Memory and the Rhetoric of White Supremacy

by

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ABSTRACT

Rhetorical theorist Kenneth Burke has asserted the significance of paying equal, if not more attention to, propagandist rhetoric, arguing that "there are other ways of burning books on the pyre-and the favorite method of the hasty reviewer is to deprive himself and his readers by inattention."[1] Despite Burke's exhortation, attention to white supremacist discourse has been relatively meager. Historians Clive Webb and Charles Eagles have called for further research on white supremacy arguing that attention to white supremacist discourse is important both to fully understand and appreciate pro-civil rights rhetoric in context and to develop a more complex understanding of white supremacist rhetoric.[2] This thesis provides a close examination of the literature and rhetoric of two white supremacist organizations: the Citizens' Council, an organization that sprang up in response to the 1954 landmark decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* and Stromfront.org, a global online forum community that hosts space for supporters of white supremacy. Memory scholars Barbie Zelizer, John Bodnar, and Stephen Brown note the usability of memory to shape social, political, and cultural aspects of society and the potential implications of such shaping. Drawing from this scholarship, the analysis of these texts focuses specifically on the rhetorical shaping of memory as a vehicle to promote white supremacy. Through an analysis of the Citizens' Council's use of historical events, national figures and cultural stereotypes, Chapter 1 explicates the organization's attempt to form a memorial narrative that worked to promote political goals, create a

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[1] Burke, Kenneth. "The Rhetoric of Hitler's "Battle."" *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973). 191

[2] Clive Webb, *Massive Resistance: Southern Opposition to the Second Reconstruction*, (Cary: Oxford University Press, 2005), 8.

sense of solidarity through resistance, and indoctrinate the youth in the ideology of white supremacy. Chapter 2 examines the rhetorical use of memory on Stormfront and explains how the website capitalizes upon the wide reaching global impact of World War II to construct a memorial narrative that can be accessed by a global audience of white supremacists. Ultimately, this thesis offers a focused review of the rhetorical signatures of two white supremacist groups with the aim of combating contemporary instantiations of racist discourse.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1903, W. E. B Du Bois remarked that "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line."[3] Over the course of the twentieth century, Du Bois' prediction repeatedly rang true as racial discord was perhaps the defining characteristic of social strife within the United States. At the turn of the twentieth century, however, this "problem" was hardly new; the preceding century was arguably defined by racial strife as well. The fight for racial equality in the United States is charged with a rich history of figures who have employed a variety of rhetorical strategies to support the cause. Frederick Douglass, Maria Stewart, and Angela Grimke are just a few of the antislavery advocates of the 19th century whose rhetorical acuity have been studied by scholars of rhetoric. Shirley Wilson Logan's work on advocates' use of narrative and identification, Stephen H. Browne's study of their use of moral appeals, and David Howard-Pitney's examination of varying applications of the jeremiad work in concert to expand our understanding of antislavery figures beyond the historical. Their focus on the "rhetorical"—that is, on the modes of persuasion deployed by speakers in an effort to move their audiences—has uncovered a rich tradition of African American oratory. Scholars including Keith Miller, Robert Terrill, and Maegan Parker Brooks have extended our understanding of this tradition through their examinations of figures such W.E.B Du Bois, Booker T. Washington, Fannie Lou Hamer, Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. Their attention to the rhetorical prowess of these civil and human rights activists of the late 20th century demonstrates, among other things, a pronounced presence

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[3] W.E.B Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). 3.

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of homiletics in the African American rhetorical tradition, code switching, and the use of the vernacular in writing and speech. The study of these activists' work has been vital in developing current understanding of black protest rhetoric in general, and rhetoric of the civil rights movement in particular.

However, while efforts to better understand the rhetorical import of antislavery and civil rights discourse have occurred, the body of scholarship focusing on the rhetorical tactics used by white supremacists and their supporters is comparatively sparse. Throughout the course of American history, the institution of white supremacy has taken various forms, ranging from overt government sponsored oppression in the form of slavery, segregation, Black Codes and Jim Crow laws, to more subtle socially enforced value systems including gentrification, negative media, and pop culture representations.

In an effort to understand how white supremacy operates rhetorically, I turn to Maurice Charland's notion of constitutive rhetoric. In his article "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the Peuple Québécois," Charland draws heavily on Kenneth Burke's idea of identification and Louis Althusser's discussion of ideology and interpellation. Charland asserts that constitutive rhetoric functions when the audience is "interpellated," or called upon "as political subjects through a process of identification in rhetorical narratives that…presume the constitution of the subjects"[4] In other words, Charland argues that constitutive rhetoric, through the use of ideological narratives, creates a group or audience that inherently identifies with and supports the rhetor's position. Charland insists that narrative is always ideological because it creates "the illusion of merely

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[4] Maurice Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the Peuple Québécois," *Quarterly Journal Of Speech*. 73.2 (1987): 134.

revealing a unified and unproblematic subjectivity." Through narrative, then, "collective identities" are formed and "exist only though an ideological discourse that constitutes them."[5]

Drawing from Charland's notion of constitutive rhetoric and Abby L. Ferber's definition of white supremacy, rhetorics of white supremacy can be defined as the ideological narratives which construct "racial difference and hierarchy as a given reality,"[6] in order to constitute a group or collective identity among whites. Using this definition as guide for analysis allows this project to more cogently discuss white supremacist groups by focusing on the ideological narratives which help call various groups and identities into existence.

In order to propagate white supremacy and defend its existence in the wake of cultural and socio-economic change, champions of this ideology have employed a wide range of rhetorical methods. Assertions of intellectual inferiority, hyper sexualization, and propensity for crime and violence within the black community; religious justification; and political and economic arguments are just a few of the rhetorical strategies that have been used to support institutions of white supremacy. These arguments, forwarded in response to progressive ideals supporting the social and economic advancement of African Americans, work to retain power for the white community through the propagation of the ideology of white supremacy. Despite the perennial nature of the institution of white supremacy within the cultural fabric of the United States, study of white supremacist rhetorics has been relatively limited compared

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[5] Ibid., 139.

