

WHITE SUPREMACIST NETWORKS ON THE INTERNET

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In this paper we use methods of social network analysis to examine the interorganizational structure of the white supremacist movement. Treating links between Internet websites as ties of affinity, communication, or potential coordination, we investigate the structural properties of connections among white supremacist groups. White supremacy appears to be a relatively decentralized movement with multiple centers of influence, but without sharp cleavages between factions. Interorganizational links are stronger among groups with a special interest in mutual affirmation of their intellectual legitimacy (Holocaust revisionists) or cultural identity (racist skinheads) and weaker among groups that compete for members (political parties) or customers (commercial enterprises). The network is relatively isolated from both mainstream conservatives and other extremist groups. Christian Identity theology appears ineffective as a unifying creed of the movement, while Nazi sympathies are pervasive. Recruitment is facilitated by links between youth and adult organizations and by the propaganda efforts of more covertly racist groups. Links connect groups in many countries, suggesting the potential of the Internet to facilitate a whitesupremacist "cyber-community" that transcends regional and national boundaries.

The objectives of this paper are twofold. First, in terms of methodology, we propose a specific strategy for applying formal methods of social network analysis to study the Internet. The Internet is possibly the most important, and certainly the most celebrated, new communications medium created by the proliferation of microcomputers in our society. Yet, despite the Internet's social significance and evident network characteristics, social network analysts have been slow to apply the tools of their trade to investigate this new medium. This paper illustrates one simple but informative way of applying network analysis to study the Internet. Many Internet sites have links that allow the viewer to jump directly from that site to others. Treating these links as ties of affinity, paths of communication, tokens of mutual aid in achieving public recognition, and/or potential avenues of coordination, we construct a network model of one specific region of the Internet.

Second, in substantive terms, we seek to broaden our understanding of the organizational and mobilizational structure of an important but poorly researched social movement: the white supremacist movement.¹ Because of its penchant for secrecy, propensity toward violence, and association with illegal activities, the white supremacist movement has posed great difficulties for researchers seeking to understand the structure and dynamics of the movement. Rigorous social-scientific studies are few; journalistic accounts tend toward sensationalism; and much of the investigative reporting is conducted by opposition groups whose findings must be treated with caution. Some of the best research takes the form of case studies (Aho

1990; Ezekiel 1995; Blee 1996), but it is not easy to extrapolate from these cases a view of the movement as a whole. By all indications, this is also a volatile and changing movement, so that studies done only a few years ago may fail to capture current trends. For all of these reasons, opening a new avenue of research on the white supremacist movement should prove valuable for corroborating, supplementing, and modifying existing findings.

The research that we present in this paper is made possible by the fact that the white supremacist movement has been very active in using the Internet as a medium for disseminating propaganda and recruiting members (Hoffman 1996; Whine 1997). Several hundred white supremacist sites currently operate on the World Wide Web, and virtually all of the major white supremacist organizations are represented on the Internet. These web sites vary in content, ranging from simply designed pages with a few paragraphs of propaganda and organizational principles to elaborate multi-page sites with extensive libraries, downloadable music and graphics, online discussion groups, merchandise for sale, and instructions for membership. A majority of the web sites have direct links to other white supremacist sites. Occasionally these links reflect formal ties between organizations or personal connections between leaders, but more often they are simply an indication of ideological affinity or common goals and interests. By systematically analyzing the pattern of these links, we hope to shed light on the structural properties of the white supremacist movement, the organizational and ideological subgroups of which it is composed, and the channels of potential recruitment and mobilization that are embedded in this network.

The use of Internet links as indicators of broader patterns of social movement structure is a methodology that should be approached with caution and awareness of its possible limitations. While it is safe to assume that those who manage white supremacist websites are most likely to create links to the sites of other organizations with which they have a "non-virtual" association, with which they share an ideological affinity, or whose goals they endorse, this does not guarantee that the overall structure of Internet links will provide a meaningful representation of the white supremacist movement as it exists outside of cyberspace. Those who manage white supremacist websites operate with imperfect information and may be influenced by other motives of which we are unaware. Internet links are also a much "cheaper" form of affiliation than those that are maintained through other lines of communication or association, so the links among websites are likely to be denser and less selective than "non-virtual" ties among organizations. Nor can we assume that the patterns of affiliation among movement leaders and militants who have the commitment, resources, and skills to operate Internet web sites perfectly reflect the views of the broader rank-and-file. Nevertheless, as we hope to show in this paper, a meaningful representation of the movement does emerge from the myriad of links among web sites and this representation is sufficiently consistent with what is known about the movement from other sources to give us confidence in the methodology we have adopted.

NETWORK ANALYSIS AND SOCIAL MOVEMENT RESEARCH

Two decades ago, Snow, Zurcher, and Eklund-Olson (1980) first proposed that rigorous analysis of the structural properties of social networks could be valuable for

the study of social movements. Since that time, researchers have sought to apply network concepts to a variety of social movements, and network characteristics have come to occupy a larger place in theories of collective behavior (Rosenthal et al. 1985; McAdam 1986, 1988; Fernandez and McAdam 1988; Marwell, Oliver, and Pahl 1988; Gould 1991, 1993, 1996; Kim and Bearman 1997). This literature has made important contributions to our understanding of social movements, but remains limited in two respects. First, most applications of network concepts to social movement research have focused on interpersonal ties, especially as they relate to differential recruitment and activism. Less attention has been given to the structural properties of networks formed by ties among collectivities, organizations, or other corporate entities. Second, network characteristics have usually been measured at the individual level in terms of the number and type of ties maintained by individual actors (Gould 1993). Methods of social network analysis that allow one to map the structural properties of social networks in their entirety have only begun to be tapped in the study of social movements.

This study departs from most previous applications of network concepts to social movement research in both of these respects. First, we examine ties among movement leaders and organizations (political parties, research centers, book publishers, musical groups, etc.) rather than purely interpersonal ties. While preoccupation with the question of who joins social movements (and under what circumstances) has led to an understandable focus on individuals as units of analysis, the literature on social movements also points to the importance of interorganizational ties for the dynamics of social movements (Curtis and Zurcher 1973; McCarthy and Zald 1977; Knoke 1990, pp. 76–81). As we demonstrate, network analysis offers the possibility of a more rigorous investigation of the structure of such interorganizational ties. Second, we use data on network linkages not merely to construct variables attached to individual cases, but to investigate the overall structure of relations among movement organizations. This allows us to take fuller advantage of the repertoire of sophisticated methods for social network analysis that have been developed in recent years.

