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White Boys to Terrorist Men

Target Recruitment of Nazi Skinheads

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There is an important distinction between hate crimes and hate group activity. Although reported hate crimes appear to be declining, there is evidence that hate group activity is increasing. This includes hate group consolidation, the increase in hate Web sites, and more sophisticated recruitment of youth. This research explores how hate groups, specifically racist skinheads, target specific youth populations for recruitment. Using a layman's interpretation of Durkheim's "anomie," skinheads look for youth that live in a world of change. Based on ethnographic research and guided interviews, this research finds that older Nazi skinheads manipulate anomic teens and indoctrinate them into a world of terror.

Skinheads in Denver murder a police officer and a Black man waiting for a bus, critically injuring a White woman who tried to help the victim. A Black Texan is dragged to his death behind a truck driven by three members of the Aryan Brotherhood. A member of the World Church of the Creator goes on a shooting spree in Illinois and Indiana, killing two minorities and wounding nine others. The late 1990s saw its share of violence committed by members of hate groups.

According to the Southern Poverty Law Center's (SPLC) (2000a) *Intelligence Report*, the number of hate groups may be on the decline, but their activity is not. "Official" data on hate crimes are becoming more reliable since the implementation of the 1990 Hate Crimes Statistics Acts, but there are still problems. Many police departments are not trained to identify hate crimes or, for various reasons, may choose not to report acts as hate crimes. Several states have no hate crime laws, and those that do have varying definitions of who should be included in the laws' "protected class." Should women, homosexuals, the disabled, and others be protected by hate crime laws? And, of course, there is a great reluctance by many to report hate crimes.

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) data that we do have, most hate crimes are committed by young people. In their research, Levin and McDevitt (1993) classified 60% of hate criminals as "youthful thrill seekers." Some of these youth are members of hate groups; most are not. That hate crimes

tend to be more vicious and injurious than normal violent crimes only adds to the destructive impact they have on the community. As with other forms of crime, most youthful hate criminals will "age out" of their criminality. But, some will be brought into the fray of terrorist hate groups. These groups may perpetrate or encourage other hate crimes, but more importantly, they create a climate where bias-motivated crime is justified. To groups such as the Aryan Nations, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK, Klan), and the World Church of the Creator, the hate criminal is a hero, doing God's work to save the White race from extinction.

The process by which young people are brought into the shadowy world of White supremacy must be researched for two primary reasons. First, we must be able to identify the macro-level social dynamics that create environments conducive to hate. Hate group membership ebbs and flows. Although some of this may be due to law enforcement policing and the courtroom challenges of legal groups such as the SPLC, it must also be related to shifts in social dynamics, including the economy, immigration, and changes in gender roles. Second, by understanding the root explanations behind hate group recruitment, strategies can be developed to combat youth involvement in adult terrorist groups. Prevention programs on the local level (education, mentoring, etc.) as well as the global level (multicultural curriculums, youth employment, etc.) can feed from the findings of sociological research.

The distinction between hate crimes and hate group activity is an important one. Although official data reflect increases and decreases in their activity, hate groups continue to operate. The SPLC (2000b) reports that in 1998, there were 537 identifiable active hate groups, but in 1999, there were only 457, 80 fewer. Understanding this trend is crucial because a significant part of change is related to the development of more sophisticated recruitment tactics. The reduction in the number of hate groups relates to five key trends:

1. Consolidation: Like corporations in merger frenzy, small hate groups are being swallowed up by larger ones. A Michigan chapter of the neo-Nazi group the American Nationalist Party joined the National Alliance. The New Jersey Confederate Knights merged with the Alabama-based America's Empire of the KKK. Even skinheads who have been fiercely defensive of their autonomy are being brought back into adult racist groups. Most notable is the Hammerskin Nation, which has moved beyond its Texas home to recruit skinheads from Oregon to Russia. According to the SPLC, the group increased in size by 70% in 1999. According to the Center's *Intelligence Report* director, Joseph Roy, the situation is deeply troubling: "Many of the less active groups have joined forces with much more serious players. There is strong evidence that far more people are now in really hard-lined groups like the National Alliance and the Hammerskin Nation" (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2000b, p. 7).
2. Web sites: More than 300 hate sites on the Web allow hate groups to spread their messages to those who might not ever travel to a rally or clandestine meeting. But, Web sites also allow individuals not associated with groups to spread their ideologies. The SPLC reports that 47% of hate sites are not affiliated with active hate groups. But, these sites may be gateways into established hate groups because most provide links to them; just a click away.

