

White Supremacists, Oppositional Culture and the World Wide Web

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Abstract

Over the previous decade, white supremacist organizations have tapped into the ever emerging possibilities offered by the World Wide Web. Drawing from prior sociological work that has examined this medium and its uses by white supremacist organizations, this article advances the understanding of recruitment, identity and action by providing a synthesis of interpretive and more systematic analyses of thematic content, structure and associations within white supremacist discourse. Analyses, which rely on TextAnalyst, highlight semantic networks of thematic content from principal white supremacist websites, and delineate patterns and thematic associations relative to the three requisites of social movement culture denoted in recent research – namely identity, interpretational framing of cause and effect, and political efficacy. Our results suggest that nationalism, religion and definitions of responsible citizenship are interwoven with race to create a sense of collective identity for these groups, their members and potential recruits. Moreover, interpretative frameworks that simultaneously identify threatening social issues and provide corresponding recommendations for social action are employed. Importantly, and relative to prior work, results show how the interpretation of problems, their alleged causes and the call to action are systematically linked. We conclude by discussing the framing of white supremacy issues, the organizations' potential for recruitment, and how a relatively new communication medium, the Internet, has been cheaply and efficiently integrated into the white supremacist repertoire. Broader implications for social movement theory are also explored.

Despite a marginalized status and popular representations that portray them as laughable and only nominally threatening, hate groups remain an active and dangerous component of our society (Shanks-Meile and Dobratz 1991; Perry 2000). Rather than lay dormant, these organizations vigorously endeavor to spread their ideology, expand their spheres of influence, and attract more adherents – some of whom have been recently implicated in some of the more serious and violent crimes against African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, Jewish Americans and homosexuals (Glaser, Dixit Green 2002). Moreover, right-wing hate organizations are experiencing a rapid process of decentralization, leading to the emergence of the "lone wolf model" of social action and violence (SPLC, 2001).

Over the past decade, white supremacist organizations have come to harness the new medium of the Internet and in impressive fashion (Burris, Smith Strahm 2000; Perry 2000). According to the Southern Poverty Law Center (2002), the year 2001 witnessed 405 hate sites on the Internet, an increase of 10 percent from the previous year. This increased use is, no doubt, partially a function of the high level of anonymity facilitated by chat rooms and electronic mail (Dobratz, 2001), which allow organizational information/propaganda to be distributed free of mainstream media constraints (Hier 2000). This makes the communicative

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possibilities of the Internet extremely attractive for hate groups. But what precisely is being communicated on these websites? And, how might the information being disseminated be important for group solidarity, recruitment and action?

In this article, we extend research of social movement culture generally, and white supremacist groups more specifically, with two primary objectives in mind. First, and consistent with some prior work (e.g., Blee 2002; Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 1997), we examine the framing techniques used and how they foster identity construction and maintenance. Secondly, we analyze causal linkages in interpretation and political efficacy in the white supremacist discourse itself. This is especially important given the argument of social movement culture theorists that effective interpretational framing will systematically link cause and effect and also foster a corresponding sense of political efficacy (Gamson 1995; Taylor and Whittier 1995; Snow et al. 1986). Our textual data are drawn from prominent white supremacist websites and our analyses utilize TextAnalyst – a linguistic analysis software package that identifies thematic content, thematic structures and thematic associations. We conclude by discussing the implications of our results for understanding hate group culture, specifically, and social movement culture and technological diffusion more generally.

Collective Identity, Framing and Social Movement Culture

Along with specifying the production of interpretive symbolic frameworks, theorizing on collective identity is a useful foundation for understanding ideological framing within social movement organizations, including the white supremacist movement. Most generally, this perspective offers theoretical insight into how social movement organizations foster group solidarity by offering an alternative to dominant ideological frameworks.

Collective identity formation, it is suggested, is the process that allows a disparate group of individuals to voice grievances and pursue a collective goal under the guise of a “unified empirical actor.” (Melucci 1995) It is from this ability to function as a unified whole that a social movement draws its strength to the extent that Kebede, Shriver and Knottnerus (2000) describe social movements as “collective identities in motion.” Indeed, collective identity is not an individual level phenomenon, but rather a larger manifestation of group attributes and member commonalities occurring on a social level (Gamson 1995; Taylor and Whittier 1995; Taylor 1996; Kebede, Shriver and Knottnerus 2000). Its importance lies in solidarity building and maintenance among movement participants through a belief in their own political or social efficacy (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996; Passy and Giugni 2001), the construction of collective rationales for participation (Snow et al. 1986), and the generation of new definitions of social reality and delineation of the oppositional “other.” (Melucci 1995)

Symbolic frames are typically employed to construct and maintain these collective identities. Frames are constructs used to assign meaning to events, occurrences, social structures and cultural artifacts, thus functioning to organize movements and facilitate participation (Snow et al. 1986). To be effective, movement leaders must construct frames so that they reflect greater social values (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996) while simultaneously appealing to already existent beliefs and experiences of potential adherents (Tarrow 1998; Morris 2000). Tarrow (1998) notes that in addition to using frames to shape group ideology, social movement organizations generate notions of *adversaries and allies* through the images they present. Such use of symbolic frames is imperative to successful recruitment as well as solidarity maintenance and commitment among those already involved.

In Passy and Giugni’s (2001) research, individual perceptions and embeddedness in social networks are found to have a significant impact on the individual’s involvement in social

movement organizations. This suggests that there must not only be a belief that one's involvement will be effective politically, but that one must also be integrated into attendant social networks. "Cultural and ideological affinity play[s] an important role" in this process (Passy and Giugni 2001). In order to recruit new members, organizations must thus present an ideological appeal that is congruent with potential members while offering a supportive and inclusive network working toward attainable political ends.

