

CYBERCULTURE AND THE ENDURANCE OF WHITE POWER ACTIVISM

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Drawing from ethnographic and documentary data, this article examines the character of the social spaces that white power movement (WPM) activists create on the Internet and the linkages to their real world activism. Specifically, we explain how white power activists use cyberspace as a free space to create and sustain movement culture and coordinate collective action. The WPM's cyberpresence intersects with and enhances their real world activities by offering multiple opportunities for access and coordination. Virtual contact with the WPM community offers members social support, companionship, and a sense of belonging to a community of Aryan believers. We argue that real and virtual spaces are not completely separate spheres but rather closely intertwined. Consequently, virtual spaces provide an opportunity to parallel and extend the type of interaction present in real world free spaces that are so critical to nurturing and sustaining white power movement culture.

Cyberspace is being used to connect all sorts of people, yet the character of those connections is unclear. Some observers argue that cyberspace is a new place of assembly where real world social communities can be established, sustained, or renewed as virtual communities. In *The Virtual Community* (1993), Howard Rheingold argues the Internet introduced a new form of community that can help bring people together on-line around shared values and interests, and create ties of support that extend their real world collective interaction. Sherry Turkle (1995:267), a pioneer in studies of identity and interaction on the Internet, claims that the virtual realm offers "a dramatic

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new context” in which to think about human interaction and how connections between people can be made. Communities that are linked through cyberspace expand the ways that individuals can connect to groups by overcoming constraints of time and place, allowing for high volume information flows, and enhancing solidarity among users (Brunsting and Postmes 2002; Diani 2000; Turkle 1999, 1995; Doheny-Farina 1996; Haraway 1991). Skeptics, however, argue that cyberspace creates mere simulacra of community. At best, very weak social ties are sustained in the absence of face-to-face interaction.

As cyberspace becomes a prominent tool used by movement organizers and activists, movement scholars are weighing in on the same questions to understand contemporary social movement cultures. Most of these commentators are critical of the idea that robust collective sensibilities can be built through the virtual realm. For instance, Gamson (1996:35) argues that cyberspace is “not a particularly useful kind of space when it comes to building commitment . . .” because it lacks direct physical contact and concrete action settings that he feels are crucial for these qualities to emerge. Others agree, claiming that the lack of face-to-face relations, spatial distance, and relative anonymity in cyberspace creates only weakly connected social networks, not strong communities (Stoecker 2002; Tarrow 1998; Burghart 1996; Nohria and Eccles 1992).

Which side is correct? Both are a bit misleading because they tend to treat virtual interaction and face-to-face interaction as separate social spheres with little connection between them. As Wellman and Gulia (1998:182) explain, “people do not neatly divide their worlds into two discrete sets: people seen in person and people contacted online. Rather, many community ties connect offline as well as online. It is the relationship [between virtual and real world contexts] that is the important thing . . .” (p.182). According to Castells (2001:119, 121), the Internet does not replace but rather *adds* on-line interaction to social relationships and if anything, it may allow for more social interaction than would otherwise occur. Barry Wellman and his colleagues have pointed out in several studies (Wellman and Haythornthwaite 2002; Wellman 1998, 1997) that there appears to be positive and cumulative effect between intensity of use of the Internet and density of social relationships. The Internet, then, does not substitute for other forms of interaction, rather it adds another layer (see also Waskul 2003; Denzin 1999). Cyberspace is just one context that, in conjunction with an array of face-to-face contexts, can be very influential in movement members’ efforts to construct and sustain movement culture and collective action. It provides new technological supports for sociability that spans physically and virtually-situated interaction (Wellman 2001; Castells 2001).

In this article we use ethnographic data on the U.S. white power movement (WPM) to describe the character of the social spaces movement members create on the Web and the linkages to their real world activism.

Specifically, we describe how white power activists use cyberspace to create and sustain movement culture and coordinate collective action by discussing how the movement's cyberpresence intersects with and enhances their real world activities. The WPM is an especially useful case as, over the past decade, activists and organizations have emphasized the development of the movement's web presence precisely for the purpose of providing new channels of access to other movement groups, members, and cultural items, and as a coordinating mechanism for real world activities. By drawing from a unique data set that includes both comprehensive content analysis of WPM websites, interviews with activists, and participant observation in WPM groups, we begin to fill a gap in the thin systematic ethnographic accounting of the character of virtual-real world interface in the WPM. Our approach also moves a step beyond prior studies on the WPM's cyberpresence which have tended to look at it only from afar, content analyzing the rhetorical dimensions of web content (Duffy 2003; Berbrier 2000) or links between websites (Burris, Smith, and Strahm 2000).

WPM, FREE SPACE, AND CYBERSPACE

The WPM is a segmented network of overlapping groups such as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), Christian Identity sects, neo-Nazis, and Aryan skinheads (Burris et al. 2000; Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 2000). Although there are differences among these wings of the WPM, they all agree on fundamental doctrines (Burris et al. 2000). Foremost among these objectives is the commitment to white power and defending the "white race" from "genocide." They envision a world that is racially exclusive with "non-whites" being vanquished, segregated, or at least subordinated to Aryan authority. Many WPM members are strongly anti-Semitic, support Aryan militarist nationalism, and claim to seek a white homeland to control and defend against non-Aryans. They also oppose homosexuality, inter-racial sex, marriage, and procreation, and idealize conservative traditional patriarchal family forms and community relations dominated by Aryan kinship. It is this "general . . . agreement on basic ideas [which] is the glue that holds the movement together" (Ezekiel 1995:xxix).

The WPM's extreme racialism and anti-Semitism means the movement is highly marginalized and membership is risky. Public rallies and demonstrations draw strong counter-protests and many activists reportedly face the anger and indignation (and sometime retribution) of employers, neighbors, and acquaintances if their Aryan ideals are revealed (Back 2002; Blee 2002; Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 2000). The WPM's foremost goal is to overcome the barriers to involvement by creating a robust movement culture that draws activists together and supports their participation.