For those unfamiliar with the methodology of social network analysis, the basic logic of this approach is quite simple (Scott 1991). First, the researcher identifies a population of “nodes” (actors, organizations, or events) that comprise a social network. Then he or she gathers data on all the ties or links of a certain kind among these nodes, for example, transfers of resources, common memberships, joint participation in events, interpersonal connections, etc. These data are arranged in an $N \times N$ matrix, which contains one row and one column for each node within the network and whose cells indicate the presence or absence of links from each node to each other within the network. This matrix is then manipulated with software like UCINET (Borgatti, Everett, and Freeman 1999) to reveal various structural properties of the network, such as the overall density of ties, the division of the network into relatively distinct cliques or clusters, the degree of connectedness or centrality of various nodes, the existence of structurally equivalent positions within the network, and so forth. The analysis is generally inductive, although it is also possible to evaluate hypotheses derived from theory or more informal types of analysis.

BACKGROUND ON THE WHITE SUPREMACIST MOVEMENT

The white supremacist movement is depicted in the literature as a fragmented, decentralized, and often sectarian network of organizations, individual leaders, and political tendencies.² At the risk of oversimplification, the movement may be described as the coming together of three historical currents. It should be stressed, however, that not every organization can be placed into one of these three categories and not every white supremacist belongs to an organization.

The first and oldest of these historical currents is the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan has gone through successive stages of growth and decline. The initial Klan was formed in the post-Civil War South as a terrorist organization seeking to enforce the social and political subjugation of the African American population. A second Klan grew to considerable power and influence nationwide during the 1920s, patterned on the model of a fraternal organization and espousing an anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic, social purity ideology. A third wave of Klan mobilization emerged in reaction to the civil rights movement of the 1960s, especially (but not exclusively) in the South. In the 1970s and 1980s, sectors of the Klan sought to put a more legitimate face on their white supremacist ideology, as exemplified by the entry of former Klan leader David Duke into electoral politics. In its current incarnation, the Klan is not a single organization, but a collection of loosely affiliated groups. Klan groups are currently found across the country, not just in the South, although they often retain a cultural identification with the South and the Confederacy. Membership in the various Klans is currently estimated at around 6,000.

The second branch of the white supremacist movement is the neo-Nazi wing. This branch originated in the 1950s with the American Nazi Party of George Lincoln Rockwell. The party splintered after Rockwell's assassination in 1967. Today the total membership in U.S. political groups who trace their origin and ideology to Hitler and the German National Socialists is probably less than 1,000; however, these numbers underestimate the significance of neo-Nazi ideology for several reasons. First, there has been a rapid rise in support for neo-Nazi groups and politics in Europe since the breakup of the former Soviet Union and the reunification of Germany. American neo-Nazis identify with and have played an important role in facilitating the growth of these European white supremacist movements. Second, the racist skinheads, who are one of the fastest growing and most violent of white supremacist groups, typically identify with Nazi symbols and ideology (more on this below). Third, through the efforts of certain Klan leaders and umbrella groups like Aryan Nations, much of the Klan has come to embrace Nazi symbols and ideology as compatible with their white supremacist outlook. This "Nazification of the Klan" has produced a situation in which the Klan and neo-Nazi wings of the white supremacist movement are no longer sharply differentiated and many Klan members would also embrace Nazism as part of their ideology. It is partly for this reason that some authors (e.g., Langer 1990) prefer the label "neo-Nazi" as a generic term for the white supremacist movement as a whole.

The third and newest wing of the white supremacist movement are the racist skinheads. The skinheads, a subculture of shaven-headed youths in combat boots, first emerged in England in the early 1970s in connection with the punk music scene. The subculture later spread to Europe, North America, and Australia. Their taste for violence found an outlet in racial bashing and, with encouragement from adult white

supremacists, eventually evolved into a crude version of neo-Nazi politics. More than simply a political movement or ideology, skinhead activism is a way of life organized around gangs of up to several dozen members. White power "oi" music, music concerts, and music "zines" are central to skinhead culture, providing a medium of communication that connects skinheads across national borders. Currently there are an estimated 3,500 racist skinheads in the United States (not all skinheads are racists) and several thousand more outside the United States. Racist skinheads are viewed by many as the main recruitment base for the broader white supremacist movement, and therefore a crucial segment to study to assess the growth potential of the movement.

An important component of white supremacist ideology is Christian Identity theology. This religion teaches that Whites are the only true children of God. Blacks and other people of color are called "mud races," the descendants of animals created before Adam and Eve. Jews are believed to be the offspring of Satan (and Eve). History is interpreted as a cosmic struggle between the children of God and the children of Satan, which will continue until one side is victorious. Christian Identity beliefs are widespread throughout the different branches of the white supremacist movement and have been promoted, especially by Aryan Nations, as a theological bridge between Klan and neo-Nazi factions. At the same time, white supremacists disagree over their interpretation of Christian Identity theology, especially over whether Jews are truly the children of Satan or simply misguided pawns of Satan. Not all white supremacists are Christian; some are atheists; and some, especially among the neo-Nazis and skinheads, are more attracted to Norse mythology ("Odinism") as the source of their religious beliefs.

Another widely shared tenet of white supremacist ideology is Holocaust denial or "revisionism." Holocaust revisionists deny that the Nazis killed six million Jews during the Third Reich, asserting that this is either a lie created for propaganda reasons or, at least, a gross exaggeration. In either case, revisionists argue that public acceptance of the Holocaust "myth" garners sympathy for Jews, which they manipulate to their own advantage. Whether or not it convinces those outside the movement, Holocaust revisionism makes Nazism more palatable to Klan and related branches of white supremacy, and therefore, like Christian Identity theology, serves the function of movement unity.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Our investigation of the white supremacist network is primarily an inductive and exploratory enterprise; however, the existing literature on the white supremacist movement raises a number of questions that have served to focus our research.

1. Most commentators agree that white supremacy is an internally divided movement, but there is little agreement on the nature or depth of these divisions. Observers commonly differentiate among the three general categories of white supremacists outlined above, but many would add additional distinctions, and sources disagree about the relative importance of these distinctions and the composition and degree of overlap among subgroups. This poses the question of whether, using Internet links as objective indicators of affinity between organizations and ideological viewpoints, we can clarify the salient lines of cleavage within the network.

2. Conversely, sectarianism is recognized by many white supremacists as a barrier to the growth of their movement, and concerted efforts have been made to bridge the organizational and ideological divisions within the movement. What evidence is there of the success of these efforts and what organizations or ideological themes receive the greatest degree of common approval or serve to bridge the gap between otherwise separate groupings?

3. While the views of white supremacists appear extreme in comparison to the political mainstream, there are certainly other groups and individuals who espouse, in a less extreme form, views that are common within the movement: for example, racism, ultra-nationalism, conspiratorial thinking, and far right-wing ideology. This raises the question of the relationship between white supremacy and other political organizations and tendencies, including those that are closer to the political mainstream. For example, many commentators view white supremacy as the extreme end point of a political continuum that begins with the ultra-nationalism and covert racism of right-wing Republicans like Pat Buchanan (Bellant 1991). Others treat Christian Identity as the extreme but logical culmination of theological tendencies inherent in the more popular variants of right-wing Christianity, such as those articulated by Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell or groups like the Christian Coalition and the (now defunct) Moral Majority (Diamond 1989; Berlet and Quigley 1995). What does the pattern of Internet links suggest about connections or affinities between white supremacists and more mainstream political groups?