Recent theorizing incorporates and synthesizes these insights by focusing on components of effective "social movement culture." (Gamson 1995; Taylor and Whittier 1995; Snow 2001) Rather than extolling the importance of culture in some obscure sense, this work explicitly highlights the three functions and processes of social movement or oppositional culture, namely (1) identity building and solidarity maintenance, (2) providing followers and/or potential recruits with an alternative frame for interpreting grievances, and (3) promoting a sense of efficacy relative to group grievances outlined in the frame. Some recent work (e.g., McVeigh, Meyers and Sikkink 2004; Roscigno and Danaher 2001; Rupp and Taylor 2003) has successfully utilized this three-pronged focus in systematic analyses of social movement culture and action.

Although prior research on white supremacist groups and their historical framing strategies specifically provide some important insights on especially the first component related above (i.e., identity construction), few if any analyses of which we are aware systematically examine all three components, let alone in a manner that highlights their possible systematic and causal interrelations. We nevertheless believe that some prior work, discussed next, does indeed lay the foundation for the three-pronged conception we use.

The Case of White Supremacist Culture

Unlike liberal social movements, which are often lauded as progressive initiatives responding to a variety of social injustices, conservative social movements are usually regarded as irrationally motivated exercises in intolerance. Yet, as suggested by McVeigh (1999, p. 1463), conservative movements are somewhat predictable as they usually involve "defensive collective action" in response to perceived "shrinking, rather than expanding, levels of power and influence," whether real or imagined. Blazak (2001, p. 994) concurs, suggesting that the world of hate groups is "filled with evil conspiracies and righteous crusades." It is this juxtaposition of conspiracies with crusades that has provided the dominant recruitment frame and identity for many white supremacist organizations. Leaders have focused on the continually threatened status of group members while making a "call-to-arms" that endows action with a sacred quality.

Two prominent themes have been especially recurrent within the ideological framing of white supremacist organizations: the divinely sanctified supremacy of the white race and inherent inferiority of all other races, and the abrogation of white rights. In the first regard, religion has historically been a strong tool (Dobratz 2001). Religion provides an overarching cosmology that both explains and justifies racist ideology. Recent use of religion is witnessed by the Christian Identity movement, which views Blacks and Jews as subhuman and homosexuals as race traitors (Barkun 1997; Sharpe 2000), and the Church of the Creator, which is rooted in a "racial faith." (Dobratz 2001) Less traditional groups such as racist Odinists also exploit the power of religion, envisioning ancient Nordic gods as archetypal representatives of appropriate human behavior and emphasizing the importance of European heritage as a source of identity and racial pride (Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 1997). Dobratz (2001, p. 287) notes that in such contexts, religion operates as a "shared experience that links one human being to others." Indeed, with white supremacist movements, religion has been

"constructed and reconstructed in ways that would reinforce movement supporters' identity with the white race." Hate groups rely heavily on ideological motivation as a means of recruitment (Blazak 2001), and religion provides a strong ideological superstructure into which a racialized worldview can easily be incorporated. Without it, the collective identity of such groups would be greatly impaired (Dobratz 2001).

Along with the use of religious rhetoric in identity building, the abrogation of white rights and the notion of white victimization have always served as powerful interpretational frames or "calls to arms" for white supremacists and potential recruits. Nakayama and Krizek (1995, p. 299) suggest that in American culture, one is white because they "lack[ed] any other racial or ethnic features." Many white supremacist organizations have historically exploited this idea by suggesting that whites have become "a maligned and persecuted minority" (Beck 2000 p. 154) and "oppressed victims of discrimination" who are deprived of exploring and celebrating their identity (Berbrier 2000, p. 179). Important relative to identity boundaries, hate groups also work to clearly define the "other," whether they be Jews, Blacks, homosexuals, liberals, Catholics, etc., and the negative effects the "other" has on society and especially on the white race (Shanks-Meile and Dobratz 1997; Perry 2000; Blazak 2001).

Even though whites have the lowest sense of racial alienation (Bobo and Hutchings 1996), white supremacist organizations continue to frame grievances in terms of white oppression. Citing policies such as affirmative action (Shanks-Meile and Dobratz 1991; Berbrier 2000), the inability to express "pride" in one's white racial heritage (Berbrier 2000), and advances made by civil rights organizations on behalf of minorities, women and gays (Blazak 2001), white supremacist groups capitalize on the view that whites are unfairly vilified and at a social disadvantage. Such grievances are cited as convincing "proof" and seem to serve the dual purpose of identity formation/maintenance and providing an interpretational frame for grievances and their alleged causes.

There may, nevertheless, be some important variations in ideological approaches among white supremacist organizations. Blee (2002), for instance, suggests that most contemporary racist organizations can be grouped into four distinct categories: racist skinheads, Christian Identity adherents, Neo-Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan. Burris, Smith and Strahm (2000), in contrast, divide the white supremacist movement into three categories: Ku Klux Klan, Neo-Nazis and racist skinheads. Finally, Dobratz and Shanks-Meile (1997) detail the ideological evolution of several of these groups separately, tracing their respective historical development and examining them within a contemporary context. Although seldom empirically disentangled, potential ideological fissures among white supremacist organizations arguably affect both the content of their rhetoric as well as the types of political and social action they advocate – a possibility we deal with in our modeling strategy and the analyses that follow.

Activists, Media and Public Discourse

Gamson (1995) refers to movement activists as "media junkies" who are constantly "monitor[ing] public discourse" in an effort to harness its power to further their own goals. Morris (2000) concurs, suggesting that media attention is crucial for contemporary social movements where leaders must face the challenge of creating and controlling coverage. To be sure, impression management is essential for social movement organizations, and the mass media enables these organizations to create and present symbolic frames for public consumption. Social movement organizations must incorporate new technologies and media outlets in order to remain competitive and viable entities.

