Nhetoric: Rhetorical power in cyberspace

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RHETORIC: RHETORICAL POWER IN CYBERSPACE

by

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Bachelor of Arts
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
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ABSTRACT

Nhetoric: Rhetorical Power in Cyberspace

by

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The Alpha group is a faction of the white supremacy movement that has established a virtual presence in cyberspace. Rhetorical strategies of agitation are practiced by the Alpha group on the World Wide Web in an effort to encourage visiting avatars to join the white supremacy movement. This study explores the rhetorical strategies of power and promulgation which Alpha uses in cyberspace. Analysis of Alpha’s digital discourse provides an opportunity to understand and evaluate the unique potentials that information technologies such as the World Wide Web bring to the rhetorical environment.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Rhetorically, political radicals and revolutionaries are characterized by their "rhetoric of confrontation." Yet it is the small group process which precedes confrontations that produces the new perceptions, evaluative standards, and commitments to concrete political actions controlling the confrontations (Chesebro, Cragan & McCullough, 1973, p. 136)

The preceding passage succinctly describes some of the significant concepts investigated in this thesis. This study examines the rhetorical strategies presented by a faction of the radical right, the Alpha group. Alphas' practice of confrontational rhetoric on the World Wide Web occurs in cyberspace, an environment which dramatically challenges traditional conceptions of communication behavior because of distinctive elements infused into the communicative process. The Web offers hate movements like Alpha a unique setting in which to mentally and physically congregate and allows groups to create contemporary renditions of antiquated racial themes. Rhetorical appeals of prejudice are dispersed into cyberspace to be read and contemplated by a potentially massive audience. The ability to reach potential members in their own homes enables radical groups like Alpha to slowly cultivate a committed membership of adherents willing
to engage in concrete political actions. The powerful rhetorical appeals that take place on
the Web incorporate both traditional and nontraditional strategies of attaining power
through agitation. This thesis focuses on strategies of power and agitation of the Alpha
group, critically evaluating the rhetorical messages with a combination of analytical tools.

Internet is rapidly becoming a predominant method of communication: “A current
conceit says that Internet time must be reckoned in dog years. The pace of change is so
fast that one year on the Internet is like seven years in any other medium” (McGrath,
1997, p. 82). From 1995 to 1996 Internet users doubled from 35.5 million to 70 million
(March, 1997, p. 1). These figures represent more than just isolated individuals checking
their e-mail or downloading games. Gaffin (1994) notes,

We do everything people do when people get together, but we do it with words on
computer screens, leaving our bodies behind. Millions of us have already built
communities where our identities co-mingle and interact electronically,

independent of local time or location. The way a few of us live now might be the

way a larger population will live, decades hence (p. ix).

As such projections become reality, scholars need to account for the impacts that such
communications conversions hold for participants in the communication process.

Operating in the spirit of Hart's (1994) call for boldness in the field of rhetorical
criticism, to “discover patterns in discourse where conventional wisdom says none should
exist” (p. 292), this thesis uncovers and critiques patterns of rhetorical discourse advanced
by a faction of the white supremacist movement on the World Wide Web. Hart’s precept
augers well for this study as there is little research available that analyzes the rhetoric of
white supremacy groups and even fewer studies which analyze hate group's rhetoric on the World Wide Web. Consequently, this study examines supremacists' rhetoric with traditional rhetorical tools of analysis and supplements these traditional approaches with alternative tools that account for the new context that cyberspace brings to the communication environment.

Discerning the persuasive potential available via channels of the Internet is expedited by focusing on Alpha's use of power and agitation strategies in cyberspace. Analyzing power strategies in cyberspace goes a long way toward increasing understanding of the relationship between communication and technology. Currently, "superficial understandings of the relations among communication, power and technology" (Deetz, 1990, p. 43) lead to erroneous assumptions by both policy makers and the public. This thesis attempts to illuminate the interconnected relation between communication, power and technology in cyberspace by outlining the process of computer-mediated communication as it occurs on the Web, providing critical tools for evaluating digital discourse and assessing its attributes. Detailed analysis of advances in communication technology is necessary as Deetz (1990) notes that "systems must be analyzed in light of a theory that can account for new forms of power" (p. 44).

Power is a useful concept for this study because power is an integral component of every human action. To gain power in a communication act requires the skillful use of all the available means of persuasion to achieve cognitive compliance by the audience. The newest advances in communication technology have paradoxically made possible new methods of attaining power, resulting in both domination and resistance. A detailed
investigation of conventional rhetorical strategies employed on the Web reveals a conception of both the rhetor and the audience that the rhetor seeks to influence. The study of rhetoric disseminated by social movements like Alpha provides academia with both an updated account of the status of white supremacy in America and a report of the rhetorical propensity developing in cyberspace.

The hate group Alpha is the focus used to develop an inquiry of Web-based rhetoric for a number of reasons. First, Alpha epitomizes the type of rhetoric employed by a growing number of white supremacy groups establishing a presence on the World Wide Web. Second, the Web represents a new area of interest for social movements seeking to increase membership. Third, the intense rhetorical messages produced by groups like Alpha on the Web yield provocative artifacts for rhetorical analysis. Web rhetoric displays new rhetorical potential when disseminated through cyberspace, enabling a revitalization of radical supremacist groups.

Definitions

The boundary of this study is established through an initial clarification of terms that serve as a foundation upon which the arguments in this paper are built.

**Rhetoric**

A justification for studying web-based communication through a rhetorical lens is effectively established by examining traditional and contemporary definitions of what scholars mean by “rhetoric.” Two thousand years ago, Aristotle stated that rhetoric is the utilization of the available means of persuasion. This fundamental definition of rhetoric
has weathered time so that at the 1970 National Developmental Conference on Rhetoric, parameters for what could be considered rhetorical studies were set:

Rhetorical criticism is to be identified by the kinds of questions posed by the critic.
The critic becomes rhetorical to the extent that he or she studies his/her subject in terms of its suasory potential or persuasive effect. So identified, rhetorical criticism may be applied to any human act, process, product, or artifact which, in the critic's view, may formulate, sustain, or modify attention, perceptions, attitudes or behavior. (Medhurst, 1993, p. xxxiii).

From antiquity to the modern era, rhetoric is the human act of persuasion. It is important to note that no qualifications are put on either of the two definitions set forth. Thus it is up to the critic to present an artifact for analysis which is intended to influence any number of potential recipients. Consequently, it is logical to include the World Wide Web as a potential sphere of rhetorical discourse.

Cyberspace

Gibson's (1984) book *Neuromancer*, establishes a generally accepted definition of cyberspace which continues to be recognized in literature and creates a conceptual vision of what cyberspace is. Cyberspace can best be described as:

a globally networked, computer-sustained, computer-accessed, and computer generated, multidimensional, artificial, or "virtual" reality. In this reality, to which every computer is a window, seen or heard objects are neither physical nor, necessarily, representations of physical objects but are, rather, in form, character and action, made up of data, of pure information. This information derives in part
from the operations of the natural, physical world, but for the most part it derives from the immense traffic of information that constitute human enterprise in science, art, business, and culture (Gibson, 1984, p. 122).

This definition gives the critic an idea of how to find cyberspace, through the “window” of a computer screen. For the purpose of this study, cyberspace currently represents the arena where users of information technology can access the Internet, including the World Wide Web.

**Power**

Pragmatically, power is a status that individuals and groups acquire through various sources. For the purpose of this analysis, power refers to the potential and actual influence by which an individual or group exerts control over other individuals or groups. King (1987) offers useful criteria for evaluating existing power in communication exchanges. First, a majority of power that is experienced can be described as group power (King, 1987, p. 4). Second, groups are created by communication. King (1987) asserts that "any account of the relationship between power and communication demands a theoretical perspective that includes three things: 1. An image of society; 2. A perspective on the nature of the tension between the individual and the social order; 3. A view of the role of discourse in communal life" (King, 1987, p. 4).

**Tying it all together: Rhetoric**

The word Rhetoric was coined to account for persuasive messages that are initially disseminated through cyberspace. Synthesizing rhetoric with a common metaphor for Internet communication allows critics to distinguish which type of artifact they will be
analyzing, specifying those messages which occur in and through cyberspace. While the initial message may be produced and distributed digitally, the repercussions of rhetoric extend far outside the cyberspace universe. To illustrate, consider viewing a persuasive ad or slogan on the Web. While you personally may be dissuaded or induced to the assertion attempted, the rhetorical appeal influences you if but for only a fleeting moment, forcing you to make a choice, considering its legitimate claim to your attention span. If the influence of the message is great enough, the message has the potential to reach others via individuals with whom you may discuss the particular site you viewed. Documenting all the possible effects of a single rhetorical record is as impossible as determining all possible outcomes of a televised program. However, studies such as this thesis provide fundamental assessments of effects furnishing a springboard for future research.

Review of Literature

At the time of this writing, little literature exists which analyzes the impact of Web-based communication on social movements' rhetorical practices. Consequently, this section of the thesis outlines a variety of texts which are useful in establishing a base from which to approach and analyze the rhetoric of white supremacy in cyberspace. Literature used in this study comes from four distinct areas; research involving hate groups, cyberspace titles, texts concerning power, and titles in rhetorical criticism of social movements.

Research of the Radical Right

Critically evaluating current white supremacist groups like Alpha requires a basic
understanding of the tradition upon which white supremacists base and build their belief systems. An excellent introduction to the history of white supremacy in the United States is provided by Ridgeway's (1995) "Blood in the Face: The Ku Klux Klan, Aryan Nations, Nazi Skinheads, and the Rise of the New White Culture." This text chronicles the rise of white supremacy in the United States, paying special attention to the various aspects of the movement. Ridgeway outlines five eras of white supremacy, beginning with the 1865 post-Civil War period to the present.

Following a similar chronological progression of inquiry, Novick's (1995) "White Lies White Power: The Fight Against White Supremacy and Reactionary Violence," argues that racist institutional policies have pervaded American politics, subtly legitimizing (and often playing a direct role in) white supremacy. Novick's text provides many examples of technology's direct role in efficient transmission of powerful racial messages. Novick alludes to the important role of technological advances which have resulted in both growing numbers of white racial adherents and acts of agitation.

A brief examination of the radical right's use of the Internet is detailed by Burghart (1996) in his article "CyberH@te: A Reappraisal" Burghart examines various factions of the radical right which use Internet technology to spread hate messages. Burghart argues that the impacts of Internet communication are overstated but worthy of continued inquiry.

Within the field of communication there is little research which looks at rhetorical strategies of white supremacy actors. What does exist establishes a basic understanding of racist discourse in the United States. Chief among these studies is Baskerville's (1963)
article, "The Cross and the Flag: Evangelists of the Far Right." While Baskerville’s article focuses on the radical right as an anticommunist coalition, it is important to note that many of the groups that Baskerville examines have ties to white supremacy organizations and that current white supremacy groups like Alpha also declares anticommunist policies. Baskerville’s article provides an initial introduction to some prominent names and organizations representing the radical right.

Leather’s (1968) "Fundamentalism of the Radical Right" also provides historical insight into the rhetoric of radical right organizations. Leather’s (1968) work outlines early rhetorical strategies used by radical right activists. Many of these strategies continue to be used to this day by groups like Alpha. Leather's (1968) discusses the strategy of creating a reactionary value system, a frequently used tactic by supremacist groups like Alpha. Leathers (1968) notes that the strategy is “self perpetuating, since there is no way to verify or disprove the propositions that spring from these values” (Leathers, 1968, p. 257). Reactionary value systems are particularly apt to show up on Webpages because of the relative ease of creating a Webpage. Often “truths” disseminated through cyberspace are difficult to disprove before reaching audiences of receivers who may not have the time or desire to verify the information being presented.

Cyberspace Literature

The task of detailing Web-based communication’s impact on rhetorical strategies is served by examining some prominent texts that help to describe the environment of cyberspace. "Recent information technics . . . are currently said to have reached a critical mass such that profound societal transformation is imminent" (Boal, 1995, p. 6).
Conclusions such as these abound in current literature, alluding to the importance that information technologies like the Web hold for human communication. Fidler's (1997) "MediaMorphosis" provides a chronological framework of historical advancements in human communication technology. Fidler (1997) constructs a schema by advancing the argument that the human race has gone through three distinct metamorphoses: the spoken word, the written word and, currently the third MediaMorphosis, digital language.

Delineating the three various epochs of the communication experience is useful to this study for a number of reasons. First, by examining previous historical communicative phases and the corresponding power relationships that came to dominate each time period, this paper proposes a hypothesis of current communication and power relationships based on empirical evidence in the historical record. Secondly, the current channels of digital communication are the product of their ancestral forms of communication and thus scholars can understand the future by exploring the past from which current communication methods have evolved.

In his aptly titled book "Being Digital," Negroponte (1995) muses on the current and future applications of digital communication. Negroponte (1995) states that "the medium is no longer the message" (p. 81). In this implied negation of McLuhan's "the medium is the message," Negroponte asserts that digital transmission allows the same message code to be translated through numerous different channels. Recipients of a message have the option of audible, textual or graphical modes of receiving the same message. In addition, the digital transmission of messages through cyberspace channels
speeds up the process of message transmission, thus facilitating the communication process.

A second significant argument of Negroponte’s is that “in the post-information age, we often have an audience the size of one” (Negroponte, 1995, p. 164). In essence, the producers of messages have the ability to construct highly tailored messages with an audience's preconceptions and value systems always at the forefront of the message. Digital language empowers the digital rhetor to work persuasive appeals to new levels. The actual mechanisms of digital dissemination are also important to conceptualize in that the method of communication tells much about the communication process itself.

Advancement in the mechanisms of dissemination of messages is laid out in Pavlik’s (1996) book “New Media Technology.” Initially Pavlik (1996) outlines the four fundamental functions of new media: production, distribution, display and storage. Production technologies are the tools that are used for gathering and processing information. Examples of these technologies include computers and electronic photography. Pavlik (1996) notes that digital production methods have enabled the world to gather an increasing amount of information in new and diverse ways (Pavlik, 1996, p. 2). Distribution, the second defining characteristic of the digital age takes a variety of formats from land-based telecommunications to satellite communication and wireless transmission. The digitization of language has annihilated time and space to bring messages to receivers at light speed. Digitalization is an important development for the very process of communication. Humans with the appropriate skills are now able to communicate with people in other parts of the world at a relatively economical cost,
accessing cultures that up to this point have been unreachable. However, the increased abilities to communicate are not without their consequences. Those who are unable to afford the necessary technology to communicate in this forum have a discursive disadvantage and are effectively shut out from participation.

Strate, Jacobson and Gibson (1996), provide an excellent anthology on computer-mediated communication, covering a broad range of topical areas of application, ranging from cyberfitness to cybersex. Their text advances a discussion of digital applications by providing a number of empirical examples of how new technologies are being used to communicate.

Power and Communication

Power is evident in every human transaction. King (1987) presents comprehensive documentation of power relationships in his book, “Power and Communication.” King’s (1987) argument rests on two major premises; first, most power is group power, and second, groups are created via communication (King, p. 4). These two seemingly modest suppositions have enormous implications for the communication process. The interdependence between groups and individuals is a crucial concept. Groups comprise individuals who relinquish some level of autonomy in order to facilitate the realization of shared objectives, creating an ongoing symbiotic relationship. The group relies on the individual membership for strength and legitimacy and the individual relies on the group for security and success in achieving goals. A breakdown in legitimacy on either side represents a break with the progress toward realization of common goals and possibly the continuation of the group itself. Secondly, if indeed communication is the method by
which groups are socially constructed, the method of communication chosen directly influences both the efficiency of group construction and the continuation of the group's existence. These two points illustrate the importance of both successful communication and individual satisfaction.

**Rhetorical Literature**

Zarefsky (1991) argues that rhetoric is situational. He explains that assessments of rhetoric, “must be made somehow in the context of the situation” (Zarefsky, 1991, p. 4). Thus, to truly understand the composition of a rhetorical artifact, the critic must grasp the setting in which a communication act occurs. Rhetoric occurs in a variety of situations. Universal methods of studying rhetoric prove to be not only inexact but limiting. Medhurst (1991) elaborates, “Once confined to platform oratory or, at the extremes to didactic literature, public address now came to stand for any communication directed to the general public without regard for the medium or channel used” (p. xxxv). These passages from leading rhetoricians in the field of communication work to legitimize a rhetorical study concerned with the rhetoric of social movements on the Web. Examining web-based communication through rhetorical lenses is not only legitimate, but desirable for the field of communication.

**Proceeding with a rhetorical analysis requires the selection of analytical tools.** This thesis utilizes two prominent texts in rhetorical criticism to evaluate the rhetoric of the Alpha group on the World Wide Web. The first text used is the previously mentioned “Power and Communication.” In addition, this study utilizes the social movements text authored by Bowers, Ochs and Jensen (1993). The text, “The Rhetoric of Agitation and
Control," provides much useful criteria which this study employs to evaluate the agitative strategies of the Alpha group. Of particular use to this study are Bowers, Ochs and Jensen's definitions of rhetoric, agitation, control and power. Also, special attention is given to the rhetoric of agitation and the specific strategies utilized by group to promulgate their persuasive messages.