Like all highly marginalized groups, the WPM requires "free spaces" (Evans and Boyte 1992) where they meet, articulate, and support their views. "Because," as Gamson (1996:37) notes, "whenever there is a significant power difference, the less powerful group needs some safe space where they are free—

for awhile—to be themselves without pressure or self-consciousness about what members of the more powerful group may think or how they will react.” Free spaces, along with “safe spaces” (Gamson 1996), “havens” (Hirsch 1990), “protected spaces” (Tetreault 1993), and “sequestered social sites” (Scott 1990), describe small-scale settings that provide activists the autonomy from dominant groups where they can nurture oppositional cultures and organize collective action (Polletta 1999; Evans and Boyte 1992; Couto 1993). Scholars have identified free spaces in a range of sites, including real world physical settings such as feminist bookstores (Taylor and Whittier 1995), block clubs and bars (Fantasia and Hirsch 1995), the Black church in the Southern civil rights movement (Morris 1984) and virtual settings of cyberspace (Gamson 1996). These sites are “repositories of cultural materials” (McAdam in Polletta, 1999: 4) where activists “preserve movement networks and traditions” (Polletta 1999: 4; Couto 1993) and cultivate support for their activities and beliefs. Free spaces are both an outcome of enduring collective action and, simultaneously, help sustain that action.

While the free space concept is useful for highlighting the contexts where members create and sustain oppositional cultures and collective action, more work is needed to understand exactly *how* free spaces facilitate these outcomes (Polletta 1999). As Francesca Polletta (1999) observes, the analytic force of the free space concept has been diminished by inconsistencies in its use and a deeper failure to grasp the more complex dynamics of mobilization. She points out that part of the ambiguity results from the conflation of several structures that play different roles in mobilization (Polletta 1999). Her strategy to correct this is to distinguish different types of free space structures and the particular tasks of mobilization they serve. Polletta (1999) identifies three such structures—indigenous, transmovement, and prefigurative free spaces—and compares them in terms of the associational ties that each tends to support. This useful typology refines the analytic specificity in important ways, yet other questions still remain. We need to not only understand how particular types of free space are organized and used to sustain movement culture and collective action, but also how different forms of free space are related to one another and the character of those relationships.

We are interested in the relationship between a movement’s real world and virtual spaces. Most previous research identifies free spaces primarily in reference to physically-located space where face-to-face interaction occurs. But the rise of cyberspace means that virtual contexts and virtual experiences are more and more common. Movements are utilizing the virtual realm as free space where activists can meet, express, and experience movement culture. This raises questions about the relationship between virtual and real world spaces. Are these separate and distinct parts of movement culture, or are they connected in ways that provides support for collective action across real-world and virtual forms?

We began this task in our previous work which examines how the WPM creates a broad array of free spaces that are utilized to articulate, support, and sustain white power culture (Futrell and Simi 2004). In this paper, we concentrate solely on the role of cyberspace as a free space in the WPM and how cyberspace is used in relation to real world movement contexts. Generally, it appears that cyberspace offers a safe, powerful, and efficient context for people to articulate challenges to dominant cultural codes which oppose overt and extreme forms of racism and anti-Semitism. As Gamson (1996) explains, websites can be insulated from the normalizing processes of mainstream culture, thereby allowing for open expressions of indignation and critical analysis of circumstances movement members feel they face.

While cyberspace is a potentially powerful communication medium, webpresence alone cannot establish or sustain a movement culture and collective action. A movement's cyberpresence must be linked to real world contexts if it is to have the cultural vitality needed to sustain collective action. As Gamson (1996:35) notes,

You can't link arms and sing "We Shall Overcome" in cyberspace. . . . "Cultures of solidarity" are constructed . . . while interacting with each other over time in concrete action settings. . . . Face to face interaction and physical contact play a role in building and maintaining solidarity and commitment that are not provided in cyberspace.

This is an important point, but it is also limited because it rests on the assumption that cyberspace and face-to-face interaction are distinctly separate spheres. The problem with separating cyberspace and real world contexts is that we miss the multiple linkages that exist between them and how each contributes *together* to sustaining movement culture and collective action. Below, we focus on how WPM activists now use the Internet as an essential component of their real world activities. By explaining how cyberspace is integrated into daily life and explicit non-virtual movement contexts, we can better understand how the Internet is used to increase opportunities to link otherwise disparate activist networks, create opportunities for multiple layers of movement commitment and participation, enable complex logistical planning, report on real world movement occasions, and provide access to an array of WPM cultural items.

METHOD AND DATA

We draw primarily from ethnographic data collected on various WPM activists and groups between 1996 and 2005.¹ Our multi-method approach

¹ There are methodological difficulties stemming from WPM members' preference for secrecy and, at times, participation in illegal activities. Entry into the movement's groups is difficult, networks are diverse and loosely structured,

(Denzin 1978) included interviews, participant observation, and content analysis of WPM websites and other literature. We draw from 107 in-depth face-to-face and telephone interviews with 63 WPM activists. These interviews spanned one to three hours each. Snowball and purposive sampling strategies produced contacts with a wide range of activists, networks, and groups within the WPM across twenty-four states. Specific organizations represented include White Aryan Resistance, Aryan Nations, Hammerskins, National Alliance, Ku Klux Klan, Southwest Aryan Separatists (SWAS) and various smaller skinhead groups (e.g., Aryan Front, Orange County Skins).² Interviews included questions about members' perceptions of cyberspace, particularly its effectiveness as a communication, recruitment, and identity-building tool, and descriptions of their experiences with producing, using, and maintaining Aryan websites. Of the 63 interview subjects, 41 "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that the Internet is an effective tool for aiding movement activism. Respondents also indicated that the Internet increases communication among WPM activists who are spatially disconnected, provides moral support among WPM activists, and is a vital asset in the logistical planning of events such as music shows and rallies.

In-depth interviews with key informants helped clarify the meaning of Internet use and activism in cyberspace. Interviewees included six website owner/administrators, movement members who regularly used web forums and other Internet-based communications, and members who rarely or never used the Internet. Observational field work concentrated on Christian Identity activists in the Southwest, Aryan Nations activists in Idaho, WPM participants in Southern California, several white power music promoters and band members, and numerous local skinhead groups. Simi visited the former Aryan Nations headquarters on four different occasions for three to five days to

and levels of activism vary widely among participants. Moreover, we are not members of these groups and WPM activists are often antagonistic toward outsiders. One author made contact with Aryan Nations and Southwest Aryan Separatists via several letters and phone calls requesting, as a sociologist, opportunities to observe various movement events. Eventually these requests were granted by both groups with the only condition being that he was white. The interviews and observations there were done with full disclosure of the author's position as sociological observer. The initial contacts with Aryan Nations led to further communication with other white power activists across several of the movement's networks. These contacts snowballed into the sample described above.