[6] Abby L. Ferber, *White Man Falling: Race, Gender, and White Supremacy*. (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1998), 11.

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to the study of anti-slavery and civil rights rhetorics. As a result, there has yet to be a comprehensive definition of the rhetoric of white supremacy, let alone an examination of the various rhetorics which fall under this definition.

Neil R. McMillen, Numan V. Bartley, Winthrop D. Jordan and other scholars, through their efforts to historicize white supremacy movements, have identified a wide variety of actions, attitudes, and arguments perpetuated by white supremacists, but have not analyzed these arguments in a rhetorical fashion. Some scholars, including Patricia Roberts-Miller, Philip C. Wander, Waldo W. Braden, and Jerry Himelstein have situated white supremacy within rhetorical studies outlining projection[7], scapegoating, myth, imagery, and coding[8] as some of the techniques used in white supremacy discourse. Each of these scholars has contributed to the important task of mapping the tactics of white supremacist rhetoric; however, scholars have yet to address how memory is used rhetorically in white supremacist rhetoric. The study of memory is important because it provides a unique view into how groups perceive power and attempt to construct frameworks of power within their group and within society. By uncovering power systems as they existed in white supremacists groups of the past, and understanding how those systems have adapted or changed in the present, we can better tailor our efforts to

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[7] Roberts-Miller, Patricia. *Fanatical Schemes: Proslavery Rhetoric and the Tragedy of Consensus*. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 37-39. Patricia Roberts-Miller describes projection as a rhetorical move where one group projects a behavior that they are exhibiting onto another group in order to reposition blame. According to Roberts-Miller, this "rationalizes the bad behavior of the rhetor, in that it makes the aggressive behavior seem, at worst, defensive."

[8] Himelstein, Jerry. "Rhetorical Continuities in the Politics of Race: The Closed Society Revisited," Southern Speech Communication Journal 48 (Winter 1983): 153-66. Jerry Himelstein defines a code word as "a word or phrase which communicates a well-understood but implicit meaning to part of a public audience while preserving for the speaker deniability of that meaning by reference to its denotative explicit meaning." Himelstein discusses coding in the context of post civil rights movement southern politicians attempting to retain votes from the African American community while simultaneously communicating "faithfulness to the racist cannons of the recent past." (156)

counter the propagation of white supremacist ideology. While the discussion of white supremacist arguments employing American history and memory is present within the work of Braden, McMillen, and Bartley, only a cursory study of its use has been demonstrated. A more comprehensive consideration, supported by work performed by memory scholars Maurice Halbwachs, John Bodnar, Barbie Zelizer, Stephen H. Browne, and Amy Lynn Heyse within the past two decades, would be helpful to explicate how white supremacy movements use memory rhetorically to influence their audience.

My thesis "Memory and the Rhetoric of White Supremacy" is a response to this gap in the critical literature. The main focus of this project is to investigate how memory is used rhetorically in white supremacist rhetoric. Using theories of collective memory established and refined by Bodnar, Zelizer, Browne, and Heyse, this project will provide a close examination of the literature and rhetoric of two white supremacist organizations: the Citizens' Council, an organization that sprang up in response to the 1954 landmark decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* and Stromfront.org, a global online forum community that hosts space for supporters of white supremacy.

This thesis consists of four chapters. In Chapter One the "Introduction," I first lay out an argument for greater attention to white supremacist rhetorics. Second, I define white supremacist rhetoric, review some of the rhetorical forms most associated with it, and identify memory as a rhetorical device central to the rhetoric of white supremacy but little examined. In Chapter Two, "Rhetorical Memory-Making in *The Citizens' Council*, 1955-1957," I explain how the Citizens' Council crafted a collective memory to gain support for the major political goals of the organization. Using rhetorical analysis, I demonstrate how this collective memory helped to foster a cohesive group identity

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favoring white supremacy and an attitude of resistance toward federal integration and federal power. I conclude this chapter with an examination of how *The Citizens' Council* newspaper preserved white supremacy ideology by indoctrinating southern children. Chapter Three, titled "Stormfront: Memory in a Global White Supremacy Community," outlines how memory functions within the contemporary online white supremacist community of Stormfront.org. In this chapter I demonstrate how collective memory is used to create a global sense of community through a common memory of the Second World War and how such rhetorical use of memory provides a space to continually outline and reformulate the history, ideology, and social practices of the white supremacist community. Chapter Four, the "Conclusion," will draw from the previous chapters to analyze how the use of collective memory has shifted from the Citizens' Council in the 1950s to contemporary usage. By evaluating the variance of the use of collective memory in white supremacist discourse I demonstrate how manifestations of white supremacy have shifted over time and how these shifts have impacted society.

Significance of Project

In "The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle," notable rhetorical theorist Kenneth Burke asserted the significance of paying equal, if not more attention to, propagandist rhetoric, arguing that "there are other ways of burning books on the pyre-and the favorite method of the hasty reviewer is to deprive himself and his readers by inattention." Instead, Burke encourages us to "watch it carefully…let us try also to discover what kind of "medicine" this medicine-man has concocted, that we may know, with greater accuracy, exactly what

to guard against, if we are to forestall the concocting of similar medicine."[9] Despite

Burke's exhortation, attention to white supremacist discourse has been relatively meager.

The absence of a major movement to identify and analyze the rhetorical strategies of

white supremacy rhetorics is problematic because it restricts our understanding of white

supremacy movements and our understanding of movements responding to white

supremacy. For example, historians Clive Webb, echoing a similar call from historian

Charles Eagles, argues that "the comparative lack of attention bestowed on

segregationists has stripped the story of civil rights protest of its proper historical context.