4. There is also the question of the relationship between white supremacy and other extremist movements whose main appeal builds upon grievances or issues other than race, but which may be compatible with or sympathetic toward white supremacist ideas. Particularly important in this regard is the militia movement — a growing movement that mobilizes around the defense of gun ownership and the need for armed resistance to federal government encroachment on local political autonomy, but which some commentators view as merely the paramilitary wing or an alternative recruitment channel for the white supremacist movement (Stern 1996). Are there signs of such connections in the Internet links among white supremacists and other extremist groups?

5. One of the main reasons for the establishment of Internet sites is the potential for recruitment of members or the nurturing of sympathizers. How is the network of links between sites structured to facilitate this process and what does the pattern of links suggest about typical paths of movement from one type of organization or level of involvement to another?

6. One of the claims made about the Internet is that it dramatically reduces the salience of physical space and fosters a “cyberspace” in which geographical proximity ceases to be a major axis around which social activity is organized. The white supremacist movement purports to address the identity and interests of a “white race” that is dispersed across the globe. What evidence is there of the formation of white supremacist “cyber-communities” that transcend regional and national boundaries?

MAPPING THE WHITE SUPREMACIST NETWORK

Our first task was to select a sample of white supremacist Internet sites for analysis. Fortunately, there are a number of watchdog groups that monitor the

presence of so-called "hate groups" on the Internet and report on their activities. We chose seven watchdog groups that appeared particularly knowledgeable in this area and compiled lists of the white supremacist sites they noted as important or representative of this type of Internet activity.³ Any site mentioned by at least three of the seven watchdog groups was included in our initial sample ($N = 50$). We then examined the outlinks from these sites and added to our sample any additional sites that received at least five incoming links. This process was reiterated until no new sites qualified for inclusion. The final sample included a total of 80 sites (see Appendix for list).⁴

There were a total of 693 links within the network, yielding a network density of 0.11 (meaning that the actual links represented 11 percent of the total possible links). The sites varied widely in their number of outgoing links. Twenty-two sites had no outgoing links, while twelve had more than 20 and three had more than 50 to other sites in the network. Despite some definite clustering (to be discussed below), the different regions of the network were sufficiently interconnected so that a majority of dyads were connected by paths of no longer than three links. It is therefore reasonable to speak of a single white supremacist network on the Internet.

TYPES OF SITES WITHIN THE NETWORK

To facilitate our analysis, we divided the network into subgroups on the basis of a content analysis of the sites and information on the groups or persons who manage them. These subgroups will be used later in the paper to help clarify the pattern of links within the network. In an effort to strike a balance between the internal homogeneity of subgroups and keeping the total number of subgroups to a manageable number, we decided on a division of the network into nine subgroups. Below is a brief description of these nine subgroups and the criteria by which sites were placed in one group or another.

1. *Holocaust Revisionists*: These sites promote Holocaust denial and contain detailed arguments about historical evidence on Nazi concentration camps and the implausibility of Holocaust claims. Most of these seek to project an air of academic detachment, but a few are more openly anti-Semitic. The Institute for Historical Review (probably the best known revisionist organization) is an instance of the former. The sites operated by Arthur Butz and Ernest Zundel are examples of the latter.

2. *Christian Identity Theology*: These sites preach a virulent anti-Semitism, drawing upon Biblical exegesis and anti-Semitic texts like the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* to advance the view that Jews are Satanic offspring committed to the destruction of God's chosen people, the "white race." Included in this group are sites like God's Order Affirmed in Love (GOAL) and Scriptures for America World Wide (Pastor Pete Peters).

3. *Overt Neo-Nazis*: Nazi sympathies are pervasive within the white supremacist movement, but not all neo-Nazis openly advertise their Nazi symbols and sympathies on the Internet. Those that do were classified as *overt* neo-Nazis. Most of these are membership organizations that recruit white supremacists for above-ground political parties or underground cells. These include groups like the National Alliance (the largest overtly neo-Nazi organization in the United States today) and the German

National Socialist Workers' Party – American Order (NSDAP-AO), another splinter of George Lincoln Rockwell's American Nazi Party and a leading producer of Nazi literature and memorabilia for German and other European neo-Nazis.

4. *Hard-Core White Supremacists*: These are mainly Aryan Nations and Klan-related sites. The content of these sites is virulently racist and anti-Semitic, but eschews overt use of Nazi symbols and slogans. Compared with the overt neo-Nazi sites, these sites also tend to have more frequent references to Christianity and stronger themes of American patriotism and "Constitutionalism" (a right-wing ideology that views the original Articles of Constitution plus the Bill of Rights [but not later Constitutional Amendments] as divinely inspired and the sole legitimate law of the land). Included among these sites are Knights of the KKK (the largest of the national Klan organizations), Stormfront (another Klan-related site), White Aryan Resistance (Tom Metzger), Aryan Nations (Richard Butler), and The Watchman (associated with the Pennsylvania Posse Comitatus and the East Coast branch of Aryan Nations).

5. *Soft-Core White Supremacists*: These sites promote white racial chauvinism without being too overtly anti-Black or anti-Semitic. This is a diverse group, including sites that glorify "Euro-American" history and culture (such as the Euro-American Student Union), groups advocating restrictions on immigration (like the American Nationalist Union), and regional separatists (like the neo-Confederate Southern League). Some appear to be front groups for more extreme and militant white supremacists.

6. *Foreign (Non-U.S.) Nationalists*: This is a heterogeneous group of European and Canadian web sites that promote ultra-nationalist views. Included in this category are electoral parties with mass constituencies (like Jean-Marie le Pen's Front National in France), regional separatists (like the French Canadian Identité Canadienne-française), and more extreme white supremacists with pronounced Nazi sympathies (like the International Third Position in England).

7. *Racist Skinheads*: Racist skinheads from many countries are represented on the Internet, including ones from the United States (New Jersey Skinheads), Britain (Skinheads UK), Scandinavia (Swedish Zone, Norwegian Patriots), and Australia (Southern Cross Hammerskins). Music is a major focus of the skinhead sites. Violent encounters with police or nonwhites (real or imaginary) receive much publicity. Nazi symbols, graphics, quotes, and slogans are particularly common on these sites.⁵ Symbols and themes drawn from Norse mythology are also prevalent.

8. *Bands, Music Labels, and Music Zines*: This group is really an offshoot of the racist skinhead sites, but is treated as a separate group because of the special commercial nature of its Internet activity. Most of the popular white power bands like RAHOWA (Racial Holy War), Berserkr, Shut Down, and Midtown Bootboys have their own web pages where they advertise their music and concerts. Also included in this group are producers and distributors of white power music (such as Resistance Records) and magazines devoted to the genre (like *Nordland*, published in Sweden).