The Internet represents one of the newest and most accessible media outlets. Websites can act as an introduction to a particular group in addition to providing legitimacy and access to

extensive resources for those already involved. The Internet itself, along with various chat rooms, bulletin boards and E-mail distribution lists, fosters a sense of community by providing “contact between previously disconnected people” who often share similar interests while incurring few social costs (Wellman et al. 1996, p. 224). Additionally, as a tool for solidarity maintenance and recruitment, the Internet can be viewed as an advanced form of mediated communication and an evolution in the public spaces that Snow, Zurcher and Eklund-Olson (1980) described as venues of information exchange. This possibility is observed by Wellman et al. (1996), who suggest that as a result of computer mediated networks, “community has moved indoors to private homes from its former semi-public, accessible milieus such as cafes, parks and pubs.”

As noted at the outset of this article, white supremacist groups have taken advantage of the Internet. The growth of hate-oriented websites likely stems from a variety of conditions. The Internet is a relatively cheap and efficient tool for disseminating organizational information/propaganda to a mass audience (Perry 2000). It is relatively “free space” with limited media and political constraint (Hier 2000). Moreover, websites function as “brochures” for hate groups (SPLC 2001), provide a forum for communication via chat rooms and E-mail (Dobratz 2001), and operate as retailers of racist music, literature and apparel. These elements enable racist organizations to disseminate their content not only to visitors on the websites, but also to the already converted who consume the products made available on the Internet. Finally, these sites assign specific meanings to current and past events, providing ideological reinterpretations of contemporary issues in an effort to promote unity among adherents while simultaneously appealing to potential recruits.

Drawing from previous research on hate groups and theoretical conceptions of social movement culture, we suspect that white supremacist groups use the World Wide Web in a manner directed toward identity building, grievance framing and efficacy.

Hypothesis 1: *While identity will likely be constructed through some fusion of racial distinctness and religious ideology, we suspect that grievance frames will be systematically linked and causally denote white victimhood as a consequence of minority threat or gains. Additionally, asserting a course of action and declarations of collective efficacy are often attendant counterparts of interpretive frameworks.*

We also take into account the possibility that there are group variations in the types of efficacy encouraged, depending on the grievance framing employed. Although there will be some structural similarity and connections between white supremacist groups (Burris, Smith and Strahm 2000) as well as certain broad, ideological parallels (Daniels 1997; Ferber 1999), some groups may advocate a markedly different approach to organizational and individual action than will others since their grievance frames may differ. (In this regard, see Blee 2002; Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 1997.) This leads to our second expectation:

Hypothesis 2: *Given distinct historical foundations, Klan-oriented groups will rely more systematically on mainstream religious and political identity frames while Neo-Nazi organizations will foster identity by relying on explicit conceptions of Aryan-privileged hierarchy and historical struggle. To the extent that Klan and Neo-Nazi groups differ in their interpretational framing of “cause” and “effect,” so will the efficacy and courses of action they advocate.*

The possibility of group variations, noted above, is dealt with explicitly in our analyses and is discussed in more detail in our analytic strategy section.

Data

The data we analyze is text material drawn from a sample of the six leading white supremacist websites.¹ It is from these sites that we extracted information from organizational mission statements.² These statements provide foundational discourse and are intended to provide the Internet user with a brief synopsis of each organization's respective identity, goals and beliefs. Such text discourse, although seldom analyzed systematically, provides unique insight into oppositional culture and its dimensions.³ Indeed, verbalization, whether in the form of written text or oral discourse, is "dynamic, often political, and potentially consciousness altering (Roscigno and Danaher 2001, p. 26; see also Gamson 1992; Goffman 1981; Lichterman 1999). Correspondingly, the "language of situations as given must be considered a valuable portion of the data to be interpreted and related to their conditions." (Mills 1940, p. 913)

Three sets of criteria were used to assess the prominence of organizations in creating the sample from which the aforementioned text was drawn: organizational reputation, size and resources. Organizational reputation was determined by the prominence of organizations and their attendant leaders in academic literature, mainstream media and Intelligence Reports from Southern Poverty Law Center. Organization size was determined through the number of branches and active links each organization has on the Internet. Such information was taken from *The Hate Directory*, an on-line and print resource designed to monitor "the proliferation of hate-oriented use of the Internet and other new electronic media." (Franklin 2002) With the exception of a single high profile organization directed by a renowned white supremacist, the organizations we include have 10 or more operational links connecting to their respective branches. Possession of a personal, privately owned domain name is indicative of organizational resources. Many smaller organizations, often with defunct links, use free or public access servers made available by Internet providers and web hosting services. Each organization we include has at least a national website operating from a private domain.

Analytic Strategy

While there is certainly an array of hate groups and organizations, we draw a distinction between two basic types, Klan-oriented and Neo-Nazi-oriented. This distinction is based on both organizational links and ideological similarities. Two of the Klan sites, for example, explicitly identify themselves as such, while the third is led by a former "Grand Dragon" and promotes conservative, pro-Christian, racially-oriented political activism. Moreover, consistent with historical Klan rhetoric, all three include links to Bible studies or external Christian Identity sites, and express views sympathetic to Christian Identity ideology. The three organizations identified as Neo-Nazi follow in the tradition of Nazi thought, espousing a conspiratorial, Jewish-dominated worldview, and displaying World War II-era Nazi symbols. These groups also cater to the racist skinhead youth, mainly through online music retailers specializing in "hatecore" and other types of "white power" music.

Because our focus centers on white supremacist ideology, specifically framing techniques oriented toward recruitment and the maintenance of a collective identity, a combination of methodological approaches are employed. In order to gain some degree of systematic understanding of thematic associations relative to the three components of social movement culture highlighted at the outset, we employ TextAnalyst. This program allows for the creation of visual representations of the semantic (i.e., thematic) networks found within text discourse. It also generates weighted coefficients indicating the relative strength of individual terms or

themes. The use of TextAnalyst and programs like it represent a truly novel approach to the sociological analysis of text data, allowing researchers to systematically observe emergent theme structures within documents as well as providing quantitative insight into the importance of individual themes and their interrelations.

