

Engendering Hate: The Rise of Feminism within the White Supremacy Movement

By

Allison R. McGrath

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Holly J. McCammon, Ph.D.

Laura M. Carpenter, Ph.D.

The advent of the Internet has led to a surge in hate group mobilization, providing affiliates of organized racism with a cost-efficient way to distribute information about white supremacy. As a result, membership to hate organizations is no longer restricted by physical distance; instead, the Internet has ostensibly transformed hate groups into aspatial communities. Consequently, hate group membership has grown immensely within the last decade (Hilliard and Keith 1999; Burris, Smith and Strahm 2000; Perry 1998; Adams and Roscigno 2005; Brown 2009). According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, there were 1,342 active hate groups operating in the United States in 2012; this number represents a 68% increase from 2000 (Southern Poverty Law Center 2012). Hate groups are strengthening due in part to the increasing number of women who are joining the white supremacy movement. As noted by Blee (2002), one-quarter of all membership—and nearly half of all new recruits—to organized racism consist of women.

As more women join the white supremacy movement, online hate networks have developed virtual spaces that are primarily targeted towards female members (Tsunokai and McGrath 2011). For example, Schafer (2002) found that a significant portion of the websites included in his study provided exclusive online forms where women could discuss such issues as pregnancy, child rearing, and homes schooling. While still a male dominated movement, many young female recruits develop a gender consciousness while negotiating their roles as both white racialists and women (Blee 1996). What remains unclear is *how* these women develop a feminist identity in such a hyper-masculine movement. This study investigates the association between female white supremacists' organizational affiliation and the formation of a feminist identity. Specifically, this research explores the ways in which these organizational affiliations provide

members with the discursive tools that both promote and hinder the development of a feminist identity within this historically hostile, patriarchal environment.

Gender Consciousness, Feminist Consciousness, and Feminist Identification

Within the past half century, the identification with feminism and attachment to core feminist values has generalized across all social groups and ideological divisions (Katzenstein 1990). With increasing labor force participation, declining fertility patterns, and rising marriage instability, men and women are adopting more progressive gender ideologies—ideologies that historically served as the foundation for the feminist movement. This type of consciousness is part of a general awareness of gender inequality, often referred to as a gender consciousness. According to Chow (1987), gender consciousness is a “general awareness of one’s self as having specific gender characteristics and an identification with others who occupy a similar position in the sex-gender structure” (285). For women, an awareness of femaleness and identification with other women can lead to an understanding of gender power relations and the institutional and social processes that foster and maintain a gender hierarchy. Gender consciousness, then, reflects individuals’ awareness of gendered power relations. This type of consciousness reflects the first step in the broader development of a feminist identity, which is also comprised of feminist consciousness and feminist identification.

Although gender consciousness is a necessary precondition for the development of a feminist consciousness, the two concepts are not the same. The difference lies in the link between gender and politics—feminism politicizes gender consciousness (Hogeland 2000). Two defining features illustrate this politicization. The first involves the rejection of traditional definitions of women’s roles within society. In contrast to gender consciousness, individuals who embody a feminist consciousness not only acknowledge the presence of gender inequality,

but also actively challenge gender power relations. For women to harbor a feminist consciousness they must learn to reject traditional group definitions based on biological explanations and embrace new images of womanhood based on gender equality (Klein 1984). The development of an egalitarian gender ideology is necessary to facilitate not only the recognition of gender inequality, but also foster the formation of a feminist consciousness.

In addition to the rejection of traditional gender norms, the second defining feature of feminist consciousness is the ideological transformation of individual perceptions of social problems. Individuals who possess a feminist consciousness are able to acknowledge the connection between personal problems and the broader political structure (Klein 1987; Klatch 2001). To achieve this outlook, women must see themselves as objects of collective discrimination and clearly acknowledge that gender-based inequalities are the result of broader systematic oppression and structural inequalities. This ideological framework fosters the development of a feminist consciousness and presents women with the opportunity and tools to identify as part of the larger feminist movement.

The third and final aspect of feminist identification acknowledges the need for individuals to adopt and self-identify with the feminist label. Part of embodying a feminist identity includes embracing a shared collective identity with others who harbor egalitarian gender ideologies and also possess a feminist consciousness. Although many individuals possess a feminist consciousness, when adopting the feminist label there is a clear disconnect between individual ideologies and social identity. Burn and colleagues (2000) suggest that although many individuals agree with the broader goals of the feminist movement, many avoid identifying or self-labeling themselves as feminists because of the negative social connotations associated with the label. These misconceptions of the broader feminist movement not only impact

individuals willingness to self-identify as part of the movement, but illustrates the extent to which feminist consciousness is distinct from feminist identity. As Rhodebeck (1996) states, the theoretical basis for separating identity and opinion is that “an individual’s association with a group is a comprehensive, more durable phenomenon than simply one’s political opinions” (387). Although feminist consciousness and feminist identity are distinct but related concepts, the latter has been shown to be more stable overtime (Rhodebeck 1996). This implies that individuals who self-identify as feminist will harbor opinions pertaining to gender equality that are more stable, and thus more accurate over time relative to their counterparts who do not adopt the feminist label. This empirical distinction illustrates the crucial importance of feminist identification and highlights the final component in the process of fostering a feminist identity.

Formation of a Feminist Identity

In addition to the three components that constitute a feminist identity, Klatch (2001) outlined the actual *social process* facilitating the development of a feminist identity. According to Klatch, there are three formal stages associated with the formation of a feminist identity: 1) the identification of inequality or mistreatment, 2) discovering a language to framing or interpret these experiences, and 3) the formation of a collective identity. The first of these three stages involves the recognition of the mistreatment of women. It is only when women begin to identify the unequal treatment of themselves as women and acknowledge that gender does have real implications that they can begin to formulate a gender consciousness. Within this first step, Klatch (2001) highlights the ways in which individuals embody a gender consciousness and the tools that such consciousness provides for the development of a feminist consciousness.

The second stage in the development of a feminist identity involves the formation of an oppositional consciousness and individuals’ ability to frame their experiences of gender

inequality. Within this stage, individuals' gender consciousness is transformed into a feminist consciousness once they begin to question and challenge gender power structures within the larger social context. This is often facilitated through the development of an oppositional consciousness—in this case a feminist consciousness—which is an ideology that challenges prevailing beliefs and principles (Morris 1992). The formation of an oppositional consciousness involves the articulation of injustice in circumstances where prevailing thought and structure demand rigid adherence to hierarchical organizational ideology (Morris 1992). This is most clearly understood in the case of rejecting traditional Puritan ideologies and societal roles for women. Given the dominant nature and normalization of traditional gender role ideology, in order for individuals to cultivate a feminist consciousness, they must first acknowledge the limitations and injustices associated with biological explanations for definitive gender roles. In rigid social environments, such as the white supremacy movement, alternative options for gender roles are rarely expressed, and thus, the normative nature of traditional attitudes is internalized as an unconscious ideology for individuals who often have the inability to imagine an alternative social arrangement (Klein 1984). This initial recognition of gender-based inequality and resistance to gender hierarchies serves as the foundation for the development of a feminist consciousness and allows individuals to begin developing a language that identifies these inequalities.