3. **Leaderless resistance:** On October 23, 1992, Christian Identity leader Pete Peters launched the idea of the leaderless resistance into the extreme right. At a meeting of White supremacists who desired to respond to the siege at Ruby Ridge, Idaho, earlier that year, Peters argued that the Klan, militias, and others should move away from the hierarchical organizations of the past because of their tendency to be infiltrated by law enforcement agents. Small cells of terrorists who shared an ideology and agenda (as laid out in *The Turner Diaries*, a fictional manual for starting a race war) would avoid government policing. Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, the 1995 Oklahoma City bombers, represent Peters's concept. As some right-wing extremists consolidate into larger hate groups, others (perhaps more) join no groups, only the vague leaderless resistance. This includes skinheads. Whereas some merge into the Hammerskin Nation, others claim no affiliation, making it hard for law enforcement and community groups to monitor nameless, small groups of skinheads.
4. **Mainstream politics:** It should be acknowledged that many right-wing extremists may have found homes in mainstream right-wing politics. Encouraged by the election to the Louisiana State legislature as a Republican of David Duke, the leader of the National Association for the Advancement of White People, others have taken off their Klan hoods and played the mainstream game. Successful campaigns against affirmative action in California, Washington, and Texas, the power of the gun lobby and the antihomosexual lobby, and sizable campaigns to preserve the Confederate battle flag's place in Southern society give right-wingers legitimate opportunities to advance their causes.
5. **Recruitment:** Like gangs and cults, hate groups have a high turnover rate. Research shows that most members stay in hate groups only as long as the groups meet their personal needs (Ezekial, 1995). Hate groups play the role of subcultural "problem solver" (Cohen, 1955). When they no longer appear to be solving the problem, members move on. Although many hate groups may find new members from the mainstream right-wing community, this research focuses on how skinhead groups specifically target young, "anomic" people. Both skinhead and nonskinhead groups are increasingly skilled in identifying "strained" populations that have gone through some type of ascribed status crisis ranging from factory layoffs to interracial schoolyard fights. Instead of the general recruitment of Whites in the past, skinheads and similar groups now target specific populations from which they are most likely to successfully recruit new members.

These five trends create a three-level environment conducive to right-wing terrorism: (a) stronger, consolidated hate groups with chapters in many states and even nations; (b) an unknown number of leaderless cells that share much of the hate groups' philosophy along with a mandate that supports violence against representatives of the government, abortion, and multiculturalism; and (c) a populace in which bigoted, antigovernment agendas are reinforced and supported. An example of the relationship between these three levels is the case of Eric Rudolph. Rudolph shared the ideology of the large Christian Identity movement. Identity Christians believe that multiculturalism, abortion, and homosexuality are promoted by an evil, Jewish power known generally as the New World Order. The FBI believes that Rudolph led a cell called the Army of God, which was responsible for bombings at the 1996 Olympics, an abortion clinic, and a lesbian bar. In 1997, Rudolph was seen fleeing into the dense North Carolina

woods. Among the mainstream people of that region, there is much support for Rudolph, who has become a local folk hero.

SKINHEADS AS TERRORISTS

Skinheads have been affiliated with hate groups in America for more than 15 years. Their roots as a subculture go back to the mid-1960s, when they emerged in London as a working-class response to the hippie phenomenon. Not initially racists (in fact, skinhead style draws heavily from Black "rude boys," Jamaican immigrants), skinheads were reactionary, resenting social forces representing social change (Hebdige, 1979). Skinheads first appeared as a reactionary element of the American punk rock scene, but it was not until the mid-1980s that they began to be recruited by more established racist groups (Blazak, 1995).

As groups such as the Klan, the White Aryan Resistance (WAR), and the New Order (a Nazi group) increased their recruitment of skinheads, skinhead violence also rose. Hundreds of acts of violence and destruction in the late 1980s were attributed to skinhead groups. One of the better known cases was the murder of Mulugeta Seraw in Portland, Oregon, in 1988. The day after an airing of an episode of *Geraldo* that featured skinheads and Nazis violently rioting on TV, Seraw was killed by three skinheads. The skinheads claimed membership in a Portland hate group known as East Side White Pride. In a 1990 civil trial, SPLC founder Morris Dees successfully proved that East Side White Pride members had been recruited by the California-based WAR to become foot soldiers in a violent race war. The trial ended with a \$12.5 million judgment against WAR leader Tom Metzger and his son John, head of the Aryan Youth Movement.

Although the judgment may have temporarily sidelined WAR from recruiting skinheads (Metzger's Web site, <http://www.resist.com>, is now one of the most popular sources of hate propaganda on the Web), skinhead violence continued well into the 1990s. Some of the most violent acts made headlines. In 1990, two Houston, Texas, skinheads killed a Vietnamese teenager whose dying words were "Please stop. I'm sorry I ever came to your country. God forgive me!" (SPLC, 2000a, p. 11). In 1992, three skinheads recruited by Bill Riccio's Aryan National Front stabbed to death a homeless Black man. Two Aryan Nations skinheads killed their parents and brother in 1995 in Allentown, Pennsylvania. Their motivation was that their parents were Jehovah's Witnesses. In 1996, a dozen Nazi skinheads stabbed to death a youth who had ejected them from a party. Denver, Colorado, saw a wave of skinhead violence in 1997 that included two murders. There have also been numerous synagogue and church attacks, random bombings, and malicious harassment cases that police attribute to skinhead groups.

Although the number of skinhead groups may have peaked in 1991, when the SPLC counted 144 groups, they may be more active now in consolidated groups such as the Hammerskins or in unaffiliated small cells. Many racist skinheads

share a belief in an inevitable race war in America. Although this race war will lead to an "autonomous Aryan homeland in the Northwest" (as a Volksfront newsletter describes it), the ultimate goal is an America that has been ethnically cleansed of all enemies, including White race traitors. This civil war may require some "sparking," as described in *The Turner Diaries* (which was written by National Alliance leader William Pierce). Acts of violence and terror by skinheads are viewed within the movement as important in speeding the polarization of the public into racial "tribes."