Only by understanding the nature of the opposition can scholars accurately assess the

accomplishments of the civil rights movement."[10] The inevitable loss of people,

documents, and resources that can provide this proper context only grows as time passes

and scholars continue to overlook this important historical perspective. Attention to

segregationist discourse is important both to fully understand and appreciate pro-civil

rights rhetoric in context and to develop a more complex understanding of white

supremacist rhetoric.

 While there is a general deficit in the study of white supremacy across all fields,

the study of white supremacist rhetoric is especially sparse. Rhetorical analysis seeks to

provide a better understanding of the persuasive elements of speech. Following Kenneth

Burke's insight, through rhetorical analysis of white supremacist discourse we can more

fully understand how white supremacist ideology is communicated persuasively.

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[9] Burke, Kenneth. "The Rhetoric of Hitler's "Battle."" *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 191.

[10] Clive Webb, *Massive Resistance: Southern Opposition to the Second Reconstruction*, (Cary: Oxford University Press, 2005), 8.

Uncovering the rhetorical tactics employed by white supremacist networks allows both scholars of history and rhetoric to better understand past responses which countered white supremacy discourse as well as formulate new arguments against the perpetuation of white supremacy ideology.

Studying memory in particular is important because it offers unique perspectives into white supremacist discourse. Public memory, according to John Bodnar, "is a body of beliefs and ideas about the past that help a public or society understand both its past, present, and by implication, its future" which "speaks primarily about the structure of power in society."[11] This study of the rhetorical use of memory allows a unique perspective into how white supremacist groups perceive power structures and how they attempt to gain power through rhetorical crafting of memory. The way these organizations construct memory provides insight into how particular social networks view their present condition and how they wish their future to unfold. Thus, the study of memory within historical groups can highlight what leading officials of such organizations valued, how these groups responded to challenges to these values, and how they attempted to shape the values of the future.

This study is additionally significant in that the election of an African American president and the economic downturn in 2008 has spurred massive growth in extremist groups, setting record numbers according to the Southern Poverty Law Center.[12] This growth, along with recent violent acts and plots tied to white supremacy groups,

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[11] John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 15.

[12] "Southern Poverty Law Center Report: As Election Season Heats Up, Extremist Groups at Record Levels" *Southern Poverty Law Center.* 8 March 2012. Splcenter.org.

demonstrates how white supremacist discourse remains both a persuasive and destructive force within society.[13] Examining how white supremacist rhetoric has changed from the 50s to the early 21st century will allow for a better understanding of how contemporary white supremacist discourse functions and how it contributes to detrimental ramifications within society.

Methodology

The main objectives of this thesis are to provide a comprehensive definition of the rhetoric of white supremacy and examine how white supremacist groups use memory rhetorically within their discourse. The methodology I use to achieve these objectives is comprised of three elements. First I provide a comprehensive definition of rhetorics of white supremacy that draws from existing theories outlining the relationship between rhetoric and ideology.

Second, I use archival research to locate and identify white supremacist discourse. The main source of my research for the Citizens' Council is the collection of *The Citizens' Council* newspaper located at Arizona State University. The historical work of Neil R. McMillen and Numan V. Bartley greatly aid my archival research of the Citizens' Council. Additionally, I rely on online forums and websites for my research on contemporary white supremacist discourse, which serve as discourse communities in themselves, and also link users to other discourse communities and sources of literature. Of these online forums, Stormfront.org serves as a primary source as it is the largest and most visited forum of its kind.

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[13] "Terror From the Right: Plots, Conspiracies and Racist Rampages Since Oklahoma City." *Southern Poverty Law Center*. Splcenter.org

Third, I draw upon the work of collective memory studies scholars to illustrate how memory, a key tool used to connect society around a shared past, appears as an essential rhetorical strategy in the rhetoric of white supremacy. This project makes use of two particular theories of memory: public memory and collective memory.

The concept of memory being shared, rather than simply individual, is an idea most notably connected to sociologist Maurice Halbwachs. Public memory focuses on the split between "official" memories, or memories which are produced or perpetuated by a society's various leaders and "official" positions, and vernacular memory, or memory created by "an array of specialized interests that are grounded into parts of the whole."[14] Bodnar argues that pulbic memory is mainly centered on the present and future because it "speaks primarily about the structure of power in society because that power is always in question in a world of polarities and contradictions and because cultural understanding is always grounded in the material structure of society itself."[15] This focus on power, Stephen Browne points out, is why "public memory is never given, but always managed; it is constructed in ways designed to accrue to the advantage of the constructors."[16] Browne highlights narrative, epideictic speech, and attention to ethos as major methods in the construction of public memory.

In her article "Reading the Past Against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies," Barbie Zelizer argues for a broader definition of memory studies, and uses the

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[14] John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 13-14.

[15] Ibid., 15.

[16] Stephen H. Browne, "Reading Public Memory in Daniel Webster's *Plymouth Rock Oration*," *Western Journal of Communication* 57 (1993) : 465.

term collective memory to account for all terms dealing with "the shared dimension of remembering."[17] Zelizer defines collective memory broadly as "recollections that are instantiated beyond the individual by and for the collective,"[18] which is often treated as the heritage of a community and functions as "a meaning-making activity."[19] However, Zelizer works create an overarching theory of memory studies by incorporating the characteristics of public memory outlined by Bodnar and Browne as well as the theories of other memory scholars.

In the time since Zelizer's article, other scholars have expanded the works of memory studies in ways that are significant to this project. In "The Rhetoric of Memory-Making: Lessons from the UDC's Catechisms for Children," Amy Lynn Heyse expands upon Browne's work by identifying the shape by which collective memory most commonly manifests: narrative retellings of the past.[20] Heyse, drawing upon the past scholarship of Steven Knapp and Robin Wagner Pacifici, argues that "collective memories become the stories that inform and shape our public lives and discourse, they bind communities together around a rhetorically constructed, shared past, and they remain active as long as they are needed or until they no longer seem valid."[21]

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[17] Barbie Zelizer, "Reading the Past Against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies," *Review and Criticism* 12, no. 4 (1995) : 214.