² In the case of widely known white power groups, the names of the organizations and their representatives are left unchanged. In other cases, pseudonyms are used. Participants in the web-based forum groups create their own pseudonyms which we randomly selected and attached to the posts that we analyzed. Any references to actual names were omitted.

observe three Aryan Nations World Congresses. Contacts with Southern California white power groups included two live website/radio broadcast productions, various social gatherings, music concerts and festivals, and twenty-two home visits with activists ranging from one day to three weeks.

We also examined forty-eight websites and four Internet forum groups dedicated to the WPM. Websites were categorized by their primary topical focus: music, politics, and religion. The forums are a bulletin board service, where participants can interact with one another by clicking on "threads" (i.e., topics) within each forum (e.g., "general forum," "homeschooling" etc.). Threads are textual conversations that are organized chronologically on the forum's webpages (Denzin 1999:114). When a participant posts in the forum, she/he is identified by username. These posts are cultural artifacts that are amenable to empirical content analysis (Denzin 1999; Waskul 2003). We collected data from these posts using what Bainbridge (2000:57) refers to as "observation ethnography." This technique involved a relatively passive research role in which we content analyzed forum threads without interacting directly with participants. We analyzed the first message of every thread posted on the main forum of four different WPM bulletin boards (n=451) using ethnographic content analysis methods (Ahuvia 2001; Altheide 1996; 2002). We used the individual post as the unit of analysis and coded each message. Several themes emerged from the data: 1) requests for assistance with movement-related projects; 2) exposing traitors; 3) outreach from/to new members; 4) movement news and announcements; and 5) commentary on world affairs.³ Combining observational, interview, and website data with principles of inductive analysis we derived the themes we discuss below.⁴

While we present our themes in a systematic and organized way, we do not intend to depict a homogenous, invariant picture of WPM culture and experience. Our arguments focus on dominant themes drawn from our data. And while our snowball and purposive sampling techniques are clearly not representative of the entire WPM, the sample does include activists from a wide array of WPM organizations across the different branches of the WPM and from every region in the U.S. Our multi-method strategy produced a dense array of

³ 33% of the posts included requests for assistance (n=148), outreach to new members included 23% (n=104), movement announcements 21% (n=97), general news 18% (n=79), and exposing traitors was 5% (n=23).

⁴ Fieldnotes contained observations of behavior related to Internet usage (emailing practices, producing web-based radio shows) and unsolicited commentary regarding the effectiveness of the Internet for building and sustaining collective identity. The latter was especially useful as it provided a comparison to interview data where research subjects were directly questioned about the effectiveness of the Internet.

data allowing for a robust ethnographic accounting of the movement's real world and cyberspace activities.

REAL WORLD AND VIRTUAL FREE SPACE IN THE WPM

We begin this discussion by describing the WPM's real world free spaces then move to describe free space in the virtual realm and analyze the character of the connections between the two. We argue that real and virtual spaces are not completely separate spheres but rather closely intertwined. Consequently, virtual spaces provide an opportunity to parallel and extend the type of interaction present in real world free spaces that are so critical to nurturing and sustaining white power movement culture.

REAL WORLD FREE SPACE

Our previous work (Futrell and Simi 2004) identifies two main types of real world free space created by the WPM. Since these types are described at length in an earlier article, we provide a summary overview here to acquaint readers with those findings. One type of real world free space is located in rather benign, everyday settings, particularly the home, where political socialization occurs in relative safety from social controls. WPM families with children use the home as a space for political indoctrination into Aryan worldviews (Blee 2002; Aho 1990). This should not be surprising as the intergenerational transmission of movement ideas is essential to sustaining marginalized movements and the level of control and anonymity that is possible in the home helps to ensure that such socialization can occur relatively unchallenged (Johnston 1994, 1991). Similarly, Richard Couto (1993:61) notes that repression almost guarantees that movement culture will be sustained mainly "in carefully guarded free spaces, such as the family." WPM members themselves place a great deal of emphasis on the home and family as a free space.

We all know the movement begins with the family so if you can't save your family then what's the point? The family is what we fight for—it is the struggle – keeping your families pure and raising your kids among your kin so you don't have to worry about the 'nons' (nonwhites) coming in . . . (SWAS activist, 1/22/97)

Activists imbue the home with "racial politics" in several ways. Parents name children and even pets with symbols of Aryan ideology. They also create family rituals which promote racial politics. For instance, before-meal prayers in Christian Identity families typically promote racial separation and visions of a white homeland and express expectations of an impending race war. Birthday celebrations and other rites of passage (e.g., graduations, hunting

trips etc.) are used to initiate children into white power culture. Birthdays are particularly symbolic as cakes are decorated with swastikas, KKK images and phrases such as "14 words" or "white power" and gifts are often linked within an Aryan ideology (e.g., G.I. Joe becomes "G.I. Nazis who will help save the white race") (SWAS activist, 3/6/98). Typically, WPM cultural items are also prominently displayed in the home. These may include pictures of Adolf Hitler and collages of children surrounded by WPM symbols, along with posters, cards, newsletters, racist comic and coloring books. Clothing, such as t-shirts emblazoned with Hitler, Nazi soldiers, hooded Klansmen, and motifs of white power music bands, are staples of activists' wardrobes. Homeschooling is the most systematic approach to political socialization engineered in WPM families. It allows WPM families both direct control over the dissemination of white power ideology and practices while simultaneously subverting multicultural values, centering the family experience on core white power ideals and practices. As a Southern California Aryan mother and homeschooler explains,

European culture is fading, our tradition is being stripped away so we have to do something to fight the assault . . . I think with the public schools just promoting filth and hypocrisy I can't imagine sending my kids there so I teach them here and I know the more we do this we will be ensuring our children have the tools to preserve our culture. . . . (Aryan Mother, 6/20/04)

Indeed, all the members we have spoken to enthusiastically see the rearing of ideologically-aligned children as an essential contribution to sustaining the movement. Each of these home-based practices is used to make the home an ideological shelter where radical racist meanings are normalized and freely expressed (also see Blee 2004, 2002).

The home is also the site for other movement activities such as racist Bible study groups and Aryan-themed parties where WPM members congregate to express and experience Aryan culture. Small independent churches and Bible study meetings that join between five and twenty members are held in activists' homes so that members can openly practice what they believe is the "true" Biblical insight inspired by Aryan ideals. In these situations, participants claim a great deal of autonomy to elaborate white power ideals and enjoy the affective support of like-minded activists. Larger congregations that draw up to 50 members sometimes meet in formal church settings. During the service members will often pledge their allegiance to the movement in elaborate rituals said to render them spiritually and racially "pure."