The relatively infrequent attacks by racist skinheads (compared with economically or interpersonally motivated crimes) should not distract observers from the increase in hate group activity. Effective policing on the federal and local levels as well as the willingness of prosecutors to test new hate crime laws may have discouraged some violence. But, recruitment and consolidation, along with the spread of unaffiliated cells, are part of racists' vision of forming armies in preparation for the prophesied racial civil war. This "drawing up of sides" is reflected in a recent statement on the Hammerskin Nation Web site:

Skinheads are meant to be a visible opposition on the street, but when you're out there, try to earn respect rather than contempt. Even those of us who aren't so visible anymore matter, because people still know who we are. Only with people's respect will we ever gain any public sympathy, which will lead us toward our goals. It takes the few brave souls to lead before the "sheep" will follow. I am reminded of some of the "outlaw" motorcycle clubs who calls themselves "1 percenters" because they are the few who have the courage to "live on the edge" and defy the law. I say Hammerskins are like 1 percenters, except that we are forced to the edge. We are sane people in an insane world. Let us bring that edge inward until our values, morals, honor and glory are the only law and we have won back the minds, hearts and souls of our people! (Hyde, 2000)

STRAIN THEORY AND HATE GROUP RECRUITMENT

From Durkheim and Merton to Passas and Agnew (1997), it has been argued that the effects of macro-level anomie can manifest on the micro level as criminal behavior. Existing as a sense of "normlessness" or as a disjunction between aspirations and expectations, this state is reflected in a form of psychological distress or strain. Whether it is Agnew's (1992) general strain theory or Messner and Rosenfeld's (1994) institutional anomie theory, the human face of strain is the same: frustration, anger, and a need to resolve some perceived inequity.

Much has been written about how strained boys and men end up in gangs as a way to address their blocked goal attainment (Cohen, 1955, Cloward & Ohlin, 1960). Not as evident are data that suggest that strained youth are actually targeted for recruitment by delinquent subcultures. This article explores research on racist skinhead groups and their recruitment targets. Although the criminal

activity of skinheads is often seen as a phenomenon separate from street gangs (Blazak, 1998; Hamm, 1993; Levin & McDevitt, 1993), criminologists have referred to skinhead groups as "White gangs." Increasingly, local police departments are including skinheads in their gang-monitoring activities.

STRAIN AS A RED FLAG

What does strain look like? How can one tell if someone is experiencing anomie? Agnew (1985) discussed the presentation of "life hassles" coming from the presentation of negative stimuli and the removal of positively valued stimuli as well as blocked opportunities. This "negative affect" generates anger and frustration, and crime becomes a corrective action. Cohen (1955) researched how strained individuals search out subcultural solutions (i.e., gangs) to resolve their strain but not how gangs search out strained individuals to recruit. On the street, strain can manifest in the values seen in Cohen's delinquent boys: nonutilitarianism, maliciousness, and negativism.

This "reaction formation" to dominant conforming values can appear as anti-social behavior (e.g., fighting or vandalism) before the strained individual finds his or her collective solution in either a nonutilitarian gang or, if he or she has the opportunity, in a more goal-oriented gang (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960). Regardless of the path, the individual is exhibiting behavior reflective of his or her psychic stress. Researchers have found evidence of this desire for a group to relieve individual alienation. In Wooden and Blazak's (2000) work on skinheads, graffiti taggers, and skaters, the authors identify anomie as a motivating factor for joining deviant groups.

Although the musical tastes and styles of dress differ from group to group, these adolescents share one commonality: They are experiencing what sociologists refer to as anomie, a sense of rootlessness or normlessness. In part, to combat this state, they join groups and assume identities that, for many, become all encompassing, a form of a "master status," the core way of defining themselves. And, embracing or identifying with a specific group—whether a "metal" clique, a stoner gang, or a tagger crew—provides these "tearaway" teenagers with a way of reducing their anxiety and alienation (Wooden & Blazak, 2000, p. 12).

The logic of anomie theory is that the individual experiences strain, which then leads him or her to group delinquency. Much of the research focuses on the group delinquency (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960) or the presence of strain from noxious stimuli (Agnew, 1985) but not necessarily on the precriminal expressions of strain. There is an assumption that the anomic person is flailing around, frustrated, angry, and inching toward the "criminal solution." High school counselors are skilled at identifying these "at-risk" youth. They exhibit certain characteristics of alienation including maliciousness, rebellious dress, and antisocial attitudes, all of which are red flags.

Other red flags can be the social-structural conditions that create anomie. The disjunction between goals and legitimate opportunities or between aspirations and expectations can take the form of economic blockage, as described in the classic strain theory of Cohen (1955); in more micro-level problems, as described in Agnew's general strain theory (1985); or in the institutional over-emphasis on economic success, as described in Messner and Rosenfeld's (1994) institutional anomie theory. In each of these instances, the individual wants something—a car, popularity, wealth—and society has not regulated the means to attain these positively valued goals. There is also evidence that cultural status (Blazak, 1995) and masculinity (Messerchmidt, 1993) may represent goals that when blocked lead to criminal activity. Gangs, for example, may use the lack of opportunity for material wealth and legitimate performances of masculinity in poor urban areas to offer a group solution for those strained boys who need to “be a man and make money.”

With regard to the racist skinheads, the negative stimuli can be represented in the presence of threats to class and ascribed status. Skinhead belief is based on the traditional cultural superiority of heterosexual, White men; therefore, anything that could undermine that group's dominance represents a threat. Antiracism, gay rights, feminism, and multiculturalism are all perceived as enemies of the status quo. Therefore, in places where these concepts are a part of the dominant discourse, it can be assumed that a certain segment of heterosexual White men will feel a great deal of strain as their traditional picture of the world and their place in it is threatened.