In addition to fostering an oppositional consciousness, individuals must develop a language and set of tools to clearly articulate their feminist consciousness. This social process is best understood through the concept of framing, which provides individuals with a language that clearly identifies gender inequalities. Snow and colleagues (1986) first applied Goffman's (1974) notion of frames to social movement organizations, and argued that meaningful frames

function to organize social movement actors' experience and guide their actions. According to Snow and Benford (1992), frames are "interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses the 'world out there' by selectivity punctuating and encoding objects, situations, experiences and sequences of actions within one's present or past environments" (137). In short, frames incorporate a diagnosis of a social problem and provide specific strategies and tactics for social change (Polletta 1998). Proponents of framing have emphasized the critical link between organizational identity and frames in relation to social movement organizations (Benford and Hunt 1992; Benford 1997; Cloward and Piven 1997). In understanding the experiences of the development of a feminist identity among female white supremacists, one of the critical factors affecting the development of this larger frame is whether there is an existing language to legitimize discontent.

The rigid nature of the white supremacy movement ensures that female constituents are often limited in acknowledging gender-based inequalities, and further developing a language to clearly articulate the injustices associated with such discrimination. With the surge in female membership within the past decade (Blee 2002), women within the movement developed a social discourse regarding their roles in the movement. Specifically, female white supremacists appropriated feminists' struggles for women to be heard, especially concerning their roles within places of employment (Anti-Defamation League 1998). Using the Internet as a platform to freely express their discontent with the present conditions for women, the efforts of female white supremacists to foster gender equality embodies goals of the broader feminist movement. These goals include encouraging women to be open and assertive in addition to acknowledging and challenging gender discrimination. Although female members are embedded in a hyper-

masculine movement, their ability to identify the presence of gender inequality suggests the presence of feminist discourse and the use of feminist frames.

The third and final stage in the development of a feminist identity is the formation of a collective identity (Klatch 2001). In order for individuals to transform their feminist consciousness into a feminist identity, they must identify as part of the larger feminist movement and openly embrace the feminist label. Taylor and Whittier (1992) define collective identity as the “shared definition of a group that derives from members’ collective interests, experiences, and solidarity” (105). Taylor and Whittier posit three analytic tools for understanding organizational identity amongst collective actors: 1) boundaries, 2) consciousness, and 3) negotiation. Boundaries, as defined by Taylor and Whittier (1992), refer to the social, psychological, and physical structures that help establish and identify differences between individuals and social groups. These boundaries clearly mark the social territory of group relations by highlighting the differences between individual groups and counter movements. Given the social nature of boundaries, they can take form in several contexts (e.g., political, economic, and cultural), although their characteristics are dependent on the specific type of boundary markers employed by the collective group (Taylor and Whittier 1992). In the white supremacy movement, several social characteristics are identified as boundary markers, which not only signify individual group membership, but clearly distinguish constituents from their opponents. More broadly, these boundary markers include racial characteristics such as white physical features, to more specific symbolic characteristics such as white supremacist tattoos and other racially charged cultural artifacts. Constituents’ ability to embrace these physical and socio-cultural markers help clearly identify those individuals who are part of the larger white supremacy movement and those who oppose their ideological viewpoints.

In addition to clearly establishing boundaries, individuals must foster a sense of group consciousness that imparts a larger significance to a collectivity. As noted by Taylor and Whittier (1992), the concept of consciousness refers to the “interpretative frameworks that emerge from a group’s struggle to define and realize members’ common interest in opposition to the dominant order” (114). Within the white supremacy movement, individuals’ ability to clearly identify gender-based inequality and acknowledge the sources of such inequality serves as the foundation for the development of a collective feminist consciousness. Members must harbor a growing sense of discontent concerning the social conditions within the movement for women—inequalities which must be attributed to structural, cultural, or systematic causes rather than to personal or individual attributes (Taylor and Whittier 1992). In short, for women within the movement to possess a feminist consciousness they must recognize that the inequalities they face result from larger social forces rather than individual sources.

While boundaries locate individuals as members of a larger collective and consciousness fosters a sense of ideological unity with a set of individuals, the process of negotiation works to strengthen these two aspects of collective identity, while simultaneously challenging the dominant ideological framework. More specifically, the concept of negotiation reflects the social process in which collective organizations work to change shared cultural definitions and further distinguish themselves from their opposition (Taylor and Whittier 1992). In order to successfully challenge and alter dominant social discourse, individual and collective negotiation takes form in everyday transgressions, which are embedded within the social realm. These everyday forms of discursive resistance help to alter the dominant ideology and also reflect the politicization of everyday life. In regards to the development of a feminist consciousness among female white supremacists, the process of negotiation reflects individuals’ ability to not only

clearly recognize acts of discrimination, but articulate and frame these injustices in a way that reflects the ideological discourse associated with the oppositional collective. In the present case, the oppositional collective is comprised of white supremacists that not only possess egalitarian gender ideologies, but also further embrace and acknowledge the importance of feminism within this patriarchal movement.

Although the multidimensional framework of collective consciousness is comprised of three distinct concepts (i.e., boundaries, consciousness, and negotiation), it is only when they are examined in unison that the process and development of a collective consciousness is clearly understood. This framework emphasizes the importance of language, collective representations, and ultimately individual's concepts of the self within the realm of social movements (Taylor and Whittier 1992). The notion of collective identity acknowledges the key role of meaning and ideology in terms of fostering a sense of belonging, as well as providing social actors with the ability to challenge dominant ideology and foster an oppositional consciousness.

Free Spaces and Discursive Politics

In conjunction with these three phases, Katzenstein (1999) notes that the emergence of a feminist identity within hostile environments is dependent upon the presence of free spaces within institutions—places where individuals can share stories and find mutual support for their oppositional identities. According to Polletta (1999) free spaces are “environments where participants nurture oppositional identities and challenge prevailing social arrangements and cultural codes” (8). These spaces are crucial for cultivating social networks that anchor oppositional identities within larger social movement organizations, ultimately allowing participants to openly express and enact their beliefs (Katzenstein 1999; Polletta 1999). While the concept of free spaces is useful for highlighting the context in which members create and

sustain oppositional identities and cultures, Polletta (1999) suggests more work is needed to understand exactly how these free spaces facilitate the development of an oppositional identity.

One potential solution to this dilemma is offered by Katzenstein (1995), who argues that individuals engage in forms of “unobtrusive protest” – a theoretical concept similar to Polletta’s (1999) notion of free spaces – within an organizational setting by relying on what she calls “discursive politics.” Despite the linguistic connotation inherent in this term, Katzenstein argues that discursive politics extend beyond the arena of language and can be applied more broadly to the politics of meaning making for individuals – particularly marginalized groups – who are embedded within the organization. More specifically, such tactics/tools are “discursive in that they seek to reinterpret, reformulate, rethink, and rewrite the norms and practices of society and the state” (Katzenstein 1995: 35).

This research argues that one way of understanding the means by which individuals foster oppositional identities within free spaces is found within a discussion of discursive politics. As acknowledged by Katzenstein (1995), the presence of oppositional identities in free spaces is dependent on the availability of discursive tools. Within social spaces, individuals’ ability to engage in social discourse is dependent on the broader discursive environment. It is this environment that dictates the social production of meaning—meaning that is dialectic, dynamic, and rife with contention (Steinberg 1998). Given that discourse often reflects an ideological thought process, it is important to understand how individuals are able to cultivate specific repertoires that reflect distinct ideological representations. In order to do so, one must acknowledge the role of discursive tools in larger discursive processes.