[18] Ibid., 214

[19] Ibid. 228.

[20] Anne Lynn Heyse, "The Rhetoric of Memory-Making: Lessons from the UDC's Catechisms for Children," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 38 no.4 (2008) : 411-13.

[21] Ibid., 411.

Heyse, following the scholarship of Browne, has expanded the idea of collective memory as constructed, focusing on the methods of construction or the "rhetorical techne of memory-making."[22] Heyse explicates use of oversimplification, enthymeme, refutation, forgetting, amplification, and appealing to common myths as means to shape collective memory.[23]

In this project, I follow Zelizer in my use of the term collective memory to encompass characteristics of memory studies of Bodnar, Browne, Heyse and others to highlight the various ways memory operates rhetorically within white supremacist texts.

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[22] Ibid., 412.

[23] Ibid.

Chapter 2

RHETORICAL MEMORY-MAKING IN THE CITIZENS' COUNCIL, 1955-1957

In October, 1955, the Citizens' Council of Mississippi released the first issue of
the propaganda newspaper, *The Citizen's Council*. The paper would later become the
official newspaper of the Citizens' Councils of America. Circulation of the monthly
periodical, varying on the year reported, was estimated from forty to fifty thousand.
Although centralized in Mississippi, the paper was spread across the South and, although
sparsely, around the nation.[24] Content of the paper, especially closer to its inception,
generally consisted of republished articles from other established newspapers that shared
the ideological sentiment of the Citizens' Council. Over time, more original content was
included in the newspaper, largely cartoons and editorials.[25] Through *The Citizens'
Council* newspaper, the Citizens' Council of Mississippi and later the Citizens' Councils
of America espoused their most prominent ideology, "the ideology of white
supremacy."[26] The study of the rhetorical strategies of the Citizens' Council has been
limited; the most comprehensive works on the organization are McMillen's *The Citizens'
Council* (1971) and Bartley's *Massive Resistance* (1969). Since these volumes, new
scholarship concerning the Citizens' Councils has been rare, and has largely reproduced
these volumes' work. While McMillen and Bartley do discuss the ideological and
rhetorical moves of the Citizens' Councils and their publications, the work is largely
cursory and does not provide a significant amount of close analysis of specific texts.

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[24] Neil R. McMillen, *The Citizens' Council: Organized Resistance to the Second Reconstruction,
1954-64* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 37.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid., 161.

In response to this apparent dearth of scholarship, this chapter will provide a close analysis of the rhetorical strategies employed in the publication *The Citizens' Council*. Of particular interest will be how the Citizens' Council used their publication *The Citizens' Council* to cultivate collective memory in an attempt to retain power through the propagation of the ideology of white supremacy.

Through their newspaper, the Citizens' Council constructed collective memory of history which comprised of three major tenets. First, the Citizens' Council fashioned a collective memory which sought to gain support for the major political goals held by the organization. The foremost of these goals was the maintenance of segregation. With federal rulings such as *Brown v Board of Education* threatening to overturn segregation, the Citizens' Council advocated two forms of political resistance to integration. One avenue of political resistance was *interposition*, a states' rights doctrine which held that state powers could effectively nullify a Federal court decision deemed beyond federal power. The second approach, albeit less popular, was that of *colonization,* which advocated the relocation of black southerners to other states within the U.S. or locations beyond its borders. The second tenet of the collective memory formed by the Citizens' Council helped to foster both a cohesive group identity favoring white supremacy and an attitude of resistance toward integration and federal power. In shaping this collective memory, the Citizens' Council recalled the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and Reconstruction Era to create a historical narrative of the South which placed Southerners as the vanguards of resistance to political and social tyranny. Finally, in an effort to preserve white supremacy ideology, the Citizens' Council fashioned collective memory into *A Manual for Southerners,* a set of children's lessons aimed at indoctrinating the

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youth. This analysis will focus on the early years of the paper, from its inception in 1955 through 1957. These are the years in which the Citizens' Council was the most prominent group in pro-segregation discourse; as early as 1957 the group's significance had already begun to decay.[27]

Political Goals

Although the Citizens' Council openly stated that it was a non political group on many occasions, as McMillen points out, in some states, the group was "unquestionably a political action group of formidable power."[28] While the political goals of the Citizens' Council were diverse and included the election of politicians, influencing school reading materials, and the suppression of African American voting, the most prominent political goal of the Citizens' Council was the continuation of segregation. Following what historian Jason Morgan Ward has dubbed "a rhetoric of reflexive defiance," the Citizens' Council treated the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling of 1954 as an attack on the white supremacist status quo.[29] The reflexive defense of segregation not only sparked the creation of the Citizens' Council, but provided a political focus for the group. Following their policy of using legal methods of resistance, the Citizens' Council began to promote ideas of interposition and colonization.[30]

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[27] Numan V. Bartley, *Rise of Massive Resistance: Race and Politics in the South During the 1950's* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), 84.

[28] McMillen, *The Citizens' Council*, 305.

[29] Jason Morgan Ward, *Defending White Democracy: The Making of a Segregationist Movement and the Remaking of Racial Politics, 1936-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 7.

[30] McMillen, *The Citizens' Council*, 360-361.