WPM house parties are designed as free spaces where activists explore and enact various dimensions of white power ideology. They typically draw between 15 to 50 WPM sympathizers who nurture common ideological ground with one another through talk that dramatizes their plight and ritual

performances intended to represent Aryan ideals. In short, these parties ensure a space where members can freely discuss Aryan ideas and enact Aryan relationships. They are intentionally and explicitly organized as free spaces.

When you live in a world like we do, you have to find places where you don't have to hold back on being racist; where other people feel and act the same way you do. The parties are definitely part of it. . . . You get a chance to come together in a small setting where it's easier to know people and build friendships. (SoCal skinhead, 9/7/02)

A primary function of these spaces is to create an environment that frees up discussion around movement narratives that are taboo in other contexts (Polletta 1999:6; Couto 1993). WPM parties are replete with narratives extolling the virtues of Aryanism. Movement "fortifying myths" (Voss 1996: 252), which celebrate the efficacy and persistence of the WPM, are customary. Likewise, members tell stories of racial dispossession that details how their racial consciousness emerged or offer elaborate morality tales that typically emphasize non-whites' culpability for societal problems and small victories for Aryanism (see also Blee 2002). The storytelling cues others to offer similar tales as mutual reinforcement of white power norms. Talk also defines racial boundaries and the parameters of white power lifestyles. Stridently racist jokes provide a language for activists to communicate ideological themes (Billig 2001). Activists we spoke to also find these parties to be safe places where they not only express white power ideals but explore, question, and clarify specific features of white power identity. Additionally, the multigenerational character of many WPM parties means that younger activists can interact with veterans who share stories of their white power activities and visions.

Another type of free space created by the WPM is organized on a much broader scale than the home or local contexts and draws otherwise unconnected members and groups into more extensive webs of white power culture. Aryan "conferences" and "congresses" draw members from a variety of WPM groups for fellowshiping and support. Intentional Aryan communities are being established to provide long-term havens for stigmatized Aryans to live together and sustain "pure" Aryan culture. Music concerts and festivals are the largest, most elaborate, and well-known across the WPM (Anti-Defamation League 2002). In each of these spaces, members whose activism may otherwise be limited to the private orbits of home and networks of friends find entrée into wider movement networks where they can learn the full extent to which their claims and ideals are shared by others (Scott 1990). These events are among the few places where movement activists can experience, in relative freedom from stigma and political repression, a large, extended community of white power adherents that exemplify the qualities of the "racially-cleansed" society they imagine.

Events such as the Aryan Nations Congress⁵, Christian Identity Conference, and White Christian Heritage Festival stress the “normality” of extreme racism and provide attendees the opportunity to express these sentiments. Seminars are usually offered on movement ideology, recruitment strategies, and, sometimes, guerilla warfare. Racist rituals are often performed such as singing racialized hymns, wearing white power regalia, sacred cross lightings, and commitment ceremonies. One Aryan Nations member explains the crosscutting networks and the inspirational character of ritual participation.

I'm so glad to see folks from all over the U.S, and even comrades from Europe . . . it's during these [Congresses] that we really get to share in fellowship and white solidarity . . . it's a great sight when you have your racial brothers show up for an event like this . . . and when it's time to light the swastika well that's what really inspires me. . . . (AN activist, 7/23/98)

A small number of intentional Aryan communities developed over the last few decades are organized as model Aryan societies. They contain as few as a dozen members to around 100 activists and are located across the country. In recent years the most prominent have been the 346 acre National Alliance grounds near Hillsboro, West Virginia, and Elohim City, a 1,000 acre white separatist community in eastern Oklahoma. These communities typically exclude non-whites, house Aryan worship centers, archives of white power literature and paraphernalia. They are also hubs for white power networking as activists outside the communities often pilgrimage to them to experience an active Aryan settlement or as a way station for those traveling or eluding authorities (Hamm 2002).

Since the late-1990s, white power music concerts have become the largest and most prominent free space gatherings among WPM members. *Hammerfest*, which is sponsored by the skinhead group Hammerskin Nation, and *Nordic Fest*, which is organized by Imperial Klans of America occur annually and reportedly draw between 300 and 600 activists (Anti-Defamation League 2002). They typically feature between 8 and 12 bands, speeches from WPM leaders, white power merchandise vendors, and an array of WPM ritual. Organizers limit attendance to WPM sympathizers to insulate attendees from

⁵ Legal actions against by local civil rights activists and the Southern Poverty Law Center stripped Aryan Nations of its compound in 2000, forcing a hiatus on the annual events. However, in late-June 2003, approximately 75 activists from Aryan Nations, KKK, National Socialist Movement, and White Revolution reorganized the World Congress in a state park near the former Aryan Nations compound (Huus 2003). More recently, an Aryan Nations faction located in Lincoln, Alabama is now hosting a World Congress.

authorities and counterprotesters. The festivals are often organized on remote, private lands, the exact location of which is announced via movement websites only days before the event. Such privacy ensures that these events provide opportunities for fellowshipping with large numbers of activist peers in a free space devoted solely to white power ideals. WPM members openly express and preserve Aryan ideals in the free spaces of concerts and festivals.

When you're at a show you get to do things you normally can't do and it just feels great to let go and be what you are [audience members are simultaneously sieg heiling during the performance]. You know, be a racist with everyone else who's here. We're all here because . . . we want to be somewhere where . . . you don't have to be ashamed. . . . It's hard to find places where you can do that. (Aryan musician/activist, 7/15/02)

Music events are especially important as one of the few settings where WPM activists participate in collective relationships anchored in Aryan ideals. Such free spaces help to sustain this marginalized movement culture.

VIRTUAL FREE SPACE

Cyberspace is also a free space where WPM members connect to movement networks and other dimensions of white power culture. But, it is unique in comparison to the real world spaces described above. The Internet offers only highly-mediated virtual interaction which affects the character of the connection between participants. Gamson (1996:35) and others note that because it lacks direct physical contact, the deeply-felt social relationships that anchor strong collective identities among social movement members may be hard to create in the virtual world of cyberspace. Without face to face relations, commitment and solidarity are weak. On the other hand, cyberspace also helps activists overcome obstacles to connecting and interacting with other movement participants and groups. The Internet offers a myriad of WPM websites where virtual networking is relatively unconstrained by limits of time and space. The Internet allows rapid and flexible forms of communication that may produce new forms of collective action not otherwise possible (Gamson 1996:36; see also Earl and Schussman 2003). But as we have already pointed out, to think of cyberspace as unrelated to the real world spaces that movements create is problematic. Recalling Wellman and Gulia (1998), "people do not neatly divide their worlds into two discrete sets: people seen in person and people contacted online. Rather, many community ties connect offline as well as online. It is the relationship between virtual and real world contexts that is the important thing . . ." (p. 182). Cyberspace does not stand alone or apart from real world activities, but rather is increasingly incorporated into how people access, organize, talk about, and support them.