TextAnalyst processes textual data through what is termed “natural language text analysis.” Using linguistic rules and “artificial neural network technology,” the program mimics human cognitive analytical processes. It begins by processing each document as a sequence of symbols, generating a hierarchical semantic network structure based on the frequency of terms and the relationships between them. After analyzing the document, each term (or theme) within the network is assigned an individual statistical weight (range 0-100) relative to its importance within the entire text. Additionally, the relationships between terms are also assigned a statistical weight, in effect highlighting the strength of thematic associations. TextAnalyst then engages in the process of renormalization – adjusting the statistical weight of each term based on its relationship to others. The renormalized values are termed “semantic weights” and can be arranged into a semantic network. High semantic weights are indicative of a term or theme having considerable significance within the overall text. Inter-item weights, also presented in the figures to follow, suggest significant association between text themes.

The collected text data was compiled into two documents, one pertaining to Klan sites and the other to Neo-Nazi sites. The data for each was then analyzed separately with TextAnalyst, and the results were used to construct the semantic networks reported below. As with all analyses, a measure of personal judgment must be exercised by the researcher. Just as thresholds of significance must be established in statistical analyses, a threshold for relevant semantic weights must be fixed in order to ascertain which terms are pertinent to this analysis as well as maintaining uniformity among the documents analyzed. A minimum semantic weight of 30 for the link between a single theme and its parent is required for a term to be considered significant in this analysis. These semantic network pathways are examined relative to the components of social movement culture outline previously. More concretely, and relative to prior work on the topic, they illustrate how identity, interpretational frameworks and political efficacy are linked in distinct ways for Klan-oriented and Neo-Nazi-oriented groups.

The Klan and the World Wide Web

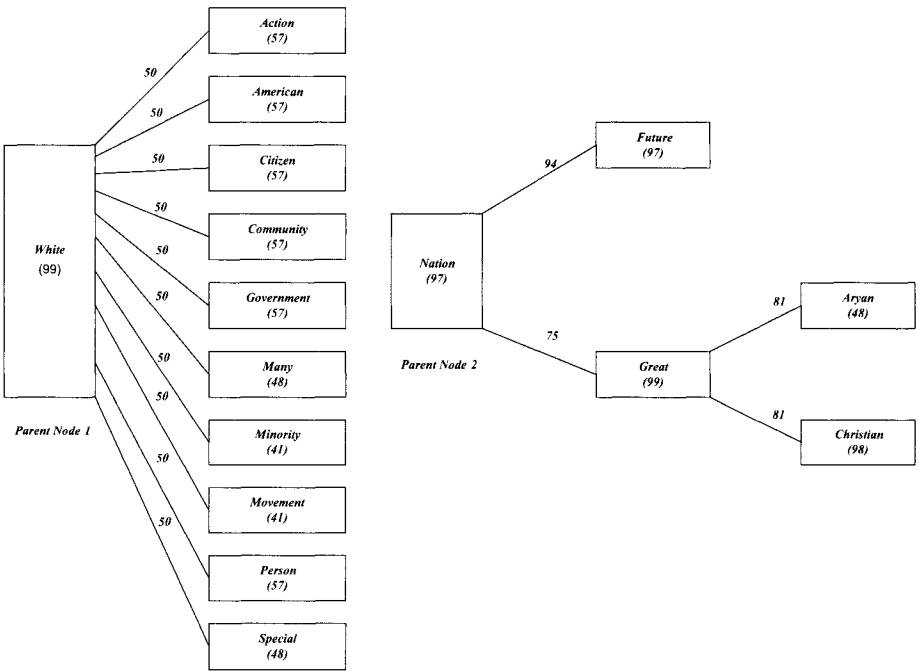
Despite keeping pace with advancing technologies, the overall image of the Klan has changed little over the years. Within the white supremacist subculture, the Klan still embodies an element of the “good ol’ boy” club that other hate organizations have attempted to move beyond. Traditional symbols such as the flaming cross and the hooded Klansman are common on Klan-oriented websites, while the rhetoric is a simplistic combination of nationalism and fundamentalist Christianity informed by racist ideology. Three overarching themes, consistent with the dimensions of social movement culture mentioned previously, are explored and apparent from the mission statements analyzed.

Identity

The recruitment potential and internal cohesion of any social movement organization arguably rests in its ability to foster a unified group identity. White supremacist organizations are thoroughly aware of this and actively endeavor to cultivate an organizational identity rooted

in race and augmented with culturally salient notions such as patriotism and religious duty. Figure 1 reports the two prominent semantic networks on Klan-oriented websites. The terms "white" and "nation" are the two parent nodes or key themes in Klan discourse, indicating not only an emphasis on race, but locating it in the context of a racialized concept of nation. The root term "white" has a semantic weight of 99 and the term "nation" has a weight of 97. A closer examination of Parent Node 1, with a specific focus on identity, reveals a direct relationship between the root "white" and a broad spectrum of associated terms as components of a white identity while simultaneously suggesting white supremacy.