9. *Books and other Merchandise*: This group includes publishers of white supremacist literature (like Fourteen Word Press) and purveyors of Nazi memorabilia and other merchandise. Other sites sometimes advertise items for sale (books, videos, newsletters), but are not included in this group unless their sole function appears to be commercial.

NETWORK CENTRALITY

One of the first questions commonly asked in network analysis is whether or not there exist specific nodes that occupy central positions within the network, where centrality is understood as a sign of prominence or potential for leadership. We measured the centrality of individual sites within the white supremacist network by their "indegree," that is, the total number of their incoming links. This measure is also referred to as "prestige" in the social networks literature (Wasserman and Faust 1994, p. 202). Four sites stood out as the most central within the network. These were Stormfront (24 links), Zundelsite (23 links), Resistance Records (22 links), and National Alliance (21 links).

Stormfront was one of the first white supremacist sites on the Internet. It is operated by Don Black, a former Klansman from Alabama (now living in Florida) who succeeded David Duke as head of the Knights of the KKK (the largest of the national Klan groups) and later married Duke's ex-wife. Like Duke, Black sought to present a more respectable public image of the Klan and to unite disparate Klan factions. Black was imprisoned in the early 1980s for conspiring with nine other Klansmen to invade the Caribbean island of Dominica as part of a plot to overthrow the leftist Bishop government of Grenada. Not only was Stormfront the most central site in terms of incoming links, it also had the highest "betweenness" score (Freeman 1979), indicating that its incoming and outgoing links were widely distributed across the network and that the site served as a crucial intermediary between otherwise unlinked sites.

Zundelsite is operated by Ernst Zundel, a German-born Canadian, who is one of the most flamboyant and most openly racist of the Holocaust revisionists. He is the founder of Toronto-based Samisdat Publishers and spokesperson for such pro-Nazi organizations as the German-Jewish Historical Commission. His publications defending the Third Reich and denying the Holocaust are widely distributed in North America and Europe, and he is thought to be a main supplier of anti-Semitic propaganda to the German far right. His arrest and prosecution for anti-Semitic activities by both the Canadian and German governments have made him something of a celebrity within white supremacist circles.

Resistance Records, based in Washington, DC, is the leading producer of white power "oi" music, a variant of punk rock whose lyrics preach a message of bigotry and violence. They distribute music by the Canadian band RAHOWA (Racial Holy War), Berserkr (Oklahoma), Bound for Glory (Minnesota), Centurion (Wisconsin), Max Resist (Michigan), and others, and also publish a professional-looking magazine (*Resistance*) that covers the skinhead scene. The music label is operated by George Burdi, lead singer for RAHOWA, along with other alumni of the largely defunct racist organization, Church of the Creator. Resistance Records' centrality within the white supremacist network reflects the importance of rock music, bands, and concerts within racist skinhead culture.

National Alliance, based in West Virginia, is the leading overtly neo-Nazi organization in the United States today. The group is headed by William Pierce, a former officer of George Lincoln Rockwell's American Nazi Party and author of the *Turner Diaries*, a popular white supremacist tract that fantasizes the overthrow of the federal government and mass murder of Jews and nonwhites to establish a racially pure Aryan society. In addition to its Internet site, the organization recruits members

through the publication of books, magazines, and newsletters, and broadcasts on AM, FM, and shortwave radio. The National Alliance website had only one outlink (to the underground German-language Thule Net site) — an expression, perhaps, of the organization's unwillingness to share the limelight and desire to present itself as the exclusive heir to the legacy of Hitler and the Nazis.⁶

It is noteworthy that each of the three major branches of the white supremacist movement had a representative among the four most central sites in the network: the Klan is represented by Stormfront; the neo-Nazis by the National Alliance; and the racist skinheads by Resistance Records. The fourth, Zundelsite, is a leading proponent of Holocaust revisionism, one of the two main unifying ideological tendencies within the movement. The other main unifying ideological current, Christian Identity theology, did not have any site that approached these in centrality. This network structure is consistent with the image of white supremacism as a relatively decentralized movement, with multiple centers of influence, representing the coming together of disparate, but mutually reinforcing, political tendencies.

NETWORK SUBGROUPS

A second issue that is commonly addressed in network analysis is the division of a social network into relatively distinct subgroups and the nature of the linkages among these subgroups. We approached this question from two angles: (1) inductively, by looking for the presence of distinct cliques or clusters within the network, regardless of the sites involved; and (2) by categorizing sites according to their content or the type of organization represented and then examining the links within and between the subgroups defined in this fashion.

The results of the inductive analysis can be summarized briefly. We found no sharp cleavages within the network — that is, no division into isolated subgroups with no or few links connecting them. In terms of cluster analysis, this is shown by the tendency of the network to aggregate into a single large cluster in which 80 percent of the sites are connected by paths of no longer than three links to all of the others. Instead of sharp divisions, there is an uneven pattern of varying density of links within and between segments of the network, but no region that is sharply segregated from any other.

Regardless of the method employed (different variants of clique or cluster analysis) two areas of particularly dense interlinking stand out from the more diffuse pattern of links that characterizes the network overall. At the core of the first are six Holocaust revisionist sites (Adelaide Institute, Committee for the Open Debate on the Holocaust, Institute for Historical Review, Radio Islam, Student Revisionists' Resource Page, and Zundelsite). The density of links among these six sites is 0.87. At the core of the second are nine skinhead sites (Freja's Homepage, Independent White Racialists, New Jersey Skinheads, Norway Patriots, Oi! Skinheads N.J. Oi!, Plunder and Pillage, Skinheads UK, Schutz Staffel/Computer Abteilung, and Swedezone). The density of links among these nine sites is 0.78.

Several reasons can be given for the pronounced density of links among these two subgroups and not elsewhere. Within any social movement the common interest that different movement organizations have in cooperation and mutual aid is partly undercut by the competition among them for resources, members, and public visibility

— not to mention sectarian divisions based on strategy or ideology. We would therefore expect those sites that are seeking to recruit members (political parties and some Klan and neo-Nazi organizations) or to attract customers (book publishers, music labels) to be less generous in directing visitors to potentially competing sites. Indeed, of the 22 sites that have no outlinks, 18 fall into one of these categories. In the case of Holocaust revisionists, we have an instance not only of a high degree of ideological unity, but one where different leaders and organizations find that the surest way to bolster their own credibility is by citing one another as knowledgeable authorities, thereby creating an appearance that their ideas are not as marginal and oddball as they first sound. Among racist skinheads, the high degree of interlinking is a testament to the solidaristic power of rock music and youth culture. As a movement built around the assertion of identity, racist skinheads appear keen to embrace others of their kind and to see themselves part of a large and growing community of white supremacists. Thus, for somewhat different reasons than the Holocaust revisionists, they also exploit the potential within the Internet for mutual affirmation through reciprocal linking.