Below, we describe the WPM's cyberpresence and then discuss the main qualities of the relationship between the WPM's real world and virtual free spaces. First, cyberspace is a means of accessing various dimensions of movement culture and coordinating real world movement activities enacted by WPM members. Second, WPM websites sustain movement narratives that are rooted in and parallel the real world contexts where those narratives are created and preserved. These uses help activists extend their real world interactions over time and space. The Internet is a means to freely express radical beliefs and to do so with greater frequency and with a multitude of otherwise unconnected WPM members. To be clear, we offer these qualities as analytic distinctions only; in actual practice they overlap significantly.

ACCESS AND COORDINATION

The WPM's cyberpresence is easily found. Internet keyword searches such as "Aryan" or "white power" lead to an array of movement websites where virulent racist and anti-Semitic views are touted. These websites enhance access to the movement in several ways. They supply online links to an array of members and groups, provide information about movement ideals and activities, are repositories for the movement's cultural items, and facilitate awareness about and entrée into real world spaces that might otherwise be unknown to many members.

WPM websites provide information about the movement in the form of music, literature, and Aryan symbolism (Schroer 2001) while real-time communication in chatrooms offers members the opportunity to create and sustain various virtual white power communities. According to Burris et al. (2000:215), these linkages show ". . . ties of affinity, paths of communication, tokens of mutual aid . . . and/or potential avenues of coordination." Information about the movement travels quickly and unimpeded across these cybernetworks and links are especially common between Klan and neo-Nazi skinhead websites both nationally and internationally (Burris et al. 2000). Websites hosted by major WPM organizations such as the National Alliance, Aryan Nations, and White Revolution provide basic information and literature about movement ideology, report on activities across movement branches, and distribute racist merchandise, even racist video games (e.g., Ghetto Blaster, Racial Holy War). Some sites intersect very closely with the home to enhance the racial socialization that occurs there. For instance, the *Women for Aryan Unity* (WAU) website offers parenting advice and a space for parents to discuss strategies for indoctrinating their children into the movement (see also Rogers and Litt 2004). There are cyber-newsletters and discussion groups organized around home schooling. Other virtual spaces are designed explicitly for children (and even, ostensibly, by children as in the case of Stormfront.org creator Don Black's 12-year old son who fronts Stormfrontkids.org). These pages provide racist crossword puzzles, coloring pages, and children's white power literature

(Blee 2004, 2002). During home visits and music events we often observed parents utilize web-based home schooling material such as coloring books, children's literature, and workbooks. All of these materials are easily accessible in cyberspace enabling WPM families to integrate them into their daily practices.

The array of websites and the activity that occurs on them offers adherents a sense that there is a community of like-minded people "out there" to connect and empathize with, and who freely support their adherence to white power ideals. Many members report their experiences with the WPM's webpresence as directly representing a much larger community of movement adherents than they would otherwise be aware of or able to contact. An Aryan Front member captures this common sentiment about the WPM's virtual community.

It keeps me connected, I don't have much free time to attend as many rallies or festivals as I'd like but emailing and the chatrooms and just the websites make me feel a lot less alone. . . . I think the Internet just makes it easier to be a racist when you know what's out there and how many other people all over the world are fighting for pretty much the same thing you are. . . . (Aryan Front activist, 6/27/04)

Similarly, a Southeastern Aryan Activist explains WPM websites as ". . . forums that help connect people to something larger that's out there" (Southeastern Aryan activist 12/15/02). That "something larger" is a sense of a collective movement community, accessibility to which has grown with the use of the Web as a virtual resource for tapping into movement groups and meeting members. Hoffman (1996:72) explains, the Internet presents opportunities for networking that simply did not exist before by offering a private form of communication and "bring[ing] distant isolated groups and individuals together." This community "out there" increasingly extends to international networks.

The Internet is the great equalizer when it comes to giving groups who are considered deviant a voice and letting them build connections with like-minded groups from across the globe. And, in a lot of cases it really works. Racists from all over the world are able to talk in email, chatrooms, literature is distributed all over. (Aryan Nations activist, 4/23/97)

Likewise, a Northern Hammerskin observes,

Since we've been able to access the Internet and email Hammers in other countries it's changed everything. We really see ourselves as part of an international movement. We communicate with each other on a regular basis, we coordinate events, we share our views on issues...The Internet

has helped us in the direction of seeing other skinheads as international brothers fighting for the same cause. I've been around a long time and it is really a lot different than before we had the Internet. We knew about [skinheads in other parts of the world], but it was more word of mouth and now we're actually working together. (Northern Hammerskin, 7/13/02)

In addition to providing access to and awareness of the WPM community "out there," the Web gives easy access to WPM cultural items and the Aryan aesthetic enacted daily by many members. Many websites host photo galleries filled with pictures of Aryan families including infants adorned with movement regalia (e.g., a baby Klan robe and hood or children posing for family portraits saluting Nazi-style wearing symbols of the movement) and displays of activists' tattoos composed of Aryan symbols such as the German iron cross, Confederate flag, portraits of Hitler, and slogans such as, "Supreme White Power." Also, Internet catalogs offer a variety of movement paraphernalia used to display membership such as clothing, music CDs, books, magazines, flags, patches, stickers, dolls, games, and other toys. A SoCal skinhead explains,

It's really cool how you can get all this shit off the net now. Ten years ago there really wasn't that much stuff you could get . . . but now you've got all the music, the clothes . . . I mean you can get pretty much anything you can think of. I bought my daughter a toy figure of Hitler from a movement website. I mean you're not going to find that at Wal-Mart. These products . . . they show how far we've come and how much possibility there is. . . . (Southern California skinhead, 6/14/04)

Cultural items such as these are interwoven with the spaces and routines of daily life, and their use may reduce the psychological distance between everyday experience and the virulent racism that marks movement membership (Futrell and Simi 2004).

