primarily, it is interested in the effect of leadership decapitation. This is defined as any example of a primary leader of a group being removed from the leadership capacity through arrest or death. This study looks at both a running total of the number of decapitations a group experiences, as well as a dummy variable that looks at whether the group has experienced decapitation or not. This allows us to determine whether decapitation has a cumulative effect (where the more decapitations, the more influence), or if it is sufficient for the group to have experienced any number of decapitations.

As I’ve explained, previous studies have developed a hypothesis regarding the significance of a group’s age. The hypothesis is that the older a group is, the more solid its internal structure, the more cemented it is in society. All of these are hypothesized to make an older group more resistant to decapitation. Therefore, this study also looks at the age of a group as an independent variable. This signifies how many years the group has existed since its founding.

Finally, the literature presents hypotheses that a group’s type will determine the level of effectiveness that leadership removal will have on a group. This study uses the Stanford datasets preexisting coding of group type with minimal change. Some types

have been consolidated (e.g. all racial groups were consolidated under the “Ethnic/Racial” category).

**Table 1.** List of Group Type codes

<b>Code</b>	<b>Group Type</b>
<b>0100</b>	Occupational Group/Worker Category
<b>0400</b>	Ethnic/Racial Groups
<b>0500</b>	Women Groups
<b>0800</b>	Student Groups
<b>1000</b>	Political Groups
<b>1100</b>	Religious Groups
<b>1200</b>	Craft or Trade Unions
<b>1800</b>	Social Movement Actors

### **Dependent Variables**

This study is interested in three general measures of group success over time, and how leadership removal may affect those measures. These measures are longevity, frequency, and intensity. Longevity is categorized as how long a group lives. If a decapitation was ultimately successful, one would expect that it would lead to a group’s death and decrease its life expectancy. For this study, longevity is looked at by using a “death” countdown. For each year in the database, I coded how many years were left until the group’s “death”. Groups with no known “death” date are excluded. Another way to measure impact on longevity was the use of a dummy variable coding whether a group was within five years of death. Using this variable *all* groups are included, leading to a much larger number of observations.

The second category of interest is frequency of activity. In this study, frequency is defined as how many events a group partakes in in a given year. This is coded for every year that the group exists within the group-year parameters. Interesting to the

study is also the change in number of events in any particular year. That is coded as the difference in number of events from the year earlier to the given year. Again, this is coded for every year that the group exists (except the first year).