The theory of interposition, which argues that states could enforce state law over federal judgment when they deemed a judicial judgment contradictory to the constitution, was first promulgated prior to the Civil War by John C. Calhoun.[31] This doctrine was not deemed legally invalid until 1960 in *Bush v. Orleans Parish School Board*, and before then, the idea was heavily supported in the South.[32] Views of interposition varied even among supporters in the South: some viewed interposition as a way to muster and organize Southern opposition to civil rights rulings, some viewed it as a means for the defense of the south to remain dignified and avoid racism. Still others viewed it as the magic bullet of Southern resistance. Despite repeated attempts by the media and political leaders, a firm definition of the theory never fully materialized. Instead, the support of interposition was driven through the use of "absurd simplifications and elaborate constitutional polemics combined with generous emotionalism."[33]

Colonization, like interposition, was far from a new idea in 1955. As early as 1768, the advocacy of colonization was being presented in newspapers.[34] The Citizens' Council saw the idea of colonization or relocation as the "best solution-and the only real solution-to the racial problem in the United States."[35] Although interposition was seen as a more viable method of resistance, it was also viewed as only a stopgap solution in the

[31]Sarah H. Brown, "The Role of Elite Leadership in the Southern Defense of Segregation, 1954-1964," *The Journal of Southern History* 77 no. 4 (2011) : 844-845.

[32] Alan Wieder, "The New Orleans School Crisis of 1960: Causes and Consequences," *Phylon*, 48, no. 2 (1987) : 121-131.

[33]Bartley, *Rise of Massive Resistance*, 126-127.

[34] Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 546.

[35] "Back To-Africa Plan is Explained," *Citizens' Council* (Jacksonville, MS), Aug. 1957, pg.4.

fight for white supremacy. Colonization, while less probable, was the ultimate political goal of the Citizens' Council in their first years.

However, both of these political goals shared a common problem. They lacked the public awareness and support that would allow the ideas to pass through the legislative process. The doctrine of interposition was both virtually unknown and abstruse to the American public in the early 1950's.[36] Colonization, despite being more straightforward and having been advocated more recently than interposition, still lacked the public support necessary to help legislation advocating its implementation to pass.[37] In an effort to combat these problems, the Citizens' Council used their newspaper to fashion a collective memory of southern history that illustrated a historical past that advocated interposition and colonization. Through this constructed past the Citizens' Council sought to provide credibility and public support for interposition and colonization.

The most prominent method the Citizens' Council used to construct collective memory was what Stephen H. Browne describes as rhetorical "expropriation," or the practice of using a past figure or event as a vehicle to "fashion the past to partisan and selective ends."[38] The Citizens' Council recalled instances of important historical figures supporting interposition and colonization as a way of reestablishing white supremacy as a

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[36] Bartley, *Rise of Massive Resistance*, 126.

[37] Robert L. Fleegler, "Theodore G. Bilbo and the Decline of Public Racism, 1938-1947," *The Journal of Mississippi History* 68 no. 2 (2006) : 9-11. Fleegler documents the attempts of Bilbo to create and pass a colonization bill in 1938 and 1939. Fleegler notes that Bilbo's colonization bills were criticized by other members of Congress, including some from the South. Furthermore, the bills received almost no national media attention. These factors may have contributed to the lack of widespread knowledge or support of colonization other than as a fringe idea in the early 1950s.

[38] Stephen H. Browne, "Remembering Crispus Attucks: Race, Rhetoric, and the Politics of Commemoration," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 85 (1999), 185.

central theme in American culture. By associating figures like George Washington, James Madison, Andrew Jackson, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln with interposition and colonization, the Citizens' Council implied that their political goals were not only legitimate, but also deeply rooted in American culture.[39]

Beyond direct association with interposition and colonization, the Citizens' Council also recalled instances of past leaders expressing resistance to the Supreme Court and espousing the belief that white and black people could never peacefully cohabitate the country. For example, in articles covering interposition, quotes like Andrew Jackson's "the court has made its decision; now let them enforce it," and Lincoln's "I do not intend to abide by this Supreme Court Decision" served to support the Councils' condemnation of the Court because they showed that respected leaders in the past had shared a similar sentiment as the Council.[40] Similarly, the Council quoted notable figures in American history discussing colonization, noting in the section "And We Quote," Jefferson's idea that "nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate than that these (Negro) people are to be free; nor is it less certain that the two races, equally free, cannot live in the same government."[41] These quotes served to remind the audience that the Citizens' Councils' notion that blacks and whites could not co-exist was embedded in the cultural fabric of the United States.

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[39] "Back To-Africa Plan is Explained," *Citizens' Council* (Jacksonville, MS), Aug. 1957, pg.4, "Joint Statement of United State Senator James O. Eastland, Congressman John Bell Williams and Judge Tom P. Brady," *Citizens' Council* (Jacksonville, MS), Dec. 1955, pg. 1.

[40] "Educator Says We Must Save South's Youth," *Citizens' Council* (Jacksonville, MS), Mar. 1956, pg. 2

[41] "And We Quote," *Citizens' Council* (Jacksonville, MS), Oct. 1956, pg. 2

Perhaps the most poignant example of rhetorical expropriation within the Citizens' Councils' construction of collective memory was that of the organization's use of Abraham Lincoln. Collective memory of Lincoln has manifested itself in various ways since his assassination; both the African American community and the Southern states have viewed Lincoln in positive and negative ways and have used his memory to promote their ideologies.[42] Lincoln, as a memorial figure, would have been problematic for the Citizens' Council due to his connection with the legacy of destruction caused by the Civil War and because of the African American community's veneration of him as the Great Emancipator and thus supporter of African American freedom and enfranchisement.[43]

In the effort to reestablish Lincoln as a white supremacist and advance their causes, the Citizens' Council emphasized specific statements made by Lincoln, statements which followed the ideology of white supremacy and supported the political goals of the organization. The most ardent example of this appropriate is illustrated in "Back-to-Africa Plan is Explained," in which the Council described Lincoln as "another white proponent of Negro colonization…whose Emancipation Proclamation included the following words: 'The effort to colonize persons of African descent with their consent….will be continued.'"[44] As a device of rhetorical expropriation, this quote contested the memory of Lincoln as the Great Emancipator by situating him as a champion of white supremacy and colonization. Reminding readers that these words

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[42] Barry Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), John Hope Franklin, "The Use and Misuse of the Lincoln Legacy," *Papers of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, 7 (1985) : 30-42.