**Theoretical Literature**

This study supplements traditional rhetorical theory with objective standards to analyze Websites provided by Grassian (1997) in her article "Thinking Critically About World Wide Web Resources." In addition to an objective criterion for analyzing Websites, traditional studies in the social sciences are used to establish a subjective method of critically analyzing Web persuasion. The primary source outside the field relevant to this study is the functionalist theory of socially constructed reality presented by Berger and Luckman (1966) in their "The Social Construction of Reality." This sociological treatise serves as the integral block upon which facets of a preliminary analytical tools are built because it posits language as a determining force in human understanding. Updating Berger and Luckman's hypothesis of socially constructed reality to account for the digitization of language is useful in understanding the rhetorical effects possible through rhetoric. Adding to the sociological considerations of Berger and Luckman, this thesis synthesizes the psychological assessments of Cantril's (1963) "The Psychology of Social Movements," to assist in analyzing Web rhetoric from a psychological standpoint. Finally, Bormann's (1972) fantasy theme analysis is employed to assist in tracking the various racial themes which chain out in Alpha's Webpage.
There are a number of constraints which information technologies introduce to the communication process, well documented in the reviewed literature. Specifically, World Wide Web applications are currently available only to those members of society who possess enough discretionary income to afford the required computer work stations or television modifications that would allow them to partake in the flow of communication. Doheny-Farina (1996) provides relevant evidence of information gaps which reliance on information technologies presents to communities. Authors Brook and Boal (1995) provide similar critiques of the social and cultural impacts of computer technology in their book “Resisting the Virtual Life: The Culture and Politics of Information.”

Method

With an understanding of the process and terminology of Web-based communication, this thesis moves to a historical analysis of technological advancements and their corresponding impacts on communication competency. In chapter two, this study offers a brief history of white supremacy groups in the United States. Special emphasis is given to previous rhetorical strategy that groups such as the Ku Klux Klan has utilized in an attempt to convince in group and out group members of the legitimacy of their ideology. Next, a chronological overview is outlined demarcating the progressive advancements in communication technology and the corresponding changes in the strategies of dissenting movements of agitators.

Chapter three outlines existing tools for analyzing rhetorical discourse of movements through the work of King (1987) and Bowers, Ochs and Jensen (1991). Tools
for analysis are developed by turning to rhetorical criticism of social movement discourse. Specifically King's (1987) "Power and Communication" and Bower, Ochs and Jensen's (1991) "Rhetoric of Agitation and Control" provide the necessary criteria that will be used to analyze the white supremacist group Alpha on the Web. Aspects of traditional theory which do not account for the unique features of cyberspace will be augmented by synthesizing aspects of both new and old theoretical perspectives. Upon these factors, the analytical tools presented in this thesis attempt to account for the variable of feedback in the computer-mediated exchanges by assessing such factors as the "hit ratio" (or number of times the page has been visited) that a particular Webpage experiences. The criteria established is applied to the Alpha white supremacy Website to assess the viability of such methods of analysis.

Chapter four applies the rhetorical theory of King (1987) and Bowers, Ochs and Jensen (1991) to the Alpha white supremacy Website. Using the previously mentioned rhetorical tools of analysis, this thesis uncovers rhetorical patterns typical of white supremacy groups agitating on the World Wide Web. Traditional tools are supplemented with objective and subjective modes of evaluation. Grassian's (1996) "Thinking Critically about World Wide Web Resources" is melded with other industry standards such as those utilized in technical journals. On a subjective level, the model asks critics to evaluate what the function of the Website appears to be. The purpose of a Website can be established when the critic determines whether a Website reinforces or challenges the dominant social reality (Berger and Luckman, 1966). This evaluative process requires critics to insert their own arbitrary framework and should include a summation of what the critic understands.
social reality to be, how the particular Website upholds this reality or challenges it and consequentially, what this means for society. The analytical tool developed is applied to the Alpha white supremacy Website to assess the rhetorical power of white power groups and the impact which cyberspace has on the successful spread of hate groups' messages.

Chapter five speculates, in a broader sense, how information technologies such as the Web might alter previous methods of social change. Such speculation is drawn out by examining the elemental components of social change; individual, communities, culture and control. Chapter five concludes the thesis with a summary of the findings of this study. Limitations of the study are analyzed and suggestions forwarded for future research.
CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

On Wednesday, February 20, 1998, two men approached a woman's clinic in a suburb of Las Vegas, Nevada, with what was then suspected to be military-grade anthrax. The two men were quickly apprehended and arrested by Federal agents. Because one of the men, Larry Wayne Harris, a microbiologist from Lancaster, Ohio, was linked to neo-Nazi and white-supremacist organizations, national attention focused on biological terrorism and the ideology of movements of the radical right. Brian Levin (1998), director of the Center on Hate and Extremism at Stockton College in Pomona, N.J., said he knew of three similar cases, and, he predicted, "There will be more" (Kasindorf, 1998, p. A1). "The extremist right-wing movement in this country is more and more interested in using biological weapons for mass destruction," (Kasindorf, 1998, p. A1) concludes Potok (1998), spokesmen for the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Alabama, an organization that monitors militias and hate groups.

The radical right has a lengthy relationship with both politics and technological advancements. Chronicling a history of the radical right aids in understanding the current state of the white supremacist movement's growing use of communication technology as an effective promotion strategy. This chapter provides a brief history of
radical right supremacist groups in the United States with special attention given to how technological advancements have been exploited by supremacist groups to bring hate messages to the nation. Empirical relationships are provided, substantiating the functional impact that advancements in communication technology have had for the rhetorical agendas of supremacist groups. The second half of this chapter briefly analyzes the history of technological advancements and the corresponding influence that technologies have for the rhetoric of agitation and control.

A History of Hate

Hate rhetoric is not limited to a people or group. Throughout history there have been murders, wars and crimes against humanity carried out because of intrinsic differences which an "other" group exhibits. Most often, groups of people are targeted based on their ethnicity and religious associations. A particularly virulent form of hate speech with a long-standing tradition in United States history is the rhetoric of radical right white supremacists. What follows is a brief history of white supremacy movements from the Ku Klux Klan to current supremacist groups such as the Aryan Nation and Alpha.

Roots of racism run deep in American history. Ethnocentrism has historically pervaded American politics and often been at the core of governmental institutions in the United States. Institutional support for racist policies characterizes the various eras of the supremacist movement. Novick (1995) argues that racism has a political precedent in the republic's institutions, providing an ideological foundation which white supremacists have
used to form and justify a vision of the "ideal" society. Early state supported and enforced slavery has created a tradition of racist ideology whose specter is continually revisited by supremacists seeking a return to the "good old days" of racial segregation and inequality.

The interconnected interest of supremacist groups and governmental actors has been tracked by Novick (1995) who argues that white supremacist movements have functioned as a rogue mercenary appendage of the state. Novick (1995) argues that supremacist groups have frequently been unofficially called upon to quell reform minded minority groups. From local law enforcement to the members of the federal government, a racist element has infiltrated American political institutions enforcing the will of a dominant white majority. Novick (1995) evidences the historical commitment to racism by governmental institutions: "white supremacy was enshrined in the U.S. Constitution through such mechanisms as the prohibition on abolishing slave trade and the counting of African slaves as 3/5 of a person" (p. 37). This tradition continued into the twentieth century with Jim Crow laws and segregation laws. Explicit support for racial politics has spawned a wide variety of radical movements whose main goal is to assure the continued racial dominance of a "white Aryan race."

Ridgeway (1995) outlines five "eras" of far-right political movements, including the Ku Klux Klan and the Posse Comitatus. Examining these five "eras" or "phases" of the far right illuminates a pattern of rise and decline in political power that the supremacist movement has realized throughout its long history.

The "First Era" of radical right organization, occurred during a post civil War reconstruction era. Outlaw armies of downtrodden whites formed "Klans" of confederate
sympathizers and practiced acts of terrorism against Blacks in the South. The earliest embodiment of a formal Ku Klux Klan (KKK) was founded in 1866 as a fraternal society among former Confederate officers. The end of the Civil War brought a legal end to slavery, yet a transition to an "equal society" was far from a reality in the South. From local to state politics there was a defiant sentiment to return daily life to the previously existing arrangements of white control over Black labor and a dominant white society (Novick, 1995, p. 39). Old Southern autocratic attempts to reconstruct institutional inequality was initially struck down by the Federal Government in an effort to maintain the illusion of equality. Dispossessed of state power, political leaders in the South turned to the KKK to enact overt repression that the state was legally incapable of enforcing (Novick, 1995, p. 39). Campaigns of terror worked to instill fear in Blacks who were disarmed and abandoned by white abolitionists at the conclusion of the Civil War.

In 1876 the Republican party and the federal government agreed to recognize "state's rights." According to Novick (1995) this "meant accepting the re-enslavement of Blacks through tenant-farming and sharecropping, and the disenfranchisement of Blacks through discriminatory legislation and economic coercion" (p. 40). With the power of state segregation policies the KKK was no longer needed and waned in size and strength. Members of the KKK during the first era of white supremacy became dispersed and were relatively inactive until the political atmosphere began to change, requiring a renewal of white repression.

The dawn of the twentieth century brought a wave of Black resistance as agitators like Ida Wells Barnett lobbied against lynching. Groups like the NAACP formed and
movements of solidarity began among oppressed Blacks, organized by charismatic leaders like W. E. B. Dubois. Blacks began to organize and practice militant self defense when subjected to physical violence. Additionally, a massive exodus of Blacks to northern states in tandem with a wave of European immigrants served as a cheap labor force for the Industrial Revolution creating competition in the job market. On the heels of a the First World War, Novick (1995) relates,

the U.S. state needed a movement among white people that would mobilize and discipline the white population, promote “Americanism,” and keep Blacks and other oppressed people in their place. Ultimately, this would strengthen the hand of the state. In response to this need, the KKK was reorganized as a national organization, after a forty-year hiatus, with the blessings of the highest ranks of the federal government (p. 42).

This response is described as the “Second Era” of white supremacy, representing an “above ground” political phase that attracted millions of members (Ridgeway, 1995, p. 38).

The basic tenets of the “new” Klan included an agenda of antiblack and anti-Catholic terrorism. During the early 1920s, this agenda was expanded to include the myth of an “international Jewish conspiracy” during a time when antagonism and fear toward naturalized aliens and immigrants were at a height. A demonization of Jewish ethnic groups and other minorities was facilitated by the reinterpretation of Christianity into theological dogma called Christian Identity. A narrative of religious revisionism purported that Anglo-Saxons were the Lost Tribe of Israel and that people of color and Jews were
inferiors, a scourge sent to earth by God (Ridgeway, 1995). According to the doctrine of Christian Identity, "true Aryans" were identifiable by the ability to blush, to have "blood in the face," the sign of racial purity (Ridgeway, 1995, p. 35).

Nativism served as a more subdued metaphor that state and cultural leaders could espouse, enabling for tempered support of radical right politics. A cultural aspect of institutionalized racism drew from an opposition to everything foreign, epitomized by the call for closed borders, open hatred of immigrant groups, and support for the abolition of amendments to the U.S. Constitution aimed at a more egalitarian Republic.

A critical aspect of this era was the successful mobilizing aspect that technology advancements imparted to the radical right. The development of cinema and short movies were utilized by supremacists to market racist ideology to mass audiences. According to Novick (1995),

President Woodrow Wilson arranged for a private viewing of the first full-length, multi-reel feature film from Hollywood, the highly racial "Birth of a Nation" which depicted the Klan as a favorable societal force and portrayed a pro-secessionist view of the Civil War. The movie was a hit, drawing massive crowds and grossing the then phenomenal sum of eighteen million dollars. In addition to the economic success, the film "worked persuasively to organize white people to support racist violence, portraying Black people as a threat to white womanhood and civilization. President Wilson gave the film his seal of approval after viewing it" (p. 43).

Cinematic channels were augmented by the development of mass marketing techniques used by the Klan to "sell its solutions to white Americans worried about uppity Blacks,
communist immigrants, liquor and crime in the streets (and) emancipated women” (Novick, 1995, p. 44). Door to door selling of the Klan was complimented by “ostensibly negative publicity and media coverage. Press “exposes” glamorized and served to build up the Klan. The multifaceted media blitz practiced by white supremacists resulted in hundreds of applications for membership into the KKK clipped out of articles and advertisements in the mainstream press (Novick, 1995, p. 46).

The impact of mass channels of communication on the successful recruitment of new white supremacists was dramatic. In addition to the thousands of new members, the radical right added to its numbers, a climate of political sympathy with racial politics was inculcated in the national psyche of millions of Americans. The winds of the First and Second World Wars diverted national attention to the hegemonic threats of Nazi Germany and exposed the nation to the realities of unchecked naked aggression against minority groups. Many members of the radical right went off to war, splintering the movement.

The “Third Era” of white supremacy began as a violent reactionary phase against the civil rights movement of the 1960s. This “Third Era” was a reactionary “rearguard” response to the civil rights movement of the 1960s and the ensuing legislation enacted to protect minority groups (Ridgeway, 1995, p. 38). Growing numbers of Blacks began to organize and protest segregation policies. This expanding Black movement was met with a counter offensive salvo by revitalized supremacist organizations, most notably the KKK. A heterogeneously factioned white supremacist movement embraced active members with positions in all levels of state and local government. Southern States were active in attempts to maintain the status quo of racial segregation. Anderson (1995) explains that,
“Southern reasons for maintaining white supremacy were always the same. They talked of maintaining the ‘Southern Way of Life,’ and of ‘Christian Values.’ They were for ‘states’ rights,’ and against ‘federal interference,’ ‘race mongrelization’,” (p. 31). Defending traditional white control in the South was achieved by exercising a full range of agitative tactics including intimidation, assault, and murder. Federal Civil Rights legislation officially delegitimized the policies and laws of the radical right in the South. Violent supremacists were jailed with prominent leaders of the various supremacist movements and the movement was forced underground.

In the “Fourth Era,” public relations became the focus of supremacist groups as high profile proponents like David Duke became visible and vocally successful political figures. The fourth phase occurred during the 1970s and consisted of a regrouping of the radical right in tandem with a strategic “whitewash” public relations campaign. Increasing numbers of politicians from the Democratic Party defected to the Republican Party. The crescendo of institutionalized political consolidation toward a racist platform is found in Richard Nixon’s “silent majority” and “southern strategy” whose aim was to “incorporate George Wallace’s supporters into the Republican electorate” (Novick, 1995, p. 67). Novick argues that a strategy of damage control attempted to rebuild the Klan on “more modern, but still openly racialist lines” (Novick, 1995, p. 67). Restructuring the various white supremacist factions was a job left to individuals with backgrounds in military intelligence and counterinsurgency. Many of the prominent leaders of white supremacy got their experience from military training during the fourth era. Examples include Bill Wilkinson (a Naval Intelligence operative), David Duke (who served with USAID in
Laos), Louis Beam, Tom Metzger, Virgil Griffin and Glenn Miller, all former soldiers or marines (Novick, 1995, p. 68).

Ridgeway (1995) describes the current “Fifth Era” as “an aggressive above board political movement” (p. 38) which can be identified by a wide range of agitative techniques from involvement in politics to entrance into the information age with World Wide Webpages. The fifth phase of the supremacist movement started in the 1980s and represents the current direction of supremacist movements. Supremacists have adapted their image, toned down their outlandish outfits and donned the attire of the typical American citizen. The epitome of successful adaptation by supremacists reached new levels with the election of David Duke to represent the state of Louisiana in the House of Representatives in 1989.

The current white supremacist movement is made up of a wide variety of sub-movements which network to create a national web of ideological support. Some prominent names of these groups include, The Knights of the KKK, White Aryan Resistance, The Aryan Nations, The Order, The American Front, The National Alliance, The Minutemen, The Liberty Lobby, and the Populist Party. There is a bewildering array of interconnections existing between these various groups and an even larger number of factional groups which act as subsets of these larger organizations.

While the names of the movement vary, the goals remain consistent: total and complete racial domination for the Aryan race at any cost. Novick (1995) advises of the necessity for scrutinizing white power groups. The movement wields real physical power which white supremacist groups are expected to exercise. Novick (1995) warns that
“advocates of white power should not be ignored, dismissed, or taken lightly. They have the power to inflict damage on Blacks, Latinos, Asians, Native Americans, Jews, lesbians and gay men” (p. 7). Since the 1980s, white supremacist groups have been emboldened to commit a growing number of violent attacks on minority groups. Examples of the violence include the “Order’s” (a white supremacy group) campaign of murders and church burnings throughout the country. According to Ridgeway (1995), “between 1980 and 1986 there were nearly 3,000 violent racist incidents, including 138 attempted or successful bombings” (p. 42). In the 1990s supremacist groups have taken on new names and carried out more physical acts of terrorism including the killing of an Ethiopian man in Portland, Oregon.

The white supremacist movement has become increasingly organized and sophisticated. Its existence has become impossible to ignore as members of these groups grab local and national headlines with their acts of terror. Many within supremacist groups have likened the resurgence to revolutionary warfare. “This is revolution,” Bob Miles¹, a leading white supremacy activist, told visitors at his farm in 1986. “Like Johnny Appleseed, we've sowed the seeds” (Ridgeway, 1995, p. 42).