Discursive tools are defined as the language available within the bounds of a specific social context that provide individuals with the ability to organize and navigate the social world.

Individuals' discursive tools are embodied by a discursive repertoire—a collective body of language that allows them to interpret and make meaning of their social world. These discursive repertoires are tied closely to their larger discursive context; that is, the variety of discursive tools available at one's disposal is dependent on their social environment. Given the connection between discursive repertoires and the broader contextual environment, some scholars argue that discourse is not simply written or spoken communication, but rather a form of mediated action (Steinberg 1998; Wetherell and Potter 1988). It is these discursive repertoires and their associated discursive tools that allow individuals to make ideological sense of broader social and political issues, and ultimately, to develop a sense of collective identity to a specific social group.

Using a case study of the white supremacy movement, this research illustrates that the presence of free spaces, in regards to the development of a feminist identity, is ultimately dependent on the availability of discursive tools. These discursive tools are ideologically bounded and contingent on specific organizational discursive contexts. Within the broader white supremacy movement, not all organizations provide female members with the same discursive tools. There is a distinct ideological faction within the movement that impacts women's ability to discuss and inhabit an oppositional consciousness that challenges the dominant patriarchal hierarchy of the white supremacy movement. Given the existence of this ideological rift, the presence of a feminist identity is not created among all women and as a result, women associated with different ideological divisions deploy discursive tools in different ways. Their ability to understand and clearly articulate gender-based inequality and the goals of feminism are dependent on the discursive tools available within their organizational discursive contexts. Through analyzing these differences in the movement, this research builds on how oppositional consciousness is fostered within the context of free spaces.

The White Supremacy Movement

The contemporary white supremacy movement encompasses supremacy organizations with a diverse array of ideologies, ranging from highly structured Klan organizations to loosely organized skinhead associations (Perry 1998). While these myriad groups are characterized by differences in age, class, and gender structures, as well as diverse ideologies, practices and national visibility, they share an underlying commitment to secure the existence and future of the white race. Members associated with all forms of organized racism uphold the goal of establishing a racially exclusive world in which “non-whites” are extinct or at least segregated and under the control of Aryan authorities (Simi and Futrell 2006). In addition to securing a racially homogenous physical environment, white supremacists are strongly anti-Semitic and largely exhibit conservative ideology (Adams et al. 2001). This includes overarching opposition to abortion, same-sex marriage, and support of traditional patriarchal family forms and community interactions. In addition to upholding white supremacist and anti-Semitic ideologies, the patriarchal nature and conservative ideology of the white supremacy movement ensures that other women, gays and lesbians, atheists and other “minority groups” are susceptible targets of the white supremacist agenda (Daniels 2009).

While white supremacists share a core racial ideology, there is a distinct rift in terms of organizational identity. Scholars have attributed this split to the role of religion within organized racism, which often serves as a catalyst for factionalism within social movement organizations (Klatch 1995). As noted by Berlet and Vysotsky (2006), white supremacy groups in the United States evolved from their historic base of various predecessor Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazi organizations. Although over time these organizations proliferated a range of competing forms and ideologies, the larger movements’ fundamental typology characterizes organized hate groups

as either politically or religiously motivated. Political white supremacist organizations find their ideological inspiration for hate rooted in neo-fascist or neo-Nazi ideology (Berlet and Vysotsky 2006), and seek to build a movement for what they believe is a future racial conflict or political overthrow of the state. This is often framed through apocalyptic or millenarian visions of what the future will look like after catastrophic racial war. Referencing Hitler's "thousand year Reich," politically motivated white supremacists believe that there is a fast approaching, inevitable conflict between "good and evil, pitting the white race against people of color, Jews, and other race traitors" (Berlet and Vysotsky 2006: 13). With this racist ideology in mind, white supremacists affiliated with politically motivated organizations encourage the involvement of all whites, and thus have much more fluid boundaries related to recruitment and engagement in forms of activism. Several examples of politically motivated hate groups include the National Alliance, White Aryan Resistance (WAR), National Vanguard, and the National Socialist Movement.

On the other side of this ideological faction is the religious sector, which includes white supremacist organizations that derive their core ideology from a spiritual belief system and members are expected to practice their specific religious doctrine (Dobratz 2001). Many scholars note that religion plays a powerful yet complicated role in shaping the ideologies and activities of social movement actors (Perry 1998; Dobratz 2001; Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 2006). Members of religiously based hate groups rely on religious texts as ideological doctrine, shaping their views regarding race and behavior of individuals within the world (Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 2006). Even though members of religious white supremacy movements often engage in racist activities that are similar to politically based movements, they are likely to be

involved in a complex subculture based around their spiritual beliefs. There are three primary spiritual forms of white supremacy: Christian Identity, Creativity, and Odinsim.

Role of Women in the Movement

While the agenda of the larger white supremacy movement emphasizes an overarching commitment to securing the future for the Aryan race, the movement remains deeply, but invisibly gendered. Although women constitute a substantial element of the larger white supremacy movement, their role differs drastically depending on their organizational affiliation. According to Blee (1996) there are three distinct roles for women within the broader movement: 1) familial, 2) social, and 3) operative. These three roles are divided along ideological lines. For example, Christian Identity and Klan groups tend to emphasize female members' familial and social roles, while women in neo-Nazi or National Socialist Movements are involved in more direct action—which Blee (1996) refers to as operative roles.

Familial and social roles are associated with tasks such as creating and nurturing a racist family (Blee 2004). Religious segments of white supremacy often depict organized racism as a “collective family.” Many racist leaders cultivate a familial atmosphere by relying on female members to invoke their responsibilities to their husbands and families, as well as perform social roles that serve as platforms for racist recruitment efforts. According to Blee (2004), in most racist organizations, women are expected to mother their immediate families, as well as the larger racist family; this is especially prominent among religiously based factions. The importance of social roles among religious based organizations has grown increasingly important in recent years, as white supremacists have strived to increase the longevity of their movement (Daniels 2009). Female members key familial roles also structure the lives of adherents around social movement activities.

Operative roles among female white supremacists are most prominent in politically-based organizations. According to Blee, (2004), these roles range from “routine clerical tasks to informal leadership and paramilitary activities” (133). Although women are found as formal leaders in only a handful of groups, these groups are most notably affiliated with a politically based white supremacist ideology. Several scholars note that women usually adopt operative roles that are less public (Blee 2004; Daniels 2009). For example, some female white supremacists work to promote their organization by making flyers and distributing propaganda, while others seek to promote their agenda and leadership positions through the Internet. Ultimately, this organizational division has direct implications for the participations of women within organized racism, specifically in terms of their gender consciousness and perceptions of gender inequalities.

Ideological Boundaries and Discursive Tools

The divide within the larger movement suggests that free space alone do not prompt the formation of an oppositional consciousness. While both religious and politically based organizations provide members with free spaces that can help foster a feminist identity, women in these organizations differ in their willingness to embrace a feminist identity. Female members who unite under the umbrella of white supremacy for a political purpose adopt more fluid ideological boundaries and progressive gender ideologies relative to their religious based counterparts. Due to the absence of religious values that emphasize a stringent patriarchal ideology, politically-motivated white supremacists are not confined by traditional gender norms and thus able to embrace more egalitarian attitudes and identify gender-based inequality—the characteristics necessary for the development of a feminist identity.