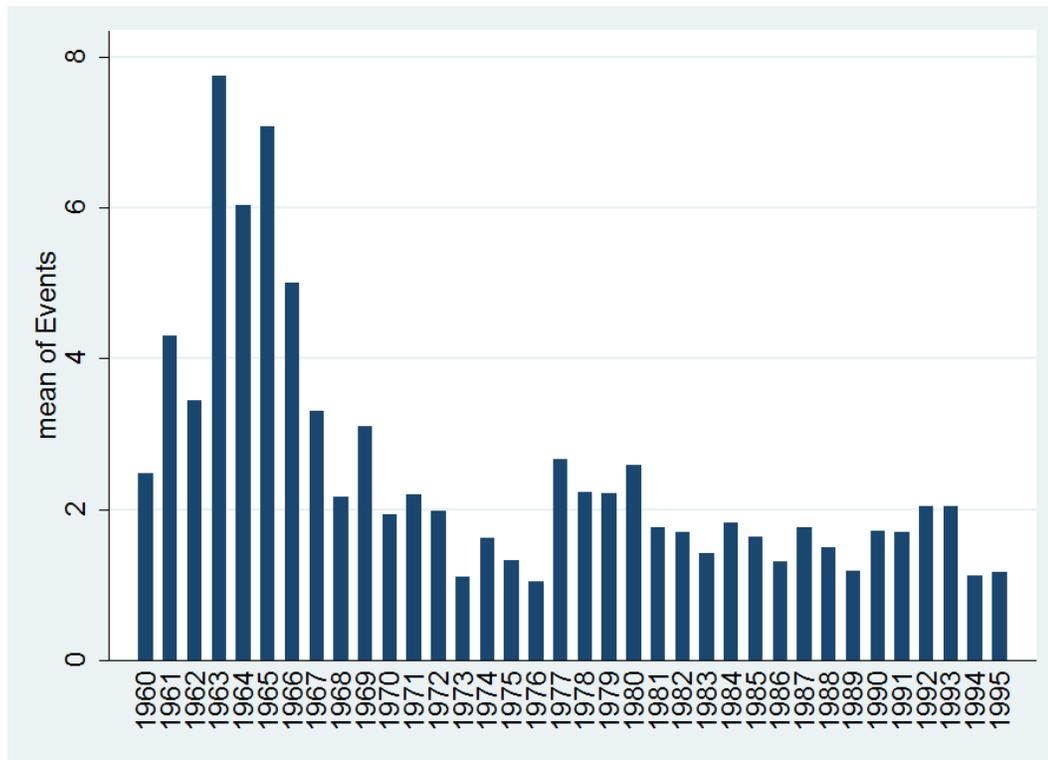
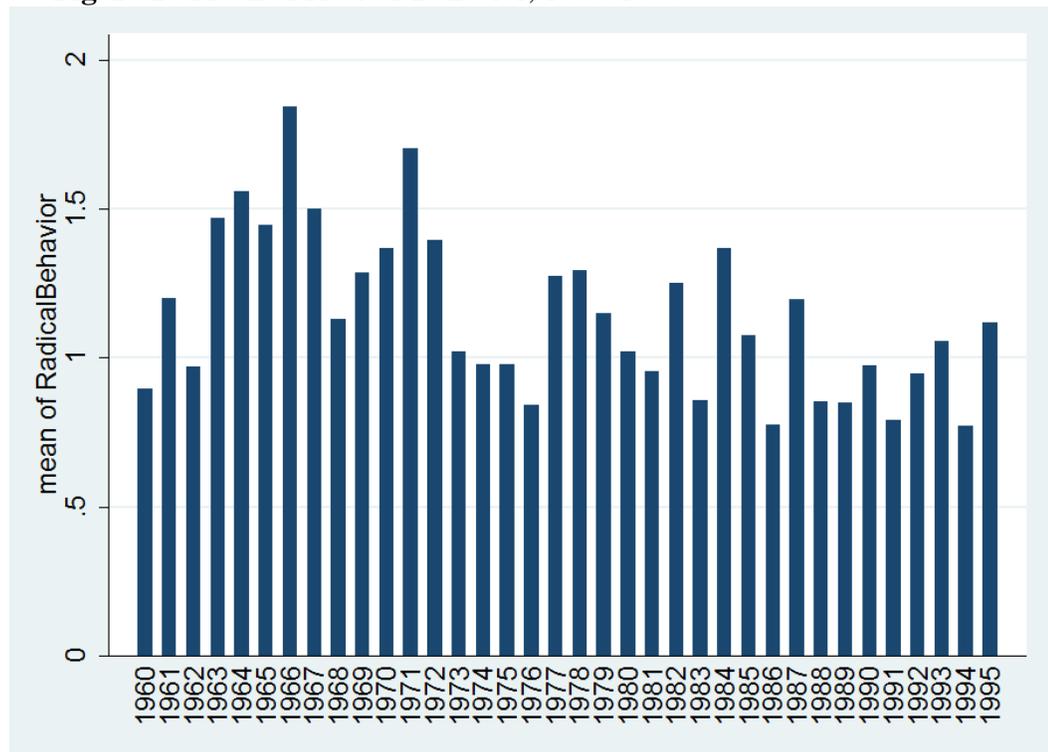
The final category of interest is the intensity of events. I consider intensity of events to be how radical an event is. As was previously described, I broke down all of the Stanford database's types of events into four categories, ordered from least to most radical. For each year in the database, I coded for which category was the highest that the group performed under. This gives an ordinal approximation of how "radical" the group was in that year. This study is also interested in looking at how a group's intensity shifts from year to year, and how the independent variables affect that, so I also coded for the change in the group's behavior. Like events, this was coded as the difference in radical behavior from the year before to the year in question. This variable allows me to look at how a group's type of behavior shifts on a year-to-year basis.