I theorize that both identifiers of strain are used by skinheads to target recruits. The presence of structural conditions that represent threats to ascribed status first attract the attention of the group to a specific population. An example would be a publicized debate in a school over a gay student group. Second, within that population, strained individuals who exhibit at-risk behavior are purposely recruited. This could be a boy with a reputation for fighting or who dresses differently from the general student population. The skinhead group is then presented as a collective problem solver to the boy (Blazak, 1998). This tactic is evident in the following passage from a Nazi group's *Action Program For Aryan Skinheads*:

Recruit Skins or covert activists from Punk Rockers and from the group of disaffected White kids who feel “left out,” isolated, unpopular, or on the fringe or margin of things at school (outsiders, loners). There are some very effective people among such kids, and working with Nazi skinheads will give them a sense of accomplishment, attainment, success, and belonging. In recruiting, proceed from such “outsiders,” inwards toward the mainstream, conventional, average students. (New Order, 1989, p. 6)

Groups such as the New Order teach their recruits the vivid philosophy of White supremacy, including the belief that the United States is manipulated by foreign Jewish interests collectively known as the Zionist Occupation

Government (ZOG). With this conspiracy theory, the strain is “explained” (e.g., the Jews are behind multicultural curricula), and the solution is presented: hate crimes and race war.

I hypothesize that racist skinhead groups use these red flags of strain to guide their recruiting activity. Threats to the traditional status quo or “cultural anomie” attract the groups, which then seek out strained individuals. The threats exist in four categories:

1. Threats to ethnic or racial status
 - growth in the minority student population
 - minority student organizations or events
 - shifts to multicultural curricula
 - racial conflict in which the institutions appear to support the minority group
2. Threats to gender status
 - conflict over female participation in male activities
 - feminist activist groups
 - antisexual violence events or programs
3. Threats to heterosexual status
 - sexual minority organizations
 - gay pride events
 - inclusiveness movements or sponsored dialogue
4. Threats to economic status
 - factory layoffs
 - large employer downsizing
 - high competition for manual labor or service sector jobs

The most common scenario involves the transition in secondary schools from Eurocentric curricula to inclusive, multicultural curricula. Here, the representations of ethnic Whites as the “heroes” of civilization (where every month is “White History Month”) are replaced with a more balanced picture of social history that presents non-White perspectives that may be seen as vilifying White participation in society. Especially when reluctantly presented by “old-school” White teachers, this new curriculum may be portrayed as attempting to create “White guilt” over issues such as slavery, colonialism, and segregation. A 15-year-old boy, born in the 1980s, without the benefit of firsthand experience of his country’s overtly racist past, may wonder why he has been pegged as the bad guy in history. He notices Black, Hispanic, and Asian student groups flourishing, yet he is branded a racist if he asks why there is no White student group. He is in the middle of cultural change without the tools to navigate it. This condition of anomie is exactly what racist groups are looking for.

METHOD

The data to support the theory that culturally strained youth end up in skin-head groups were collected in a 7-year ethnographic study (Blazak, 1995) in

which it was found that that members of skinhead groups had experienced threats to economic status (usually, their parents had experienced downward mobility), racial status (through the increased integration of White suburbs), gender status (represented in the perceived end of the ability to be "real men" because of feminism), and heterosexual status (fostered by the idea that the gay rights movement was destroying the traditional family). Data on the recruiting goals of the skinheads were retrieved more through guided conversations and anecdotal experiences.

The ethnographic study took place from 1987 to 1995. During this time, participant observation projects were run with groups of skinheads in places such as Orlando, Florida; Atlanta, Georgia; Chicago; and several other cities. Additional research was done firsthand with groups in London and Eastern Europe. Additionally, 65 face-to-face interviews were conducted. The focus of these interviews was on the subjects' own experiences with strain, but many discussions touched on the recruiting practices of the various groups. Most of this information was logged in field notes or on a voice recorder.

After the conclusion of the ethnographic study, a new series of interviews began through a grassroots organization called Oregon Spotlight. Oregon Spotlight monitors hate-group activity in the state of Oregon, counsels convicted hate crime offenders, and runs presentations for middle and high school students on preventing hate crimes. Through Oregon Spotlight, interviews have been conducted with skinhead recruiters as well as with secondary school youth in focus groups on the experience of being recruited. Additional information from school counselors served to verify claims of recruitment activity.

Based on the 65 formal interviews, approximately 200 informal interviews from the ethnographic study, the interview with three skinhead recruiters through Oregon Spotlight, and the additional data from approximately 200 Oregon secondary school students, a theory can be inductively reasoned. Ultimately, future research will test the hypotheses that (a) schools that publicly experience a threat to culturally valued status are targeted for recruitment and (b) individuals expressing the negative affect of strain are targeted for recruitment.

FINDINGS

Of the 65 intensively interviewed skinheads, roughly half admitted being involved in some form of recruitment activities. Usually, these involved getting flyers into high schools or rock clubs. The flyers contained contact addresses or phone numbers for those who were interested. An informal youth network was also used to find out about specific individuals who might be easily recruited. The three skinheads in the Oregon Spotlight research were all active recruiters in the Portland and Eugene areas. All three have also served prison terms for various hate crimes, and one is currently incarcerated for a parole violation.