New “seeds” of the supremacist revolution are of the electronic variety and illustrate the continuing technological sophistication of white supremacy. Cyberspace allows for more efficient methods of disseminating hate messages. From secret gatherings

¹Ridgeway (1995) documents that Miles was a former Republican Party leader who headed up George Wallace's 1968 presidential campaign. Miles became a grand dragon of the Ku Klux Klan in Michigan before moving on to become a powerful coordinator between various radical right groups. Currently, Miles is a leading activist and theoretician promoting the Fifth Era of the Ku Klux Klan.
to pamphlet distribution, to mass media channels such as cable television shows and finally the Internet, the forward march of white supremacy has endeavored to stay abreast of all new technological advancements. Burghart (1996) notes that, "the white supremacist movement has long been on the crest of technological change" (p. 12). White radical "revolutionary" warriors press on seeking new frontiers to dominate, namely cyberspace. A progression into digital communication strategies may very well represent a new sixth phase of the radical right. Cyberspace is an area that has realized an explosion of subsets of white supremacy whose members set up shop and create safe havens in which racist communication takes place. These havens of hate allow white supremacists to disseminate racial messages in new and complex ways. Through mechanisms like the graphically based World Wide Web, supremacists are able to bypass laws and restrictions and reach people across national boundaries in their homes. Webpages act as electronic billboards displaying hate rhetoric to interested parties. Illustrating the utility of Internet communication to the agenda of supremacist aspirations, Burghart (1996) relates the position of Tony McAleer a new-Nazi skinhead who formerly ran the Canadian Liberty Net who explains:

The Internet is great for communication. You can send electronic mail or chat with somebody anywhere in the world on the Internet for free. You can post messages on electronic bulletin boards where potentially millions of people can read your information. This information can be posted anonymously or with a pseudonym. You can debate with anti-racists or just post Racist ideology and information. There are no limits to free speech on the Internet, anything goes. There are places
on the Internet where you can find information, books, literature, etc. . . . that you
can download to your computer and spit them out on your printer (p. 13).

The allure of cyberspace has attracted a massive proliferation of various white supremacy
groups starting with the Stormfront group and continuing with groups like Alpha.

The Alpha Group: A Brief History of Hate

Alpha was founded in late 1993 by Ryan Wilson to replace the defunct United
States Of America Nationalist Party (USANP), a group which successfully agitated for
five years. A political environment encouraging equality for minority groups, a
motivational factor in the formation of the now defunct USANP, is the social reality which
Alpha was formed to challenge. Alpha embraces a pan-Aryan outlook and attempts to act
as the "catalyst within a world wide stagnating movement" (Alpha, 1998 p. 1, available:
http://www.alpha.index.html). Alpha is not a Ku Klux Klan, Nazi or religious supported
organization. However, Alpha admittedly adheres to many of the teachings and beliefs of
these organizations. Politically, Alpha characterizes its views in line with National
Socialism which represents the desire for a "strong healthy race" free to prosper in an
environment which allows "spiritual and physical growth." Notably, Alpha defines itself as
the "racial/political/paramilitary organization of the Aryan people" (Alpha, 1998, p. 1
available: http://www.alpha.index.html). Alpha maintains that all avenues of activism must
be enacted to reach its goals of white racial dominance.

The first and primary activity that Alpha currently concerns itself with is the Alpha
Web site, a task requiring contributions from both leaders and members. Wilson is the
Identifiable leader of the group and he often speaks on behalf of all members of the organization, through regular on-line newsletters. Membership comprises an unidentified network of presumably white members who assist in continually updating and maintaining the Alpha site. Members contribute both their skills and orations to a collective presentation of Alpha ideology. Staunch support is pledged by members who reference the large number of hours and dedication required to establish and maintain the Website. The founders believe that Alpha represents the finest Website of its kind on the Internet. Alpha explains that “the posting of information and the creation of an on-line, or virtual, library containing many of the inspirational works of our people is the primary operation as of this moment” (Alpha, 1998 p. 1, available; http://www.alpha.index.html). Recently technical problems forced Alpha off-line for a number of months but the movement has labored and succeeded in finding a permanent Internet provider to establish stability.

Understanding why the World Wide Web proves especially beneficial to radical groups like Alpha is facilitated by an explanation of technology’s role in advancing the interests of power seeking groups throughout history. Gaining an appreciation for the powerful influence that technological advancements hold for the rhetoric of social movements is facilitated by examining the history of technology’s impact on persuasion. The following chronology briefly provides evidence of the dramatic role which technological advancements have for the persuasive process.

Communication Technology’s History with Social Movements

This section outlines a brief historical overview of the impact that technology has
on language, specifically the influence of the World Wide Web (WWW), and the abilities that new technologies like the Web offer to social movements. A conceptualization of these new technologies enables a more thorough criticism of the nature and impact of technological advancement on rhetorical communication of groups such as the white supremacists.

Language is the fundamental building block of human communication. Examining the composition of language reflects values, norms and an image of the society creating the language. The digitalization of language, especially the development of hypermedia, has enabled the reframing of rhetorical arguments at the base of white supremacist doctrine. This section begins by outlining three phases of technological advancements in language transmission. Such historical observations are useful in that technology and language have a shared symbiotic relationship. Appreciating this relationship allows for an understanding of society’s relationship to technological change.

Organizations ranging from established institutions to groups of agitators have an inseparable relationship with technological advancements. The relationship has worked to subtly legitimize technological advances as a necessary step in human progress. From the printing press to the Internet, societies have raced forward to design and implement more efficient time saving methods of communication. Current shifts in communicative methods are unmistakable in the case of Web communication. The World Wide Web daily asserts its legitimacy as heir to a growingly global audience. From local television news channels to political contenders, the Web has become a communicative necessity. The increasing reliance upon digital channels of communication such as Web technology,
promise monumental changes for communicative practices.

As increasing numbers of Americans depend on Websites as their primary source of information, daily communication patterns change. A reliance on new technology as a knowledge source, change typical patterns in communication practices. Rather than turn on the television or pick up a newspaper, Americans are going online to gain information about the world around them. These changes in information gathering practices persuade people to shift their daily habits and learn new rules of interaction in cyberspace.

Throughout history, humans have learned to adapt to new methods of communication. Exploring the impacts of historical advancements in communication technology is useful to this study for a number of reasons. First, such explorations establish an empirical record of human proclivities for communicative change. Secondly, understanding where human inclinations have previously led, this study can deduce what Web communication holds for the rhetorical strategies of radical social movements. Thus this study looks to the past to understand what the future promises.

The reconceptualization of space which new media technology fosters necessitates detailed discussion of possible social and cultural impacts. The available channels which senders have at their disposal to disseminate persuasive messages have increased dramatically in the last hundred years. Medhurst (1990) initiates a discussion of technology's interminable relationship with humanity with his observation that "the dawn of the technological age is co-terminus with the birth of humanity's most advanced technological instrument: language" (p. ix). Indeed, historical records substantiate that language is the defining element in human being's evolution.
This section outlines three significant periods of communication technology's development and details the corresponding change which resulted. The idea of three disparate stages in communication was first forwarded by Walter Ong who outlines a chronology of primary oral cultures followed with writing and finally electronic media. Fidler (1997) recasts this evolutionary process as MediaMorphosis. A brief discussion of each successive stage follows.

Spoken Language: The First MediaMorphosis

The first MediaMorphosis occurred with the rise of language. Fidler (1997) relates that humans began to mimic animals to satisfy an innate inner need for personal expression (p. 55). With language in their repertoire, humans gained the infinite variables of both space and time. With more time at their disposal, human innovation became a powerful transforming agent and propelled individuals to seek safety in numbers, leading to the establishment of groups. Once in groups, humans communicated with each, other establishing a correlation between rules of talking and the rules of thinking. The development of language and its corresponding rules mutually affected the ways in which humans organized their individual lives. Commonly referred to as social reality construction, language forced humans to develop rules and roles which developed over time into established power hierarchies. Increasingly, technical forms of conveying language (through the development of linguistic rules etc.) facilitated the reception of messages, requiring less effort to understand what the "other" was attempting to convey. Increases in efficient transfer and reception methods proved beneficial in increasing a shared conception of reality. Advances proved to be a paradox in that those who utilized
the messages relinquished some power to those who designed the rules of "the game."

**Written Language: The Second MediaMorphosis**

The second MediaMorphosis, written language, served to transform collective and individual consciousness even further, impacting the formation and action of social groups. One of the most significant results of written language was that space became increasingly transcended as knowledge was more easily shared. In turn, cultures became increasingly stable and intensely more stratified between those who had a mastery of the written language and those who did not.

The written word allowed for production of light and portable documents, resulting great social change. The hallmark of progression to a new social order was the typographic age which began in the fifteenth century and solidified with Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the printing press. The printing press altered a 6,000-year-old tradition in written language which, up to the development of the press, had been for elites only. The ability to rapidly disseminate written messages drastically altered the ability of groups to attract new members and question the social order.

Transformations wrought by written language effectively made the world smaller as messages could more easily be shared across oceans and borders. Consequences of these changes culminated in what Fidler (1997) calls the "fulfillment of unmet needs" (p. 65). Some of the needs met were standardization of written language and rules of grammar and syntax (Fidler, 1997, p. 66). Additionally, written language and the printing press enabled literacy of the masses (Fidler, 1997, p. 66) and cracks in the foundation of control over information which elites had maintained for centuries. The capability to
understand and personalize the day's events by increasingly larger segments of society
created a politically conscious world. This political consciousness instilled individuals
with the belief that they had the ability to change the world around them.

Written language opened many previously closed areas of public life to people of
the world. As written methods of disseminating messages became increasingly prolific,
information became increasingly relied upon as a commodity and information became a
prerequisite to power. Institutional demand for efficiency required a more rapid form of
transferring messages. Thus, the electronic age was born.

**Digital Language: The Third Mediamorphosis**

Preceding Metamorphoses set the stage for the current communication
transformations known as the third mediamorphosis of the electronic age of
communication. According to Fidler (1997), what distinguishes the electronic age from
the language and written eras is the marriage of electricity with language resulting in
"breathtaking advancements" (p. 79). Beginning with the telegraph, electronic
advancements including the telephone, radio, television and computer have involved
electronic transfer of language so that efficient message delivery could take place between
machines. The electronic aspect of the digital epoch differs from previous advancements
in that the actual languages being used are physically different and indiscernible to humans
because of its electronic nature. Electronic transfer offers many advancements to the
communication process, including increased temporal and spatial efficiency in
disseminating and receiving messages.

Increased proficiency of technologies of the third metamorphoses "have
contributed to a blindingly rapid transformation and expansion of human communication system that is unprecedented in human history" (Fidler, 1997, p. 107). At no other period in human history has information been both so abundant and accessible. The impact of these advancements on the process of communication cannot be overstated. Fidler (1997) states that in a short period of time powerful technological change has affected "nearly every individual, society, and culture" (p. 107). Hence society stands on the threshold of major changes in the process and potential of everyday communication transactions.

Electronic advancements in communication technology from the telephone to television have already dramatically changed the conception of what it means to communicate. Gumpert and Drucker (1996) point out that

Every media development alters the availability and nature of traditional private and public places. The newspaper influenced and defined, in part, the barbershop, the village green and the café. The telephone shaped the nature of courtship. Radio altered the experiences of the living room, the car and the doctor's office.

The computer keyboard opens up distant retrievable vistas. (p. 31)

In the midst of determining what effect mass communication methods have on the communication process, a new advancement has rapidly infiltrated the communication technology, digital language.

The digitalization of language into 1's and 0's dramatically propels the transmission capability and response time of the typical communication act. The arena where this newest advance in communication occurs is in the non-space of cyberspace. Interlocutors find themselves as nomads in an electronic frontier, wandering from Website to Website.
and in many instances setting up electronic communities of individuals who share similar interests. A nomadic condition is not unique to contemporary society. Previous metamorphoses highlight humanity’s desire for progress which often paradoxically comes at odds with the independent trait of the human race. Not all citizens of the world can collectively take technological strides forward together. Benniger (1997) points out that, “Throughout history, the trend to more centralized means of mass control has been continually countered by innovations-analogous in form to the infrastructure of cyberspace— to technologize and rationalize interpersonal communication and distributed control” (p. 52). At the close of the twentieth century these advancements include the “tendency toward convergence among the various media, a convergence which encompasses the computer as well” (Strate, Jacobson and Gibson, 1997, p. 5).

The Web represents the epitome of media consolidation. World Wide Webpages offer visitors all the capabilities of previous electronic communication (telephony, audible and visual elements) with the additional opportunity for instantaneous interaction. Interactivity is achieved through the use of hyperlinks which enables users to propel themselves forward and backward until the desired location is found. Gibson (1997) suggests that such navigational ability through documents “encourage(s) vastly different habits of thought than does traditional print” (p. 249).

New habits in communication practices present social actors with the necessity to adapt rhetoric in order to remain a viable force in the public realm. As social movements adjust their rhetorical strategies to include new frontiers, scholars must revise the way in which they study current directions of discourse. One approach is to use established
rhetorical criticism to evaluate the potential effects of Web-based communication. There is a large body of literature which assists critics in analyzing power and the rhetoric of social movements. The next chapter will focus on two particular texts as the basis for a methodology to analyze the rhetoric of white supremacy in cyberspace and a synthesis of other studies which aids in accounting for the unique characteristics which World Wide Web discourse brings to the communication exchange.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the method used in analyzing the Alpha white supremacy groups’ rhetorical appeals on the World Wide Web. The method of analysis consists of three parts. The first two aspects are composed of traditional studies of power and agitation while the third section is a synthesis of various analytical tools from the social sciences. The first traditional method of analysis employed by this study is King’s (1987) design for analyzing power. King’s (1987) theoretical constructs for identifying power are coupled with the analytical tools of Bowers, Ochs and Jensen (1993) who outline criteria for identifying various stages and strategies of social movement evolution. Traditional rhetorical methods of analysis will be fortified with a synthesis of analytical tools which includes the combined theories of Berger and Luckman (1967), Bormann (1972) and Cantril (1963), helping to account for the unique environment of cyberspace.

A Theory of Power: Strategies and Tactics

King (1987) provides a theoretical framework with which to assess discursive acts of power. King (1987) arranges power communication into various components of the rhetorical environment. Power of speakers, audiences and groups are contextualized by exploring each of the actors and the corresponding strategies employed to achieve power.
Speaker and group strategies will be the focus of this study as these two components of power communication are the significant factors within a social movement. Prior to examining speaker and group strategies, a theoretical foundation of power is next established.

A theoretical survey of power is initiated with the introduction of two premises which undergird the majority of power relations. First, power becomes manifest as a direct result of groups. Secondly, groups exercising power are created by discourse (King, 1987, p. 4). While individuals may appear to be in control of a group, individual power emanates from a group conferring legitimacy to the group's leader(s). Realizing that much power is group power is a warrant for studying social movements. The second premise of power is also important. If groups exerting power are created by discourse, then studying this discourse becomes an integral interpretational aid for understanding both group and the resulting manifestations of power the group exhibits. In addition to the two premises of power just discussed, any account of power communication must determine an image of society, the nature of tension between individual and the social order, and the role of discourse in group routines (King, 1987, p. 4). Once these basic suppositions are determined, an analysis of power turns to the relationship between speaker and group, examining the discursive strategies utilized to attain and preserve power.

The first step in analyzing discursive power of a speaker is to examine speaker attributes. A primary component of a speaker's ability is what King (1987) refers to as "speaker status" (p. 9). Speaker status is crucial to leadership effectiveness that a speaker
conveys both to group members and outside forces and is a product of the speaker’s relationship to his or her community. Respect, affection and trust are all essential prerequisites to a speaker’s positive status ranking (King, 1987, p. 9). Once a speaker has attained an advantageous ethos level with an audience, other tactics are utilized to maintain a position of control over an audience.

The shrewd usage of variables in the communication environment, which King (1987) calls “visual grammar” (p. 10), is a common tactic used by speakers to convey power. The skillful use of an environment’s available components enables the sage speaker to sustain an audience’s attention and many times, win members of an audience to sympathize with the rhetor. King (1987) notes that, “special architecture and technology combine to increase the speaker’s control of an audience” (p. 10). A focus on technological components is useful to this study because cyberspace offers speakers unique possibilities for the effective use of visual grammar, establishing a unique strategical architecture. King (1987) stresses that effective visual grammar is realized when speakers combine knowledge of audience behaviors with aesthetic form rather than logical content. Specific examples of aesthetic form include “climactic introductions, use of praise and blame and the use of binary contrasts” (King, 1987, p. 11).

Another speaker tactic for achieving legitimate power is the strategic use of language. The relative power of a speaker is expressed through word choices that reflect the speaker’s position in relation to the audience. Emphasizing certain types of vocabulary enables the speaker to devise rules of interaction and social practices for potential group members. The use of language to define rules and roles of group interaction puts the
speaker in a powerful position as creator of both policy and doctrine that will guide the group’s decisions and actions.