To delve more deeply into the complex pattern of links within the network, we classified each of the 80 sites into one of nine subgroups and then calculated the density of links within each subgroup and between each pair of subgroups. Figure 1 presents these densities in the form of a matrix. Following the matrix is a graphic representation of the network showing only those paths where the density of links between subgroups is greater than 1.5 times the network average of 0.11. These data allow us to make finer distinctions among the nine subgroups in terms of their internal cohesion and incoming and outgoing links.⁷

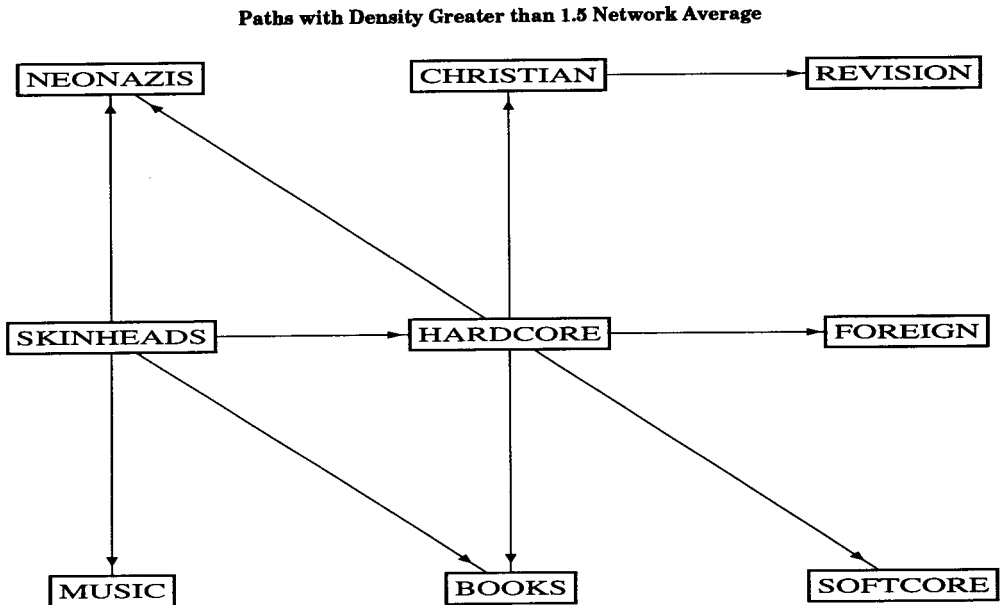
As would be expected, the density of links within subgroups (shown along the diagonal in Figure 1) is generally higher than between subgroups, but this pattern is far from uniform. The highest density of linking within subgroups is found among racist skinheads (0.51) and Holocaust revisionists (0.47), followed by Christian Identity theologians (0.33). At the other extreme, for reasons already noted, relatively

FIGURE 1

DENSITY OF LINKS WITHIN AND BETWEEN SUBGROUPS
(Read across for outlinks and down for inlinks)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Revisionists	0.47	0.07	0.01	0.02	0.05	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.03
2. Christian Id	0.20	0.33	0.00	0.05	0.05	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.08
3. Neo-Nazis	0.01	0.06	0.11	0.08	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.00
4. Hard-Core	0.14	0.17	0.20	0.23	0.20	0.21	0.12	0.08	0.20
5. Soft-Core	0.02	0.05	0.00	0.02	0.20	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.07
6. Foreign Nats	0.14	0.07	0.08	0.10	0.14	0.18	0.05	0.04	0.05
7. Skinheads	0.12	0.06	0.35	0.28	0.15	0.13	0.51	0.45	0.28
8. Music	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.08	0.09	0.08
9. Books, etc.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.00

FIGURE 1 (Continued)



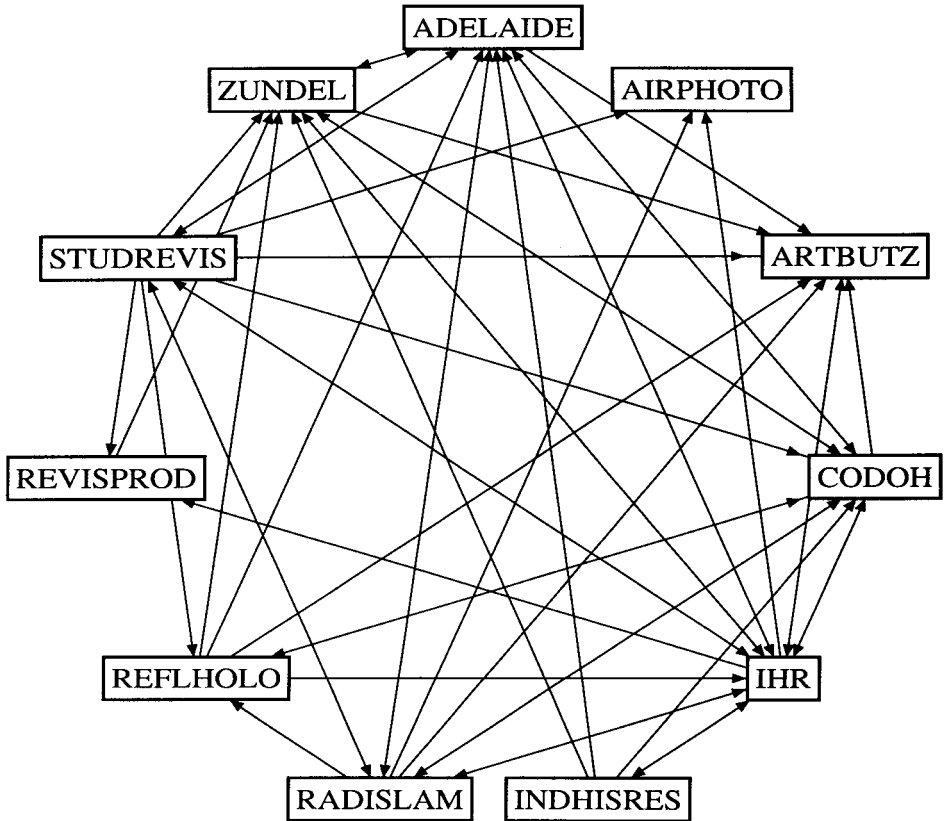
few within-group links are found among overt neo-Nazis (0.11) and the more commercially oriented sites like musical groups (0.09) and book publishers (0.00). A better sense of the extent of variation represented by these numbers can be grasped by comparing Figures 2 and 3, which depict links within one of the more densely interlinked subgroups (Holocaust revisionists) and one of the less densely interlinked subgroups (overt neo-Nazis).