## **Analysis of Results**

Numerous regressions were run of the data using Stata. In particular, each category of interest (longevity, frequency, intensity) was run using both variables of interest (deathCountdown/nearDeath, Events/changeEvents, radicalBehavior/changeRadicalBehavior, respectively). Additionally, all regressions were run using the decapitation count, as well as the decapitation dummy. This was done to ensure that both the possibility of cumulative decapitation, and non-cumulative were tested.

### **Civil Rights Era Analysis**

Before turning my attention to any of the relevant regressions, I looked at the dataset that I had created to see if the trends matched the literature pertaining to the Civil Rights Era. As was previously discussed, the 1960s and 70s in America consisted of a high number of events, and radical behavior surrounding the African-American Civil Rights movement. The 70s and 80s brought less radical behavior, but still had social action surrounding women's rights protests and anti-war protests. Figures 1 and 2 display the results from these analyses. These graphs display the average number of events and level of radical behavior per year for any group. As is clear, the data do indeed reflect the trend of significant action in the 60s, declining into the later years. Additionally, radical behavior peaks in the early 60s, although declining less through the time period.

**Figure 1.** Mean of Social Action Events, 1960-1995**Figure 2.** Mean of Radical Behavior, 1960-1995

## Decapitation

To gain a better understanding of the contexts under which decapitations occur, I first ran a set of regressions running my two decapitation variables as the dependent variables, and age and group types as the independent variables. The results are displayed in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Impacts of Group Extremism

	1	2
	DecapitationDummy	nearDeath
<b>lagForm4***</b>	<b>.644*</b> (.296)	<b>1.490*</b> (.237)
<b>Age</b>	<b>-.017*</b> (.006)	-2.8e-4 (2.2e-4)
<b>Race/Ethnic Group</b>	-1.099 (.647)	-.649 (.492)
<b>Political Group</b>	<b>-1.282*</b> (.651)	-.158 (.481)
<b>Religious Group</b>	-1.231 (.665)	-.732 (.502)
<b>Union Group</b>	**	**
<b>Women Group</b>	**	-.727 (.621)
<b>Student Group</b>	**	-.543 (.521)
<b>Social Movement</b>	<b>-2.524*</b> (.643)	-.754 (.465)
<b>R-square</b>	.105	.033
<b>n</b>	1161	2338

Standard errors in parentheses.

\*Indicates significance at the .05 level or higher

\*\*Values were dropped by Stata as they predicted failure perfectly

\*\*\*Lagged 2 years

These regressions show several interesting findings as to what types of groups are more likely to experience decapitation. Consistent across both regressions are findings that older groups are generally less likely to experience decapitation. Both regressions show a strong and statistically significant correlation between being a social movement and the likelihood of decapitation; we can conclude that a social movement is significantly less

likely to experience leadership removal. The regression running the decapitation counter (Model 1) finds negative correlations between race/ethnic groups and religious groups and decapitation. We can conclude that these groups are unlikely to experience large numbers of decapitation. On the other hand, the regression running the decapitation dummy finds a negative correlation between political groups and decapitation; political groups are less likely to experience any number of decapitations. This initial analysis gives a baseline against which to measure the other models.

Another interesting characteristic under which to study those groups who suffered decapitation is level of radicalism. I looked at the percentage of groups who experienced decapitation across my four categories of behavior, and found an increase in likelihood of decapitation in the higher groups, as is displayed in table 3

Table 3. Distribution of Decapitation by Behavior Type

<b>Level of Behavior</b>	<b>Percent experiencing Decapitation</b>
<b>1</b>	1.3%
<b>2</b>	6.02%
<b>3</b>	10.53%
<b>4</b>	12.12%

These results were verified by my regression in Table 2. The results show that groups who engaged in the most extreme form of behavior were more likely to be decapitated, and were more likely to be within five years of death. Additionally interesting is the finding that every instance of decapitation occurred to groups who were classified as “violent”; that is, their organization at some point engaged in violent behavior. It is apparent that the tactic of leadership removal is more likely to occur in more radical, violent groups.

## Longevity

Tables 4 and 5 show the results of the regressions that were run on the data for the independent variables relevant to the category of longevity: whether a group was near death (within five years), and how many years away the group was. First, the regression was run using the decapitation counter, which held for the possibility of cumulative effects of decapitation. The regression was next run with the decapitation dummy.