Nonverbal power is a third mainstay in the arsenal of power seeking speakers. Substantial research has indicated that nonverbal communication is the most significant mechanism through which humans acquire meaning. Mehrabian (1972) suggests that ninety-three percent of the emotional influence of messages is a direct product of nonverbal sources. Following these findings, King (1987) explains that “the nonverbal dimension of power is expressed in objects, in relational behavior, and in the deliberate manipulation of symbols” (p. 17). Nonverbal communication reveals much about a group’s dynamics. Comprehending speaker power is revealed when examining the nonverbal cues which a speaker uses to control the environment in which his/her message takes place. With a solid understanding of the discursive style of group leaders, a critical eye can be turned to general group strategies of power communication.

A symbiotic relationship exists between the speaker and audience for the speaker relies on the continued support of the audience to maintain power and control while the audience relies on a speaker for ideological leadership and reaffirmation. Consequently, strategies used by speakers to sway audiences are numerous. King (1987) argues that “strategy is embodied in messages. It is communication to an opponent by means of mutually shared symbols” (p. 27). The communication must also be conveyed to group members to maintain group cohesion. Thus, analyzing the rhetorical messages of a group for identifiable strategies of power is a first step in critically evaluating a social movement.

The first power strategy is manipulating context or defining the rhetorical
situation to suit the needs of the group. Context is altered when groups are able to “change the persuasiveness of an argument or appeal by expanding or diminishing the context in which a group of listeners think about it” (King, 1987, p. 29). Essentially, trivial events are rhetorically reconstituted into pivotal turning points. King (1987) refers to these events as synecdoches or small events which point to a larger trend. When employed skillfully the group is able to create exigencies in the audience’s mind, encouraging them to enlist and participate in the “cause.”

Contraction is a second power strategy which movements may employ. Contraction is identified by the tendency to reduce a problem to finite parts. Systemic inconsistencies are too overwhelming for any movement to effectively deal with and thus reductionist tendencies enable a piecemeal approach to problem solving for group leaders and members. Rather than focusing on reasons for existing situations, contraction power strategies divert attention to symptoms (King, 1987, p. 31). Leaders practicing contraction, isolate problems to a few discrete manageable targets, and call for immediate implementation of self-determined solutions (King, 1987, p. 32). Contraction strategies exhibit powerful options because they move groups to immediate action as opposed to drawn out debate.

Accommodation is a third strategy of power communication. Accommodation relies on temporary postponement of overt conflict in an attempt to portray stability. Accommodation strategies work to lull opposing actors into a false sense of security. During armistice periods, groups engage in an underground fortification phase, rallying group members to prepare for the next offensive action. King (1987) illustrates that the
supposed "period of peace" between races in the South which purportedly existed between World War I and 1954 was, in actuality, a period of negative peace (p. 34). Through an accommodation strategy, blatant supremacy lapsed while segregationist policies flourished. Institutional accommodation of minority groups in which the establishment attempts to quell potential uprisings is an example of accommodation.

A fourth power strategy is the practice of destroying legitimacy of opposition groups. Destroying legitimacy of another group is accomplished by justifying action based on reference to a prior moral authority (King, 1987, p. 34). When groups are able to rationalize their acts by taking a moral high ground based on tradition, they gain the power of precedent. Essentially, groups are able to defend a version of the status quo, delegitimizing opposing groups as "radicals" who seek to change an established standard operating procedure. If groups are able to convince their members that they are an ideological representation of the founding "father's" belief system, movements can gain commitment by members.

Techniques which effectively destroy legitimacy of opposing groups are called manipulation of context. Manipulation of context can be assisted through the creative structuring of syntax which occurs when groups set abstract rules to control individuals' behavior (King, 1987, p. 35). In context manipulation, quantitative evaluations are used to evaluate people. King (1987) argues that this a dehumanizing tactic because such methods "refuses to come to grips with individual experience, impose a bogus uniformity of products that does not exist, and treats individuals as functions" (p. 38). A strategy of context manipulation includes using statistics to prove arguments.
Specific group strategies also include episodic and systemic mobilization. Episodic mobilization strategies involve a short term convening of group members to achieve a brief agenda of objectives. Systemic mobilization, on the other hand, is recognizable by a movement's call for long range and far reaching goals (King, 1987, p. 41). Determining the mobilization strategy of a movement is a useful tool in assessing the potential impact that a movement may have for society.

Criterions for evaluating communicative power are useful for evaluating white supremacist groups which are evolving through discourse on the World Wide Web. This study identifies the image of society that the Alpha group holds, the narrative tensions created by supremacist groups and the role that discourse plays in the movement's routines. Once the basic attributes of the Alpha group have been outlined, the analysis turns to examining the strategies of predominant "speakers" observable in the Web page, namely speaker statuses, use of visual grammar, use of language, and nonverbal applications. With speaker attributes catalogued, specific power strategies are tracked including context manipulation, contraction, accommodation, legitimacy destruction and context manipulation. Finally the power analysis concludes by determining whether the Alpha movement is attempting episodic or systemic mobilization.

A Theory of Social Movements: Rhetoric of Agitation

The importance of power to group creation and maintenance is acknowledged by Bowers, Ochs and Jensen (1993) who provide an essential criterion for classifying the character of a particular social movement. Bowers, Ochs and Jensen (1993) add to a
theoretical understanding of power by outlining five types of social power: reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, referent power, and expert power. Reward power exists when an individual or group possesses certain resources which it can confer as a reward to those that follow the lead of the individual or group. Coercive power exists when a group threatens violence to maintain control. Legitimate power is a social contract of sorts where individuals relinquish power to a group or individual in exchange for perceived membership benefits. Referential power occurs when an individual identifies with the ideologies of another individual or group. When a group or institution has significant quantities of valuable resources such as information or status, the group often possesses expert power.

In addition to providing a power classification system, Bowers, Ochs and Jensen (1993) delineate major components of social movement communication practices by creating a foundation of key definitions upon which a theoretical framework for analyzing agitator and establishment action is laid. Initially, the text identifies an operational definition of rhetoric as “the rationale of instrumental symbolic behavior” (Bowers, Ochs and Jensen, 1993, p. 1). Rhetoric is a symbolic sequence of communicative interchanges that influence people to do something. It is worth noting that nonverbal aspects of discourse are just as important to the rhetorical act as actual speech, emphasizing the instrumental characteristic of rhetorical messages. The authors distinguish instrumental rhetoric from expressive and consummatory behavior (Bowers, Ochs and Jensen, 1993, p. 2) when they explain that instrumental rhetoric intrinsically seeks an effect or outcome to follow the message. Additionally, the authors separate ideological statements from
instrumental statements because of the defining aspect of ideological messages. For the purpose of this paper, both instrumental and ideological functions of rhetoric will be examined because ideological designations arguably contain as much persuasive power as calls to action. Social activists like Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael have pointed out that the ability to define people, situations and ideas strongly correlates to social power. A powerful rhetorical strategy of social movements is to define “other” groups in an objectionable manner. Thus, an initial step to analyzing the rhetoric of social movements is to identify the instrumental and ideological functions of typical rhetorical practices.

There are three defining characteristics of social movements that will be used by this analysis in order to classify the nature of white supremacist’s rhetorical appeals. First, social movements are commonly composed of groups working outside the normal decision-making establishment, meaning that social movements typically lack legislative and enforcement powers of the institutions they oppose. Secondly, social movements are identifiable by the agenda of significant social change which they seek to generate. Finally, social movements are recognizable by the willingness to engage in resistance that transcends conventional discourse. Like Bowers, Ochs and Jensen (1993), who emphasize the non or extra-verbal acts of agitators, this analysis examines the nonverbal symbolic messages occurring in cyberspace to assess the rhetorical effect of computer generated persuasion.

Next this analysis determines if the agitation demonstrated by white supremacist groups is based on vertical or lateral deviance (Bower, Ochs and Jensen, 1993, p. 7). Agitation based on vertical deviance takes place when a group accepts the basic values of
established institutions but disagree on the distribution of power or benefits as allocated by establishment actors (Bowers, Ochs and Jensen, 1993, p. 7). Agitation based on lateral deviance occurs when social movements oppose the dominant value system itself. While Bowers, Ochs and Jensen (1993) differentiate these two types of agitation, this analysis will perform permutations between the two styles of agitation, establishing that members of the same group can at different times practice both styles of agitation. While one style may dominate, groups like the white supremacist movement pick beneficial aspects of the dominant value system to embrace and simultaneously reject other aspects of the value system itself as morally suspect.

Identifying specific stratagems of white supremacists is a task which Bowers, Ochs and Jensen (1993) facilitate by presenting a hierarchical progression of movement strategies. The first stage in agitation is petition in which agitators approach the establishment to seek desired social change. The petition stage is a crucial prerequisite to further social action for the social movement to continue as a legitimate force. If establishment actors are able to prove that agitators did not first attempt to go through the “proper channels,” then the movement has the potential of losing credibility. When the petition stage fails to meet the agenda of a social movement, more advanced strategies need to be employed or the movement will wither and die.

The second stage of agitation is promulgation which amounts to a massive public relations campaign utilizing all available channels of communication to advertise the movement and recruit members. A sufficient base of involved members enables leaders of social movements to solidify the group into a cohesive working unit. Social movements
function effectively when group members are collectively moving toward the same ends. Accomplishing solidification is an extensive and ongoing program consisting of construction of “in group” language and symbols, slogans, in group publications and thematic music (Bowers, Ochs and Jensen, 1993, p. 24).

Advanced strategies of social movements include the technique of polarization. This tactic creates a definitive dichotomy between those members in the social movement and those who are not members. In essence an “Us vs. Them” mentality is cultivated by group leaders to assure member dedication to the agenda of the movement. Uncommitted members are pressured at this stage to assimilate into the group ideology or to become the enemy by joining ranks with the status quo. Neutral members are also undesirable to leadership for if the movement is to succeed there must be absolute internal homogeneity. Establishing a polarized consciousness among group members is accomplished by exploiting flag issues and flag individuals (Bowers, Ochs and Jensen, 1993, p. 34). Flagging individuals and issues as a “threat” to group members, the collective energies of the movement can be channeled at the “common foe.” Expediting this process is the invention of derogatory jargon for the chosen “enemy” (Bowers, Ochs and Jensen, 1993, p. 36). A specialized vocabulary, usually consisting of highly connotative words, enables the group to share a common language building internal cohesion.

With a solid nucleus of dedicated members, the movement’s next step is to project its persuasive appeals to larger audiences. The first step in this process is nonviolent resistance to status quo policies. A nonviolent approach includes violations of what are considered unjust laws and acting out in ways which violate social norms but would be
acceptable in the ideal world of the agitators. Nonviolent resistance is almost always symbolic and establishes tangible fortifications to the ideology of the movement (Bowers, Ochs and Jensen, 1993, p. 40). A key factor for successful nonviolent campaigns is a commitment to persisting in nonviolent agitation (Bowers, Ochs and Jensen, 1993, p. 40). Nonviolent agitators present problems for status quo actors because they are highly visible to the public yet do not present a viable target legitimately thwarted by control mechanisms. While a key component of a successful movement, nonviolent strategies often require years to effect perceptible change. To hasten social change, many movements progress to more extreme agitative strategies.

Escalation and confrontation are the attempts by movements to increase internal tensions within status quo minded actors. An initial tactic within this phase is the tendency to artificially inflate membership numbers in an attempt to confront the establishment with a credible threat. With the illusion of large numbers of potential agitators, rumors of threatened disruption (Bowers, Ochs and Jensen, 1993, p. 42) are spread further preparing the establishment for widespread agitation.

Confrontation takes place with four identifiable tactics of defiance. Movements acting out, display “offensive” nonverbal behavior including unusual apparel, symbolic gestures, emotive posters and heavy symbol usage. Secondly, verbal obscenities are employed to attract attention. In addition “nonnegotiable demands” are advanced to preclude viable options of quiescing the movement. Finally, random acts of token violence are practiced to establish the willingness of the activists to physically commit to the realization of their agenda. The execution of confrontation tactics is often performed.

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by different aspects of the movement in what Bowers, Ochs and Jensen (1993) call a “Gandhi and Guerilla” approach. A “Gandhi” faction of the movement practices confrontation by nonviolent assertions of legitimacy while the “Guerilla” faction is committed to acts of violence in an attempt to destroy the establishment (Bowers, Ochs and Jensen, 1993, p. 43). A Gandhi approach is a rhetorical presentation of symbolic and instrumental behavior while Guerilla tactics are non rhetorical because the actions are aggressive (Bowers, Ochs and Jensen, 1993, p. 43).

The works of both King (1987) and Bowers, Ochs and Jensen (1993) furnish substantial criteria with which to evaluate the rhetoric of social movements, yet fail to include tools to assess the unique aspects of agitation occurring in cyberspace. Bowers, Ochs and Jensen (1993) assume the utilization of the mass media in their establishment of potential promulgation tactics while this study focuses on the World Wide Web. Traditional mass media channels are dramatically different from new information technologies and change the contours of a “typical” agitative exchange. Additionally, Bowers, Ochs and Jensen (1993) create a framework for analyzing movements that assumes physical presence which agitation in cyberspace does not require. While it may be possible to “cookie-cut” rhetorical appeals into the criteria of King (1987) and Bowers, Ochs and Jensen (1993), it is hardly desirable. The World Wide Web dramatically changes the context in which rhetoric can occur and as such, introduces gaps in the traditional methods of understanding the rhetoric of social movements. In response to existing deficiencies, this study develops a synthesis of the preceding works with contemporary
theories to develop new tools of analysis to account for the unique nature of rhetorical messages.

Cyber-Synthesis: An Approach to Analyzing Rhetoric in Cyberspace

As no current tools of analysis exist\(^2\) which enable researchers to specifically critique the rhetoric found in Web sites, this study advances a tool of analysis for this purpose that simultaneously takes objective and subjective applications into consideration. Perry (1996) illustrates both the effects of new communication formats along with the need for new methods of studying these effects in the field of communication when he notes:

> technology often has made it easier for audiences to respond to the media. As these tendencies accelerate, new models will be necessary. For example, traditional models that draw a strict separation between source and receiver and that downplay the role of audience reactions as mere "feedback" may no longer describe mass communication processes adequately. (p. 44)

There are currently objective industry standards that are utilized to assess the appeal and effectiveness of Websites. One of the most prominent is the UCLA College Library "Standards For Thinking Critically About Top Websites." Some of that institution's criteria are utilized in this analysis. For the purpose of practical application

\(^2\)While specific Web models are lacking there are many tools of analyzing specific rhetorical statements. Hart (1971) examines the concept of doctrine by detailing the strategy of doctrinal speakers, "apparently knowing that their listeners already 'have the answers'...doctrinal speakers elaborate anxieties and only rarely discuss solutions"(p. 252).
there are certain aspects that a critic can look for when analyzing a site. Grassian (1996), of UCLA, presents several key areas that can be used to evaluate Webpages. Specifically, this study focuses on the areas of content and evaluation, source and date, and structure.

First, in evaluating content, the critic can pursue the following questions: What is the purpose of the Webpage? Who is the audience? With a basic understanding of the content of a Website, the philosophy of the Webmaster becomes discernible. Second, identification of the source and date is important for specificity. Identification can be accomplished through answering questions like: Who is the leader/creator? Is there any sort of bias evident? When was the Web item produced? When was the Web item last revised? How up to date are the links? Next the critic looks to the organizational flow of the Webpage answering such questions as: Is the document visually appealing (i.e., vibrant colors, interactivity, shock value)? Do the graphics and art serve a specific function or are they decorative? Does the text follow basic rules of grammar, spelling and literary composition? Are links provided to other similar groups? Finally, can confidential information be sent to group members over the Internet when necessary?

A subjective analysis of Websites is built on a synthesis of theories offered by Cantril (1963), Bormann (1972, 1983, 1985) and Berger and Luckman (1967). The initial assumption advanced is the idea that human beings act for self-serving ends. Cantril (1963) contextualizes this idea with the theory of the ego-driver which asserts that ego maintenance is the prime objective of human existence. Cantril (1963) proposes that
individuals are driven to join groups on the basis of self-serving needs. Cantril (1963) argues, "Derived drives are autonomous of their origins but not autonomous of the ego or of the values in the culture which the individual has somehow interiorized as part of them(selves)" (p. 35). Social movements seek members who are (or could be) pro-active about the "cause." A pro-active nature stems from some degree of perceived self-worth that is increased through group affiliation. It is a logical step to include self-perception as a crucial target which movements target through their rhetorical strategies to win members and encourage action.

Once a believable system is adopted, rationales are developed to explain the surrounding world. As a result, individuals seek others who share their vision and together they continue the rationalization process by creating fantasies. Bormann's (1972) fantasy theme theory proposes that individuals create symbolic fantasies to explain the inconsistencies of everyday life. In a group setting, these fantasies are advanced through

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3 A thorough discussion of the "ego" is outlined in Gregg's (1971) "The Ego Function of the Rhetoric of Protest".

4 Adding to this idea Stewart, Smith, and Denton (1989) note that, "social movements must attempt to alter self-perceptions of supporters and potential supporters so they will believe in their self worth and their ability to bring about urgent change" (Stewart, p. 126).