As shown in the network diagram of Figure 1, two subgroups have particularly strong links to sites outside their subgroup. Racist skinheads show little discrimination in the sites they link to. Whatever offends mainstream political sensibilities seems to attract them. Music is clearly the main preoccupation of skinhead culture, as indicated by the high level of outlinks to music sites (0.45). Strong links also go to neo-Nazi sites (0.35), which reflects the strong tendency among racist skinheads to identify with Nazi ideology (or at least with Nazi symbols as badges of identity), and to hard-core white supremacists (0.28) and sellers of racist books and other merchandise (0.28). The only sites that receive few links are those of Christian Identity theology (0.06) — an indication of the relative indifference of skinheads to matters of theology and their tendency to gravitate toward the more inchoate and “do-your-own-thing” alternative of Norse paganism (“Odinism”).

Hard-core white supremacists are slightly more selective in whom they link to, but still very ecumenical in linking to a wide range of white supremacist sites, especially foreign nationalists (0.21), overt neo-Nazis (0.20), soft-core racists (0.20), book sellers (0.20), and Christian Identity theologians (0.17). This ecumenical bent is particularly pronounced in the case of the Stormfront and Aryan Angel (Aryan Nations) sites. The diversity of outlinks from the sites in this subgroup is consistent

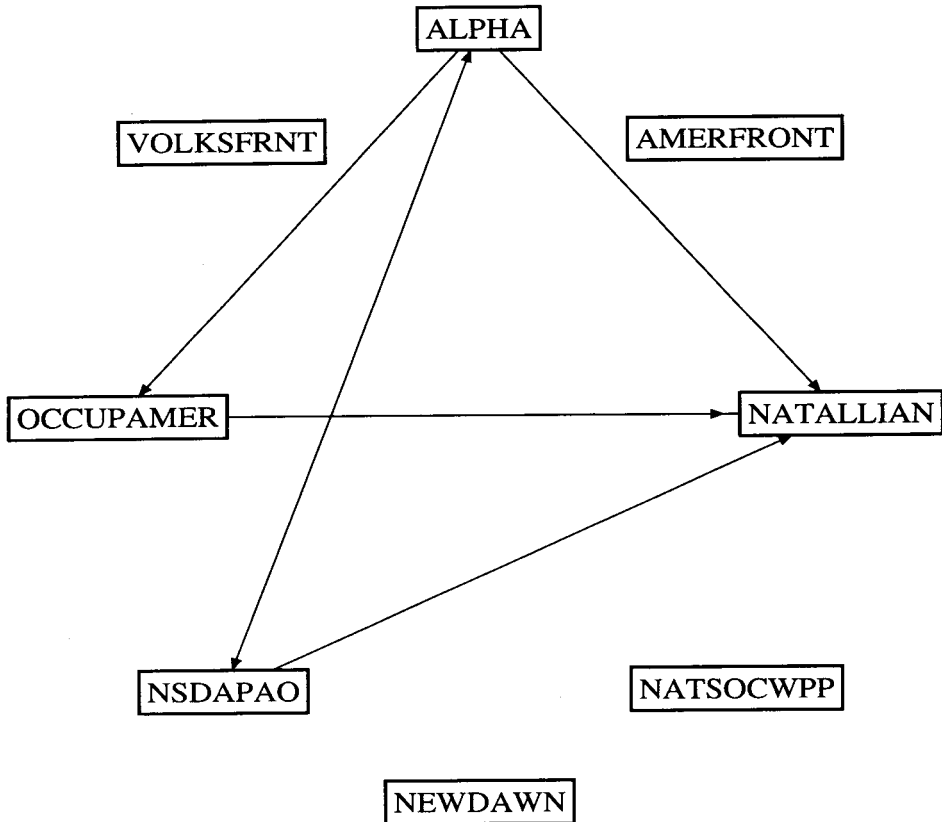
with the fact that Aryan Nations and certain Klan organizations have been among the most committed to the goal of movement unification.

FIGURE 2
LINKS AMONG HOLOCAUST REVISIONISTS



- KEY:** ADELAIDE = Adelaide Institute
 AIRPHOTO = Air Photo Evidence
 ARTBUTZ = Arthur R. Butz Homepage
 CODOH = Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust
 IHR = Institute for Historical Review
 INDHISRES = Independent History and Research
 RADISLAM = Radio Islam
 REFLHOLO = Reflections upon the Holocaust
 REVISPROD = Revisionist Productions
 STUDREVIS = Student Revisionists' Resource Page
 ZUNDEL = Zundelsite (Ernest Zundel)

FIGURE 3
LINKS AMONG OVERT NEO-NAZIS



KEY: ALPHA = Alpha
 AMERFRONT = American Front
 NATALLIAN = National Alliance
 NATSOCWPP = National Socialist White People's Party
 NEWDAWN = New Dawn
 NSDAPAO = National Socialist Workers' Party-American Order
 OCCUPAMER = Occupied America
 VOLKSFRNT = Volksfront

Other subgroups have lower levels of linking outside their group. We have already mentioned the elitism of overt neo-Nazis and commercial orientation of music and merchandise sites, which causes them to have few outlinks either within or outside their group. The soft-core white supremacists also have few outlinks to sites outside their group, presumably so as not to tarnish their "moderate" appearance; however, they do receive numerous inlinks *from* more extreme white supremacist sites. The "intellectuals" of white supremacism, including both its self-appointed

clergy (Christian Identity theologians) and its mock professoriat (Holocaust revisionists) link most strongly among themselves and to one another. Significantly, Christian Identity theology, which casts itself as the unifying creed of white supremacism (and a potential bridge to more mainstream Christian conservatism), receives few inlinks except from hard-core white supremacist sites connected with the Klan and Aryan Nations. Holocaust revisionists (with the notable exception of Zundelsite) receive equally low levels of inlinks from elsewhere in the network. Even the overt neo-Nazis appear only mildly interested in their intellectual efforts to exonerate the Third Reich. If Internet links are any indication, European fascists show more interest in polishing the tarnished image of the Third Reich than their American imitators.

LINKS TO AND FROM SITES OUTSIDE THE NETWORK

To examine links between white supremacist sites and militia sites, we first constructed a sample of 50 militia sites using a method similar to the one used to sample white supremacist sites (snowballing from sites identified by watchdog groups). We then checked each of these 50 militia sites for any links to or from the white supremacist network. Surprisingly, we found almost no links in either direction between white supremacist sites and militia sites. Even the Militia of Montana, whose leader John Trochmann is reputed to have extensive white supremacist ties, received only two links from the network. Eight other militia sites received one link each. This seems to contradict the claims of some watchdog groups who paint the militias as mere front groups for white supremacism.

Most militia groups publicly profess not to be racist (what happens in private probably varies) and their sites are generally free of racist propaganda. It is therefore understandable that they might not want to advertise any covert connections to white supremacist organizations with Internet links, but there is no reason why white supremacists should be constrained from creating links to militia sites. And, if white supremacist sites wanted to bring militia organizations and activities to the attention of their visitors, there is little that militia sites could do to prevent inlinks. However, this has not occurred. Why not? A comparison with the soft-core white supremacist sites is instructive. Some of these sites almost certainly *are* fronts for more openly racist groups even though they studiously disclaim any racist views and eschew links to openly racist sites. However, white supremacist groups *do* have numerous links into these more moderate-looking sites. If militias were mere fronts for white supremacism, we would expect this same pattern to occur. Clearly more study is required on the relationship between white supremacism and the militia movement.