[43] Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln*, 211-221.

[44] "Back To-Africa Plan is Explained," *Citizens' Council* (Jacksonville, MS), Aug. 1957

originated from Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation was strategic because it refocused the message of the speech from one of racial progress through abolishment of slavery to one of white supremacy through the idea of colonization.

In addition to expropriating people from national history, the Citizens' Council drew upon past conflict between states and the Federal Government when creating collective memory, especially when advocating interposition. The Citizens' Council asserted that "repeatedly, in the past, whenever the Federal Government attempted to usurp the sovereign right and powers reserved to the States, those States affected took such steps as were necessary to void and hold for naught such illegal actions."[45] Following this claim, the Council provided short accounts of various times interposition had been used by states including: Georgia in 1792 and 1825-29, Kentucky and Virginia in 1798, Pennsylvania in 1809, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire and Vermont in 1814, South Carolina in 1832, and Iowa in 1880. The article concluded with the most recent example of a state's defiance of the Federal Government, and made sure to note that these cases, especially the most recent, saw no response from Federal power. Although the events recalled by the Council may not deal directly with issues of white supremacy or race, their use in the construction of collective memory operated to provide precedence, and therefore credibility, to the use of interposition. In the Citizens' Councils' instantiation of collective memory, these historical precedents attempted to legitimize interposition by placing it within the legal history of the United States.

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[45]"Joint Statement of United State Senator James O. Eastland, Congressman John Bell Williams and Judge Tom P. Brady," *Citizens' Council* (Jacksonville, MS), Dec. 1955, pg. 1.

The collective memory manufactured in the Citizens' Council newspaper helped to drive the political goals of the organization by providing credibility to interposition and colonization. As overt support of white supremacy began to die out in mainstream discourse, the Citizens' Council employed the rhetorical expropriation of past figures and conflicts to reestablish white supremacist attitudes into the collective memory of their audience.[46] Although the achievement of these political goals was important to the Citizens' Council, much of their attention was focused on creating group solidarity and promoting and attitude of resistance.

Solidarity and Resistance

While the Citizens' Council often portrayed their newspaper's influence as reaching a national, sometimes global audience, the majority of the paper's articles were targeted toward the South.[47] Bartley notes that a main goal of resistance efforts in the 1950s was to "systematize southern society by stamping out dissent and organizing the entire regional community in defense of the "southern way of life."[48] Defenders of segregation commonly used language appealing to Southern Myth to stress that group

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[46] Robert L. Fleegler, "Theodore G. Bilbo and the Decline of Public Racism, 1938-1947," *The Journal of Mississippi History* 68 no. 2 (2006), pg. 1.

[47] The newspaper often included letters to the editor from around the country and from other countries. Although the main support and readership was centralized in Mississippi, these letters were likely published in an effort to represent the fight (or at least sentiment) against integration as happening beyond the Deep South. While not an exhaustive list, letters can be found from Washington in "From Washington State," Dec. 1955 pg. 2, California in "From California," Apr. 1957 pg. 2, New Jersey in "New Jersey Alert to Racial Threat," Dec. 1956 pg. 3, United Kingdom in "Friends In London," Aug. 1956 pg. 3. The newspaper also included articles which relayed stories of people in the North speaking out against integration. An example of this can be found in "Northerners Want South To Keep Up Segregation Fight," Jun. 1956 pg 6.

[48] Bartley, *Rise of Massive Resistance*, 190.

unity was paramount to success.[49] Drawing from Braden's definition of a myth, Heyse

defines a Southern Myth as "a shared narrative that draws on the memories and

imaginations of the Southern collective," which "is also typically an emotional rather

than logical oversimplification of Southern events, persons, and relationships that draws

on both Southern reality and Southern fiction."[50] Two of the most prominent of these

myths were the myth of the Solid South and the myth of the Lost Cause. The myth of the

Solid South expressed the idea that outside agitation and internal insurgence could only

be resisted by complete unity between white Southerners. The myth of the Lost Cause

rationalized the loss of the Civil War through an idealized view of southern society. As

Braden explains, the myth of the Lost Cause:

> Declared the South's innocence in relation to the war and Reconstruction, and…
> insisted on the Confederacy's moral and righteous victory against aggressive
> outside sources despite their military defeat. The major themes of the Lost Cause
> myth included an argument for states' rights, a claim that Confederates were not
> rebels or traitors, an assertion that slavery was not a cause of war, blame for the
> war on Northerners and abolitionists, an insistence that the South was not beaten
> in battle but overwhelmed by numbers and resources, a celebration of great
> military and political men, parallels between the plight of Southern Confederates
> and the plight of early Americans before and during the Revolutionary War [51]

The Citizens' Council drew from the myth of the Solid South and the myth of the Lost

Cause to construct collective memory of the South's past and used this narrative to foster

group solidarity and an attitude of resistance among their readership. Critical to their

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[49] Waldo W. Braden, "The Rhetoric of Closed Society," *The Southern Speech Communication Journal* 45 no. 4 (1980), 350.

[50] Anne Lynn Heyse, "The Rhetoric of Memory-Making." 414.