WPM music is a popular vehicle to connect to movement culture. Music-based websites provide easy access to movement music in the form of racist songs (and lyrics) as MP3 downloads, CDs, streaming radio and video, as well as movement music paraphernalia. These websites are managed by groups that range from small two or three person Internet outlets that stock and distribute Aryan music to larger, independent labels that sign bands, produce recordings, sell merchandise, and organize live concerts, festivals, and mini-tours. Resistance Records and Free Your Mind Productions (formerly Panzerfaust) have the most prominent and elaborate Internet presence. Hundreds of titles from white power bands can be ordered through each organization's website along with access to 24-hour streaming radio, chatrooms for activists, and racist books, videos, jewelry, and clothing. The websites

display political lifestyle models of Aryan activism which viewers are encouraged to assimilate and reproduce. Resistance Records markets their own fanzine, *Resistance*, and clothing brand, "Aryan Wear," which combines Viking, skinhead, punk, and military influences. Such cultural displays of racism can help members reproduce the look and sensibilities that are presented.

Cyberspace also makes it possible to access a variety of real world free spaces that might otherwise be unknown to many members. Indeed, virtual white power websites and the activist networks they support are almost always tied to real world activities. Major WPM organizations, such as the National Alliance, Aryan Nations, and White Revolution promote a variety of national and regional gatherings using the Web. These include their own meetings as well as meetings of affiliated groups. Since most of these websites are linked to many others they offer quick and easy connections to a range of WPM groups sponsoring real world gatherings. Web surfers can find events categorized by locale and choose to attend those most convenient to them. Music events are also organized through the web. For instance, attendees of Aryan Fest 2004 were instructed via a password protected website to gather at a meeting place several miles from the event at times set by festival organizers where they were first scrutinized and then led to the site.

Cyberspace even enables some participants not physically attending to feel part of the action in these real world spaces. The Web helps them to vicariously participate by attending to reports about concerts in music forum groups by those who attended or by listening to streaming live broadcasts or recordings of the performances. For instance, Panzerfaust.com gave virtual entree to the 2004 AryanFest through live video streams and sound clips of the event. In this way access is spread beyond the concrete setting of the show to the virtual realm and back into real world contexts of the home or parties.

Web based forum groups are also a vehicle for entrance into real world movement spaces. Participants in forum groups often seek face-to-face connections with other members asking about the location of other WPM activists and meetings outside of cyberspace. The Internet allows organizers of established groups to quickly respond to those searching for these offline connections. In a typical exchange, a nascent WPM member asked,

Do any of you guys ever meet up in the real world? I live in Farmington. If any of you guys would like to get together, please feel free to contact me. (whitewarrior, downloaded from whiterevolution.com, 1/24/05)

Shortly thereafter, a membership coordinator for a state-wide WPM group responded.

White Revolution members actually get together quite often. Sometimes for cookouts . . . but mostly for our meetings. . . . White Revolution members will be having a meeting later on

in the month. . . . If you feel comfortable enough to send me your email. . . . I can put you on our email list so you can stay up to date on what we are doing. . . . (downloaded from whiterevolution.com, 1/24/05)

Also common are queries about potential off-line connections from those moving to a new area.

i am a skingirl planning on moving to south city in the middle of april and i dont know many people there. it would be good to meet some like minded folk. email me if you get some time. Hail Victory!! (skingirl14, downloaded from panzerfaust.com, 5/22/04)

As is typical, responses to this posting were quick and inviting, congratulating the skingirl on her new move and offering a number of ways to establish real world connections once she arrived. Activists make similar use of e-mail lists to organize small, regular local gatherings such as Bible study meetings, campouts, and parties.

White power culture is expressed and consumed through a wide array of information, activities, experiences, and cultural items that are available on the Internet. WPM activists use the Web as a tool to overcome obstacles by bridging movement members and groups on a consistent basis. Time and distance mean little in cyberspace and so communication and planning is less constrained. Movement websites thereby increase opportunities to access the movement and participate both virtually and in real world action settings. Both forms of participation are crucial to tying members to the movement as ties established in virtual spaces are most effective for identity building when they are supported by social linkages in physical settings (Diani 2000; Virnoche and Marx 1997).

MOVEMENT NARRATIVES

Free spaces are where movement narratives that are otherwise suppressed can be openly expressed and supported. Movement narratives are comprised of the stories activists tell about the injustices they face and the ways to fight them. According to Couto (1993:57), they “provide group members historical precedents of individual and collective resistance, alternative explanations of the groups’ condition, and an exposition of the virtues of a group that others consider virtueless.” The freedom to express hardcore racist beliefs is a key element of on-line interaction among WPMers and parallels the type of talk we observed in real world movement occasions. Web-based spaces add to the array of contexts where the WPM’s virulent racism can be expressed and supported. Virtual conversations abound with talk of violence against “racial enemies” and an Aryan future “cleansed” of homosexuals, nonwhites,

communists, and other “villains.” These conversations identify the social, physical, and moral boundaries that mark the WPM community against its foes.

Movement “fortifying myths” (Voss 1996:252), which celebrate the efficacy and persistence of the WPM are customary both in real world and on-line interaction. These stories focus on beliefs about the movement’s inevitable destiny and righteousness in the struggle for Aryan dominance and are validated and reciprocated in conversations. Also prominent are morality tales that focus on themes such as personal trauma that led members to their “racial awakening”—stories of becoming that mark tragic events as a trigger (Blee 2002:25-53). Questions such as, “When did you realize you hated niggers or what made you hate niggers?,” are popular and draw some of the most emotion-laden discussion among forum participants. For instance:

when i was in 1st grade i was dragged into the boys room by 4 niggers was beat to a pulp then pissed on by all 4 of them. . . . I learned to stand up for myself realize no I have good reason [to hate]. (TruckingSkinhead, downloaded on 11/29/04 from panzerfaust.com)

I always knew they were different . . . so I have never really been nonracist, I was a closet racist for quite a while . . . then some nigger threatened to slit my brothers throat, I saw the light and then last year I found this website and learned about the Zionists. . . . (whitewzealander, downloaded from panzerfaust.com 11/27/04)

Examples of model Aryan actions are also posted and become focal points of on-line conversations. For instance, a Free Your Mind Productions forum member posted a news article with photo images and a video clip on the first ever Gay Rights march in Belgrade, Yugoslav during which racist skinheads and Serbian nationalists violently attacked marchers causing several serious injuries. Users unanimously and enthusiastically hailed the violence, as a small sampling of the discussion demonstrates.