We also found almost no links in either direction between white supremacist sites (including Christian Identity theologians) and the more mainstream Christian Right.⁸ This also contradicts the claims of watchdog groups who portray groups like the Christian Coalition as part of the same political and theological continuum as Christian Identity preachers. Mainstream Christian fundamentalists like Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson come in for much derogatory comment in the white supremacist sites for their support for Israel, openness to Blacks, etc. Thus, as far as Internet links are concerned, there is little evidence of communication or cross-fertilization between Christian Identity theology and more mainstream (less overtly racist) variants of right-wing Christianity. Neither are there significant links to the

personalities or organizations of right-wing Republicanism (Pat Buchanan, Heritage Foundation, etc.).

There are also surprisingly few links to the earlier generation of extremist right-wing or anti-Semitic organizations. Throughout the entire network there was only one link to the John Birch Society and only two links to the Liberty Lobby's *Spotlight* web site. The lack of links to the former is understandable, given the Birch Society's official renunciation of anti-Semitism. But the lack of links to the Liberty Lobby is more puzzling given the latter's role as the chief torchbearer for anti-Semitism in the United States in the decades of the 1970s and 1980s. Willis Carto, the main figure behind the Liberty Lobby, has feuded with the leaders of several other white supremacist organizations over the years, including the National Alliance, the American Nationalist Union, and the Institute for Historical Review, but this alone does not seem sufficient to explain the Liberty Lobby's virtual invisibility in the web pages of the larger white supremacist network.

On the other hand, there are numerous links in both directions between the white supremacist network and the Internet sites of antiracist watchdog groups. White supremacists create links to their supposed political opponents for two reasons. First, they apparently delight in the inflated reflection of their own menacing presence that one often finds on the watchdog sites. Second, the watchdog sites do a better job than the white supremacists themselves of providing a detailed guide to the white supremacist network. For their part, watchdog groups create direct links to white supremacist sites to alert their audience of potential supporters to just how offensive the content of these sites really is (and thus how important it is to support the activities of antiracist groups like themselves). Because they have greater access to the mainstream media, watchdog groups are often the ones responsible for publicizing the existence of white supremacist activity on the Internet, which white supremacists say helps to attract new visitors to their sites (Burghart 1996, p. 12). This points to an ironic symbiotic relationship that deserves greater study: that between extremist movements and watchdog countermovements, each of which benefits organizationally from the increased public prominence of its nominal enemy.

DISCUSSION

Our aims in this paper have been twofold. First, we have introduced a simple but useful method for applying techniques of network analysis to study the Internet. The present study hopefully demonstrates the utility of this approach. Generally speaking, data on Internet links appears to provide a reasonably accurate representation of the interorganizational structure of the white supremacist movement. Many of the patterns we have uncovered would be familiar to scholars who have studied this movement through other lenses. This correspondence between the structure of Internet links and other forms of association among movement activists is the strongest evidence for the plausibility of treating Internet links as empirical indicators of affinity between movement organizations and ideological viewpoints. Some of our findings appear to contradict the conventional wisdom or point to new or previously unrecognized patterns that deserve further study. As with any type of social scientific data, there are potential validity and measurement problems that are best solved through corroboration with other data and methods. Any novel conclusions regarding

the structure and dynamics of the white supremacist movement should therefore be viewed as tentative. With this caveat in mind, we now return to the six research questions that we posed earlier in the paper to see what insight this study has provided into those questions.

1. *Are there any sharp cleavages within the movement?* No. White supremacism appears to be a relatively decentralized movement with multiple centers of influence, but without any sharp cleavages between warring or isolated factions. In particular, links are common between Klan and neo-Nazi sites and between Christian and non-Christian sites. The movement may be fragmented organizationally and plagued by competition among rival leaders, but it does not appear to be sharply divided along doctrinal lines.

2. *What success has been achieved in building a coherent and unifying ideology?* The most celebrated effort to build ideological unity within the movement — the attempt by Aryan Nations to unify the movement under the umbrella of Christian Identity theology — appears to have failed. Incoming links to Christian Identity sites are among the weakest in the network. On the other hand, as indicated by both the content and linkages among sites, the “Nazification” of the movement appears to be proceeding apace. This development is likely to prove a liability in terms of attracting a mass following, but may serve the movement well as a basis of identity and incitement to violence.

3. *What bridges are there to more mainstream political groups?* Almost none. In particular, the movement appears very isolated from both the mainstream Christian right and right-wing Republicanism.

4. *What bridges are there to other extremist movements?* Almost none. In particular, there are few links to or from militia organizations.

5. *What paths of potential recruitment via the Internet are implicated in the structure of the network?* Commentators are divided on the viability of the Internet as a recruitment tool for the white supremacist movement. Some question its potential to substitute for face-to-face recruitment and doubt that it adds significantly to already existing propaganda channels (Burghart 1996). Others see it as a qualitatively new and more effective channel for reaching potential recruits (Hoffman 1996). We cannot resolve this question on the basis of the present study, but we can point to several characteristics of the network that are relevant to this issue.

Much of the discussion about recruitment into white supremacism focuses on racist skinheads as the most rapidly growing segment of the movement. It is clear from our study that, while music provides the main focus of skinhead attention, the Internet also provides skinheads with sources of ideological indoctrination and connections to adult organizations that may keep them in the movement after their beer-brawling, concert-going days have ended. Whether these resources are utilized and how much they merely duplicate other channels of information and mobilization we cannot say.

Less attention has been given to what we have termed the “soft-core white supremacist” sites. These, too, have significance for the recruitment of activists, or at least for the cultivation of sympathizers who might be put off by the content of hard-core white supremacist sites. As research on other social movements has shown, recruitment to high-risk activism is often the end point of a progression through more moderate and limited forms of political action (McAdam 1986). Soft-core white

supremacist sites may therefore provide important points of entry into the movement. Some of these soft-core sites are almost certainly operated behind the scenes by more extreme racists with ties to hard-core white supremacist organizations, although it is nearly impossible to tell for certain. This points to one of the unique advantages of the Internet for the creation of political front groups: the possibility of almost total anonymity for the leadership of an organization and the ability to create a "virtual organization" with or without the existence of a rank-and-file membership. White supremacists, some of whom have been quite sophisticated in exploiting the potential of the Internet, can be expected to take full advantage of these opportunities.

6. *What evidence is there of the formation of a white supremacist "cyber-community" transcending regional and national boundaries?* This also is a question that cannot be answered solely from the data at hand. A thorough study of the emergence of a white supremacist "cyber-community" would give equal or greater attention to the functioning of computer bulletin boards, online discussion groups, and the like. Internet sites serve more as advertisements for the movement and libraries of propaganda to be passively consumed than as arenas for interactive community building. Nevertheless, the pattern of links among Internet sites gives us some clues about the capacity of white supremacists to build ties across regional and national boundaries.