Figure 1. Semantic Network of Klan Ideology



The structure of the semantic network associated with Parent Node 1 is relatively simplistic, suggesting that the themes of the texts are quite explicit in nature. Identity construction and maintenance is a deeply embedded motif that finds itself repeated and reiterated throughout the texts. The associations between the dominant term "white" and ideas such as "American," "citizen," "community" and "government" – each having a semantic weight of 57 – are all indicative of a collective self-awareness that can be equated with Melucci's (1995) "unified empirical actor." This becomes strikingly apparent when one observes the association between "white" and "movement" (41). An excerpt from the text is illustrative in this regard:

*The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan will in the years to come, become recognized by the American people as THE WHITE RIGHTS MOVEMENT!*⁴

The connection between "white" and "person" individualizes this appeal, noting that the goal

of collective social action is to “to foster a spirit of ‘togetherness’ and to enable white people to stand strong as one class of person – to protect their rights and possessions.” Clearly a collective identity exists to the degree that the Klan is presenting itself as a social movement organization. The root term of Parent Node 2, “nation,” has an overall high semantic weight of 97. The association of “nation” with the terms “great” (99) and “Christian” (98) indicate a similar notion of collective identity:

*Our purpose is to UNITE, ORGANIZE, and EDUCATE the White Aryan masses world wide to the dangers that face our Race, Culture and our Great Christian Civilization.*⁵

Interpretational Framing and the Klan Worldview

While the Klan spends a great amount of time constructing a sense of unity and racial identity, it briefly enumerates issues that pose a threat to the “white race.” One site provides articles designed to “highlight the problems that we know need to be addressed, and brought to light” and subsequently identifies these problems as:

*Affirmative Action, white Christian and family values, education, minority hate crimes on whites, minorities in high placed government positions which adversely affect and discriminate against whites, immigration slanted heavily on minority influxes to our nation, and so many more issues that affect the future of you and your family’s ability to prosper in this great nation.*⁶

The notion of threat is quite powerful within this context and is often articulated in terms of legal sanctions against whites, attacks on “white Christian” values, loss of legislative power, and the possibility of becoming a numerical minority. These broad constructions of threat provide the Klan great latitude in identifying exactly which segment of the population poses a specific threat. Banners presented on one introductory page provide links to INS phone numbers to report illegal immigrants, home schooling information and printable adoption cards so that in the event of death one can request that their child be placed with “white, Christian, heterosexual” parents. This mode of articulation cloaks racialized interests within the context of a political struggle; adversaries are not so much specifically identified as implicated in a structural conspiracy against whites.

Klan Ideology and Efficacy

In contrast to many white supremacist organizations that are suspicious of the government, the Klan often advocates participation in and a restructuring of American democracy. A segment of the Parent Node 1 network, reported previously in Figure 1, shows a moderately high (50) relationship between the root “white” and the term “government.” A portion of the text expands upon the notion of a “white government” stating that the Klan’s goal is:

*To voice and represent the rights for white people to the various levels of government agencies within the United States primarily, but also the international community.*⁷

The somewhat stronger relationship (57) between “white” and “action” also presents a unique linkage and the attendant text offers an ambitious strategy for the Klan, whereby they aim to:

*Achieve a credible and recognized standing within the U.S. judicial system, to represent white people [as a class] and others wronged by discriminatory practices and other actions.*⁸

Furthermore, the Klan suggests that its paramount plan of action is to:

*Promote an attitude of “Equal Rights for White People” with special favors for NO persons or race.*⁹

These appeals rely heavily on the victimization ideology common among white supremacists (Berbrier 2000) and the view that whites have become disenfranchised as a result of current governmental policies. Subsequently, *legal reformation and political participation are seen as viable avenues for collective action*. This provides a sharp contrast to Neo-Nazi organizations that often adhere to ideologies informed by a conspiratorial worldview and wherein political participation is less advantageous and desirable than revolutionary action.

Aside from articulated political ambitions, the Klan provides several less explicit avenues of action. Links to INS phone numbers and home schooling resources, for example, represent less ambitious yet possibly more accessible methods of individual action. Additionally, two websites have online gift shops where one can purchase racist paraphernalia, simultaneously offering financial support to the movement.