8fuckin8! thats the idea smashing queers and zog enforcers. (Viking88, downloaded from fymp.com, 2/13/04)

Damn those pics are great. If anyone deserves a good beating its that lot. Takes me back to the good ole days of my youth. Three cheers for the brothers taking care of business. . . . Fag bashing by moonlight oh god don't it feel so right. (Battlefront, downloaded from fymp.com, 2/13/04)

Talk in cyberforums is frequently in the form of advice, both sought and given, on topics ranging from ways to spread the movement’s messages, to more personal concerns such as parenting strategies, financial investments, or relationship problems. The latter is particularly prominent in forum groups, as

members often report finding their Aryanism leads to stigma and ostracism. Typically, these queries garner responses from other members with similar experiences who offer sympathy, support, and solutions. Many of the responses appear to come from veteran members looking to help a nascent recruit. The fraternal quality of these types of exchanges highlights the moral support and camaraderie found both in real world free spaces and on-line. This supportive context is also found by those just tapping into the movement. The following response to a query by a potential member about becoming more involved in the movement is typical of the welcome and solidarity to be found among Aryans on-line.

Mike, you are so welcome here. We have a lot of good people here, all happy to meet you, and converse with you. . . . There are people of all ages . . . and we are all of one mind . . . enjoy your participation on this forum . . . Lucy. (downloaded from whiterevolution.com, 7/29/04)

Likewise a new National Alliance member was greeted with similar support.

Way to go, Northland! Keep on spreading the word...Someone is bound to wake up and take notice when they see that they aren't alone in this mess. Congrats on joining the Alliance...Well done, friend, and welcome! Snowcat (downloaded from Stormfront.org, 4/20/04)

Those who are questioning their commitment to the movement also seek support on-line. These too are typically met with empathy and appeals to stay committed in the face of pressures to change their racist politics. As a typical response shows, the movement is glorified and mainstream culture is characterized as faulty.

You are right, NEVER change! It only shows what a debased society and how we have fallen. . . . The road we all have chosen is hard. . . . You sound like a great Woman, Salutes to you! Never change, You are right! (Rockabilly88, downloaded from resistance.com, 11/3/04)

The form of talk among activists is often scrutinized for depth of feeling and commitment to movement ideals. Much like the interaction we have observed in the WPM's real world free spaces, participants in on-line bulletin boards attend closely to how they present themselves. They rely upon a shared mode of expression about racial authenticity to determine others' veracity and allegiance to movement ideals. Articulation of a clear "racial loyalty" seems required. Commenting on real world interactions, Blee (2002) describes this as signals that convey a willingness to unite with other racially conscious Aryans and oppose those who seek to destroy the white race. Since skin color cannot be directly observed in cyberspace, signals of racial loyalty become even more

crucial and several symbolic codes are apparent. Postings on topics that might otherwise seem far removed from racist themes, such as advice on computer troubleshooting or cooking recipes, are replete with references of racial loyalty and movement participation. Messages often begin or close with phrases like “88” (8 stands for the eighth letter of the alphabet, 88 symbolizes “Heil Hitler”) or “Sieg Heil” to mark their connection to Aryanism. Names used in these forums are almost invariably pseudonyms that bear the mark of movement membership such as Aryan Warrior, White Resistance, or Mudslayer. Also, cybertalk is imbued with expressions of fraternity and kinship, with terms like “brother” and “sister” used to evoke a sense of solidarity that is at the core of WPM culture (see also Zickmund 2000).

EXTENDED INTERACTION AND SUPPORT

Cyberspace intersects with each type of real world free space that WPM activists create and extends the possibilities for interaction outside of face-to-face contexts. Virnoche and Marx (1997:88) refer to “virtual extensions” of interaction by members that move in and out of “shared physical interaction space.” This extension of interaction is a byproduct of the new forms of access, organization, and ongoing talk among members that cyberspace makes possible. Connection with other members, which would otherwise be limited to relatively short and infrequent encounters in the movement’s real world free spaces, continue in a variety of forms on the Web.

Most clearly there is an extension of interaction by time, distance, and the breadth of networks activists can be involved in. Connections between members do not end when a concert is over, a congress closes, or a party ends. Cyberspace is used as a bridge between members otherwise disconnected from one another outside of the movement’s periodic real world meetings. In real world spaces members exchange email addresses, discuss forum groups they participate in and websites they frequent in order to extend their relationships online. The breadth of the networks activists can be involved in is expanded as cyberspace allows links among a vast array of participants. In fact, the largest and most prominent real world movement activities, such as music events, are those with the most extensive web presence. Interaction around the WPM’s music scene (Futrell, Simi, and Gottschalk 2006; Back 2002) draws individual members into the widest array of movement networks and extends their participation into many dimensions of movement culture—e.g., other groups, branches of doctrine, and even globally as cyberspace helps to bridge members internationally. The face-to-face interaction that occurs around these music events most clearly extends back into cyberspace. Enthusiastic descriptions of movement events especially music shows are common and can affirm the affective bonds of community attendees claim to experience in these gatherings. The Internet forum group on Panzerfaust.com was replete with such descriptive exchanges following the 2004 Aryan Fest.

My bro N I went to our first Aryanfest this last weekend in phoenix. It was just mind blowing on the amount of brothers and sisters out there all living, breathing, and working for the cause. And here I thought we were alone LOL. . . . Living in todays society its nice to know that at any time I can log onto Panzerfaust and be connected to my brothers and sister's, and speak our minds on the cause at hand. For me its all of us getting together and fighting for the same common goal "THE PRESERVATION OF THE WHITE RACE." Once again thanks to Azvolksfront, and Panzerfaust Records for the weekend with my new family. Proudwhiteman (downloaded from panzerfaust.com 3/24/04)

I had a great time at Aryanfest! Everyone made WAU feel so welcome there and it was great to finally meet some folks face to face!!...It was nice to meet all of you guys and gals and keep up the great work cause you guys are doing great things!!!I can't wait to go to another VF sponsered event that is for sure! (PantheonEC, downloaded from panzerfaust.com, 2/3/04)

You all make it worth the work and frustration that goes with being a racist on a daily basis, thank you all very much.14/83/88. (skrewdriver, downloaded from panzerfaust.com, 2/4/04).

Embracing the Aryan aesthetic and conveying it to others on-line can help evoke feelings of solidarity that nurture a sense of identification with the collective "we" of the movement "community out there."