5 Symbolic language is effective because it provides a "tangible target for hostility, foster in group feelings... hence the use of 'god words' and 'devil words' as well as 'stereotypes, smooth and graphic phrases and folk arguments.'" (Simons, 1970, p. 5-6). Additionally, Bowers, Ochs and Jensen (1993) suggest that "agitators often create expressive and esoteric symbols... these symbols are among the most powerful and interesting agitation artifacts. Sometimes the symbols have a complicated mythology, and sometimes they become accepted simply because they are either appropriately powerful, ambiguous, or well-designed" (p. 28)
the aggregate acceptance of fantasy chains. Bormann's (1972) fantasy theme involves two primary principles. First, people use fantasies to establish a social reality. An example of this fantasizing is evident in Websites which make ideological assertions and arguments based on their idea of what represents probable truth (Rybacki & Rybacki, 1991). These "truths" are embodied in the use of symbols—the second principle of Bormann's (1972) fantasy theme. In Webpages, symbols are used to reinforce ideas that work to explain phenomena and create/reinforce a reality. This process becomes interactive in cyberspace because people's symbols "converge in a joint creation of reality, a sense of reality that has exceptional salience and truthfulness to them" (Rybacki & Rybacki, 1991, p. 87).

These fantasies become established within the group and, as a result, form the social reality of the group. Social Construction of Reality Theory (Berger and Luckman, 1967) consists of five fundamental principles. First, there are many realities that people construct. However, one preeminent reality exists which is, "the reality of everyday life. Its privileged position entitles it to the designation of paramount reality" (Berger and Luckman, 1967, p. 21). The process through which events become part of the everyday

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6"Values and attitudes of many kinds are tested and legitimized as common to the group by the process of fantasy chains" (Bormann, 1972, p. 398).

7An interesting contrast to the perceived truthfulness of the common reality is what Debord (1983) labels the integrated spectacle which is characterized by the combined effect of five principle features: "incessant technological renewal, integration of state and economy, generalized secrecy, unanswerable lies, and eternal present...The spectacle proves its arguments simply by going round in circles: by coming back to the start, by repetition, by constant reaffirmation in the only space left where anything can be publicly affirmed, and believed, precisely because that is the only thing to which everyone is witness" (p. 236).
reality is known as "habitualization," which simply means that actions repeated enough
times form a pattern. Institutionalization, the next step in social construction, occurs
when, "there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors" (Berger
and Luckman, 1967, p. 54). Invariably, alternative realities present themselves within this
framework and pose a challenge to the standard operating procedure.® When opposition
to the dominant institutionalized norm is voiced, the individual(s) voicing dissent are
labeled as deviants to the normative framework. "Deviants" are held in check by the
dominant institution through a system of therapy and/or nihilization, in which the deviant’s
behavior is corrected, or their interpretation of reality is denied as a possibility.

To paraphrase the subjective section of the model, individuals are prompted to act
on the basis of self-serving needs. This characteristic results in the need for humans to
rationalize confusing aspects of their own lives. Instead of assuming responsibility for
perceived inconsistencies, humans develop elaborate systems of explanation that serve to
answer the unexplainable. These interpretations are linked together in what Bormann
(1972) calls fantasy chains. These chains become metaphors or symbols for
disenfranchised groups which arrive at a collective consensus with other group members
and adopt their vision of an alternative social reality. This newly accepted reality
competes with the dominant reality that the rest of society knows. As frustration with the

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®In the context of social movement theory, groups solidify when dominant institutions challenge the sub-group's collective reality (Bowers, Ochs and Jensen, 1993).
status quo increases, leaders⁹ attempt to mobilize adherents to defy normative thinking. This mobilization occurs not only mentally, but also physically as group members assimilate the new social reality and are asked to act for the group. Webpages offer a unique forum for individuals to identify and build a strong self perception enabling interaction with like-minded people. Once a community is established, unification is facilitated through a variety of symbolic fantasies on the Web.

The following chapter utilizes a combination of the preceding tools of analysis to evaluate the rhetorical appeals of the specific white supremacist group Alpha. Operating under King’s (1987) theoretical framework of power, this study evaluates the image of society which white supremacists seek to achieve through their use of visual grammar, powerful language and nonverbal symbols. In addition, King’s (1987) method for evaluating power is utilized to determine which strategies white supremacists use to persuade audiences including: manipulating audiences, contraction, accommodation, destruction of legitimacy and strategic use of syntax. Once an understanding of power is reached, the study evaluates the Alpha Webpage to determine which stage of agitation the

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⁹Simons (1970) delineates the internal tensions that movements experience, especially the pivotal role of the leader. Simons outlines the difficulties that leaders of social movements uniquely experience: "The leaders of social movements can expect minimal internal control and maximal external resistance. At best, the movement's leadership controls are an organized core of the movement (frequently mistaken for the movement itself) but exerts a relatively larger number of sympathizers on its periphery" (p. 4). The circumstances that leaders face are met with strategies that seek to secure massive internal support, which means that the leader must at least seem militant (p. 10). A radical leader can motivate each person in a social movement by creating a strong identification of the goals, eventually fostering the rhetoric that "any means are justified" to achieve these goals. One of these means is the tendency to oversimplify ideas, and as Simons points out, this "mass support is more apt to be secured when ideological statements are presented as generalized beliefs" (p. 5).
group has reached utilizing Bowers, Ochs and Jensen's (1993) rhetoric of agitation and control. Finally the attributes of cyberspace and their impact on rhetorical exchange of white supremacist groups will be examined utilizing the subjective/objective criteria developed.
CHAPTER 4

CRITICALLY EVALUATING ALPHA

Chapter two of this thesis details a history of white supremacy in the United States. What differentiates the current white supremacy movement from typical agitative forces are the ideological mutations the movement has gone through, from being an establishment force to an agitative group. While most social movements are conceptualized as outside the establishment, the members of the radical right have a heritage both as institutional actors and outside agitators, placing supremacist groups in their own class of social movements. Due to the unique nature of the white supremacy movement and the new medium of cyberspace being utilized to spread its messages, this study applies a combination of analytical tools to assess the rhetorical appeals of the white supremacist group Alpha. First, this study uses King's (1987) method of determining power strategies to analyze the Alpha group. Second, this chapter investigates the assorted agitative postures that the Alpha group practices by applying Bower, Ochs and Jensen's (1993) tools for studying social movements. Finally this chapter concludes with an approach to analyzing rhetorical messages in cyberspace called cyber-synthesis.
Power Communication Exhibited by the Alpha Movement

A basic understanding of the contemporary tenets espoused by white supremacist movements in cyberspace can be determined by using aspects of King's (1987) method for studying power in communication. Alpha's prolific existence relies almost entirely on an interactive association of "on-line" visitors. An involved membership meets King's (1987) first condition of power relationships because Alpha's power is conferred by groups of visiting Web avatars. Using visitation results (commonly referred to as "hits" measured by a "hit counter") Alpha professes to be a flourishing on-line movement whose continued success is reliant upon more dedicated white men and women to join the ranks. New members of Alpha relinquish individual power by pledging to follow the inflexible requirements mandated by Alpha leadership. Membership in Alpha requires prospective associates to be of Aryan descent, honorable, and eighteen years of age or older. In addition, Alpha charges that individuals must "respect members and yourself be respectable, place your duty above all else, be in agreement with the platform, [be] professional in action and appearance, [be] dedicated unto death, and accept the command structure and take orders" (Alpha, 1998 p. 1 available at; http://www.alpha.index.html).

More instrumental to the vitality of Alpha is the dependence on a continuous dialectical exchange for continued group control. Alpha relies almost exclusively upon King's second test of power that groups are created and maintained through continual discourse. Alpha was begun, is nurtured, and perseveres through a continuous communication exchange. By its very nature, Web-based communication dictates engagement by the individual. Alpha seeks to maximize interaction by making available a
variety of discursive options. The group is aware of the potential power of interactive technology for cultivating involved members and Webmaster Ryan Wilson is quick to share his view that the Web is a powerful mechanism for recruitment. Wilson claims, “the Internet is an outstanding place to meet and network with like-minded people” (Wilson, 1997, pg. 2 available; http://www.alpha.org/).

The goal of sustaining powerful and open lines of communication with the world is fostered through appeals for monetary contributions, increased membership, philosophical sympathy and active participation. Realizing the impact of discourse on power acquisition, the Alpha page solicits funds based on the perceived need to create a multifaceted media presence. The group’s specific plans include the production of “mini-movies” for cable TV, the purchase of production cameras, acquisition of a meeting place and the funds to cover the day to day costs of direct mail and flyer pieces. Additional communicative aspects of the site are displayed in the highly advertised IRC “chat-rooms” which enable an interactive dialogue between adherents of the ideology of white supremacy.

Verifying the three suppositions of King’s (1987) power schema (image of society, nature of conflict and role of discourse) is a simple task because the Alpha Webpage places a priority on informing visitors of its ideology. Alpha works diligently to provide visitors a rationalization of the supremacist image of society through mechanisms like their FAQ (frequently asked questions) component of the Webpage. In this section of the site, Alpha posts replies to questions which are often asked by “those who have known nothing in their life but the liberal propaganda” (Wilson, 1997, pg. 2, available;
The Alpha site preempts objections to its ideological stance with prefabricated questions and answers. Questions such as "Why do you 'hate' blacks, Jews and other minorities?" are answered with circular arguments like, "racially aware Aryans do not 'hate' other races, but simply realize that we are clearly and unquestionably superior to other races" (Wilson, 1997, pg. 2, available; http://www.alpha.org/). A primitive logic is further evidenced by responses like "Protecting what our people have created, our culture and securing a racially pure homeland is an imperative for our people in the coming millennium. The instincts for self-preservation and procreation are the strongest instincts of all" (Wilson, 1997, pg. 2, available; http://www.alpha.org/). When faced with questions pertaining to equality of all people as set forth in the Declaration of Independence, Alpha replies that such statements refer to white Europeans and that "there is not now, nor has there ever been any scientific proof confirming 'racial equality'. All research or testing ever performed concluded contrary to the popular belief of 'equality'" (Wilson, 1997, pg. 2, available; http://www.alpha.org/).

Adding to this vision of society, Alpha attempts to portray the nature of conflict between whites and blacks as a good versus evil battle. The selective presentation and interpretation of statistical graphs and charts equip Alpha with the ability to characterize minorities as criminal. An example of such "proof" is Alpha's "racial statistics" internal link which provides a pie graph of U.S. demographic populations compared to U.S. racial prison populations. Alpha summarizes the charts with the argument that "Blacks represent roughly 13% of the total U.S. population, yet represent 41.1% of the prison population! Take into account that this graph only represents the prison population and not those on
parole, probation or those who were never caught” (Wilson, 1997 pg.1, available; http://www.alpha.index.html/). This statement is followed by the large bold fonted message, “Do you really want them in YOUR neighborhood?” (see appendix). Such arguments are commonplace in the site. Such arguments build upon a premise that society is increasingly becoming diluted by the negative influence of ethnic minorities.

The nature of conflict between the white individual and the social order is a regular feature of Alpha’s rhetoric. Alpha routinely argues that the modern day Aryan plays the part of a relentless warrior battling the social injustices of equality and toiling for a better world free from minority favoritism. The role of discourse is central to the survival of any social movement both in cyberspace and the real world. Communication on-line is emphasized by Alpha as a necessary weapon in the ideological war for domination and white supremacy.

Analyzing the speaker style of Alpha is facilitated by focusing a critical eye on the main contributor to Alpha, Webmaster Ryan Wilson. Wilson’s speaker status is created by his painstakingly portrayal as a normal and successful white male. The effort to be positively regarded is evident in the only picture of Wilson available on the Website. In a standard use of both nonverbal and verbal elements of persuasion, Wilson portrays himself as the archetypal “common man.” Wilson is dressed in a white shirt and tie seen sitting amid a vast array of various information technology gadgets including a television monitor with the still frame of Adolph Hitler. Philosophical sympathy plays on perceived commonality with the majority of Americans. For example, Wilson (1998) states “our beliefs parallel those of our forefathers who fought for the United States under terrible
conditions to make a home for their Aryan people to prosper, free from foreign rule" (p. 1, available; http://www.alpha.org/). Wilson hopes to garner support through these and similar appeals to tradition in an effort to mainstream the movement. Wilson furthers his attempts to be perceived as a rationale actor by justifying his ideology with spurious appeals which aspire to resound of scientism. Wilson states,

> to "hate" someone for the color of their skin is simply ludicrous. The difference is genetic. Apes are only one or two chromosomes away from being "human," they also have two arms, legs and bleed red yet they are an entirely different animal. Although we never know where evolution will take apes in the future, a million years from now, but today they are not human just as Negroes are not fully evolved and could be deemed ‘sub-humans’. Out of all races of people on earth, the Negro is the lowest in intelligence and still possesses many animal like characteristics such as wool like animal hair, thick lips and apelike skull features.

(Wilson, 1997, p. 2, available; http://www.alpha.org/)

Wilson exhibits his mastery of Web communication through a seamless mix of up to date and high tech visual, grammatical, linguistic, and nonverbal applications.

Technological gadgetry is used to visually entice the viewer into various sectors of the Webpage. For example, the entrance to the Website is a dynamic audiovisual portal which uses sights and sound to lure the cyber-surfer into the realm of the Webpage. A highly skilled Webmaster, Wilson's technical ability sets him up as an authority and confers power to him as a competent rhetorical "speaker."

Wilson widely practices the first strategy of power, manipulation of context,
throughout the Alpha Website. By defining the white race as the sole legitimate heir to all that is good and right, the Alpha group creates a context of white superiority which avatars are continually conditioned to believe every time they visit the page. An example is Alpha's "Help Save This Endangered Species" (see appendix) portion of the site where Alpha portrays the white race as losing ground to a multifaceted ethnic onslaught. Wilson (1998) argues,

There are already numerous signs that the White race is losing the will to assert itself, and even the will to live. Each year more White people die than are born. At the current rate Whites will become a minority in the United States around the year 2030, if not sooner. The traditional, healthy, cultural and spiritual values of our race have been undermined and contaminated (p.1, available: http://www.alpha.flyers.org)

Examining this appeal, the critic can discern a manipulation of purported facts in an attempt to create a sense of urgency in white readers' minds. Other examples of context manipulation abound in the Alpha group's news sections of the Webpage where minor daily occurrences, such as upcoming rallies and television specials, are converted into major rhetorical events. These examples point to a trend in which Alpha constantly attempts to create exigencies with an implied sense of urgency so as to elicit a real world response in members.

Complementing a strategy of context manipulation, Alpha also employs a regular strategy of contraction where they point fingers at "apathetic whites" and ethnic minorities as the symptom of all that goes wrong in modern society. Ironically Alpha refers to
internal conflicts as a problematic aspect hindering white unity. Alpha states “within the white nationalist movement, when you see one person pointing the finger and screaming that guy did this and this guy did something else and our organization is perfect you know something is wrong.” A standard of moral excellence is blatantly violated by Alpha itself as the group repeatedly focuses the reader’s attention on “dilemmas” of the white race including white apathy and racial integration. Whites are admonished for being either cowards or hypocrites. Wilson argues that white cowards are those who agree with supremacist doctrine but are “too lazy” to work for change. White hypocrites are identified by Wilson as those whites who agree with basic beliefs of Alpha yet attempt to be “politically correct” through silence.

Cyber contraction is most readily apparent on every subsequent page of Alpha as the movement finds new and unique ways to blame racial minorities for all social ills. Racial jokes, cartoons, books, flyers, music, photographs and news stories both subtly and conspicuously vociferate the “innate weaknesses” of racial minorities. Accommodation is not a discernable power strategy of the Alpha movement. Rather, the rhetoric of the page insists upon extremism as the only viable option for group adherents to realize racial purity. The hard-line stance which Alpha broadcasts exhibits the single issue focus which Alpha aspires to instill in the psyche of its members, absolute and complete white racial domination.

The mobilization strategy of the Alpha movement is systemic (as opposed to episodic). The goals of Alpha are long ranged and have far reaching consequences evidenced by the objective of increasing membership, facilitated through Alpha’s “on-line”
registration. Webmaster Wilson's (1998) vision is to “see ALPHA units in every major
city and town across the U.S. and all European countries in the next few years.” (p. 2,
available; http://www.alpha.org/). Wilson illustrates this vision with a computer-generated
map that changes before the viewer’s eyes (a type of Cyber-metamorphosis) from the
current presence of Alpha, to the planned membership for the future.

The systemic goal of white revolution is emphasized in the Alpha group’s
invitation to their white European “brethren” who Alpha implores to “spread the word of
White unity and power in YOUR country! Smash the Marxist/liberal/Zionist control!”

Agitation Strategies Utilized by the Alpha Group

The Alpha group simultaneously exhibits many stages of agitative strategies
discussed by Bowers, Ochs and Jensen (1993). While a strategy of polarization best
demonstrates Alpha’s current tactic of agitation, there is ample evidence of other agitative
strategies at work.