THE SELECTION OF ANOMIC POPULATIONS

Members of organizations such as Youth Corps (the youth wing of the KKK), the Aryan Youth Movement (the youth wing of WAR), and Volksfront (an Oregon Nazi skinhead group) often discussed strategy meetings in which core members would discuss target populations where recruitment activities would have the greatest results. Leafleting was the most common strategy, but members might also stage a violent confrontation with an "enemy" to raise visibility and awareness. There was a manipulation of the power of rumor and the knowledge that young people will quickly spread forbidden information. Trey, a 22-year-old Portland skinhead, said,

There was this fight at [Walker] High School between a Black kid and a White kid and everyone was supporting the Black kid who had been picking on this White forever. Typical bullshit, right? But we knew that there were Whites there who were sick and tired of being called "racists" just for sticking up for themselves. So we went down there one day, right, when school was letting out and beat the shit out of some gangster-looking nigger. The next day everyone at Milwaukee was talking about, "Oh man, did you hear that the skinheads kicked some nigger's ass?" It was the talk of the school so we went back a week later and put up a bunch of flyers and got a bunch of calls from kids wanting to know what they could do.

This tactic was not uncommon. The skinheads like to view themselves as rescuing the cultural underdogs in a heroic, macho fashion. One of the more common images in skinhead art and tattoos is the Viking warrior who comes to rescue his people from the "evil Jews and subhuman mongrels." During the ethnographic research, one ritual was regularly observed. Racist skinheads would often mix with other youth subcultures at all-ages alternative music clubs. These clubs, where musicians often performed, would attract punk rockers (both left wing and right wing), hippies, minority youth, and mainstream "slummers." The skinheads would stay in the background, drinking beer and talking to girls. But, as soon as any conflict arose, the skinheads bounded into the fray to attack whichever party was the least like the skinheads. Most commonly the victim was a SHARP (Skinhead Against Racial Prejudice), who was seen as a racial traitor, but occasionally, it was an ethnic or sexual minority. The goal was that the skinheads would be seen as "kicking ass" and doing something about the problem of threats to ascribed status. Jack, a 20-year-old Orlando skinhead, said,

It's a fun Saturday night for us. We go down to [the club] and drink beer, slam dance, and pick up some punk chicks and fight. All it takes is one spic to start something and we just open a can of whoop-ass. It's great for us because we know that half the White kids there are getting harassed by the Hispanics in their school and they are just waiting for someone to stick up for them. I've had these totally straight looking kids come up to me later, maybe a month later, and say, "Hey, that was really cool what you did. I wish you guys would come to my school and kick some ass." It's like a commercial for Youth Corps.

The selection of schools or neighborhoods usually involves two factors. First, are there any racist skinheads already in the school or younger siblings of older skinheads who can be used as contacts? The second factor represents more of the awareness of the value of anomie: Is there any perceived threat to straight, White (male) students that can be manipulated by the racist group? As mentioned, this threat can be economic, racial, or sexual. The following comments represent these categories:

The easiest place to recruit is around some big layoff, which is pretty common around here [Chicago]. You wait for things to get bad and you go talk to the kids, not the parents and say, "You know why your dad got laid off? It's because the money hungry Jews sent his job to China. They care more about the fucking Chinese than they do about the White workers." You know, they're all fucked up because their world is upside down and here is someone explaining it to them in very simple terms. (Sid, 18, Chicago skinhead)

The suburbs are the new battle zones. We hardly even go into the city anymore. But the burbs are supposed to be White! I mean, Whites moved out here to get away from all the crime and niggers and shit and here they come. And now we have gangs out here and drugs and these nice clean White kids gettin' jumped. We know that White parents are tired of moving and White teachers are scared to death and the young people are on the front line. (Bryan, 25, Atlanta skinhead)

The feminists are as bad as the queers are. We try to get our guys to talk to dudes who think feminism is cool. You know, they're into it because they think they'll get laid. But we say, "Hey, you know what happens if the feminists gets their way? No one's gonna listen to you because you're a man and you're gonna be cleaning out the toilet. And even fewer White babies are gonna be born because if a chick has sex with you and gets pregnant she's gonna have an abortion so she can keep her paycheck. Do you think the niggers and the Mexicans are having abortions? Hell no!" So then they see feminism as the nail in the coffin. It's like, who wants to be a minority? (Harley, 24, San Francisco skinhead)

I'll tell ya, as much as I hate all this "gay pride" shit, it's been the best thing for skinheads. Our numbers have tripled since they've been having these (gay pride) rallies in Cobb. It's like fag haters just come out of the woodwork and we just scoop 'em up. We can't print enough flyers. I think people see that our way of life is threatened and they want to do something. We've got an idea! (Frank, 21, Atlanta skinhead)

Over 15 years, I have heard these stories over and over again: Skinheads leaf-letting neighborhoods where automobile or textile workers have been laid off, blaming affirmative action and "Jewish capitalism." Skinheads coming to the "rescue" of White youth who have been victimized by minority gangs. Skinheads who present a viable model of masculinity to boys confronted with the "homofication" (a skinhead term) of American culture. But, perhaps the newest recruitment technique is to target schools that are experiencing a curriculum shift toward multiculturalism. As history and social science books are retooled

to be more inclusive, the voice that is diminishing is the hegemonic, straight, White male perspective. Without the proper context, this shift can seem to be a conspiracy to write White contributions out of the standard educational curriculum. Several high schools in Oregon have been targeted for recruitment using the backlash against multiculturalism as a way in.