**Table 4.** Models of Impacts of Cumulative Leadership Removal on Longevity

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>nearDeath</b>	<b>deathCountdown</b>
<b>Decapitation</b>	<b>.358*</b> (.159)	<b>-.429*</b> (.089)
<b>Age</b>	<b>-.001*</b> (.0002)	9.7e-5 (9.9e-5)
<b>Race/Ethnic Group</b>	.273 (.324)	.125 (.156)
<b>Political Group</b>	<b>1.431*</b> (.334)	.022 (.160)
<b>Religious Group</b>	-.336 (.338)	.409 (.155)
<b>Women Group</b>	<b>1.554*</b> (.614)	-.346 (.276)
<b>Student Group</b>	.126 (.370)	.267 (.169)
<b>Social Movement</b>	.074 (.284)	-.021 (.145)
<b>Constant</b>	<b>-1.705*</b> (.260)	<b>2.137*</b> (.132)
<b>R-square</b>	.058	.013
<b>n</b>	1299	607

Standard errors in parentheses.

\*Indicates significance at the .05 level or higher

**Table 5.** Models of Impacts of non-Cumulative Leadership Removal on Longevity

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>nearDeath</b>	<b>deathCountdown</b>
<b>DecapitationDummy</b>	.323 (.247)	<b>-.795*</b> (.171)
<b>Age</b>	<b>-5.41e-4*</b> (2.36e-4)	9.69e-5 (9.93e-5)
<b>Race/Ethnic Group</b>	.248 (.326)	.144 (.158)
<b>Political Group</b>	<b>.752*</b> (.315)	.072 (.163)
<b>Religious Group</b>	-.370 (.338)	<b>.431*</b> (.155)
<b>Women Group</b>	<b>1.516*</b> (.613)	-.328 (.276)
<b>Student Group</b>	.076 (.369)	.285 (.169)
<b>Social Movement</b>	-.130 (.282)	-.003 (.145)
<b>Constant</b>	<b>-1.667*</b> (.258)	<b>2.120*</b> (.131)
<b>R-square</b>	.032	.013
<b>n</b>	1437	607

Standard errors in parentheses.

\*Indicates significance at the .05 level or higher

Several statistically significant results arise from these sets of regressions. Both sets of regressions show correlations favoring a conclusion that decapitation will lead to a group being closer to death. For the “nearDeath” dummy variable, there is a conclusively positive correlation with both types of decapitation (cumulative and non-cumulative), meaning a group having experienced decapitation is more likely to be near death. For the “death countdown”, there is a statistically significant negative correlation with decapitation; that is, a group that has experienced decapitation will have fewer years left in its life. The results also show that age has a significant impact on the “nearDeath” variable. They show that older groups are less likely to be within five years of death; this lends credence to the theory that older groups are more cemented in society. Across both regressions, the results also show that both political groups and women’s groups are more likely to be close to death. For the political groups, this can be explained by the fact that

many political groups are often created for one or two elections, and then fade out of existence (e.g. Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party).

## Frequency

Tables 6 and 7 show the results for the regressions that were run on the independent variables for the concept of frequency (number of events, and change in number of events). As was done for longevity, the regressions were first run using the decapitation counter to account for cumulative effects of multiple decapitations, and then run using the decapitation dummy.

**Table 6.** Models of Impacts of *Cumulative Leadership Removal* on Frequency

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>Events</b>	<b>changeEvents</b>
<b>Decapitation</b>	.050 (.124)	.063 (.255)
<b>Age</b>	<b>-5.6e-4*</b> (1.1e-4)	-3.2e-5 (2.1e-4)
<b>Race/Ethnic Group</b>	<b>1.904*</b> (.224)	-.049 (.443)
<b>Political Group</b>	<b>.742*</b> (.266)	.121 (.511)
<b>Religious Group</b>	.112 (.226)	.014 (.425)
<b>Union Group</b>	.014 (.370)	-.685 (.692)
<b>Women Group</b>	.920 (.516)	.148 (1.059)
<b>Student Group</b>	<b>.834*</b> (.247)	.213 (.480)
<b>Social Movement</b>	<b>1.24*</b> (.197)	.106 (.376)
<b>Constant</b>	-.150 (.182)	-.148 (.341)
<b>R-square</b>	.031	.002
<b>n</b>	1335	1299

Standard errors in parentheses.