A strategy of petition is not directly practiced by the Alpha group. Failure to
petition highlights a potential weakness that the group may encounter in the future. While
some white supremacist individuals such as David Duke attempt to infiltrate the
government, Alpha disavows relations with the government by referring to current federal
practices as pathetic substitutions for responsible action. A strategy of petition may have
been attempted at some point in Alpha’s history. However, no sign of this tactic is evident
in the Website.
Promulgation is a perpetual factor used by the Alpha group in an attempt to add members to the roles of the movement. Propaganda is disseminated through a variety of channels and made available by Alpha through the Website. Sympathizers can get physically involved by attending advertised rallies, downloading fliers and posting them in “your neighborhood,” writing to like-minded Aryans, participating in real time chat rooms and acting as proofreaders for Web documents and cartoonists. Efforts are made to offer visitors a wide range of possible involvement opportunities which illustrate a solidification strategy. Alpha appeals to visitors that “it is up to each and every one of us to do our share. We must all cooperate and contribute what we can to the common cause” (Wilson, 1997 pg. 2 of 3 available; http://www.alpha.org/).

Solidification is a crucial aspect of the Alpha group’s technique for organizational success and is evident when the avatar first visits the Alpha Website. The Alpha site opens with a grid system superimposed upon an oceanic scene of azure waters and blue skies. In the middle of this rectangular scene appears a red glowing triangle the portal for entering the Website. Beneath this celestial scene a vibrant red and yellow colored box contains the bright blue message “WARNING: ALPHA IS FOR ARYANS ONLY!” available at http://www.alpha.org/). This warning message manufactures illusions of exclusivity and endeavors to sustain the sensation of solidarity. Themes of solidification continue as visitors proceed into the site. The next screen visitors are subjected to incorporates a solid black background with a variety of moving icons and symbols. At the very top of the Website is an astral picture of planet earth underlined by an animated bright red laser which beams across the top of the screen piercing a glowing
red triangle. To the left of the revolving earth is the text "ALPHA Headquarters Web site."

Continuing down the screen the viewer encounters a large message created in bold silver fonts which reads "Unity is Power!" establishing a foundational cornerstone of the movement and further exhibiting the solidification strategy exercised. Directly below this notice is the capitalized declaration "WE'RE BACK!" (available at http://www.alpha.org/directory/index.html) referring to a brief three month hiatus the Website experienced as a result of technical problems. To the left of the body of the screen is a narrow upended rectangular box which occupies the entire left-hand side of the screen. This box contains buttons which are marked by various titles (including 'Feedback', 'Links', 'e-mail addresses', 'Telephone numbers' and symbols including a swastika) which can be used to transport the avatar to various segments of the Website. Mysterious colored buttons with no title transports the avatar to secured segments of the Webpage. These exclusive areas of the site are only attainable with pass codes granted when the avatar has proven himself or herself by becoming a contributing member of Alpha. Secret "rooms" of Alpha separate the casual visitor from the committed member and allow for "in group" identification. While these areas of the site were not addressed by this study, the solidification strategy is readily apparent.

Solidification is advocated in a number of other various manners. A common practice is for Alpha to bring attention to an upcoming white supremacist function followed by appeals to "show your support for our race and the unity we have for our movement, attend this event!" (available at http://www.alpha.org/directory/index.html).
For purposes of encouraging further solidarity, the Alpha page provides many methods by which members can both physically and mentally practice a lifestyle of white Aryan resistance. Among available meeting options, Alpha encourages active participation with their “Join us on IRC!” large fonted message. Alpha encourages members to “Talk live with others who share concern for our race and future. IRC (Internet Relay Chat) provides an excellent forum for discussion and meeting others in your area or around the world!” (available at http://www.alpha.org/directory/index.html).

For visitors who are ideologically aligned with the precepts of white supremacy as well as those new to a doctrine of racism, the most potent aspect of Alpha’s arsenal is the practice of polarization. The colossal chore of prostyletizing an unseen audience into practicing members of white supremacy is aided by dichotomizing visitors into groupings of “for” and “against” the ideals of racial domination. Alpha implements numerous devices to ensure a polarized audience of ideological adherents, the first of which is continual subordination of ethnic minorities to the white Aryan race by means of using various written arguments accompanied by visual stimuli. The “flyers” section contains numerous downloadable flyers with titles like “Save this Endangered Species,” “A Lesson on Racial Integration from the History of Portugal,” “Jewish Influence: A Letter of Admission,” “Why Are Jews Persecuted? Some Insight From Jewish Writings,” “Race and Integration: Scientists Speak Out” and “The New Face of Uncle Sam” (see appendix). Each flyer contains the extensive use of polarizing language in an attempt to demonize minority groups. For example, “The New Face of Uncle Same Flyer” warns in a bold font “AS AMERICA IS SWAMPED BY IMMIGRANTS, ALARMED WHITES MAY
BECOME A MINORITY IN THEIR OWN LAND," accompanied by the cartoon of a Hispanic man robed in red, white and blue attire (available at http://www.alpha.org/flyers/flyers.html). The exclamation is accompanied by three pages of text which attempt to substantiate the racial claim forwarded. Similar flyers exist for each ethnic minority providing an established pattern of polarization. In addition to flyers, the Alpha site provides numerous racial cartoons and jokes which use degrading "humor" to draw distinct lines demarcating the belief in the "pure" white race and the "polluted" other ethnic minorities.

Violence is not a strategy which the Alpha movement overtly espouses. Rather Alpha labors to promote an image of peaceful agitation through comments like "Alpha struggles to promote truth about racial difference and works in local communities to establish a strong sense of white Aryan racial unity and pride" (available at http://www.alpha.org/directory/index.html). While the movement strives to maintain the perception of a nonviolent demeanor, there are many instances pointing to the willingness of the movement to go to the next level to realize its goals. Perhaps most revealing the propensity of violence is the paramilitary section of the Website. Here Alpha members are provided with an ideal "Aryan soldier" checklist which includes a listing of various combat apparel and weaponry which Alpha suggests is necessary for the ideal Aryan (available at http://www.alpha.org/paramilitary/paramilitary.html). Addresses and phone numbers of weapon emporiums are provided to aid individuals in acquiring such weaponry and apparel.

Even more suggestive of probable violence, is a section of the site entitled
“improvised munitions” which provides a detailed step by step guide for creating more than fifty two combinations of homemade explosives. Among the “do it yourself” explosives one can find detailed recipes for pipe hand grenades, wine bottle cone charges, fertilizer/hydrazine liquid explosive and cigarette lighter hand grenades (available at http://www.alpha.org/paramilitary/MUNITIONS/im.html). Amazingly, this assortment of easy to make home explosives is accessible to anyone who can use a mouse to point and click their way to the Alpha site. Alpha claims to offer these formulas to visitors for educational purposes, yet insinuates throughout the Website that potential members must do whatever it takes to assure white racial domination.

Confrontational and escalation practices are an endemic component of Alpha’s bid for radical change in the present system and the ultimate establishment of a racial homeland for its members. Alpha proudly recounts the recent “news” story in which an Alpha supported white community in a suburb of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, successfully chased out a new Black family which arrived to begin living in “their” neighborhood. This story is followed by a large black and white graphic of a white paramilitary man toting a machine gun with ancient Norse warlords in the background (see appendix) Surrounding this menacing picture is the bolded text which reads “Kinsmen! We must FIGHT or we WILL Perish” (available at http://www.alpha.org/directory/index.html). A similar motif is displayed in the photo gallery section of the website where Alpha members are shown dressed up in camouflage gear practicing war games. In other sections of the page, Alpha provides images of military tanks and soldiers to illustrate the lengths at which the group is prepared to go to realize white racial domination. It is unclear whether Alpha represents a
Gandhi or Guerilla aspect of the supremacist social movement as Alpha has yet to claim responsibility for neither violent nor nonviolent acts.

Applying Cyber-Synthesis

Because of the unique cyberspace environment in which a rhetorical act takes place, this next section utilizes a conglomeration of social theories. First the application takes place in an objective analysis, observing discrete and easily identifiable aspects of the Website.

Identification of the source and date is rather obvious in the case of the Alpha Website. In the site, the leader, Wilson, has a picture of himself in his work station surrounded by paraphernalia of the Third Reich, embodied in the still image of Hitler on a background TV screen. Further, he provides two physical addresses of headquarter locations in Philadelphia and encourages correspondence.

The site was created on September 7, 1996, and has a frequency counter documenting visits to this site. At the time of this writing, visits numbered over 83,000. It should be noted that the site is updated weekly with graphical enhancements, added links (31 regular links and 14 "super" links\textsuperscript{10}) and additional rhetoric to justify the "cause."

The leader identifies the group’s philosophy in the mission statement which specifies that “We must secure the existence of our people and the future for white children.”

Upon analyzing the organizational flow of the Webpage, it is extremely difficult to discount the technical abilities that the creators demonstrate. Proof of this claim comes

\textsuperscript{10}A super-link as a hyper textual lexis to other web pages i.e. larger parent groups of the KKK and other groups affiliated with white supremacy.
from the visual appeal that the Webmaster continuously updates through a variety of lavish computer imagery which compliments the text. The color organization follows a pattern of vibrant extremes. Initially, the page comes up black, followed by brilliant blues, reds, and yellows. These color extremes add life to icons and text messages throughout the site. Many icons are three dimensional and move similar to animation which is intended to maximize interactive attention. There is a picture or image for nearly every page of text that follows with a trademark symbol (swastika, barbed wire, demonized cartoon images, and more subtle photos) reinforcing Aryan ideology.

The dominant symbol is the ever-present red triangle which can be found on every page. At first glance, the triangle appears to be a mysterious emblem, possibly having religious overtones (i.e., the Father, Son and Holy Ghost figures in Christianity) or a cultural badge (e.g., the gay movements use of a pink triangle). This preconception is quickly corrected to some degree as the symbol converts to a geometrically dissected triangle exposing a Ku Klux Klan member’s hood. Through the continued promulgation of this triangle, the cumulative effect is a symbolic artifact which is fused into the viewer’s psyche. Presumably the goal is to have viewers associate the sight of a red triangle with the Alpha and all that the group believes. In addition to varied symbols, the interactive musical portal (located at the entrance to the site) entices viewers to proceed into the actual site. Shock value is continually maintained through graphic cartoons, racial jokes, quotes and pictures that serve as a persistent reminder of the true focus of the movement: racial domination. At times, graphics are purely symbolic and in other sections icons serve a more pragmatic function. An example is the membership division of the site where an
animated hand reaches out in a virtual three-dimensional manner toward the viewer and
grabs an application form, suggesting the immediacy that Alpha hopes to convey. At
other times the icons serve as a lexis to other segments of the page. Alpha’s iconic links
not only propel users throughout the page, but attempt to reinforce the underlying
ideology of racial domination.¹¹

With the exception of a few basic typographical errors, the page follows
fundamental rules of grammar, spelling, and literary composition. What is especially
interesting to note are the rules of syntax that the Webmaster breaks for the purpose of
reinforcing the philosophy of superiority. Through the technique of religiously capitalizing
the word "White," the leadership attempts to visually persuade readers that Aryans are
godly beings (adding to the notion that Aryans are on a mission from God). Secondly, the
name Alpha is always capitalized to read ALPHA. The purpose of this technique is not
clear. However, a probable hypothesis is that ALPHA represents a hidden acronym
unknown due to restricted areas of the site which can only be accessed by members.

Addressing the final component of the objective section of Cyber-synthesis, is the
aspect of confidentiality and anonymity. Alpha interactants have the ability to send and
pursue confidential information to other group members. Anonymity is maintained
through a process of code words that enable the member to access especially revealing
sections of the Website. It is likely that these confidential areas provide a means to
increase group cohesion because people feel more integral to the movement’s mission. As

¹¹For example by clicking on an icon of a swastika viewers are transported to a
museum of Nazi Germany including; Hitler delivering speeches, formations of SS soldiers
marching and the war machine which Hitler constructed.
a final note, secret sections of the page provide the group with a comfortable venue where they cannot be monitored helping to establish a greater sense of freedom.

In the subjective application it is revealing to understand the ego driven motives at the core of Alpha's presence on the Web. These motives are easily identifiable in what best can be described as Alpha's mission statement.

I am a White Nationalist because I believe in the dignity, the glory, and most of all, the survival of my race: the White Aryan race. I am a White Nationalist because I know that without a strong, healthy, and prosperous White race our planet is doomed. I am a White Nationalist because I see the non-White multitudes outbreeding White Aryans by a greater margin each year. I am a White Nationalist because I believe that no task could be more urgent or more noble than the task that my racial comrades and I have now undertaken: joining ALPHA; striving to ensure the survival of our race and waging a ceaseless struggle against our enemy (available at http://www.alpha.org/directory/index.html)

The underlying theme of the previous passage, although not explicitly stated, but important, is the fact that the rhetor is white. Such statements support the idea that a reality has been formed based on innate aspects that individuals within this group uniquely possess; race-based traits. In addition, this quotation typifies the type of moral imperative which movements utilize to convey urgency. Such appeals meet Cantril's (1963) criteria because the motivations for the movement are intrinsically linked to their perceived need to survive ethnically. Once the self interest of the movement is established, a mechanism is needed to rationalize and further a racial belief system. Racist ideology is attempted
through the dramatistic use of fantasy themes.

The rhetorical vision a "master race" is expanded through Wilson's rhetoric. For example, Wilson (1998) states, "By our very nature we demand no less than perfection" (available at http://www.alpha.org/directory/index.html p. 1). Implicit in this statement is the idea that the unique nature of white Aryans is a pure race that inherently epitomizes all that is good. This fantasy theme "chains" out by the examples that the creator endeavors to present. For example, Wilson (1998) relates,

I came to realize that the Aryan race, the race of Plato, Shakespeare, Newton, Mozart, DaVinci, Michelangelo, Marco Polo, Washington, Franklin, Henry Ford and Thomas Edison, is a noble and intrepid race of creators, explorers, statesmen, scientists, poets, astrologers, leaders and philosophers, which has been responsible for nearly all of the technological, scientific and cultural advances of the past two millennia. (available at http://www.alpha.org/directory/index.html p. 5)

Adhering to the fantasy chain cycle, Alpha continuously employs a variety of fantasy building tools to "chain out" their vision of an ideal society. Some of the predominant illusions that are presented include the idea that Blacks are inherently prone to committing crime, Jews own a monopoly of information technologies (particularly television), mongrelization will occur through inter-race relations and minority groups have a negative impact on the white race. Ethnic groups are blamed for inculcating "the values of White racial guilt, White racial self-hatred, White racial surrender, and suicide into the White Aryan people of our nation" (available at http://www.alpha.org/flyers/flyers.html).
Through the use of an underdog metaphor, Wilson provides more evidence to strengthen construction of the fantasy. Wilson perpetuates the notion that the odds against the movement are great, "up to this point (Alpha) has been run by myself and a few die-hard comrades. We share a vision for the future and what can be done to improve the world around us. Time is limited and resources few to waste on those who would contribute little to further our cause" (available at http://www.alpha.org/directory/index.html). In other areas Wilson talks of "awakening the sleeping giant of the White race" (available at http://www.alpha.org/directory/index.html). Implicit in phrases like "die hard," "limited time" and "sleeping," Wilson conveys the wall of resistance his group faces. In light of this resistance, symbolic language and icons are utilized to enhance a sense of in group support. 12

Once the scene is set for the fantasy, the vision is set to be repeated. Questionable logic is employed when the group maintains that,

Being a liberal is clearly an easy belief to hold. The belief is simple, short-sighted and requires little to no thought or intelligence. Simply put, it goes like this, 'anything goes'. Don't think about it just accept it? Don't think about what homosexuals represent and the message their acceptance sends to children, if you question your [sic] a 'homophobic'! If you question anything the Jews do in society, they always have that nice 'your [sic] an anti-Semite!' buzz word for you."

(available at http://www.alpha.org/directory/index.html)

12 An in depth look at symbolic rhetoric is presented in Bowers, Ochs and Jensen's (1993) "Rhetoric of Agitation and Control" which describes that movements rely on symbols and connotative language to increase their persuasive appeal.
These generalizations promote the major fantasy that the supremacists advance: The Aryan race is pure, perfect and should not be diluted.

With this spectacle firmly entrenched, the movement moves to challenging the dominant reality that the majority of Americans believe. Normative social reality in the United States is based on the ideas of equality set forth in the Constitution. The Aryans disagree with modern society's interpretation of these ideas and thus present their own interpretation of equality. Wilson claims that all people are not created equal as the Constitution states because the statement was made "in the opening of the Declaration of Independence." Wilson continues that the statement "all men are created equal" refers to "White Europeans who had lived under a class society all their lives and wanted to start a fresh life in the new world that was America" (available at http://www.alpha.org/directory/index.html). Further evidence of the refutation of the dominant social reality, is manifest when the author maintains "All research or testing ever performed concluded contrary to the popular belief of 'equality', and let it be stated that equality is just that, a popular belief-not in any way fact" (available at http://www.alpha.org/directory/index.html). Similar attempts at disproving mainstream social reality are recurrent throughout the site's pages. The cumulative effect gives critics an easily identifiable alternative reality which seeks to gain legitimacy.

Chronicling the various aspects of the Alpha group, from power to agitative strategy, it becomes clear that Alpha represents a revived facet of the white supremacist movement in the United States. The movement has generally adapted its rhetorical strategies to new technological innovations including computer-mediated communication.
to increase visibility to a younger generation of potential viewers as well as reestablish commitment from older members who may still lurk around in racial pockets of the United States. Prime Time News' (1993) video entitled “Cyber Hate” details the power potential which exists in the technology presented by the World Wide Web. Empirical evidence is presented in the documentary illustrating how new targets of racial hate messages are the young unformed minds of high-school students. Numerous examples are provided showing how various factions of the white supremacist movement have intentionally directed messages of Cyber hate to local high schools in an attempt to garner support from a maturing segment of the population.