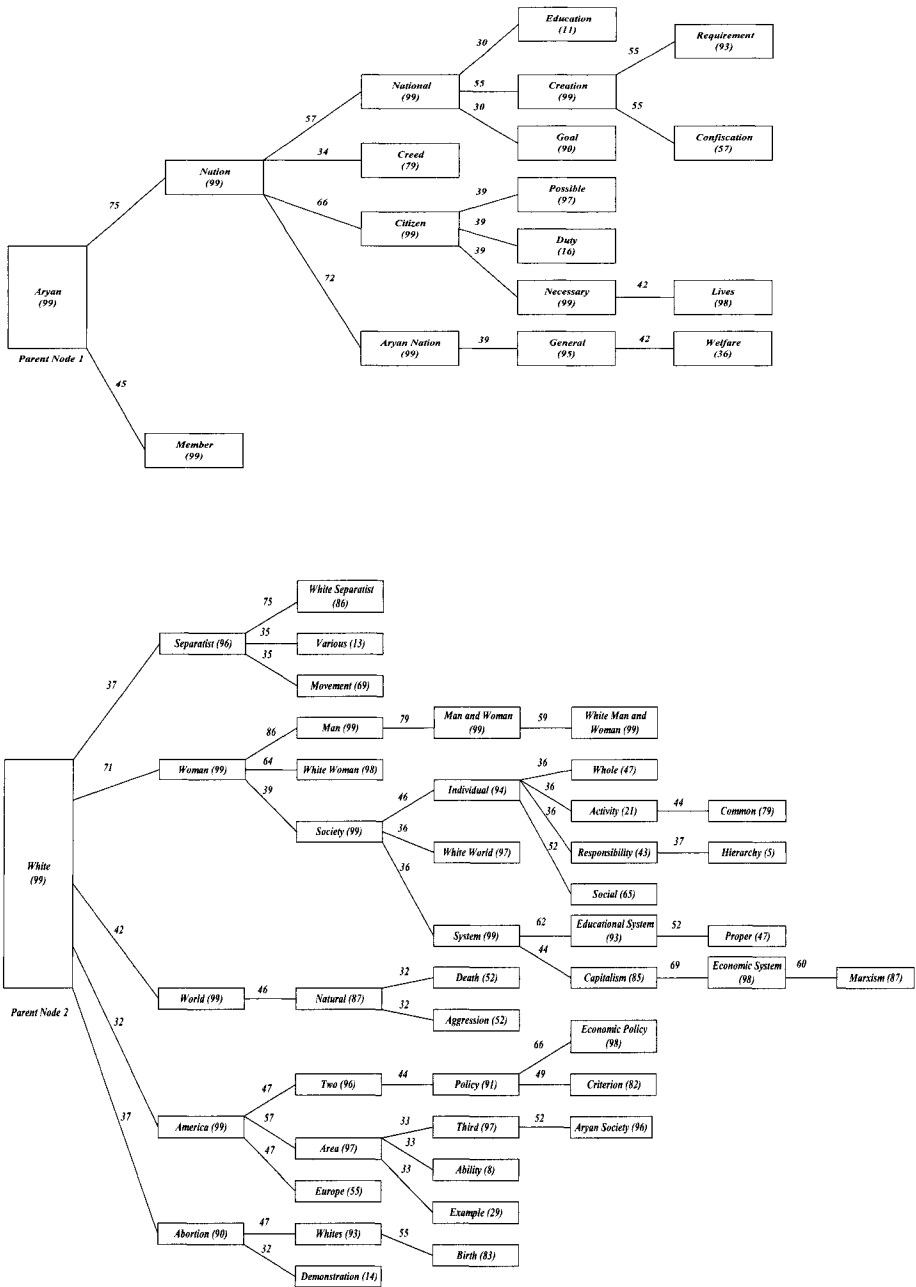
Neo-Nazis and the World Wide Web

While the Klan embodies the white supremacist movement of the past struggling to remain relevant, Neo-Nazi organizations represent the future of organization and action within the hate subculture. Neo-Nazi groups work diligently to develop and refine organizational ideology, often associating themselves with pseudo-academic/scientific associations devoted to issues such as holocaust denial, racial determinants of intelligence or revisionist history as a means of establishing legitimacy. True to their name, Neo-Nazi groups rely heavily on the symbols of Nazi Germany, prominently displaying swastikas, traditional images of (male) Aryan youth and caricatures of Jews. Despite some divergence, similarities are evident. Grievance interpretation and recommendations for social action, however, differ and are more explicit than those posed by the Klan.

Identity

Like the Klan, Neo-Nazi organizations endeavor to create a strong sense of group identity, predictably grounded in race. Whereas the Klan builds upon patriotism and nationalism, Neo-Nazis tend to focus on separatism and the creation of a new nation. The parent nodes “Aryan” and “white,” reported in Figure 2, provide the foundation for these organizations to elaborate on notions of the state, attributes of upright citizens and the nature of the white supremacist movement. These two parent nodes expand upon divergent themes; the root “Aryan” associated with concepts of the state and citizenship while “white” is associated with broader constructions of the movement culture. Both of the root terms in the Neo-Nazi networks have semantic weights of 99, indicating a relatively high degree of significance to the overall text.

Figure 2. Semantic Network of Neo-Nazi Ideology



The structures of both networks are reasonably complex, suggesting that the many themes within the texts are less explicit than those of their Klan counterparts. The network associated with Parent Node 1 deals with notions of white identity and is notably less complicated than Parent Node 2. Because creating a sense of identity is imperative for any social movement organization, it is of paramount importance that these ideas are presented in an unambiguous and concise manner. Correspondingly, the idea of the Aryan race as "special" or "different" is explicitly emphasized. Take the following, for example:

*Nature has refined and honed the special qualities embodied in the Aryan race so we would be better able to fulfill the mission allotted to us. Even though Nature also has developed other forms of life, including other races of man, we have a special obligation to our own race: to ensure its survival, to safeguard its unique characteristics, to improve its quality.*¹⁰

Furthermore, the importance of race is stressed as the single most important attribute of the individual and the source of personal identity:

*To a White Separatist, the overriding importance is race, not what we have known as nation, in this century.*¹¹

The strong connection (75) between "Aryan" and "nation" denotes an inherently racialized conception of the ideal state and the identity of the populace. One text specifically states that "none but those of Aryan blood, whatever their creed, may be members of the nation." This is a significant departure from the rhetoric of the Klan, despite its blatant racism, which advocates working within existing governmental structures. Neo-Nazi organizations are comfortable calling for a holistic restructuring of the state along with redefining criteria for citizenship.

Interpretational Framing and the Neo-Nazi Worldview

Identifying social problems and their supposed causes functions as a unifying, interpretational device among white supremacists and this is often the only thing many of these disparate groups have in common. Neo-Nazi organizations frequently focus on, and causally attribute blame to, elements that they perceive to be contributing to the broader deterioration of society. One site suggests that:

*After the sickness of "multiculturalism," which is destroying America, Britain, and every other Aryan nation in which it is being promoted, has been swept away, we must again have a racially clean area of the earth for the further development of our people.*¹²

The idea of multiculturalism is particularly threatening because it promotes the notion of equality across cultural and racial borders. Again, victim ideology discussed by Berbrier (2000) emerges in these texts wherein organizations claim:

*Even today our White women are put at the same level as the non-Whites, in civil "wrongs" legislation, such as Affirmative Action programs.*¹³

Moreover, the welfare of the state is solely reliant on the oversight of the white race:

*The diverse races and religions of North America will ultimately sink into Third World poverty and disease, until White men and women turn the tide.*¹⁴

Where Klan organizations identify threat as an immediate danger brought about by legal restrictions, unemployment or attacks on “traditional” values, Neo-Nazis often link this threat causally to cultural and social degradation brought about by multiculturalism or liberalism. As our results presented next suggest, in order to counteract what they view as degradation, these organizations assert that whites must create a separate state and strictly limit non-white immigration.