Additionally, members associated with political organizations possess discursive repertoires that contain a wider array of discursive tools related to gender equality. This is directly related to a discursive organizational context and the role of boundaries in shaping the development of discursive repertoires (Steinberg 1998). Because politically affiliated white supremacists do not unite under the umbrella of white supremacy for religious reasons, the core values that shape their ideology embrace a wider variety of views—views that embrace a more progressive ideology when it comes to gender politics and the role of women within the movement. Ultimately, the role of discursive repertoires illustrates that the social context of free spaces, such as the Internet, do not provide always individuals with the discursive tools necessary to develop an oppositional consciousness.

Hypotheses

While scholars have acknowledged the processes associated with the development of an oppositional consciousness (see Katzenstein 1999 and Klatch 2001), they fail to examine the relationship between organizational membership and the ideological discursive tools those memberships can provide for the formation of a feminist identity. These organizational affiliations and the discursive repertoires and tools they provide can help foster an oppositional consciousness, more so than simply the availability of free space. The present research will fill the current empirical gap by examining the association between organizational affiliation and the formation of a feminist identity within the larger white supremacist movement. This study is guided by three specific hypotheses:

H1: Members who unite under the umbrella of white supremacy for a religious purpose (e.g., Ku Klux Klan and Christian Identity Movement) derive discursive tools that hinder the

development of a feminist consciousness. Due to more rigid ideological boundaries and traditional gender ideologies, religious organizations do not provide female members with the discursive repertoires to develop a feminist consciousness.

H2: Members who unite under the umbrella of white supremacy for a political purpose (e.g., neo-Nazi and National Socialists) will derive discursive tools from this organization affiliation that foster the development of a feminist consciousness. Due to more fluid ideological boundaries and progressive gender ideologies, politically based organizations provide female members with the discursive repertoires to develop a feminist consciousness.

H3: Given the rigid adherence to hierarchical organizational ideology associated with the larger white supremacy movements, female members ability to derive discursive tools that foster the development of a feminist identity will be stymied by the broader discursive organizational context. Specifically, female members who display a feminist consciousness in both political and religiously-motivated organizations will be limited in terms of their ability to achieve the full spectrum of feminist identity due to the absence of discursive tools that positively reflect feminism and the feminist movement.

Data

This study utilizes the Internet message board Stormfront.org—which is geared towards mobilizing white supremacists across the nation—as a platform for data collection. These types of technological innovations in computer-mediated communication have allowed hate groups to transform themselves into virtual communities. Likeminded individuals are now able to unite from all parts of the globe to promote hatred against minorities (Caren et al. 2012). Within the larger white supremacy movement, the Internet serves a vital role in terms of providing members

with a space to freely express their reactionary beliefs. These virtual free spaces allow members of organized racism to overcome obstacles in regards to connecting and interacting with other movement participants and groups (Simi and Futrell 2006). This online communication does not stand-alone from real world activities, but rather is increasingly incorporated into how white supremacists access, organize, and engage with fellow likeminded individuals. In many ways, online hate organizations are similar to conventional social movement communities (Caren et al. 2012). As identified by Taylor and Whittier (1992: 107), social movements communities are defined as “networks of individuals and groups loosely linked through an institutional base, multiple goals and actions, and a collective identity that affirms members’ common interests in opposition to dominant group.” An excellent example of an online social movement community is Stormfront.org.

Stormfront.org

One of the largest and longest running online social movement community and virtual free spaces for white supremacists is Stormfront.org (Tsunokai and McGrath 2011). Organized around multiple thematic message boards, this virtual community provides individuals with an interactive platform to post comments on thousands of different topics. Founded by Don Black, a former Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, Stormfront was originally developed in the fall of 1995 as part of a larger private dial-in bulletin board system (DBB) for Black’s colleague David Duke who at the time was running for a U.S. Senate seat. Black created the DBB so that Duke’s campaign staff could remain in constant contact with each other. Five years later, the site went public and was available to white supremacists across the nation. Stormfront.org was the first site of its kind, providing fellow white supremacists or nationalists with an asynchronous virtual

community where one can foster a sense of “place” by engaging in social exchanges revolving around the white power movement (Tsunokai and McGrath 2011).

Stormfront.org quickly transformed itself into an aspatial community where like-minded individuals could bridge geographical divides and unite together to ‘preserve the white race’ (Bowman-Grieve 2009; Daniels 2009). Similar to physical communities, Stormfront.org has in place rules and regulations and a governing body to ensure its survival as a virtual community. For example, new members are always placed on moderation status until certain requirements are met (e.g., posted at least 10 times, amassed 12 reputation points, or have been a registered member for at least 10 days). Until one is taken off moderation, all posts written by new members are subject to review by moderators. Moderators, who are often appointed due to their knowledge about certain subject matters, are assigned the responsibility of overseeing specific forums. Within Stormfront, more established community members are often afforded greater status or prestige via reputation ratings. All registered members have the opportunity to rate their fellow users’ postings by selecting one of three ratings: positive, negative, or neutral. As users amass reputation points, different public descriptors are assigned to posters, indicating their standing in the community. The reputation points of individuals highlights the presence of stakes and rewards within this virtual network, and helps assess the commitment of individual members of this virtual community.

Methods

The advent of the Internet has dramatically increased the type and range of documents open to qualitative analysis. Internet sources, such as the discourse fostered in virtual networks, are especially open to a method of analysis in which online discourse can be systematically examined and assessed in order to develop a better understanding of this complex social

phenomenon (Bowman-Grieve 2009). This research examines Stormfronters' discursive politics, as defined by Katzenstein (1999), in order to assess the presence of a feminist identity amongst female white supremacists. In order to investigate the association between white supremacists' organizational affiliation and the presence of feminism, questions were posed on Stormfront.org to directly examine the underlying relationship between female members' organizational affiliation, the discursive tools this membership provides, and their views towards feminist consciousness more broadly.

In order to obtain appropriate research respondents via Stormfront.org, members were contacted using a guest account. Stormfront.org allows individuals to either register as an official member of the virtual network or log in as a guest. Through this guest membership, questions were posted on the online network under the Open Forums thread, which is open to all guests of the website. Under this section there is a General Questions and Comments section, which provides individuals with a virtual platform to ask questions and garner greater knowledge about the white supremacy movement. The use of a guest account on this online hate network was approved by Vanderbilt University's Institutional Review Board.¹

The first phase of this research began with a set of questions that investigates the presence of feminism within the Stormfront community. These questions assess the underlying association between white supremacists organizational affiliation and their discursive perceptions of feminism. The questions were developed based on the guiding theoretical constructs of this research: 1) organizational affiliation (e.g., Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazis, etc.); 2) discursive tools; and 3) feminist consciousness.

¹ Vanderbilt IRB identification number 120962.

Utilizing the General Questions and Comments section of Stormfront.org, the following question was posted that taps into the underlying constructs of each concept:

It seems that there have been several debates regarding the role of women within the WN movement. This debate appears to concern whether women should focus on fulfilling domestic duties, such as child rearing, or engage in leadership positions. I'm curious as to what Stormfronters' experiences have been within the movement and if this is related to their ideological viewpoint.

Here are some questions:

- 1) Within the larger movement, are you associated with a specific ideological group?
- 2) Do you think women's priority is to focus on reproducing the next generation of the white race or engage in forms of direct action?
- 3) What are your views regarding women's rights?
- 4) Is feminism or women's rights relevant within the WN movement?