\*Indicates significance at the .05 level or higher

**Table 7.** Models of Impacts of *non-Cumulative* Leadership Removal on Frequency

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>Events</b>	<b>changeEvents</b>
<b>DecapitationDummy</b>	-.089 (.204)	.058 (.352)
<b>Age</b>	<b>-5.69e-4*</b> (1.12e-4)	-3.34e-5 (2.01e-4)
<b>Race/Ethnic Group</b>	<b>1.906*</b> (.224)	-.052 (.429)
<b>Political Group</b>	<b>.796*</b> (.264)	.128 (.436)
<b>Religious Group</b>	.129 (.228)	.015 (.409)
<b>Union Group</b>	.003 (.370)	-.689 (.665)
<b>Women Group</b>	.909 (.516)	.144 (1.019)
<b>Student Group</b>	<b>.828*</b> (.247)	.209 (.461)
<b>Social Movement</b>	<b>1.232*</b> (.196)	.105 (.357)
<b>Constant</b>	-.139 (.182)	-.143 (.327)
<b>R-square</b>	.031	.002
<b>n</b>	1335	1437

Standard errors in parentheses.

\*Indicates significance at the .05 level or higher

Some interesting and significant results arise from the results showing the effect that group type has on the number of events conducted in any given year. Older groups are shown to engage in fewer events. Racial/ethnic groups, political groups, student groups, and social movements are all shown to engage in more events. However, there are no statistically significant findings with respect to decapitation, and no statistically significant findings as to a group's change in number of events from year to year.

### **Intensity**

Tables 8 and 9 display the results of the regressions that were run for the effects of cumulative and non-cumulative leadership removal on the concept of intensity (the group's radical behavior, and change in radical behavior in a given year).

**Table 8.** Models of Impacts of *Cumulative* Leadership Removal on Intensity

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>RadicalBehavior</b>	<b>changeRadicalBehavior</b>
<b>Decapitation</b>	.084 (.135)	<b>-.318*</b> (.149)
<b>Age</b>	<b>-2.51e-4*</b> (1.12e-4)	2.21e-6 (1.14e-4)
<b>Race/Ethnic Group</b>	<b>1.458*</b> (.257)	.062 (.239)
<b>Political Group</b>	<b>1.159*</b> (.284)	.125 (.278)
<b>Religious Group</b>	<b>.587*</b> (.244)	.054 (.229)
<b>Union Group</b>	.613 (.372)	.038 (.401)
<b>Women Group</b>	<b>1.778*</b> (.481)	.073 (.559)
<b>Student Group</b>	<b>.544*</b> (.277)	.043 (.256)
<b>Social Movement</b>	<b>1.132*</b> (.220)	.051 (.201)
<b>R-square</b>	.019	.001
<b>n</b>	1335	1335

Standard errors in parentheses.

\*Indicates significance at the .05 level or higher

**Table 9.** Models of Impacts of *non-Cumulative* Leadership Removal on Intensity

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>RadicalBehavior</b>	<b>changeRadicalBehavior</b>
<b>DecapitationDummy</b>	.049 (.203)	<b>-.411*</b> (.210)
<b>Age</b>	-1.54e-4 (1.11e-4)	-8.96e-7 (1.18e-4)
<b>Race/Ethnic Group</b>	<b>1.432*</b> (.258)	.087 (.249)
<b>Political Group</b>	.341 (.265)	.097 (.249)
<b>Religious Group</b>	<b>.548*</b> (.244)	.065 (.237)
<b>Union Group</b>	.594 (.370)	.043 (.417)
<b>Women Group</b>	<b>1.729*</b> (.478)	.090 (.581)
<b>Student Group</b>	.486 (.276)	.060 (.265)
<b>Social Movement</b>	<b>.860*</b> (.218)	.081 (.206)
<b>R-square</b>	.015	.001
<b>n</b>	1473	1473

Standard errors in parentheses.

\*Indicates significance at the .05 level or higher

The results reveal several interesting correlations between leadership removal and intensity, as well as between group type and intensity. Relevant to this study, the results

show that groups who experience a decapitation will decrease the radical nature of their organizational behavior from one year to the next. This is consistent with the notion that decapitation is an effective tactic, as groups who experience decapitation become less aggressive and radical.