The degree to which many members are dependent upon these web forums for connection to the broader WPM community is especially apparent when the sites go down for technical upgrades or reorganization. For instance, upon the return of the Free Your Mind Productions forum board from a temporary hiatus, members expressed deep disappointment about the downtime and clear excitement about the board's return. A participant responding to others' frustrations over the downtime said,

Damn right!!! I kept clicking on it like someone with a broken remote. Lol Glad to see everyone back here. Kinda gives ya a warm feelin' knowing there's other people out there that think like you. (Spring Demon, 1/21/05, downloaded from freeyourmindproductions.com)

Another responded in kind,

Me to. I really enjoy posting in this forum with others who share my faith and knowledge of the true nature of race and

nation. Without it I get lonely. There is so much trash hurled at us through the media that is meant to isolate us. . . . I for one am glad to find a place like this. (AryanPrincess, 1/21/05, downloaded from fymp.com)

This sense of knowing that “there’s other people out there that think like you” is the critical point about what cyberspace offers to the WPM. For marginalized groups, the sense that there is a “community out there” to gear into and find support to bolster their beliefs against various pressures can be deeply meaningful (Blee 2002). Many of these forums offer both information and moral support on a variety of issues in ways that are also commonly reflected among many other web-based groups unrelated to the WPM such as menopause groups, recovering alcoholics, and drug addicts (Wellman and Gulia 1998:172). This support appears to be especially important in the online relationships between new and veteran activists. The virtual “community out there” is a reference point for newer members and veteran activists serve as role models of how to maintain involvement and faith in the movement over time. Creating and sustaining such commitments among members, particularly recruits, is a primary role of the WPM’s cyberpresence.

CONCLUSION

The Internet has added a layer of interaction opportunities to Aryan activists’ movement experiences. These virtual extensions of real world interactions are based on multiple forms of communication among members and result in adjunct virtual free spaces that complement the real world spaces where WPM culture is sustained. As Burris et al. (2000:232) point out, the Internet seems to hold a “special attraction for those in search of ‘virtual’ community to compensate for the lack of critical mass in their own [locale]” and to extend the otherwise sporadic involvement of members in the movement’s real world free spaces. Virtual free space allows activists to develop multi-dimensional connections to the movement, many of which intersect with activities in the home and in larger movement occasions.

The links between virtual and real world activities have been relatively unexamined due to a tendency to think of cyberspace interaction and traditional place-based interaction as separate and distinct social worlds (Wellman and Gulia 1998). What is clear is that cyberspace has changed the capacity to generate and sustain different types and larger numbers of social connections among many WPM members and groups. The WPM’s cyberpresence offers numerous ways for members to supplement their real world involvements with day-to-day virtual involvement in the movement. Aryan webpages offer a vast array of information, activities, and cultural items of the movement that members use to maintain connections to WPM culture when real world spaces are not available. Forum groups offer ways to connect directly with other

movement members, seek advice, and encourage each other to hold fast to their Aryan ideals. These experiences often intersect closely with a wide range of face-to-face movement occasions, from small informal gatherings of family and friends to large-scale, formally-organized events that draw movement members from across a variety of locales and networks. Thus, while the WPM's webpresence symbolizes a movement community "out there," real world settings offer the opportunities for participants to get together in meaningful face-to-face interaction. Together, these forms of interaction can help amplify and sustain participation. Links between real and virtual spaces are multi-directional and often deeply intertwined, feeding off each other in ways that allow activists opportunities for greater access, more efficient coordination, expression of movement narratives, and the extension of social interaction and support.

The opportunities to easily access a larger Aryan movement "community out there" that welcomes others into the fold inspires many members and nurtures commitments to Aryan ideals held by adherents located in disparate places. For radical, marginalized, high-risk movements such as the WPM, maintaining a cultural community of activists may be the outer limit of what is possible under present socio-cultural circumstances (Buechler 2000:208). Free space is difficult to create and sustain for the most marginalized movements such as the WPM as one of the ways authorities suppress them is by controlling the space where activists can connect.⁶ WPM members use cyberspace as a highly accessible repository for movement culture and a means to connect and extend interaction to encourage solidarity with an enduring community of white power believers. The Web is a stage on which to display a variety of cultural models that participants are encouraged to internalize as their own. The goal is to draw people into and sustain their connections with what is claimed as an authentic, radical, viable, and self-sustaining cultural alternative to a multi-ethnic, anti-Aryan society.

The expanded interactional opportunities that cyberspace provides increases the potential for participants to boost their involvement in both virtual and real world movement activities to the point of making Aryanism a focal point of their daily life, as many of our respondents do. This does not mean that all participants are influenced by the WPM's cyberculture in the same way at all

⁶ The WPM certainly faces limits on their real world free spaces. Music shows and conferences are always under threat of public exposure by authorities, counterprotests, and the media. Watchdog groups such as the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) have waged legal battles to eliminate some of the movement's free spaces. For example, in 2000, a civil suit by SPLC bankrupted Aryan Nations leader Richard Butler and forced the closure of the Aryan Nations compound in Hayden Lake, Idaho where congresses were held for many years.

times. Some members may never connect to others through the Web, while others may limit their involvement solely to WPM cyberculture by surfing WPM websites and lurking in cyberchats. But our observations indicate that virtual participation is just as likely to be an extension of real world free space activities. WPM activists craft virtual spaces that parallel the real world free spaces where the unconstrained expression of radical racism is encouraged and supported. The extended interaction available online provides an important bridge between members whose participation might otherwise be limited primarily to contact with local movement networks. It also means that participants can experience powerful, emotion-laden narratives, social support, and even mentoring from other members. Yet, the WPM's virtual spaces are much more accessible than many of the real world spaces which means that opportunities abound for net surfers to connect with Aryanism and be exposed to the WPM's radical racist and anti-Semitic presence.

Self change and collective identification with a group generally occurs gradually from interaction and exposure to their alternative style and narratives (Kiecolt 2000:117). As Lee and Leets (2002) observe, the more opportunities for exposure to racist narratives and experiences and the longer that exposure, the more deeply participants may identify with the WPM and the more likely they are to seek more real and virtual interactions with other adherents. Indeed, real world contacts often seek to extend relationships online and, as Wellman and Gulia (1998) find people who connect through the Web often go to great effort to make contact with this community offline. We need more research that explores this dual dynamic and the implications for the persistence of marginalized groups such as the WPM.

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