The first question measures individuals' membership affiliation, which is a critical component in terms of analyzing the relationship between organizational identity and the presence of feminist consciousness. The second and third questions seek to capture organizational ideology by assessing the roles women occupy based on their affiliation within the larger movement. As noted by Blee (2004), women's roles within the movement are largely dependent on subgroup associations (e.g., familial, social, and operative roles). The fourth and final question ultimately assesses the presence of a feminist consciousness and feminist identity. Although scholars have noted the presence of a gendered consciousness amongst women within the movement (Blee 1996, 2004; Daniels 2009), the adoption of a feminist identity amongst female white supremacists remains undeveloped.

To ensure the anonymity of all respondents within the sample, the screen names for all Stormfronters were replaced with pseudonyms. In total, there were approximately 286 individual responses, however, only 106 posts were directly related to the original questions posed. Given the format and interactive nature of Stormfront.org, members have the option of engaging in independent conversations with one another, which often deviate from the original

question. Thus, over half of the responses included in this particular discussion board consisted of conversations that deviated from the original question and were disregarded from the present analysis. Of the 106 relevant posts, the majority of respondents were affiliated with politically based organizations, with over 60% of the sample identified as being associated with neo-Nazi, Nationalist Socialists, or some other politically-motivated hate group. In terms of their religiously based counterparts, approximately 20% of the sample reported affiliations with organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan or Christian Identity Movement. Given the anonymity of Stormfront.org, there was a significant portion of the sample that refrained from self-identifying with any particular branch of the larger white supremacy movement. Thus, approximately 20% of the sample was coded as unknown affiliation with any specific white supremacist organization.

It is important to note that the sample analyzed was a convenience sample and thus subject to sampling bias. Although a convenience sample is a type of non-probability sampling, the nature of the present empirical study is beyond the scope of random and generalizable sampling techniques. Additionally, the secrecy and relative anonymity of the white supremacy movement led scholars to classify the movement as a hidden population since members are often ostracized from mainstream society (Blee 2009). Since members are difficult to contact and identify, a strategic convenience sample is an acceptable sampling strategy for the present analysis.

Even though a convenience sample is an appropriate sampling technique, individual respondents and their views are not generalizable to the larger white supremacy movement. Given that Stormfront.org is an online community, individuals must have Internet access and the knowledge to navigate and engage in this virtual community. For members who do not have

online access or who are not active in this social network, their views remain overlooked. Furthermore, the responses and opinions obtained may only be representative of individuals who are deeply committed and actively involved in the movement and online community of Stormfront.org. As a result, the findings may not reflect the view of the entire movement, but rather those members who are active on this particular online network. Even with the possible sources of bias introduced by utilizing a convenience sample, this type of sampling strategy is the best choice to empirically investigate the role of feminism within this hidden community.

Analytic Strategy

The responses to these sets of questions were coded employing a theoretically driven content analysis using the Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) software Dedoose. Codes were derived deductively based on existing theory and empirical research (see Blee 1996, 2002, 2004 etc.). Based on the individual posts, codes fall into five main areas: 1) organizational affiliations, 2) gender egalitarianism, 3) gender consciousness, 4) feminist consciousness and 5) feminist identification. These main codes were applied to the textual data during the initial open code reading of the data (Glaser and Strauss 1967). After several extensive readings of the posts from the larger thread, additional themes that emerged from the data not represented by the deduced codes were included during the second phase of the analysis. These sub-codes were applied during the axial coding, in which thematic categories were created and condensed (Glaser and Strauss 1967). The last and final step in the coding process was selective coding, where the existing subset of concepts and relationships highlighted in the two previous steps (Glaser and Strauss 1967) illustrate why some female white supremacists come to hold a feminist consciousness while others do not.

Results

Gender Consciousness and Religious Organizations

The first hypothesis postulated that members of religiously motivated hate groups would not only possess more traditional gender ideologies, but exhibit greater reluctance towards adopting a feminist ideology given their lack of discursive tools available at their disposal. The first portion of this hypothesis was supported, with the majority of religious white supremacists embracing traditional roles for female members, specifically regarding reproduction and childbearing duties. While some members were open to embracing more egalitarian gender roles, even the most progressive religiously motivated individuals still emphasized the importance of reproduction. For example, the respondent *Ratterch* suggests that although women play a critical role outside of the home, their commitment to the white race ensures that they must fulfill their biological duties:

If she really was best suited for it, then I agree, if the woman in question had no children. But like some others on this thread, I do believe that for breeding age women, children are a priority. I'm not suggesting you personally are like this, but I really can't understand how many people on here are advocating for gender egalitarianism if they really are for white preservation. It seems so contradictory.

Ratterch's response illustrates the relationship between discursive organizational context and the boundaries that shape individual's discursive repertoires. In the case of religiously motivated white supremacists, their religious doctrines emphasize the caretaker role of women and stress the importance of reproduction. Individuals' stringent religious ideology does not offer discursive tools that permit discussion of alternative roles for women, and ultimately, the possibility of a feminist consciousness among religious white supremacist. In light with *Ratterch's* perspective, several other members, such as *Displin*, emphasize the importance of centering women's priorities on children and care-giving roles:

I think a woman's priority should be having kids, raising them, running the home, and supporting her husband. BUT, I don't think she shouldn't work, as long as her duties outside the home don't come before her

domestic/familial duties. Women make great teachers, nurses, and secretarial office personnel (for example) and I personally loved waitressing--catering to people and being welcoming and social...

If a woman is past her child-bearing years and her children are nearing adulthood, and she possesses the qualities needed for a leadership position within the movement, I think she should be able to apply. There should absolutely not be any Affirmative Action in the WN workplace when it comes to women, but I see nothing wrong with her being considered if she has what it takes/if she has something valuable to offer.

While some members who subscribed to religious-based organizations were open to the possibility of women engaging in employment or leadership opportunities outside of home, the overwhelming sentiment was for women to focus on domestic and more traditional activities. Even though some religious members were able to acknowledge gender-based inequality within the movement, the patriarchal foundation upon which their religious beliefs were based prevented them from identifying the negative implications associated with such traditional beliefs. Rather, religious white supremacists possess gendered discursive tools that reflect a biological explanation of gender roles, which legitimizes the role of women as caretakers and procreators. For example, as noted by *Pradors*, who happens to affiliate with the religiously motivated hate organization known as Christian Identity, the bible identifies clear and rigid roles that are deemed appropriate for both genders:

Well, CI women believe in the male-female roles as laid out in the Bible. So that would be the difference. I've definitely noticed it myself - but I have met non-Christian WN women who were "traditional" like I am

Other members echoed this sentiment, stressing religious values and emphasizing the biological nature of gender roles. The link between biology and gender roles illustrates how religious-based organizations shape members discursive repertoires and provide them with discursive tools that serve as a barrier to the development of a feminist consciousness. It is these discursive barriers that prevent religiously motivated white supremacists from challenging the present conditions for women within the movement. The presence of discursive barriers is further illustrated by *Steremega* who advocates that women should focus on domestic activities for

pragmatic reasons and to help ensure that members fulfill their commitment to furthering the white race:

My views on women's [sic] role is that they should focus themselves in domestic activities. It's just pragmatism. Women are biologically geared up for raising children, and with the number we are going to need, it's not going to be easy at all having both partners working.