Neo-Nazi Ideology and Efficacy

Neo-Nazi organizations are generally distrustful of the government, often using the pejorative acronym ZOG (Zionist Occupied Government) when referring to the United States. Through this delegitimization of the government, a call for revolution and the creation of a new, presumably “better,” governing structure becomes a central goal and focus of action. Parent Node 2, reported in Figure 2, shows an association (42) between the root “white” and the term “world.” The text itself elaborates on the concept of a “white world” and the duties the new government must carry out:

*The fact is that we need a strong, centralized government spanning several continents to coordinate many important tasks during the first few decades of a White world: the racial cleansing of the land, the rooting out of racially destructive institutions, and the reorganization of society on a new basis.*¹⁵

To this end, a variety of oppositional tactics are suggested as methods of resisting the perceived intrusions of the government. Racial separatism is one of the primary recommendations. The association (37) between “white” and “separatist” in Parent Node 2 illuminates this point, while the attendant text states that:

*The White Separatist, by his or her very nature, must applaud racial and cultural Separatism worldwide.*¹⁶

Moreover, and relative to Klan rhetoric, Neo-Nazi discourse suggests an apparent threat to the white race; a threat that must be addressed through the protection of the white family and white women by propagating white unions and childbearing. This is quite evident in Node 2, with linkages between the parent theme of “white woman,” “man and woman” and “society.” There is clearly a gendered character to this discourse – one wherein traditional gender roles function to preserve the white race through family formation and childbearing.

Discussions of “revolution” are often expressed in broad terms with few specific or feasibly attainable political goals. A relatively new strategy that makes these organizations a legitimate threat is the “lone wolf” approach to social action. The idea of the lone wolf racial revolutionary was immortalized in the novel *The Turner Diaries*, sold on several of these websites and said to have been used by Timothy McVeigh as a blueprint for the Oklahoma City bombing (Lee and Leets 2002). An image on one site depicts a wolf with bloody teeth and

swastika eyes; the caption for the image states, "lone wolves are everywhere. We're in your neighborhoods, financial institutions, police departments, military, and social clubs." This appeal to individual action, denoted in semantic Node 1 by "duty," is associated with the term "citizen." (99) The same appeal is illustrated in Node 2 by "activity" (21) and "responsibility" (47), both associated with the term "individual" (94), and is grounded in the view that participants are not alone, but are acting for the collective good of their race and surrounded by clandestine sympathizers. This is in contrast to Klan discourse, discussed previously, wherein the suggested remedy to a tainted (rather than a conspiratorial) political process is more institutionalized and reformatory forms of collective political action.

Discussion

White supremacist organizations, like any social movement organization, diligently strive to propagate their ideology, forward group goals and attract new adherents. The Internet offers "the ultimate freedom of speech" and has been claimed by some to represent the preeminent "forum of democracy." (Barabasi, 2002) Hate groups are keenly aware of this, utilizing the Internet to disseminate information, market specialty goods and communicate anonymously in the nether-realms of cyber space. For both Klan-oriented and Neo-Nazi organizations, Internet websites consistently reinforce a sense of collective identity, emphasizing the supremacy of whites and the difficulties they face as a race. As our analyses reveal, these views are perpetuated through a steady and unwavering identification of oppositional "others" and a conspiratorial worldview that places whites continually on the verge of peril. Furthermore, these websites describe social problems, interpret them in a racialized context, and advise an appropriate (and allegedly causally-related) course of action.

Table 1, drawing from our previous findings, reports key similarities and differences between Klan and Neo-Nazi-oriented groups. The Klan uses religion, specifically Christianity, not only as an ideological foundation but also a source of group identity. Claims that Christian values, often described as "white Christian values," are under attack exacerbate a preexisting sense of persecution and underscore the need to take action. Neo-Nazis use religion as well. Their use, however, differs in its primary aim toward creating a sense of Aryan unity. There are no explicit terms relating to religion in either of the Neo-Nazi semantic networks, and the symbols on their websites are a diverse amalgam of Christian, traditional Nazi and pagan iconography. Here religion is employed to establish an impression of historical continuity between a glorious Aryan past and the present.

In the process of framing and describing organizational ideology, these groups generally present a series of causal arguments relating to perceptions of injustice. Broadly, white supremacist organizations are concerned with the perceived white political deprivation and the possibility of becoming a numerical minority. These concerns are routinely articulated through rhetoric representing whites as victims of systematic governmental, legal and societal abuses. These problems are often attributed to "liberalism" or "multiculturalism," essentially code words for any manner of thought which does not inherently privilege a white status quo.

Aside from these general similarities, Klan-based and Neo-Nazi organizations each have more nuanced and idiosyncratic understandings of perceived social problems. Klan groups focus much of their attention on perceived legal sanctions against whites (e.g., affirmative action), attacks on "white Christian" values (e.g., the so-called "homosexual agenda"), or a decrease in legislative power. These are viewed as the result of special treatment for minorities. Neo-Nazi organizations often concentrate their attention on alleged deterioration of society that is the outcome of racial and cultural degradation, both biologically and socially. These groups also see themselves as victims of an illegitimate and oppressive government

Table 1: Comparison of Klan-oriented and Neo-Nazi Organizations

Similarities		Differences	
		Klan	Neo-Nazi
Principal Identity	White, Racist	White, Christian, American	Aryan – context of historical/biological supremacy
Interpretational Framing			
Principal Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whites as numerical minority Loss of social authority/power Victimization Ideology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal sanctions against whites Attacks on "white Christian" values Loss of legislative power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural/social/biological degradation Illegitimate/oppressive government
Primary Cause	Liberalism, Multiculturalism, Pluralism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Special treatment" for minorities Political disenfranchisement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conspiratorial national/global forces (i.e., Jewish domination)
Action/Efficacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Racial separatism/Segregation General suppression of "undesirables" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation in/restructuring of American Democracy Legal reforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holistic restructuring of state "Lone Wolf" violent action
Symbolism	Religious symbolism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional Christian symbols Patriotic emblems (i.e., American flag) Confederate Flags 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christian/Pagan (often Nordic) symbols Traditional Nazi iconography

* See Berbrier (2000)

that has been hijacked by a variety of external forces. Neo-Nazis fold these issues into a comprehensive conspiratorial worldview in which the white race is victimized and subjugated by a vast network of Jewish-controlled organizations.