[51] Waldo W. Braden, "Repining over an Irrevocable Past: The Ceremonial Orator in a Defeated Society, 1865-1900," in *Oratory in the New South,* ed. Waldo W. Braden (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 22-26. Braden also argues that the myth of the Solid South is either another name for, or a closely connected "dimension" of, white supremacy due to the overwhelming use of the myth to resist the advancement of African Americans in Southern society.

formulation was the "strategic placement" and re-narration of key events in America's history. As Stephen Browne explains "strategic placement" involves "a systematic effort to control the otherwise unpredictable sweep of events by fixing them within a compelling meta-narrative."[52] The Citizens' Council used memories of the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and Reconstruction Era to form a historical narrative that painted the 'southern way of life' as central to the American national tradition and Southerners as the sole protectors of this tradition. The narrative also worked to silence dissenting opinions while emphasizing a tradition of southern leadership and resistance. By connecting this past narrative to present events, the Citizens' Council hoped to inspire readers to continue the "legacy" of Southern unified resistance.

The foundation of the Citizens' Councils' narrative posited southern tradition as integral to national tradition. To form this connection for their audience, the Citizens' Council related Southerners and southern society to the birth and construction of the nation. The Council painted famous leaders from the South as men born in the spirit of Southern greatness. Common depictions of 'Founding Fathers' George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, both of whom were born in the South, as products of the 'southern was of life,' worked metonymically, encouraging readers to trace a smooth alignment between the South and the architects of the nation. Such connections allowed the Council to assert that the Constitution was heavily influenced by southern leadership,[53] and allowed them to point to Southern involvement in the construction of the country as evidence for the credibility of the southern value and social system. The Council's

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[52] Browne, "Reading Public Memory," 464.

[53] "Challenge to the South" *Citizens' Council* (Jacksonville, MS), Apr. 1956.

"Wandering Far Afield," article argued that "the South knows what it is doing. Its social structure is the result of experience, not theory; and the principles governing it were formulated by men who gladly made the supreme sacrifice of life and property to provide us with the Constitution…"[54] This connection placed the protection of the southern way of life on a national level; in the narrative of the Citizens' Council southerners were not only protecting southern tradition but the nation itself.

The theme of resistance was extremely prominent in the Citizens' Council's narrative of the past. In a segment titled "Mississippi Notebook," the Council used the Revolutionary period to bolster support for actions of resistance, asking, "to those who see in this an unjustifiable defiance of authority, we ask: where would this country have been if the colonists had not defied the British Crown?"[55] Attributing the foundation of the nation to an act of resistance allowed the Council to justify resistance on a regional level as part of a national tradition.

The Citizens' Council also worked to represent resistance as a southern tradition by recalling Southern opposition during the Civil War and Reconstruction as important times of Southern leadership. The article "Challenge to the South" declared that "never since the tragic days of the Civil War has such an opportunity been presented to the South to step forward and again provide leadership for this nation."[56] Heralding the government rulings against segregation as "Reconstruction II," the Council noted that

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[54] "Wandering Far Afield" *Citizens' Council* (Jacksonville, MS), Dec. 1956.

[55] "Mississippi Notebook," *Citizens' Council* (Jacksonville, MS), May 1956.

[56] "Challenge to the South," *Citizens' Council* (Jacksonville, MS), Apr. 1956.

Mississippi was fulfilling its "historic role as leader of the Southern racial reaction just as she had…in 1875 to overthrow Reconstruction."[57] Additionally, major leaders like Jefferson Davis and Robert E. Lee were held up as shining examples of patriotic resistance. For example, in an article entitled "His Example Inspires Our Efforts of Today," the Council recounted Davis as a model of resistance: "In the face of overwhelming odds, amid scorn and ridicule from the South's unrelenting enemies, Jefferson Davis fought the good fight. He never compromised a principle nor betrayed the trust reposed in him by the people and cause which he represented."[58]

When recalling the Civil War and Reconstruction, the Citizens' Council drew heavily upon the myth of the Lost Cause. Originally, the Lost Cause myth was created to reconcile the loss of the Civil War and the devastation of Reconstruction for Southerners; however, the Citizens' Council reframed the themes of the myth to construct a narrative that depicted resistance as a main component of Southern history. Reframing themes of the Lost Cause so that they articulated a legacy of resistance permitted the Citizens' Council to draw a connection between past arguments against Reconstruction and its preliminary steps toward integration, and present-day arguments against integration. Placing stories of the Civil War and Reconstruction alongside stories of the Revolution reframed the past for present aims in such a way that made the current-day fight for Revolution appear as a normal and expected chapter in the narrative for Southern sovereignty.

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[57] "New Reconstruction Compared With Old," *Citizens' Council* (Jacksonville, MS), Dec. 1956 pg 3-4.

[58] "His Example Inspires Our Efforts of Today," *Citizens' Council* (Jacksonville, MS), Jun. 1956.

The progression of the narrative of southern memory from past to present was a key component in the Citizens' Council's rhetorical strategy because it allowed the Council to connect their collective memory to events in the present. By establishing resistance as a positive southern tradition throughout times of conflict in American history, the Citizens' Council created an opportunity to critique the audience for failing to resist. For example, in the article "If We Wish To Be Free," the Council asks, "What has happened to a once proud people whose forefathers founded a great nation by resisting the tyranny of immoral authority?" The article continues to admonish the audience asking, "Have we become in this year of 1956 so fearful and pusillanimous that we lack the courage to defend ourselves, and perish like bleating sheep before the onslaught of any tough and unscrupulous aggressor?" After these accusatory questions, the article closes with Patrick Henry's famous "Give me liberty or give me death" speech, challenging their audience to rise together in resistance.[59] The Citizens' Council used their constructed narrative to point to a loss of tradition and place the responsibility of this loss on their audience. However, by ending the article with a well known call to resistance, the organization informed its audience that by resisting integration they could carry on the well-established southern tradition of resistance.