One of the most common skinhead tactics is to attempt to establish a "White student union." This method was pioneered in the 1980s by the Klan in the east and WAR in the west as simply an issue of equality. There is a Black prom queen; there should be a White prom queen. There is an Asian student union; there should be a European student union. There are gay pride stickers; there should be straight pride stickers. There is a Hispanic heritage week; there should be a European heritage week, and so on. The concept of the White student union appeals to the adolescent's need for fairness and balance. Without an understanding of cultural history, in which power has been slanted in the direction of straight, White males, the concept seems just. This is enhanced by the switch to the multicultural curriculum, which further removes the voice of the weakening hegemony.

Sam, 26, who had spent years recruiting high school youth into the Aryan skinhead movement, explained the importance of manipulating the victim mentality.

It's really easy. You find out what's happening in a school and then find out where the kids hang out. You get some stupid conversation going and then you ask them about school. They bitch and moan and you say, "Yeah, it was a lot better in my day when we didn't have gangs and people who can't even speak English and all this multicultural shit." I'd say, "Don't you think it's fucked up that you can have a Black student union but not a White student union? Why are the Blacks allowed to be racist?" And you can see them agreeing. I say, "Did you ever own a slave? Did you ever kill an Indian? So why are they trying to make you feel guilty for being White?" Before they can answer I'd start telling them about ZOG. About how the Jews are behind all this to fuck over the White man. I give them the whole line, multiculturalism, gay rights, affirmative action. These kids don't know shit so they just eat it up. Then I tell them they should hang out with us or start an "unofficial" White student club. They just look at me like I'm Jesus Christ and I just saved them.

TARGETING STRAINED INDIVIDUALS

As the New Order's (1989) recruitment manifesto illustrates, "disaffected White kids who feel 'left out,' isolated, unpopular, or on the fringe or margin of things at school" (p. 6) are targeted for intensive recruitment, as well as those experiencing strain due to the inability to achieve positively valued goals or who are presented with noxious stimuli. The ethnographic part of this research revealed that Nazi skinheads can serve as "big brothers" or "friends in need" to frustrated boys whose fathers have been laid off or who have been harassed by

minority peers. Like the members of cults, skinheads provide a sympathetic ear, a critical explanation of the problem, and an action program that appears to (somewhat) resolve the problem.

DISCUSSION

I found that the skinhead recruiters interviewed were aware of the experience of normlessness among certain youth populations. These populations were targeted because of their desire for structure, a subcultural solution to their anomie, as well as their need for consistent models of authority and masculinity. They were easily manipulated and brought into the fray of right-wing hate groups.

The violent solution that these groups offer (becoming a soldier in a race war) will appeal to a large percentage of anomic young men because of its simplistic reality. Wars are won. Evil conspirators are banished. The mythical past of unchallenged, straight, White male hegemony is restored. For a generation weaned on video games and violent media, the world of Aryan terrorists can be intoxicating.

Sociological research is crucial in unlocking this attraction that makes recruiting so easy. The recruiting process is similar to that used by cults. Young skinheads may also end up in more serious right-wing groups such as Aryan Nations and even militia groups. Additionally, the readiness of the coming youth generation to look for extremist, subcultural solutions must be discussed. Finally, intervention strategies are proposed that will prevent young people from entering the world of racist terror.

SIMILARITIES WITH CULTS

Recruitment into hate groups most obviously parallels gang recruitment. Criminological research is replete with examples of how alienated urban youth find homes in gangs. Venkatesh (1997) found that gangs recruit as corporate partners with the urban community, providing both opportunity and service for youth. Davis (1999) has written that gangs are "pseudo communities," attracting interstitial youth who are not reached by other institutions. The gang is primarily a replacement family.

But, unlike economically driven gangs, hate groups have ideological motivations for recruitment. Less obvious are the parallels with the recruitment activities of religious cults. Both hate groups and cults bring their new members into a world filled with evil conspiracies and righteous crusades. They are the "chosen few" who must fight a holy battle against often unseen enemies. The tricks that cults use to attract new members, described in Robert Cialdini's (1993) book *Influence: Science and Practice*, are significant for their use by skinhead groups in approaching strained youth. Cialdini describes six principles of cult recruitment:

1. **The rule of reciprocity:** Recruiters perform favors for recruits in exchange for a significantly larger favor later. In my research, older skinheads would often "take care of" (i.e., threaten, attack) non-White (or White) bullies of their target and later remind the target of how they had "saved his ass" when it came time to increase commitment levels.
2. **Commitment and consistency:** Once a recruit takes a stand on a specific issue, there is reinforcement for that person to remain consistent to that idea until it becomes effortless. One of the first questions Klan recruiters ask young targets is "Do you believe in the White race?" Once they have an affirmative answer, the subsequent discussion reinforces that target's belief in his or her race and its crisis.
3. **Social proof:** Ideology becomes more appealing when others, especially the famous, believe it. When there are degrees of uncertainty and similarity between themselves and recruiters, individuals are more likely to defer to others for context cues. The most common tool of the racist skinhead is White power rock. The presence of numerous bands and active record labels, such as Resistance Records, shows the legitimacy of the ideology to a potential recruit who may be waffling. Additionally, racist, sexist, and homophobic quotations from non-hate group members, such as Atlanta Braves pitcher John Rocker, are offered as evidence of the "normality" of bigotry.
4. **Liking:** People are more likely to say "yes" to people they like. Physical attractiveness, praise, and sensitivity can be used to manipulate recruits. As mentioned, anomic youth are "lost." They are often lacking father figures or consistent emotional attachments. Skinhead recruiters are very savvy at presenting themselves as attractive macho men who are genuinely concerned about the lives of their targets. They want to be their targets' best friend. This is an incredibly effective tactic when used on confused youth who are looking for someone who cares and listens to them.
5. **Authority:** Authorities can use symbols such as titles, clothing, or automobiles, to convince others of their knowledge, wisdom, and power. As Stanley Milgram's classic studies demonstrated, we are more than willing to follow individuals we believe hold power (even if they don't). The skinhead recruiters in this study flaunted bogus titles, such as youth director, and detailed skinhead uniforms to impress potential new members.
6. **Scarcity:** People assign more value to things that are harder to acquire. The "scarcity principle" works because the availability of an item or experience is seen to reflect its quality, and one perceives a loss of freedom when an opportunity disappears. According to Cialdini (1993), cults often use "limited number" and "deadline" tactics to recruit members. Similarly, skinhead recruiters refer to "time running out" before some inevitable calamity (Y2K, the race war, etc.) when the lines will be drawn. "You gotta get onboard before the shit hits the fan," said Sam, the skinhead recruiter. "After that, you're on your own."