Notions of group efficacy are similarly different and appear to be tied to the variations in verbal discourse just described. Klan groups advocate collective political action while Neo-Nazi organizations suggest both responsibility for white procreation and more radical strategies. This differentiation in type of action prescribed is perhaps the most important distinction between the two organizations. The endorsement of "lone-wolf" actions by Neo-Nazi groups, particularly involving violent or illegal methods, not only poses a general immediate danger, but also makes locating and prosecuting responsible parties more difficult. The use of the Internet as a forum for distributing information on manufacturing weapons or the publishing of hit lists serves to illustrate the utility of the web to such organizations while making their potential threat all the more salient.

Despite differences in both organizational framing and suggested strategies for group efficacy, the white supremacist movement has functioned thus far without any fracturing along these fault lines. Indeed, research by Burris, Smith and Strahm (2000) has suggested that there are no sharp cleavages that pose any real threat to the movement, citing the decentralized nature of the white supremacist movement and linkages between Klan and Neo-Nazi websites. At this juncture, white supremacist organizations are marginalized social actors and their structural similarities, organizational linkages and fundamental racism may very well be enough to generate a sense of solidarity among various groups. If, however, either faction began to make gains politically or socially, ideological fissures, particularly on issues of reform or revolution, could potentially divide the movement.

Conclusion

This article has considered the use of ideological framing on the Internet by white supremacist organizations as a means of appealing to potential adherents (Tarow 1998) and organizing and facilitating participation (Snow et al. 1986). Furthermore, the components of social movement culture (Gamson 1995; Taylor and Whittier 1995) and the creation of a singular social actor (Melucci 1995) are examined within the context of their representations on white supremacist websites. Our analyses reflect an effort to address these theoretical possibilities while simultaneously explicating the ideological framing devices being used by white supremacist groups within the context of a relatively new medium, the Internet.

Our findings hold several implications for the broader body of social movement literature. First, social movement culture is complex and involves a variety of symbols and themes that are interpreted and redefined through the lens of organizational ideology. Seemingly divergent and contradictory themes, such as social equality and assertions of white supremacy, can be seamlessly melded together and presented as congruent interests. This is consistent with findings that show the negligible effect of ideological disparities on group cohesion and the functionality of malleable ideologies in appealing to more mainstream segments of society (Blee 1996).

Second, this article offers an example of how culture can be systematically analyzed. Culture is not an intangibly amorphous phenomenon, but an aggregate of beliefs and ideologies that stimulate action. Drawing on Swidler's (1986) metaphor of culture as a tool kit, social actors utilize cultural elements that are most salient and suited for their particular circumstance. In this regard, we can examine the "tools" employed by social movement organizations to infer motivations, identify organizational goals and evaluate applications of ideology to action.

The Internet is a dominant new technology that is inexpensive and easily accessible, proving to be a valuable resource to social movement organizations striving to disseminate information and attract new members. For white supremacist groups, the movement from a public forum into the vast, relative anonymity of cyberspace represents a transition in traditional recruitment strategies. Social movement organizations, as our case suggests, can indeed use the Internet to present their respective messages directly to the public without being filtered through mainstream media outlets. The Internet, as an emergent technology, can certainly be a vehicle with which to propagate organizational ideologies. It may also be, for social movement scholars, a field for extracting and assessing the components of social movement culture.

In this article, we have sought to synthesize prior knowledge about social movement culture within white supremacist organizations while adding another level of depth through the use of systematic methodology. The integration of traditional interpretive methods with TextAnalyst allows for a deeper insight into the nature of social movement culture. Moreover, the approach we have employed creates a needed bridge between methodologies that rely on subjective readings (and thus run the risk of researcher bias), and those that are more strictly quantitative in nature, which run the risk of stripping the sociological understanding of discourse from its truly social, interpersonal and political character.

Notes

1. In many ways, our analyses of discourse are quite consistent with prior historical and contemporary research on ideological framing within white supremacist organizations (e.g., Daniels 1997; Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 1997; Ferber 1998). Our analyses, however, differ in attempting to systematically disentangle unique dimensions of social movement culture outlined previously.
2. In the absence of a mission statement, text is taken from a comparable category such as "frequently asked questions" (FAQ) or lists of issues and the organization's positions.
3. Some prior work concludes, based on interorganizational networks, that there exist no major fissures in orientation among white supremacist organizations (e.g., Burris, Smith, and Strahm 2000). This conclusion, however, is inferred based largely on analyses of objective, structural links between organizations rather than on in-depth analyses of what precisely is being communicated by each. Our approach, which focuses on the actual thematic content communicated, is distinct and more systematically aimed at disentangling cultural frames. These two distinct approaches – one focusing on organizational links and the other on communicative content – are potentially complimentary as we note in our discussion of results and conclusions.
4. www.kkk.bz (Knights of the Ku Klux Klan)
5. www.kkkk.net (Imperial Klans of America)
6. www.naawp.com (National Association for the Advancement of White People)
7. www.naawp.com (National Association for the Advancement of White People)
8. www.naawp.com (National Association for the Advancement of White People)

9. www.naavp.com (National Association for the Advancement of White People)
10. www.natvan.com (National Alliance)
11. www.resist.com (White Aryan Resistance)
12. www.natvan.com (National Alliance)
13. www.resist.com (White Aryan Resistance)
14. www.resist.com (White Aryan Resistance)
15. www.natvan.com (National Alliance)
16. www.resist.com (White Aryan Resistance)

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