### **Impacts of Group Type post-Decapitation**

As was previously explained, a recurring theme throughout the relevant literature is that different group types will be affected differently by decapitation. To test this theory, I created interaction variables for every group type and decapitation, and ran regressions of my dependent variables. What I wanted to look at is whether different types of groups react differently to decapitation in terms of longevity, frequency, and intensity. For longevity, the only statistically significant group type was the ethnic/racial group. However, this result was driven almost entirely by the success of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference after the assassination of its first president, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (there were only two examples of ethnic/racial groups with decapitations). For intensity and frequency there were no statistically significant findings.

## Summary and Conclusions

Looking at the totality of the regression results, an overall picture begins to emerge. Leadership removal is more likely to be experienced by groups that are more radical, and engaging in more extreme behavior (refer back to Table 2). Once this leadership removal is experienced, the data suggest that decapitation of social movements is, for the most part, a productive tactic to employ. Groups that experience decapitation are more likely to be close to their “death” and will likely decrease their radical nature. These results are summarized in Table 10 below.

**Table 10.** Models of Impacts of Leadership Removal in Social Groups

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>nearDeath</b>	<b>changeEvents</b>	<b>changeRadicalBehavior</b>
<b>Decapitation</b>	<b>.358*</b> (.159)	.063 (.255)	<b>-.318*</b> (.149)
<b>Age</b>	<b>-.001*</b> (.0002)	-3.2e-5 (2.1e-4)	2.21e-6 (1.14e-4)
<b>Race/Ethnic Group</b>	.273 (.324)	-.049 (.443)	.062 (.239)
<b>Political Group</b>	<b>1.431*</b> (.334)	.121 (.511)	.125 (.278)
<b>Religious Group</b>	-.336 (.338)	.014 (.425)	.054 (.229)
<b>Union Group</b>	**	-.685 (.692)	.038 (.401)
<b>Women Group</b>	<b>1.554*</b> (.614)	.148 (1.059)	.073 (.559)
<b>Student Group</b>	.126 (.370)	.213 (.480)	.043 (.256)
<b>Social Movement</b>	.074 (.284)	.106 (.376)	.051 (.201)
<b>Constant</b>	<b>-1.705*</b> (.260)	-.148 (.341)	***
<b>R-square</b>	.058	.002	.001
<b>n</b>	1299	1299	1335

Standard errors in parentheses.

\*Indicates significance at the .05 level or higher

\*\* Dropped from regression

\*\*\*These are the results of an ordered logistical regression estimation. “Full” results are available from the author upon request

What is the bigger picture that can be drawn from these results? As groups become more radical, it becomes more and more difficult for them to peacefully exist within the status quo, and something must change. Whether it is conducted by a government agent, or some other group, as groups reach a certain threshold of extremism they are likely to be decapitated. When this happens, the group is likely to lose some of the radical energy it previously held as the individual who, until that point, was the rallying source for the group will have been eliminated. Important contacts within society that the leader held will also be lost. In short, the group will need to find ways to replace the important role that the leader held and, in many instances, will be unable to do so. The group will lose steam, fizzle out, and cease to exist.

These results lend credence to certain concepts, while failing to show support to others. Particularly, the concept of the “charismatic leader” is supported. As previously explained, this theory dictates that the leader of a group plays an essential and unique role in forming, strengthening, and sustaining a group. If that individual is lost, the group will have a difficult time replacing him/her. The results of my study tend to support this theory. Groups that lost their leader had a difficult time maintaining an extremist mentality and keeping the group together.

The results also tend to contradict the previously established repression and terrorism literature. Previous works have hypothesized that extreme repression would tend to have a backlash effect, in which the group would become more radical. Particularly in the field of terrorism, studies have found that decapitation often resulted in

the group rallying around its martyred leader. Even in religiously oriented groups, this study did not find any such backlash or martyr effect which would have been predicted.