More than *two-thirds* of links within the white supremacist network connect sites in different countries. The proclivity to create links to sites in other countries is strongest among the Scandinavian skinheads, but also pronounced among American skinheads and a few of the more ecumenical Klan and Aryan Nations sites. Evidently, in a country like Norway, where the total number of racist skinheads is estimated to be no more than 150 (Suall et al. 1995, p. 56), the Internet holds a special attraction for those in search of a "virtual" community to compensate for the lack of a critical mass in their own town or country. In the same way, the Internet has the capacity to facilitate a sense of community for white supremacists in rural backwaters and/or affluent suburbs across the United States and other countries. Investigation of the manner and extent to which this capacity is being utilized, especially in the online chat rooms that are linked to some of the white supremacist Internet sites, offers a worthwhile subject for further research. Looking to the future, as the Internet assumes a greater role in society, the potential of the medium to substitute for face-to-face association and spatially bounded organization building may prove to have sweeping implications not only for white supremacism but for other social movements as well.

NOTES

1. Authors disagree over the most appropriate label for this movement. Langer (1990) prefers "neo-Nazi" to emphasize the germinal role of German National Socialism for the ideology of the movement. Dobratz and Shanks-Meile (1997) prefer "white separatist" as more consistent with the self-identification of movement members. We prefer the label "white supremacist" as more encompassing than the former and more accurate than the latter in capturing the racist and anti-Semitic face of the movement that we encountered in this research.
2. In this section and throughout the paper we have drawn upon the following general sources of information on the white supremacist movement: Ridgeway (1990); Hamm (1993); Sual et al (1994);

Schwartz (1996); and Dobratz and Shanks-Meile (1997). Additional information has been garnered from the white supremacist sites themselves.

3. The seven groups were Far Right Web Review <www.clark.net/pub/cwilkins/rfpi/frwr.html>, Hatred on the Net <www.med.rug.nl/pharma/services/remember/hate_net/page01.htm>, Hate Watch <hatewatch.org>, Nazism Exposed <www.cs.uit.no/~paalde/NazismExposed/Scripts/nlinks.html>, Net Hate <www.vir.com/Shalom/hatred.html>, Political Research Associates <www.publiceye.org/lnk_rit.html>, and Queer Resource Directory <qrd.tcp.com/qrd/www/RRR/rrrpage.html>.
4. Data on links were collected during a two-week period in 1997. Some links have changed since then, but dramatic changes in the overall pattern of links are unlikely.
5. Indeed, many skinhead sites would have qualified for the overt neo-Nazi category but were segregated into their own subgroup on the basis of their self-identification as skinheads or because of their heavy interlinking with other skinhead and skinhead music sites.
6. Since the data for this study were collected, the National Alliance has added three additional outlinks, two of which are to European sites.
7. In most cases it is unwise to compare densities within or between network subgroups of different sizes. For the kinds of ties typically maintained by human subjects, there is usually a limit, or at least a rising marginal cost, to the number of ties that a single person can maintain. This means that, other things being equal, larger subgroups will tend to have lower densities. When the subject is not a veritable person but a virtual subject like a web site, this is less of a concern. While a person cannot maintain a hundred friends as easily as ten, a web site can easily maintain a hundred links at little more cost than ten. Hence, there is no reason larger subgroups should have lower densities than smaller ones, at least not over the range of subgroup sizes dealt with in this study. In fact, there is no correlation within the white supremacist network between subgroup size and the density of ties within subgroups.
8. The only exception is the God's Order Affirmed in Love site, which has numerous links to more mainstream sites dealing with Christian Reconstructionism (a doctrine that calls for reconstructing society to conform with the laws of the Old Testament). One commentator calls Christian reconstructionism a potential "ideological bridge between the Christian Right and the extremist right" (Diamond 1989, p. 139).

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APPENDIX

WHITE SUPREMACIST INTERNET SITES INCLUDED IN THE STUDY

Holocaust Revisionists:

Adelaide Institute (Australia)
 Air Photo Evidence
 Arthur R. Butz Homepage
 Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust
 (Bradley R. Smith)
 Insititute for Historical Review (Greg Raven)
 Independent History and Research
 (Michael A. Hoffman II)
 Radio Islam
 Reflections upon the Holocaust
 Revisionist Productions
 Student Revisionists' Resource Page
 Zundelsite (Ernest Zundel)

Christian Identity Theology:

Be Wise As Serpents
 God's Order Affirmed in Love
 Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion
 Scriptures for America Worldwide

Overt Neo-Nazis:

Alpha
 American Front
 National Alliance
 National Socialist White People's Party
 New Dawn
 Nat'l Socialist Workers Party-American Order
 Occupied America
 Volksfront

Hard-Core White Supremacists:

Aryan Angel's White Links (Aryan Nations)
 Aryan Nations
 Crosstar
 David Duke U.S. Senate
 Knights of the Ku Klux Klan
 Politically Incorrect E-Zine
 Stormfront White Nationalist Resource Page
 White Aryan Resistance
 The Watchman
 Yggdrasil Library

Soft-Core White Supremacists:

American Nationalist Union
 American Renaissance
 Euro-American Students' Union
 National Party
 Southern League (Dixie Net)

Foreign (Non-U.S.) Nationalists:

Alleanza Nazionale (Italy)
 British Nationalist Party
 Burgerforum Europas (Germany)
 Freedom Site (Canada)
 Front National (France)
 Heritage Front (Canada)
 Identité Canadienne-Française
 (Quebec)

International Third Position (England)
 National Democrats (England)
 Nation of Europa (England)
 Nationale Volkspartij (Netherlands)
 Patriotic National Union (Finland)
 ThuleNet (Germany)
 Vlaams Blok (Belgium)

Racist Skinheads:

Freja's Homepage (Sweden)
 Independent White Racialist Homepage
 New Jersey Skinhead Page
 Norwegian Patriot Page
 Oi! Skinheads N.J. Oi!
 Plunder & Pillage
 Skin-Net White Power Skinheads
 Skinheads U.K.
 Southern Cross Hammer Skinheads
 (Australia)
 Schutz Staffel/Computer Abteilung (Sweden)
 Swedezone Swedish Unofficial Resource Page
 Viking (Norway)
 World Church of the Creator

Bands, Music Labels, Music Zines:

Berserkr
 Excalibur (Czech)
 Londinium (Italy)
 Midtown Bootboys
 Nordland (Sweden)
 Perimetro (Italy)
 RAHOWA Unofficial Page (Canada)
 Resistance Records
 Shutdown
 Stormfront Records
 Tuono Records (Italy)
 Vlajka Skinhead Music (Czech)

Books and other Merchandise:

Fenix Books
 Fourteen Word Press
 Nordeffekter (Norway)