Alpha also provides examples of its reliance on young “white pride” in an attempt to encourage others to “get the message and join.” Shane Killen, a sixteen-year-old Alpha supporter from Florida, wrote an essay which Alpha displays within its site as a tribute to youthful “excellence.” Killen writes,

most of our future race are wiggers [white niggers] and race traitors. We can’t expect to accomplish anything by sitting behind our computers and saying how it will be better in the future. We must unite as one and work together to save the white race. Many of you probably think that this is never going to happen, but it will. Now your’re at the point saying that I am violent and want to kill all blacks. This is not true. I do not believe in violence, and secondly I’m a Christian, which I follow my religion and would never kill an innocent creature. But sometimes I don’t call a nigger an innocent creature. Is he one of God’s creations? Did God really make a Beast that goes around the country raping white women and using
violence? I believe not. One species, many races, and as my race is threatened by other races, it is only right that I must defend it. (available at http://www.alpha.org/directory/index.html)

This passage demonstrates the suasory potential of supremacist discourse. While young and old alike may partake in such discourse as an afterthought, the continued participation in Cyber hate swiftly becomes a part of members' dominant reality. The Alpha movement itself may not affect significant change. However, the seeds of discontent which are sown encapsulate an unknown future of potential violent supremacist induced action.

The progression of white supremacist rhetoric into cyberspace is defined by this analysis as rhetorical appeals. Through the example of a single supremacist group, out of the hundreds of racist inspired movements which exist, this analysis has provided evidence establishing the power of cyberspace as a potential sphere of major social change.

Nhetoric's future effects on the actions of individuals and groups are uncertain as the technology is daily unfolding and being utilized by an increasing number of groups. However one thing is certain, the rhetorical potential of cyberspace to enlist and activate a large number of individuals is enormous. The following chapter summarizes the findings of this study, outlines limitations and suggests possible future areas for research so that scholars may stay abreast of the rhetorical potential of cyberspace.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Information technologies in their various guises such as the World Wide Web are in their infancy. The potential which new communication technology holds for communication exchanges, from the interpersonal level to group based communication, is just beginning to surface. If history is any gauge for determining technology's impact on communication practices and effects, one can easily predict that the changes to come are nothing short of revolutionary. This study has evaluated one aspect of the many possible applications which digital communication brings to the persuasive practices of social movements. Radical social movements such as Alpha are a part of American history and by all indications will continue to flourish in the future. Analyzing preliminary effectiveness of information technologies influence through the rhetoric of white supremacy is a necessary first step in understanding the effects of Web-based communication channels on the process of persuasion.

Turning a blind eye to the advancements made into communication technology by groups like Alpha is an unsafe course of action. Hyde (1990) explains, "the danger is not technology; rather, the danger is us--we who do not question, we who do not understand, we who do not communicate beyond the rhetoric of either/or" (p. ix). It would be easy to
discount groups like Alpha as crackpots who pose no immediate threat to Americans way of life. As Hyde's (1990) remarks point out, doing so is dangerous because radical groups fester and breed. They fill their ranks with adherents (through mechanisms like the World Wide Web) who are willing to take extreme measures to realize the goal of racial domination. Discounting white supremacy groups' forays into cyberspace will not make the discourse go away or become less important to those who might fall prey to the lure of racial scapegoating. Evaluating World Wide Websites such as Alpha is an important first step, contributing to a more detailed understanding of both the status of white supremacy and the rhetorical power available in cyberspace. However, as unparalleled changes in communication habits unfold, repercussions of the digitalization of language will be felt on all levels of society. The impending waves of change which digital communication promises to deliver will need to be carefully studied for potential impacts.

This final chapter discusses the findings of the study, examining its strengths and weakness while outlining areas for future research in the rapidly growing field of Web-based communication. This study has contributed a preliminary understanding of Web-based rhetoric by qualitatively evaluating the rhetoric of social movements which use new communication technologies to broadcast their persuasion in non-traditional ways. Evaluating the Web rhetoric of white supremacy groups provides the field of communication with a means of understanding the history and future of white supremacy in America. At the same time this study initiates a type of rhetorical criticism which analyzes the composition of typical Web-based communication.

An updated account of the new rhetorical strategies of white supremacy groups
provides the field of communication with some significant findings. First, racist political
groups are a phenomenon which live on and thrive in the growing interconnected global
community. Recognizing this fact is important, for in order to combat racism people must
first understand its basis for being. Secondly, the migration of white supremacist rhetoric
into the realm of cyberspace illustrates the renewed commitment of racial politics in
America. Perhaps representing a “sixth wave” of the white supremacy movement,
advancement into the area of new information technologies creates unique possibilities for
the rhetoric of agitation and promulgation. Alpha’s World Wide Website proves that
seeds of radical rhetoric will continue to be sown in the minds of new information age
communicators.

This chapter concludes the study of the rhetorical power in cyberspace with a
summary of the tactics and strategies employed by Alpha to gain converts to its
philosophy of white racial domination. The following pages detail a summation of the
findings of this study, paying close attention to the unique aspects of rhetorical
communication occurring in cyberspace and postulating on the potential consequences
that new media bring to the persuasive act. The findings of this study are analyzed for
deficiencies so that future research may design analytical tools that fully assess the effects
of rhetorical appeals. The final section of this chapter outlines implications of computer-
mediated communication on the key players in communication exchange, identifying
future areas for further research. Current literature examining the transformative
propensity existing in cyberspace will be used to assess the impacts that rhetorical
exchanges have on individual consciousness, community formation and control.
Assessing the Tactics and Strategies of Alpha's Rhetoric

While determining the exact effects of Alpha's radical rhetoric is impossible, it is reasonable to hypothesize probable outcomes based on previous technological consequences. As chapter two outlined, white supremacist organizations have a history of adapting their rhetorical strategies to new technological advancements. Previous success realized by supremacist groups in new media applications demonstrate the capabilities which some white supremacists possess. Far from the stereotypical "back woods and backwards" image, a new breed of white racists enshroud themselves in the technological cloak of World Wide Webpages, selling a sanitized image of white supremacy to both young and old generations of on-line computer users. Speculations involving the potential impacts of Web-based communication for the persuasion process are fortified by comprehending characteristics which uniquely empower the digital rhetor.

World Wide Web communication is currently being touted in mainstream media and through advertisements as a liberating technology, empowering users to gain autonomy over their personal lives. Growing segments of the population who go on-line to partake in a "liberating" arena of public discourse, prematurely assume that they are in control of the communication taking place. A brief examination of the Web's qualities reveals unmistakable structural governors which augment the persuasive capabilities of social actors. Two features of the Web in particular allow for increased control over potential audiences: the tendency of Websites to create an infrastructure which effectively narrows and or expands options for prospective interactants and the predetermined choices which Websites offer to individuals. These two examples confirm the control
capabilities fostered by the World Wide Web providing power over the individual for Internet service providers and Website creators alike.

The infrastructure of the World Wide Web is designed to encourage simultaneous use of the matrix by large groups of physically fragmented individuals. Websites become power sources for the individuals creating them when large numbers of individuals routinely visit and interact in the Webpage's "virtual universe." The large potential constituency afforded by the World Wide Web meets King's (1987) first prerequisite of power that much power is derived from groups (p. 4). Realizing the old adage that "power is in numbers," most Websites use "hit counters" to inform future visitors how many "others" have committed to a digital dialogue with the particular Website. A bandwagon mentality is successfully woven by the Webmaster and, in the example of Alpha, viewers are encouraged to be a part of a "growing" community. In Alpha's case more community members confer power on the Webmaster and the Alpha group by their submission to the authoritarian structure mandated for community members.

King's (1987) second criteria that power generates from discourse (p. 4), is another notable example of the successful strategy used by the Alpha group. Interactive Relay Chat (IRC) rooms enable synchronous communication among the population of a particular site. Communication exchanges occurring in these IRC rooms can be monitored by the Webmaster and service providers and dialogues can be reprinted on the Webpages to mold the consciousness of the group. This surveillance capability afforded to the proprietors of Websites provides tremendous power. First, the Webmaster can create rules and roles for what type of discourse will be allowed on the site. As chapter four
illustrates. Alpha creates a specific set of rules that members are to follow without question. Such rules and roles are enforceable as providers can expel users who do not comply. Secondly, the ability to continually monitor conversations allows Webmasters like Alpha's Ryan Wilson to continually narrow and/or expand options for current and future interactants through modifications made to the Website. Alpha continually updates the Webpage and indicates when the page was last updated so as to convey a continual renewal of commitment to the mission and members of the movement.

The second aspect of Web communication that enables more efficient power transfers is the illusion of choice that Web-based communication suggests to individuals. While Web-based communication is unique in its nonlinear design, it is important to realize that all of the "choices" with which individuals are presented when visiting a Website are predetermined. Hypermedia and symbols which transport avatars around a particular Website like Alpha are strategically designed to reinforce messages favorable to the leadership of the Webmaster or provider. The necessity of engaging with these iconic mechanisms for travel, reveals a sophisticated control mechanism created for the realization of power. In the Alpha Website, the glowing red triangle is a principal means of entering the site, continually reinforcing the symbolism of white supremacy.

Webpages are pre-designed and consistently updated to attract individuals "in" to the particular virtual world created. Websites such as Alpha’s "virtual community" exemplify the tremendous power potential that social movements seek to cultivate on the World Wide Web. "Virtual Communities" appeal to individuals to join Web-based groups of other individuals sharing similar interests. Again, the prefabricated nature of the
Website establishes norms which the avatar must follow in order to be successful in this synthetic environment.

Willing acquiescence to the rules and roles of a particular Website illustrate the referent power which such Websites enjoy. Individuals influenced to engage in communication exchanges with a Website must abide by the predetermined rules for interaction if they wish to continue functional association with other Web members. Non-transparent rules for interaction are typically outlined in Websites “home page,” which is the avatar's first look at the particular Website. Sometimes implied rules are detailed throughout the page in areas referred to as FAQ, or frequently asked questions, portions of the site.

Legitimate power also seems to be a consistent source of control for Webmasters. Avatars visiting Websites confer legitimacy to Webpages through their virtual presence and interaction with the page. Visitors may be asked to “sign a guest book” which involves including the individual’s e-mail address and general demographic considerations. This information is then used to track down individuals through “snail mail” (U.S. Postal service) or through the e-mail genre of Internet technology. Once located, Webpages can continually inundate individuals with messages to encourage continued participation in the virtual group sustained by the Website. Many times Webpages seek financial support for maintenance and renovations made to the particular site. This is also a predominant strategy of Alpha. Almost always, Websites encourage visitors to either become members or directly involve themselves somehow in the mission of the page.

Benson (1996) effectively portrays the predeterminable power offered by
cyberspace interactions with his analysis of on-line political discourse. Benson (1996) notes, "Internet political discourse appears to exhibit a powerfully motivation generic shape . . . the repeated appeal to totalizing, logical demonstration as a mode of political discourse indicate[s] that participants are, in effect, agreeing on a shared set of discursive rules" (p.374). Observing discursive rules of discourse creates a social contract of sorts between the visitor and Webmaster. Compliance with discursive rules signals a willing submission on some level to the ideology of the particular Webpage. As Web-based technology progresses, the ability for Webmasters such as Wilson to identify and control visitors to the Alpha site will undoubtedly reach new levels.

The preceding illustrations only begin to describe the subtle method of gaining power which World Wide Webpages enable. Specific attributes outlined by this study represent only a few of the many capabilities which World Wide Web-based communications confer to creators. As Web technology daily reinvents itself, new applications offer activists innovative approaches to persuade audiences.

Limitations

There are numerous limitations inherent to this study. The first limitation exists in the literature reviewed and used for many of the conclusions reached by this study. Current literature conspicuously lacks a substantive body of research which specifically addresses the rhetorical implications of World Wide Web communication. Consequently, the literature used in this study borrows heavily from a wide range of available journals and publications which do not specifically address the rhetorical power exhibited by social
movements on the World Wide Web. Much of the material in this thesis comes from authors who make macro-analyzes of the role of cyberspace, posing problems for evaluating a specific tentacle of what has come to be known as the Internet. In addition many of the findings have the potential to become outdated as new technological developments become a part of the growing field of Internet communication.

Second, the theoretical depth of this thesis is limited, particularly in the coverage of the concept of power. There are a wide variety of possible sources that critics may choose to turn to in an attempt to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the existing philosophies regarding concepts of power. Future research may wish to employ the research of Habermas or Foucault to enable more in-depth analysis of power relations. For the goals of this study, King (1987) and Bowers Ochs and Jensen's (1993) works provide a basic method for determining and evaluating power communication in its various guises.

Third, the choice of the Alpha movement as the case study on which this study focuses its attention is not representative of the vast majority of Webpages that are created and visited in cyberspace. Consequently, the method of analysis and corresponding findings may not be applicable to the vast majority of sites which exist on the World Wide Web. The method designed to study Alpha may benefit from extensive revisions as the tools for analysis utilized in this study may not prove applicable to other World Wide Websites.

Anonymity is another huge factor which presents problems for differentiating the passive visitor from the committed activist. There has been preliminary work done by
scholars like Lee (1997) to assess the anonymity factor made available to users of computer-mediated communication. Much more research needs to be developed to assess who visits Websites and what effect the rhetoric has on those visiting Websites like Alpha. It is difficult to conclusively document a causal relationship between rhetorical messages and corporeal actions. While, cyberspace seems to perform some role in the promulgation and solidification stages of a social movement, ascertaining the level of influence which the Web plays is next to impossible to determine. One possible tracking mechanism is a Webpages “hit counter,” however the reliability of using such mechanisms has been called into question. The designers of a specific Webpage have the ability to artificially inflate the numbers that a hit counter shows to those visiting a Webpage.

Cyberspace, as a dominant sphere of discourse, is in its infancy. The relative newness of the technology poses problems to critics attempting to provide definitive statements about the effects and consequences of rhetoric taking place on the Web. While World Wide Web usage may become a dominant form of communication, there is no way to tell how much of an effect a specific page may contribute to the actions of individuals who engage in the mandates of the group. While there are limitations with this study, readers and future researchers should not be discouraged from seizing the moment to evaluate the increasing role which Web-based communication promises to play in the art and expression of persuasion. The next section contemplates likely ramifications which World Wide Web communication potentially offers to the individual consciousness, community formation and control.
Implications and Future Research

The rhetorical possibilities fostered by cyberspace are profound, yet scholars are only beginning to realize the possible outcomes of transitions to digital-based communication such which occurs on the World Wide Web. This section delves into a few of the notable spheres of social life which will undoubtedly be affected by the advances of computer-mediated communication such as the Web. In the physical world, organizations encounter many obstacles to gaining audiences for power. Physical space and time are two factors which limit the full realization of power in the physical world. However as previously mentioned, Web communication effectively annihilates time and space, allowing for the rapid formation of groups resulting in more efficient power transfers. Communication scholars should analyze what effects technological advancements have on the communication process so that citizens are apprized of their communication options and conceivable consequences. As the Web becomes a dominant source of information, which individuals turn to for communication and educational purposes, critics must evaluate the repercussions which result from changes in our communication practices.

The following section provides a precursory overview of potential effects resulting from the impending shift to digital communication such as that occurring on the World Wide Web. As history has shown, communication preferences have implications which ripple outward from the consciousness of the individual to the community in which the individual finds themselves. The context in which the individual and community interact in the ongoing construction of social reality contains imbedded aspects of power and control.
which decisively affect the outcome of community/individual interaction. To fully understand how Web-based communication occurring on the Web might possibly affect societies normative constructs of living, the following section illustrates each component of the experience, providing empirical and hypothetical implications of rhetorical exchanges.

Consciousness

Intrapersonal communication is the first facet to consider, for the ego is the basis of individual consciousness. Understanding the impacts of Internet communication on the individual consciousness enables a personalization of the possibilities and problems of cyberspace. Undoubtedly people effect and are affected by others, nevertheless people return daily to some level of intrapersonal communication to make sense of it all. Over time, individuals simultaneously embrace and reject values and ideas which are presented to them. Each successive epoch of communication transition has affected this process. Digital communication occurring on the Web promises continuing changes in the manner of self conceptualization. Bolter (1996) notes that, "the graphic rendering of electronic space may well affect the definitions or constructions of self in our culture" (p. 110).

The digital age immensely affects the process of identity construction, at times tipping the scales in favor of a prefabricated ideal. Currently, individuals gain a perception of the world based through communication and agreement with others, resulting in a socially constructed reality. In this process, the individual has a vital role, lending his/her voice in the construction of a harmonious social order. Through interaction with computer-mediated applications, notably the World Wide Web, the individual receives the
illusion of creative discovery, when in actuality, iconic choices are preset. In cyberspace, synthetic representations of the natural environment are designed by computer engineers and are established long before the first visitor ever enters a specific Website.