This perspective was apparent amongst several religious members. The emphasis on biological differences between men and women is part of religiously motivated members' discursive repertoire. Individuals affiliated with religious organizations deploy their discursive tools by referencing the bible and highlighting the biological explanation for traditional gender roles for men and women. For example, *Ratterch* illustrates the use of these religious discursive tools by noting the biological distinction between men and women and emphasizing the need to focus on biology to secure the future of the larger Aryan race:

I'm not saying that women are less important than men - simply that biologically the sexes are geared up for very different roles and function most efficiently as a society when that is respected. Advocating traditional gender roles is tried and tested to be effective in raising birth rates.

As exemplified by *Ratterch* and her peers, religious white supremacists emphasis on biology and reliance on religious discourse serves as a barrier to the development of a feminist consciousness. While some religiously motivated members did display a burgeoning gender consciousness, the emphasis on reproduction and strict adherence to traditional gender roles barred them from challenging the stringent gender hierarchy that comprises the broader movement. Without the language or discursive tools to frame gender inequality, religiously motivated white supremacists are unable to cultivate an oppositional consciousness—one that reflects a feminist ideology.

Feminism and Religious Organizations

Stormfronters associated with religious organizations were quick to acknowledge and associate feminism as part of the larger anti-white agenda. According to *Cemittus*, who is

affiliated with a religious-oriented organization, the overarching goal of the feminist movement is viewed in a positive light; however, it is the anti-white and “man-hating” aspects of the movement that deter her from positively embracing the movement:

Some aspects of feminism are ok by me, such as equal pay for people doing the same job. Much of contemporary Feminism though is based on an anti male and White hating agenda. I don't see that in the people I'm friends with.

The excerpt above illustrates the negative stereotypes associated with the feminist label. Within the larger white supremacist movement, feminism is affiliated as part of the Zionist Occupation Government (ZOG)—an anti-Semitic ideology that illustrates the general distrust white supremacists harbor towards the government. As noted by Berlet and Vysotsky (2006), the religious sector of the white supremacy movement believes Christianity is polluted by Judaism, and emphasizes the importance of maintaining racial purity by promoting an anti-Semitic ideology. This ideological framework is embodied by ZOG—a pejorative acronym referring to the idea that the federal government is compromised by its allegiance to the goals of global Jewish elites (Blee 2006). While ZOG is associated with all branches of the larger white supremacy movement, religiously motivated individuals were more likely to highlight the connection between feminism and ZOG and stress the inherent anti-white nature of the feminist movement. For example, *Ratterch* acknowledged that the second-wave feminist movement has a distinct and inherent anti-white agenda:

I view "women's rights" as a second-wave feminist construct, which has deliberately been used as a cloak to disempower men and largely destroy the white family unit. Many feminists were Jewish, married their ideology to Marxism and had these goals in mind from day one.

Additionally, amongst the more conservative and religiously minded-members, there was a clear disconnect between possessing gender consciousness and adopting the feminist label. As noted by *Ratterch*, basic women’s rights such as voting and equal pay were interpreted as ideologically

distinct from the feminist movement itself, with religious members arguing that contemporary feminist movements are focused solely on undermining the future of the white race:

Equal pay and the right to vote are not what modern feminism is about. Modern feminism is about, and only about, destroying the white family unit and removing white men from positions of power. There are absolutely no positives to it. Anyone who supports it on here I consider to be an enemy.

As *Ratterch* outlines, feminism is viewed with great distain by religious white supremacists.

Religious individuals associate feminism with the deterioration of the nuclear family and the removal of white men from positions of power. Given that many forms of organized religion are founded upon the principals of patriarchy, it is not surprising that religiously motivated white supremacists' discursive repertoires would reflect their stringent religious doctrine. Is it these religious values that influence the discursive organizational context in which religiously motivated white supremacists resides, which in turn, shapes their discursive repertoires and discursive tools. Ultimately, although religious white supremacist are able to identify issues of gender inequality, the presence of discursive barriers limits the availability of discursive tools that allow them to actively challenge gender hierarchies and move from a gender consciousness to a feminist consciousness.

Gender Consciousness and Political Organizations

The second hypothesis posited that members who unite under the umbrella of white supremacy for a political purpose would not only display more egalitarian gender role attitudes, but also possess the discursive tools that foster the development of a feminist consciousness. In regards to the first portion of this hypothesis, the majority of politically motivated individuals supported the notion of egalitarian gender attitudes and direct leadership opportunities for women within the movement. However, whether this attitude took form in advocating for

traditional gender roles or promoting positions of leadership for women across the movement, responses demonstrated a distinct divide about women's role within the movement.

For respondents affiliated with politically-based organizations, the majority were advocates of supporting women in whatever roles they deem fit. White supremacists within this subgroup were very vocal about allowing women to contribute to the movement in any form.

For example, as outlined by *NoteThega*, although men and women may differ by biological characteristics, there are no intrinsic limits of who should fulfill specific roles in the movement:

What hard and fast rules are there for either sex? Women have children. Men are stronger. That doesn't mean women can't do something, or that men have to do this that and the other. We all bring unique skills, and while one sex will generally bring one aspect more than the other, we're all needed to unite and fight. All of us are needed to have families; why aren't all of us needed to be active WNs?

Several other Stormfronters echoed this sentiment. While they believed that women should acknowledge their innate biological ability to procreate, women should also be actively engaged in the movement. Given that the discursive repertoires of politically motivated members provide them with discursive tools that stress the importance of ensuring the future for the white race, even the most ideologically progressive members were adamant about the need for women to engage in some type of reproductive activity. As highlighted by *Lappzig*, several members stated that reproduction is up to both men and women to ensure the future of the next generation of Aryans:

I believe it is a woman AND man's priority to focus on reproducing the next generation of the white race AND engage in forms of direct action. We each have our own roles and jobs to play in this. I don't need to outline them here, as I believe most WN already know what those roles are.

Although the majority of politically motivated members were supportive of operative roles for women within the movement, there were several outspoken individuals who believed women needed to engage in acts of direct leadership. While these women were in the minority, the overarching agreement of egalitarianism within the movement among politically motivated individuals highlights the role that discursive organizational context plays in terms of providing

members with a discursive repertoire that reflect a feminist consciousness. Politically affiliated outspoken women acknowledged gender inequality within the movement and called attention to the need for women to be active and involvement in all aspects of the movement, aside from reproductive purposes. These women clearly articulated a feminist consciousness, for they not only identified incidents of gender inequality, but outlined a plan and call for action to alter the current state of gender relations. For example, *InsideBe*, one of the most vocal women on the forum, clearly stated her plan of action she believed women needed to uphold in order to further the movement:

What I see is a lack of an overall plan so we can proceed forward in an organized manner. Well, I think we need to get more vocal and start participating in not only petition drives, but demonstrations. I think we need to start small with our local groups and hopefully it will ignite more courage in others. I also believe we need to actively organize and participate in local militias. We need to be prepared to defend ourselves, in a shift situation.

Several other politically-oriented women that shared this view of direct action. These women vocalized their support for change within the movement, and some went as far as to outline a strategic plan and highlight various tactics that white supremacists could employ in order to further the movement. One individual in particular, *Viziazi*, provided a detailed list of the various ways in which women could engage in various forms of action:

We need to participate in EVERYTHING. The tried and true, and the new...we need to build structure, and NOW. Nothing will be worthwhile, unless there is a structure that bridges all networks and globally. Undermine at every level.

Pamphlets - Mass drops, and as unaffiliated as possible. Education/information. PURE.