I acknowledge that there are limitations in my study. My regressions yielded rather low R-squares, implying that the factors that I used did not account for the totality of the reasons that a group would die, or become less radical. This is to be expected, as any social movement is a complex structure, and its survival is dependent on the sum of many circumstances. Also, my study only covers groups active within the United States between 1960 and 1995. For an ideal study of this type, future researchers would need to compile a database covering all social groups across all countries over a large time period. Ideally, this database would also contain a significant number of control variables.

While there are limitations to this study, it serves as a step forward in quantifying the study of decapitation and social groups. While previous works have touched on the field of social movement decapitation, none have done so with any quantifiable research. The rise of Facebook and Twitter has led to a world in which it is increasingly easier to reach out and create social movements. Looking at the Arab Spring uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, one sees examples of how social movements were handled ineffectively by their governments. This field of study is crucial for governments to know the possible implications of their actions. My research aims to contribute to the body of literature on social movements, decapitation strategy, and repression in general to give a better look at, and raise important questions about, the interactions between groups and states, and the effects of various actions.

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## APPENDIX

Table of Studied Groups

<b>Group Name</b>	<b>Year Founded</b>	<b>Number of Events</b>	<b>Decapitations</b>	<b>Years</b>
ACLU	1920	217	0	
Act Up (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power)	1987	43	0	
AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations)	1955	31	0	
Amalgamated Clothing and Textiles	1914	12	0	
American Agriculture Movement	1977	40	0	
American Indian Movement	1968	16	3	1973, '73, '76
American Jewish Committee (AJC)	1906	14	0	
American Jewish Congress	1918	26	1	1984
American Nazi Party (National Socialist White People's Party)	1959	44	2	1966, '67
Animal Liberation Front	1976	15	0	
Anti Defamation League	1913	26	0	
Ass. Of Community Organizations For Reform Now	1970	11	0	
Black Muslims (First Nation of Islam)	1930	13	1	9/6/1973
Black Panthers	1966	51	4	1967, '68, '69, '69
Black Student Union	?	23		
Bogalusa Voters League	1956	14		
Center For Constitutional Rights	1966	10	0	
Civil Liberties Union	?	14		
Clamshell Alliance	1976	19	0	
Coalition for the Homeless	1981	11	0	
Committee for nonviolent Action	1957	25	0	
Communist Workers Party	1973	13	0	
Community for Creative Nonviolence	1978	13	0	
Congress of Racial Equality	1941	370	1	1964
Dignity	1969	28	0	
Environmental Defense Fund	1967	12	0	
Equal Employment Opportunity commission	1965	14		
Fifth Avenue Vietnam Peace Parade Committee	1965	10	0	
Free Speech Movement	1964	11	0	

Gay Activist Alliance	1969	25	0	
GreenPeace	1971	25	0	
Irish Gay and Lesbian	1990	18		
Italian American Civil Rights League	1970	12	0	
Jewish Defense League	1968	70	2	1990, '92
John Birch Society	1958	13	0	
KKK	1946	266	0	
Legal Aid Society		39	0	
Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party	1964	10	0	
Move	1972	10	1	1985
NAACP	1909	628	0	
Nation of Islam (2nd)	1977	13	0	
National Council of Churches	1957	14	0	
National Organization for Women (NOW)	1966	132	0	
National Peace Action Coalition	1970	10	0	
National States Rights Party	1958	17	0	
National Urban League	1910	25	0	
Natural Resources defense Council	1970	12	0	
New World Liberation Front	1974	11	0	
New York Civil Liberties Union	1951	50	0	
Omega 7	1960	26	1	1983
Operation Rescue	1986	56	1	1992
People's Coalition for Peace and Justice	1970	13	0	
Revolutionary Communist Party	1975	14	0	
Sierra Club	1892	30	0	
Socialist Workers Party	1938	13		
Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)	1957	139	1	1968
Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)	1960	106	3	1966, '67, '68
Students For a Democratic Society (SDS)	1960	124	0	
United Farm Workers	1962	18	0	
United Federation of Teachers	1960	11	0	
United Freedom Front	1975	13	0	
Vietnam Moratorium Committee	1969	64	0	
Weather Underground	1969	15	0	
Women Strike For Peace	1961	28	0	
Young Americans For Freedom	1960	24	0	
Youth Against War and Facism	1962	26	0	
<b>Totals</b>		<b>3266</b>	<b>21</b>	
		across 66 groups	across 12 groups	

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