The increasing dependency on the Web and its hypermedia method of engagement promises to change the individual. Future research may investigate the impacts of Internet communication for individual consciousness formation by focusing on aspects of Web communication such as the role of hypertext. Gibson (1996) suggests "that nothing less than the transformation of consciousness is at stake in a relationship with hypertext" (p. 245). Hypertext currently is the dominant method of "travel" through cyberspace, engendering a sense of active participation in the retrieval of information. Such participation has been coined "virtual participation" significantly contributing to self perception. "One concern over the effects of virtual participation is that, like the computer, its elements are totally internal and intrapersonal they forced us to internalize significant portions of daily life and result in the interiorization of self-perception" (Larson, 1996, p.102). Others have described Internet communication as "the juncture of digital information and human perception" (Strate, 1996, p. 3).

What are the potential repercussions of Web communication on the individual and why is the individual important to this study? Berger and Luckman (1966) argue that both mind and body are necessary for development of self. The individual is essential to the successful formation of any movement. Each new member of a movement is a potential contributor and recruiter of other new members. Additionally, the individual lends legitimacy to the movement through their membership. Thus the individual is a key
player in both understanding the rhetorical process and assessing to what degree technological advancements impact the individual.

Technological advancements certainly force a reevaluation of the self. Each refinement on existing lifestyles forces a similar redefinition of the functions of man. And at each stage we see the definition becoming stricter, more precise, and always in relation to the ‘change agent’ -- be it a mule, a hammer, an assembly line, or a communications satellite. Thus, one of the most significant effects of technology is to force man into ever-higher levels of self-definition. Our machines, in other words, force us forward. (Hunter, 1970, p. 226)

It is next to impossible to account for the intrapersonal communication occurring while an individual partakes in Web-based communication. Yet it is unmistakable that alterations in patterns of communication must necessarily have an impact on the self assessment. Messages which have been found to profoundly effect self awareness in the physical world (reflected appraisal, social comparison) are presented to the individual on the Web both continuously and rapidly.

Engaging in Internet communication through Webpages undoubtedly affects intrapersonal communication and recent research has concluded that communicating through cyberspace can augment individual ability to strategically manipulate identity (Walther, 1996, p. 3). Consequentially, the individual has the ability to progressively add or subtract aspects of the consciousness which may be deemed situationally useful.

Understanding the powerful nature of instantaneous communication flow, associations of individuals ranging in size from one to thousands have established a
presence on the Web for various reasons. This study has presented the persuasive objectives which encourage groups like white supremacists to create a presence on the Web. In essence Internet communication occurring on the Web represents the newest advancement in the advertising function of groups. Mead (1962) invents the term “the generalized other” to describe “the organized community or social group which give to the individual his unity of self” (p. 154). Internet communication pushes individuals to dramatic refinements on their existing lifestyle and actions. “These technologies then enable us to experience control as a projection of self out of our center, from our wills, into something else. That something else, that field of activity, is space. It is real because it is independent of us, but paradoxically more real because it also responds to us” (Phelan, 1996, p. 41).

Community

“The networks unconstrained by conventional geographic boundaries had become a self-contained universe known to a growing number of computer researchers as cyberspace” (Strate, Jacobsen, Gibson, 1997, p. 3). Self-contained universes in cyberspace are areas where individual join with others in virtual communities. Communities are the extension of the individual from the private life to the public persona. Typically, communities are conceptualized as the geophysical space where human beings’ congregate and live together. This definition of community becomes tested with the digital revolution. One needs only look to the cybecities of Microsoft to view communities with active and “present” members who conceptually inhabit a virtual space hundreds, even thousands of miles apart. Perhaps this is a reaction to the global
community which seems daily to become more of a reality. Castells (1997) postulates that “when the world becomes too large to be controlled, social actors aim at shrinking it back to their size and reach” (p. 66). With a loss of control over physical space, individuals turn inward through mechanisms like the Web, to share visions of the mind with others who do not necessarily share the same locale creating virtual communities of networked individuals.

Virtual communities serve as integral contributors to the social construction of reality. Together with the individual, communities engage in a constant process of redefining and solidifying the position of a dominant reality, the reality of everyday life. Leading authorities in the field claim that hypertext will alter the manner in which these realities are constructed (Bolter, 1996). There are many reasons to believe that such conclusions are valid. First, the notion of an overarching dominant social reality becomes questionable, because observance of one dominant social reality is not essential within the parameters of cyberspace. A multitude of separate universes are created and maintained in cyberspace, offering individuals choices. Each new universe has the opportunity to become the dominant reality in the minds of its participants and thus need not conform to a normative standard. In addition the ability of individuals to simultaneously be members of widely different universes further fractures the possibility of one universe attaining the status of dominant social reality.

Secondly the Web offers former “deviants” of the dominant social reality a safe haven of discourse. The Web offers disenfranchised individuals a friendly forum for their beliefs, individuals gain the opportunity to converse with others who share their vision of
reality. World Wide Web discourse mutually creates and reinforces experiences which solidify the individual belief system and creates a sanctuary for others. This Cyber community forming is daily process on Webpages. Hate groups have also found that the annihilation of space allows for them to come together and share their beliefs. What was once an obstacle to Klan meetings is now possible, instantaneous visitations and reinforcing symbols are available instantaneously. Additionally, these new social spaces create the possibility of new and different types of face to face interaction.

Doheny-Farina (1996) describes the potential of computer mediated worlds to increase face to face interaction among community members. Doheny-Farina (1996) asserts that we can make the necessary connections with those around us and “possibly restore the integrity to the places we find ourselves” (p. 34). Conversely, others have argued that Internet communication actually decreases the opportunity for face to face interaction. This is because the communication gives users the illusion of effective communication and decreases the perceived need to physically "see" the other in person. Computer-mediated interaction obstructs complete perception of the environment in which the communication is occurring. Additionally, nonverbal aspects of communication may be lost or hidden by both senders and receivers distorting the quality of the communicative exchange.

While, there is evidence that community building in cyberspace is occurring, there are dissenters who see this type of community as disempowering. On the pessimistic side, critics like Carlson (1995) look to structural barriers which inhibit the involvement of the community because, in his words, the community itself is weak.
The free communication spaces that we have now (e.g., Internet, public-access TV) are already boring—because community is weak. The whole notion of public opinion has turned into an easily manipulated series of statistical non sequiturs. In Debord’s words, “Unanswerable lies have succeeded in eliminating public opinion, which first lost the ability to make itself heard and then very quickly dissolved all together (p. 242)

Perhaps digital communication will enable interactants to successfully empower themselves. On this end of the spectrum is Negroponte (1995) who optimistically outlines four dynamic qualities which, he believes, will result in the triumph of both the individual and communities. These are the decentralizing, globalizing, harmonizing and empowering virtues of digital communication. (p. 229).

Somewhere in the middle of this debate of technotopia vs. dystopia is the stance of Doheny-Farina (1996), who argues “that powerful cultural trends are seducing us toward technological immersion and away from our placed lives. On the other hand, I recommend not shunning the net but steering it” (p. xii). Wisdom in which direction to guide the Web is more often than not, an exercise in subjectivity.

Understanding how the community and individual work together in constructing a reality which they collectively inhabit is the next area to look to when evaluating the potential effects of digital communication. The builders of computer-mediated Web pages have already begun their construction. No votes are taken and responsibility is assumed by no one. An unregulated environment is alluring as such spaces engenders an assumption of freedom. However as more users gain access to the Web, their choices will
consist of those that the previous builders have set as the default. Default is an important clarifier for individuals will conceivably have the option of furthering the vertical and horizontal building of the infrastructure effectively narrowing (or by the same token) expanding options for the next interactant. The question is whether the next interactant will have the initiative to take additional steps and expand the realm of cyberspace beyond preexisting norms. If individuals do not engage in the collective structuring of electronic frontiers like the Web, then dominant institutions will seize control over these synthetic areas.

Control

Who will define the rules that guide the continued construction of cyberspace? History hints at the probable outcome through the words of Benniger, (1996) “For those of you who might want to preserve the decentralized and interpersonal nature of cyberspace, consider: No such infrastructure or medium has ever resisted application to mass persuasion and control” (p. 52). Perhaps the creators of Webpages and Internet service providers will become the definers of rules for on-line communication. If these forces are able to establish themselves as cyber-hegemons, the resulting control of populations will reach new levels. As Benniger (1996) again points out, “The possibilities for effective control of a large population via cyberspace appear unmatched by those of any other existing means” (p. 54).

The reason that digital communication allows for such massive power transfer is that in the digital age, the individual relinquishes control of data which serves in the construction of powerful rhetorical appeals. Again Benniger (1996) elaborates that each
person's "immediately processable record of past behavior on the Net will afford unprecedented support for efforts to persuade, influence, and control her or him" (p. 56).

Web sites such as Alpha contain enormous possibilities for rhetorical power. Designers of Webpages and the owners of the channels also have great propensity for power. Schiller (1995) notes:

Control of information instrumentation invariably goes hand in hand with control of the message flow and its content, surveillance capability, and all form of information intelligence. To be sure, the revenues from such control are hardly afterthoughts in the minds of the builders and owners of the information superhighway (p. 20)

As the above quotation illustrates, control mechanisms are at the foundation of the construction of the information superhighway. Institutions, such as governmental forces, continually attempt to regulate information technologies to keep the communication occurring on the electronic highway in line with an established value system. While the government initially established the Internet, business and individuals alike have usurped the government's position as sole owner of the channel. Who will come to dominant these power struggles, individual or institution, has yet to be decided. One thing is for certain, control is facilitated by those engaged in Internet communication.

Concluding Thoughts

"Cyber indicates control effect through interactivity" (Phelan, 1996, p. 40).

This analysis has defined preliminary aspects of rhetorical communication and
hypothesized possible implications that digital communication, occurring on the Web, will have for individuals and society. As the above quote by Phelan indicates, the very root of the word cyberspace implies control. Much more research needs to be done in the area of Internet communication to provide practical understandings of how to analyze control mechanisms exhibited in areas like the World Wide Web. Human communication processes have experienced massive changes in the short time in which people have inhabited the earth. Advancements propelling these changes have occurred through both technical and intuitive inventions of human ingenuity. The dawn of the personal computer marks perhaps the most phenomenal epoch of communication growth. Future research which establishes methods of approaching Internet communication is crucial to begin the process of understanding the impacts of digital communication. Examining on-line communication with tools of rhetorical criticism is an initial step which enables critics to assess persuasive effectiveness of rhetoric while keeping a critical eye to the underlying motives which producers of digital messages seek to achieve.

A new landscape has been drawn, enabling the production and distribution of rhetorical messages like never before in history. The technical abilities to modify a persuasive appeal to specifically target individuals drastically changes the transactional environment of the communication act. The information age has changed the environment and allowed for racial messages to become distributed to audiences that heretofore would never have been exposed to such information.

Ascertaining the significance of computer-mediated rhetoric is an important task which this study has initiated by examining the World Wide Web strategies of white
supremacist social movements. Analyzing the rhetorical strategies of the Alpha movement provides a precursory micro-analysis into the growing discursive potentials offered by cyberspace. A wide variety of gateway mechanisms exist to access cyberspace. By focusing on the World Wide Web, this study has narrowed the spotlight to a channel which embodies the various aspects of Internet technology. History has proven that shifts in modes of disseminating messages have dramatically changed the way in which many humans conduct their daily lives. The World Wide Web offers a foretaste of the impending technological advancements looming on the horizon and provides critics with tangible artifacts that can be used to help develop tools of analysis. This thesis has begun this process by focusing on the rhetoric produced by supremacist social movements. Hopefully this study will serve as a catalyst, prompting others to design and implement methods of analyzing the discourse taking place in cyberspace.
APPENDIX

Alpha Web Pages Analyzed
United States Population

- Black 29,930,524
- American Indian, Etc. 2,015,143
- Asian or Pacific Islander 7,226,986
- Other races 9,710,156

US Racial Prison Population

- Black non-hispanic 41.1%
- White non-hispanic 41.6%
- Hispanic 15.6%

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear 1996 1/97

Take a close look at the graphs above. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to see the major disproportion of minority crime. Blacks represent roughly 13% of the total US population, yet represent 41.1% of the prison population! Take into account that this graph only represents the prison population and not those on parole, probation or those who were never caught.

This page will be expanded as data is confirmed and time allows expansion.

**Do you really want them in YOUR neighborhood?**
ALL CHANGE IS NOT PROGRESS. The technological advances made in recent decades have bestowed many superficial material advantages on mankind but, at the same time, they have injured the world in which we live and lowered the quality of our lives.

The air in which we breathe has been poisoned. Our food is full of chemical additives. Our waters have been polluted, and even the rain that falls from the sky is filled with acid in some regions. The ultimate horror of nuclear holocaust, even now, looms ominously on the horizon.

This unrestrained technological onslaught menaces the very existence of such animals as the Giant Panda and the gigantic Blue Whale. It threatens to exterminate the timid Mountain Gorilla and the magnificent California Condor. But there is another animal population which is also endangered and whose disappearance would be an even greater tragedy - the Aryan (White) race.

There are already numerous signs that the White race is losing the will to assert itself, and even the will to live. Each year more White people die than are born. At the current rate Whites will become a minority in the United States around the year 2030, if not sooner. The traditional, healthy, cultural and spiritual values of our race have been undermined and contaminated. Suicide has become the number two cause of death for White teenagers. (Automobile accidents are now number one.)

Unfortunately, most White people are ignorant and apathetic to the threat of racial extinction. Instead, they are caught up in an attitude of "do your own thing," "live for today," and "look out for Number One." They couldn't care less about the world their grandchildren and great-grandchildren will have to live in, nor do they care about the future of their race.

But some of us do care. We are concerned. We are determined that our race will survive; that it will have a clean environment in which to live and that the future
The Flyers presented here are an example of several used by ALPHA in our street activities. Some have been revised from older flyers received from other organizations over the years. We urge people to print out a copy of them, add our address, and distribute if possible.

**ALPHA Flyers & Cartoons Menu**

- Help Save This Endangered Species
- Which Plan Is Being Followed?
- What To Do When...
- The New Face Of Uncle Sam
- America Loves A Good Party!
- Why I am an ALPHA Aryan Nationalist
- Differences in race...not just skin deep
- Race And Integration: Scientists Speak Out
- Lesson on Integration from the History of Portugal
- Is This A Registered Gun?
- What Is Racism?
There has been much talk of America disappearing. Disappearing, that is, as a world power, as a military leader, even as a dominant economic force.

But there hasn’t been so much talk about an even more serious vanishing act - that of the American people themselves.

Recently, in a crowded Miami Airport, I watched a bewildered young GI listening to the machine gun bursts of Spanish announcements. "I would like to get back to America," he wailed. It was hard to accept he was in it.

Astonishingly, his vision, and that of the rest of the world of traditional America, is fast being swamped. By the time his grandchildren are 65 - just two generations away - when Americans will be a minority in their own land.

Once only speculation, the "browning" of America is a fact borne out by census. In the future, the average American will not trace his ancestral line back to Europe, but to South America or even Asia.

The White American is now a diminishing species, overwhelmed by a tidal wave of immigration from Asia and Latin America.

Already one in four Americans describe themselves as Hispanic or non-White. If the current trends in immigration and birth continue, the Hispanic population will increase by 21 percent, Asians by 22 percent, Blacks by 12 percent and the Whites by less than 2 percent.

Put those figures together, add a few decades, and the America we know will have changed beyond recognition. If the English language survives as the main means of communication, it will be infused with words and terms we have never heard of.

With it will come a social revolution, altering everything from the way history is viewed to education, culture and politics.
White Men Must Arm!
At the ALPHA HQ computer / multimedia dept. (with the support of people such as yourself)
we plan on upgrading our computers so that extravagant video productions can be made.

Updated 3-6-98

Greetings friends:

The time is here to update this long overdue message to our visitors. I sincerely apologize to our regular visitors to this website for the sad lack in progress pertaining to updating the site with fresh material and current events. I, as with most other Aryan men, must work for my daily bread and the time has not been available to me for updating. As many know the webpage was down for a period close to three months. This interruption in service was the result of our provider going out of business and several problems that arose transferring to the current provider (wpwww.com). Now that the problems are behind us, we will charge ahead into the future bringing you one of the best racial websites on the Internet. I would like to thank everyone for their participation in our literature drive the end of 1997, now we must gear up for the spring offensive. The timing for our web page could not have been worse, directly following the literature drive. Now, we are once again ready to strike.
Getting the best out of life.

This page is under construction
Join Us On IRC!

Talk live with others who share concern for our race and future. IRC (Internet Relay Chat) provides an excellent forum for discussion and meeting other in your area or around the world!

Meet us on the Undernet network on channel #ALPHA
To gain access to IRC, run a web search for MIRC (PC) or IRCLE (MAC), download and install the program and set it for the undernet network, then join us in channel #ALPHA.

Racial Statistics for the United States

HQ Update revised on 03/09/98.

Membership applications are now completed and ready for mailing.
If you wish to join ALPHA, write to our HQ address requesting an application.
P.O. Box 23184, Philadelphia, PA 19124
KU-KLUX-KLAN
1991
STONE MOUNTAIN,
GEORGIA
WHITE UNITY RALLY
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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