Petitions - Electronic or otherwise. Door to door is a great way to get people to listen and SEE representation, whether it's overall effect is worthless doesn't matter.

Voting - Doesn't really matter in the two party system, but votership should increase as a way of stalling things, and siphoning power.

Demonstrations - Must be generally discussed, and happen like lightening. Counter demonstration is our worst enemy, so the numbers (which is their tactic, and it's effective) must be a priority IF we do this.

Counter demonstrations - Not a tactic we typically use, unless I'm unaware of massive effort in this department. It is THIS exact tool that our enemy uses effectively against us. We NEED to use THEIR methods, because it convolutes their ability to resist it, much as they've done through manipulations of our altruistic policies and general sense of equality.

Rallies - (secure not public) - Rallies are for us. They are for motivation, and recognition of our larger number. To FEEL and SEE that we are together.

Media fronts - We need to find media avenues that aren't reliant upon censorship etc. This is hard to do, but it must be done under the guise of "normalcy" at first.

Temporary allying - No, not with black nationalists. Nothing screams hypocrite, or creates future worry more. I mean with certain groups that are not necessarily aligned completely to our value systems, but are "White enough" to net some of the masses through endorsement, even unknowing endorsement if possible. These must be highly defined scenarios, that do not complicate us later, or end up doing damage. It must be thought about. It should start locally. Of course entertainment is a great way.

Letters to politicians/"faces" - We need to start instilling a little fear in our policy makers and power shakers. This is not to be done in a way that gets you arrested for making threats. Use your brain, because it's very easy to assert yourself, and our position, without becoming a target. Plant seeds of doubt. Especially when all of the above is starting to become publicly known, our representation will sell it.

As acknowledged by *Viziazi* and her politically motivated peers, there is a need for women's active involvement in forms of white supremacy activism that support the mission of organized racism. Aside from recognizing the void of women in positions of direct leadership, members of politically-based organizations acknowledged the presence of gender inequality within the movement and called attention to the negative implications of such gender-based stratification. By challenging the present state of inequality, these individuals illustrate the connection between the availability of discursive tools that allow them to identify gender inequality and the development of a feminist consciousness—a consciousness that politicizes gender-based stratification. The excerpts above illustrates that within the movement, women are not only conscious, but also very meticulous when it comes to engaging in forms of direct action. By not simply settling for caretaking and more domestic roles, politically motivated white supremacists possess more fluid discursive repertoires. These women do not adopt religious doctrine which discursively bars of the development of a feminist consciousness. It is the basic understanding and acknowledgment of gender inequality, in addition to the evaluation of how such inequality impacts the movement, which distinguishes politically and religiously motivated white supremacists' discursive tools and the development of a feminist consciousness.

Feminism and Political Organizations

Although politically motivated Stormfronters were aware of gender-based inequality and exhibited a feminist consciousness, their discursive organizational context depicts feminism as

part of a larger anti-white establishment and thus, does not provide them with the discursive tools to embrace and self-identify as part of the larger feminist movement. This ideological frame associates feminism with a wide variety of negative connotations, and respondents note that the mainstream feminist movement is intrinsically anti-white, anti-family, and anti-male. While the majority of white supremacists were in agreement about what the feminist movement represents, there was a clear distinction between religious and politically based organizations in regards to their use of feminist rhetoric and display of feminist sympathies.

In regards to white supremacists who affiliated themselves with politically oriented organizations, they were much more vocal about their discontent for the present condition of women within the movement than their religious counterparts. As such, these women more likely to echo feminist rhetoric and display a feminist consciousness. For example, *NoteThega*, one of the more outspoken female Stormfronters, expressed the following sentiments when describing the present state of women within the larger movement:

Yeah, and that was my whole point. Every few weeks now, endless relentless threads bashing women and everything we've done and how we aren't good enough and doing enough and how any of us with jobs, or lives, or who haven't had a chance to have a family yet are supporters of feminism etc., etc. pop up - but when do men stand up and say "No more?" When do they stand up and say they're partaking in this cesspool and indulging in sex and drugs and hipster crap and consumerism in turn?

Just like not every man, especially WN men, are like that so not every woman, especially WN women should be accused of feminism. Even those of us who defend fellow women from being slandered and called horrible things and constantly attacked

We can either all keep fighting and saying that women are awful, get back in the kitchen, start breeding, you're all feminists blahblahblah, or we can actually effect change and actually start making families, instead of instructing OTHERS to do so, and attacking everyone. I cannot get back in the kitchen, have children, or rely on a man and no woman can, until there are men actually stepping up! How can I be expected to have kids and take care of a home, alone?

While *NoteThega* remains skeptical of the feminist movement and adopting the feminist label, she does express a clear feminist consciousness, specifically in regards to the distribution of gender roles and white supremacist expectations for women within the movement. Her perception of inequality within the movement is illustrative of a feminist consciousness—one in

which she agrees with promotion of gender equality, but remains reluctant to adopt the feminist label. The clear reluctance to self-identify as a feminist prevents *NoteThega* from displaying the full spectrum of feminist identity, for she lacks the sense of collective identity that comes along with identifying with the feminist label.

Several other politically motivated white supremacists displayed a feminist consciousness, which is one element of a feminist identity. For example, as noted by *Lightboge*, while she agrees with the principals of a feminist consciousness, there is an explicit distinction between what she defines as radical and moderate feminists:

As for the rest of your argument, I support gender-equality, plain and simple. This means that both genders should have equal treatment, equal respect, equal opportunities, equal responsibilities and equal consequences.

As I pointed out, many feminists are not equalists, but instead are man-hating hypocrites who ultimately want to degrade men to second-class citizens. I despise these feminists and everything they stand for.

However, there are also plenty of moderate feminists, who simply want equal opportunities in work and education. I support this, because I'm against gender-based double-standards.

Although politically motivated white supremacists were able to distinguish between what they define as radical and other more moderate forms of feminism, ultimately they remain reluctant to adopt the feminist label. A disconnect between members' feminist consciousness and willingness to adopt the feminist label prevents them from displaying the full spectrum of feminist identity. Additionally, while these Stormfronters were able to identify aspects and forms of inequality within the larger movement, their inability to form a cohesive language and sense of collective feminist identity is illustrative of the larger ideological foundations that comprise the white supremacy movement. It is these discursive barriers that prevent politically-motivated white supremacists from furthering their feminist oppositional identity and illustrates that discursive tools in the context of free spaces do not always foster oppositional consciousness. The gravity of these discursive barriers is even more pronounced for their religious counterparts

that encounter more rigid organizational and discursive context influenced by patriarchal foundations.

Stormfronters' resistance to the feminist label was influenced by their organizational affiliations. While there were clear distinctions in regards to women's roles within the movement based on white supremacists organizational affiliation, even the most progressive individuals faced discursive barriers to developing an oppositional consciousness (i.e., feminist identity). Findings indicate that, overall, individuals associated with the larger white supremacy movement remain reluctant to openly adopt a feminist identity, regardless of organizational affiliation. This inherent resistance highlights the power of the ideological foundational frames that comprise organized racism. The feminist label and the underlying perspective of the feminist movement illustrates that although free spaces, such as Stormfront.org, provide individuals with the opportunities to utilize their organizational discursive tools to foster a feminist consciousness, there are larger discursive and ideological barriers within the movement that hinder the development of a feminist identity.