Similarities between cult and skinhead recruiting are subjects of future research. Although cult violence is usually directed inward, as in the 1978 Jonestown massacre or the 2000 mass death of members of The Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God in Uganda, the apocalyptic rhetoric is similar. Youth alienated from mainstream institutions, including religion, are prime targets.

RECRUITMENT OF ADULT SKINHEADS

Of course, there is a food chain in the hate movement. Despite the terrorist cell approach of leaderless resistance, there is an informal hierarchy, with rabble-rousing skinheads at the bottom and "legitimate" militia groups at the top. When I began my research on skinheads in the mid-1980s, people often asked, "What happens to skinheads when they grow up?" I had no answer then, but now, 15 years later, there are some good ideas. Most experience the skinhead phenomenon as a subcultural phase of their youth, often leaving once they start their own families. Some join adult White supremacist groups and become more involved in the political aspects of White supremacy. But, as research shows, the desire for autonomy that led them to become skinheads in the first place tends to drive them out of the authoritarian groups that require obedience. Many of these youth become antiracist skinheads to preserve their independence. As one ex-skinhead said, "I went from my parents telling me what to do to the Nazis telling me what to do. I just said, 'Fuck it.'"

But there are those who are content with the reduced autonomy because along with it comes the structure absent in the normless world from which they are retreating. Seasoned skinheads are actively recruited by groups such as Aryan Nations, the World Church of the Creator, and various Klan groups. There, they are used as security agents, sources of weapons, and symbols of the soldiers on the front line of the race war. In the early 1990s, Tom Metzger, leader of the White Aryan Resistance, shaved his head to show his support for the skinheads.

The role skinheads play in the militia movement is yet unclear. That state militias often draw their members from groups such as Aryan Nations and the Klan, who themselves recruit skinheads, leaves one to imagine the inevitable. Skinheads were active in the antigovernment demonstrations during the siege at Ruby Ridge in 1992 and continue to share many of the antigovernment ideas of some militia groups. This research shows that skinheads have adopted the idea of leaderless resistance. The killings in Denver in 1997 were the work of a terrorist cell that killed one of its victims because "he was wearing the enemy's uniform." His skin was black.

GENERATION WHY?

Despite the success of multicultural curriculums in reducing bias among youth, no cohort may be more ripe for recruitment than the current teenage generation. Unlike the culture-shaping baby boomers and the relatively small Generation X, youth born after 1981 face numerous sources of anomie and thus have been dubbed "Generation Why?" (Wooden & Blazak, 2000).

The youth of Generation Why? were born after the experience of overt racism (busing, segregation, etc.) and have always known Black History Month. But,

they are also a more racially diverse generation. Thirty-three percent of the high school class of 2000 were members of minority groups. Only 28% of Americans, in general, are minorities (Foster, 1999). The potential for racial unity exists as more youth define themselves as "multiracial," but there is also a potential for conflict as schools and communities become "less White," inciting fears among racists. The 2000 census is expected to reveal that California is the first state where Whites are a minority.

This has been described as a generation in crisis. They are less likely to spend time with their parents or to be known by name to their teachers. Nanette Davis (1999), in her book *Youth Crisis: Growing Up in the High-Risk Society*, points out that all the institutions involved in helping youth make a safe transition from childhood to adulthood are in a state of crisis. These include the family, schools, religion, the juvenile justice system, and the occupational structure. Davis outlines seven of the manifestations of cultural "crisis":

1. Modern life is uncertain.
2. Politicians opt for short-term solutions, ignoring long-term consequences.
3. The emphasis on consumerism.
4. Race, class, age, and ethnic divisions discourage youth from believing in social institutions.
5. There is a lack of adequate child care.
6. Risk reduction attempts do not target the most vulnerable.
7. There is a "cult of individualism." (pp. 14-15)

Davis's (1999) risk model fits right in with the fears of potential skinhead recruits:

1. Modern life involves dramatic shifts in "what was." This includes the perceived secure place for heterosexual, White men in a traditional society.
2. Short-term solutions are also appealing to skinheads who see "bashing" someone as a solution to a social problem.
3. The emphasis on consumerism alienates those who do not share in the current economic prosperity. This is magnified when previously subordinated groups such as African Americans seem to be experiencing dramatic upward mobility.
4. The politics of political correctness also alienate some straight, White males who no longer feel that mainstream institutions such as the business world or higher education represent them.
5. The lack of child care can be attributed to the "unnatural" movement of women into the workforce and away from the home. This may also be a source of resentment for those who did not receive adequate bonding with their parents.
6. At-risk youth are often conceptualized as poor, urban minorities, not products of the socially disorganized suburbs. There is a plethora of programs for gang-affiliated youth, but few for Klan-affiliated youth.
7. Finally, the cult of individualism assures every American of his or her inalienable rights (the right to a cell phone, the right to go to the college of one's choice, the right to maintain one's privileged position in society) without any responsibility. It is this experience of crisis that makes certain youth so attractive to hate groups. (pp. 14-15)

The suicide of rock star Kurt Cobain in 1994 brought the sociological term *anomie* into the American lexicon. *Generation Why?* is often in “drift” due to uninvolved parents who can’t see the crisis. Five million children under the age of 13 are “latchkey kids,” left unattended after school each day (Siegel, 2000). The parents of half of American teenagers are divorced, and 63% of teenagers live in homes where both parents work outside the home (Kantrowitz & Wingert, 1999). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, cases of teen depression have increased 300% in the past 30 years (Mehren, 1999). For these youth, hate groups and their solution-oriented agendas may be highly attractive.

PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Considering the proclivity of hate groups to bring young people into their dark world of conspiracy and violence through the skinhead subculture, strategies must be developed to protect youth. Although the life of the terrorist might seem romantic or heroic, the reality is far different. Death in police shoot-outs or from unexpectedly exploding pipe bombs is normative in adult hate groups such as The Order. More likely are long prison terms due to stricter policing by the FBI, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, and local police, and enhanced sentences mandated by new hate crime laws. The fact that the largest skinhead group, the Aryan Brotherhood, is essentially a prison gang reflects this.

REDUCING CULTURAL ANOMIE

Reducing cultural *anomie* on the macro level is no easy task. As long as society values correcting the power imbalances that have given certain categories privilege, straight, White men will feel threatened. No one likes to lose the privileges of power. Riane Eisler advocates the development of institutions based on partnerships (Eisler, Love, & Loye, 1998). The current dichotomous power model (male-female, straight-gay, White-Black) dictates that one group be dominant and the other group subordinate. Here, the advances of the subordinate group are seen as losses by the dominant party in a zero-sum game format. Erasing those boundaries allows all to share in the advancement of any member of society. The gains of women and ethnic and sexual minorities are not seen as threats to men, Whites, and heterosexuals in the partnership model.

Shifting society out of the dominant-subordinate paradigm may be plausible, but I argue here that an achievable macro-level solution is to reduce threats to economic status. The policies of deregulation under Ronald Reagan and the North American Free Trade Agreement under Bill Clinton have propelled the deindustrialization of the American workforce. The Dow Jones industrial average topping 10,000 and the creation of millions of low-wage, service-sector jobs in the 1990s have not prevented a significant portion of Americans from feeling

that they have lost out on the American dream. As has been done in other countries, legislation can be passed that protects factory workers from layoffs and white-collar workers from downsizing. Currently, few politicians advocate for the working class, leaving racists free reign in their interpretations. To them, the lack of legislation is proof that Congress is just a tool of the Jews, who lay off and downsize at will to maximize their wealth.

THINK GLOBALLY, ACT LOCALLY

They might just be Band-Aids compared with large-scale cultural shifts, but local solutions can be effective in reducing bias-motivated violence. Oregon Spotlight, along with many other groups, spends a great deal of time working with young people in hopes of keeping them from moving up the ladder into adult racist movements. The strategy works with three types of youth:

1. Youth who are members of hate groups: These young people can be reached. Most are just looking for a subculture that makes sense of their world. They tend to lack consistent male role models in their lives.
2. Youth who have been arrested for committing hate crimes: Often, the worst scenario is when a young hater is put into a correctional facility where racist gangs such as the Aryan Brotherhood are waiting to indoctrinate them. Within the total institution, racists can resocialize the youth, who, on release, will have been transformed into a warrior for the extreme right. There are diversion programs for young minority gang members. The same can be mandated for hate criminals (as they have by groups such as the Anti-Defamation League in New York).
3. Youth in target populations. Populations that have experienced threats to ascribed or economic status are likely targets for hate group recruitment. Classroom discussions, school assemblies, and programs can teach youth about the tactics of hate groups as well as the value of diversity. Curriculums such as the SPLC's Teaching Tolerance program strive to make multiculturalism meaningful to all, including ethnic Whites.

Each of these groups must be targeted with a program that teaches critical thinking. The illogic of racism and bigotry can be illuminated. Who qualifies as White? Why are there so many contrary examples of stereotypes? What would the world really be like if the extreme right got its way? And, most importantly, what would you give up by not living in a diverse culture? After I had talked to him, one Nazi skinhead called Oregon Spotlight and told me he wanted out of the movement. I asked what turned him around, and he said it was an offhanded comment I had made about peanut butter being invented by George Washington Carver, a Black man. "Man, I love peanut butter and I'm not going to give it up just so I can be a good racist!" he told me.

There are enough angry adults who do not understand what is happening to their world and will seek out hate groups to express their rage. Some may be satisfied with membership in the KKK, and some will join terrorist cells and try to fulfill the hate-filled dictates laid out in *The Turner Diaries*. But, it is clear that

hate groups are also recruiting young people. They are the new blood; they are the future. Anomic youth who are looking for answers and big brothers, if they cannot obtain those things from other sources, will follow.

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