Conclusion

The Internet has essentially revolutionized how hate is spread across the globe. As highlighted above, white supremacists have been able to successfully harness the power of the web to establish virtual communities. Within these virtual settings, likeminded individuals who feel threatened by diversity have developed and fostered social bonds with one another, while in the process creating a sense of community. As more women join the white supremacy movement, it has become apparent that there is a growing gender consciousness amongst members; many female recruits are becoming increasingly egalitarian in their perceptions of gender and ideology within the movement (Blee 1996, 2004; Daniels 2009). What remains

unclear is *why* these women, in such rigid hyper-masculine environments, display both a gender and feminist consciousness, yet remain reluctant to openly embrace a feminist identity. To investigate this relationship, the present study examined the association between white supremacists organizational affiliation and the formation of a feminist identity. More specifically, this study focused on the ways in which white supremacists' organizational affiliations provide female members with the discursive tools to develop a feminist consciousness within a hostile patriarchal environment.

The findings from this study clearly illustrates that there are differences in terms of members organizational affiliation and feminist consciousness within the larger white supremacy movement. More specifically, Stromfronters associated with politically-based organizations (e.g., Neo-Nazis and Nationalist Socialists) clearly exhibited a feminist consciousness when it came to acknowledging gender based inequality and challenging traditional roles of women within the movement. On the contrary, their religiously motivated counterparts (e.g., Ku Klux Klan and Christian Identity Movement) exhibited discursive barriers that did not allow them to actively challenge gender hierarchies, which is necessary to develop a feminist consciousness. Given the rigid patriarchal ideological boundaries associated with religious white supremacist organizations, members are limited in terms of their discursive repertoires, and ultimately the discursive tools necessary to develop a feminist consciousness. Consistent with previous research (see Blee 1996, 2002, 2004), these results acknowledge the organizational divide within the larger movement and the implications of factionalism for the formation of oppositional identities. However, unlike previous research, this study acknowledges the role of ideological discursive tools and the barriers that broader discursive organizational context presents in the development of a collective identity rooted in an oppositional consciousness.

While there is a clear difference among white supremacists in terms of organizational affiliation and feminist consciousness, the majority of Stormfronters remain hesitant to adopt the feminist label, regardless of organizational affiliation. Although it was initially hypothesized that the availability of electronic free spaces (i.e., Stormfront.org) in conjunction with fluid and progressive ideologies would foster the development of a feminist identity among politically-motivated white supremacists, the foundational ideologies of the larger white supremacy movement ensure that even the most progressive and outspoken members associate feminism with a larger anti-white ideology. Although Stormfronters were able to identify the presence of gender based discrimination within the larger white supremacy movement, they were unable to frame and interpret these experiences into a collective feminist identity; hence, while there was the presence of a feminist consciousness, especially among politically-motivated members, the ideological discursive repertoires that uphold organized racism prevent individuals from outwardly embracing the feminist label.

In order to better understand why white supremacists experienced discursive barriers, it is important to acknowledge the fundamental beliefs that comprise the larger white supremacy movement. As noted by several scholars (Perry 1998; Burriss et al. 2000; Simi and Futrell 2006) the larger white supremacy movement is comprised of a network of overlapping organizations. Although there are differences among these branches of organized racism, they all agree on the fundamental doctrines that comprise the larger movement. These foundational ideologies include a commitment to defend the white race and securing a future for the next generation. Additionally, many members of organized racism are deeply anti-Semitic and harbor conservative ideologies, and as such, oppose homosexuality and idealize traditional patriarchal family forms and communities (Simi and Futrell 2006). It is these underlying ideologies that

uphold the larger movement, preventing members from cultivating a collective identity that reflects their oppositional consciousness. More specifically, although politically-motivated white supremacists are able to clearly recognize and acknowledge gender-based inequality and challenge gender hierarchies, their inability to possess a feminist consciousness and experience all elements of feminist identity is a result of fundamental beliefs that associate feminism as part of a larger Jewish ploy to undermine the white race (Blee 2004). It is this belief that has led white supremacists to disregard the feminist label, even for those individuals who espouse progressive and egalitarian ideologies characteristic of a feminist consciousness.

While the Internet served as a platform to contact and garner data from members of organized racism, there are limitations associated with the use of online data. Given the anonymity associated with the online world of hate, individuals do not have to divulge personal details, such as their gender, ethnicity, or age. Furthermore, Stormfront.org does not provide information concerning members' association with the different organizations that embody the larger movement; thus, this study is unable to ascertain the legitimacy of members' stated organizational affiliations. Moreover, while the web provides researchers with the ability to investigate topics previously off limits, there remains a controversial debate regarding the authenticity of online social actors. As noted by Bowker and Tuffin (2004), the lack of boundaries and social cues associated with the Internet enables individuals to falsify their virtual presence. In turn, many scholars question if virtual communities are indeed true communities, given that online networks hold limited liability for their members (Driskell and Lyon 2002).

Although previous research has acknowledged the limitations associated with using Internet data as a platform for social research, there is a burgeoning body of literature that highlights the advantages of social movement online communities (Caren et al. 2012; Tsunokai

and McGrath 2011). More specifically, as noted by Tsunokai and McGrath (2011), the inherent qualities of cyberspace enable members of virtual communities to be liberated from previous geographical and social constraints. In turn, the web allows likeminded individuals to develop and foster social bonds with one another, while simultaneously creating a sense of community. Among highly stigmatized hidden populations, such as the white supremacist movement, the web serves as a refuge for individuals who feel threatened by increasing diversity (Caren et al. 2012; Tsunokai and McGrath 2011).

Given the resistance towards the feminist label, future research should empirically examine a disconnect between feminist consciousness and individuals' reluctance to self-identify with the feminist label. While scholars have paid close attention to both the socio-demographic predictors of feminist identities (Rheingold and Foust 1998; Aronson 2003; Hall and Rodriguez 2003) and the negative connotations associated with the feminist label (Williams and Wittig 1997; McCabe 2005), few have explored the multidimensional nature of feminism and the social process of identity development. It is crucial that scholars acknowledge the varying social processes and context in which both feminist consciousness and identity take form, especially given the distinction between feminist opinions and self-identifying with the feminist label (Rhodebeck 1996). In order to do so, future research should pay close attention to individual definitions of feminism and their perceptions of the feminist label to unearth the relationship between the two concepts.

Lastly, it is important to note that findings from this study may assist hate watch groups, such as the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Anti-Defamation League in developing strategies to better understand how oppositional and progressive egalitarian ideas can take hold and develop within organized racism. Ultimately, increased accessibility to the Web will lead to

more online friendships amongst white supremacists, which in turn, may produce more offline interactions as well. Consequently, the Internet has the power to slowly blur the distinction between the virtual and the physical realms of racial bigotry. The bridging of these two spheres only serves to strengthen the white supremacist movement. Additionally, online to offline interactions among similar individuals often act as intensifiers. That is, the interactions tend to amplify the common bonds that were initially established within the virtual community (Baker and Ward, 2002; Simi and Futrell, 2006). If these interpersonal relationships remain strong within the physical world, there is also a good chance that sustained commitment to virtual hate communities will remain high as well (Bowman-Grieve, 2009). As noted by Simi and Futrell (2006), real and virtual spaces are not separate spheres, but rather are settings that are closely intertwined. Thus, in order to curb the growth of white supremacists and hate organizations, it is pertinent that scholars continue to investigate the rise of this hidden population in the 21st century.

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