The Citizens' Council also capitalized on the historical progression of their narrative by giving examples of those who carried on the tradition of resistance in the present time. Individuals held up as examples by the Council were compared to persons from the Revolution, Civil War, and Reconstruction. Describing the spread of the Citizens' Council organization, the article "Mississippi Offers Inspiring Example,"

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[59] "If We Wish To Be Free," *Citizens' Council* (Jacksonville, MS), Nov. 1956.

praises that "there has perhaps never been any more effective group action since the assembly of patriots at Concord, than the two hundred and fifty Citizens' Councils in Mississippi."[60] In other places, the Council likens those resisting at the present time to ancestors of those who have resisted in the past with phrases such as "these are the 1957 descendants of the patriots of 1775." to animate their sentiment.[61] These types of comparisons promoted the Citizens' Council as a group which actively carried on the southern tradition of resistance. Thus, these articles advocated that joining, or becoming more active in, the Citizens' Council was the most honorable of demonstrating loyalty to the south and its legacies.

While the Citizens' Council used this narrative to unify its audience through a tradition of resistance, they also used the narrative to create solidarity by silencing dissenting opinions. Similar to how the Council created a narrative to promote resistance as a positive tradition, the Council compared past people and events to the present in the attempt to stifle discordant opinion. In many cases, the Citizens' Council demonized dissenting ideas as "northern" and compared them to northern actions in the past. The Reconstruction era was alluded to heavily by the Citizens' Council for this purpose; large articles outlining how the evils of Reconstruction were being implemented in "Reconstruction II" appeared commonly in the newspaper. However, the newspaper also sought to vilify southerners who did not share the Councils' values. For example, in the article "Mississippi Notebook," the Council asserted that:

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[60] "Mississippi Offers Inspiring Example," *Citizens' Council* (Jacksonville, MS), Jan. 1956.

[61] "Facing Our Responsibility," *Citizens' Council* (Jacksonville, MS), Feb. 1957.

fence straddlers condemning Council members as 'extremists' are nothing more than spiritual comrades of Revolutionary War "moderates" who doubtless regarded Paul Revere as an extremist and hate mounger for shouting a warning to his sleeping countrymen. There have always been such 'moderates' on hand to decry active resistance to injustice.[62]

These statements worked to further solidify the group by discrediting those who were critical of it while still operating within the historical narrative the Citizens' Council had constructed.

Indoctrination of the Youth

While the creation of solidarity among the general public was a high priority for the Citizens' Council and the white supremacist movement, the Citizens' Council made a special effort to indoctrinate the children of the South. Even long before the beginnings of the civil rights movement, the practice of indoctrinating youth into the ideology of white supremacy was seen as the best way to create solidarity in support of segregation. In her book, *Raising Racists: The Socialization of White Children in the Jim Crow South*, Kristina DuRocher explores how Jim Crow era segregationists socialized children in order to perpetuate the white supremacist status quo. DuRocher argues that:

As white southerners rebuilt the cultural ideal of race relations necessary to maintain white patriarchy during segregation, they recognized that unless they imparted these lessons to the next generation, all would be lost. White children had a critical role to play in the continuation of segregation for their actions would ultimately maintain or destroy the system of white supremacy. White southern adults, in an effort to preserve their social and political authority, created a culture for their youth. The vocabulary, stories, texts, cultural images, and rituals with which white southerners surrounded their children

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[62] "Mississippi Notebook" *Citizens' Council* (Jacksonville, MS), May 1956, pg 2.

normalized white supremacy and racial violence through perpetuating an idealized, patriarchal vision of their future roles as white southerners.[63]

As the foundations of overt white supremacy began to shake and crumble in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the focus on the indoctrination of the youth only grew. The repeated blows to segregation policies prompted a renewed emphasis on instilling the ideology of white supremacy in the southern youth. Beginning in February, 1957, the Citizens' Council began to run a series of articles aimed at implementing their ideology in early education. Entitled "A Manual for Southerners," the articles contained simplified versions of the arguments found in the rest of the publication. However, as McMillen notes, the arguments aimed at adults were not much more complicated.[64] The first installment of the manual led with an editor's note that explained the reasoning behind the publication of the manual, asserting that "for too long Southern children have been "progressively educated" to scorn their origins and the reasons for our bi-racial society. "A Manual for Southerners" seeks to correct this."[65] The manual was broken up into two sections, one meant for third and fourth grade students and one meant for fifth and sixth grade students. The publication is reminiscent of the catechisms created for similar purposes by the United Daughters of the Confederacy discussed by Amy Lynn Heyse. In her article "The Rhetoric of Memory-Making: Lessons from the UDC's Catechisms for Children," Heyse identifies oversimplification, amplification, and forgetting as rhetorical

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[63] Kristina DuRocher, *Raising Racists: The Socialization of White Children in the Jim Crow South,* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 8-9.

[64] McMillen, *The Citizens' Council*, 162.

[65] "A Manual for Southerners," *Citizens' Council* (Jackson, MS), Feb. 1957, 1.

tactics used to create "mythical collective memories" that are easily understood and accepted by children.[66] She defines oversimplification as the process of "leading the Children to remember complex historical and political events in uncomplicated ways."[67] Amplification allows the rhetor to shape memory by elaborating the significance or importance of past events or people, thereby creating exaggerated value in the present.[68] Forgetting, according to Heyse, is either the wholesale or selective forgetting of undesirable parts of the past in order for a group to "deny or feel better" about their collective past.[69]

Drawing upon these rhetorical tactics, the Council constructed a collective memory within "A Manual for Southerners," which served to promote white supremacist sentiment by explaining ideas of race and southern culture to children in a way that children could easily understand. In a manner similar to that performed in other articles within *The Citizens Council*, "A Manual for Southerners," worked to create a historical narrative supporting white supremacy. However, the narrative was specifically composed to be accessible to children. Thus, "A Manual for Southerners" placed extremely distilled (and biased) narratives of race and southern history on intersecting paths ending with the succinct conclusion that the mixing of race would lead to negative consequences, specifically the destruction of the "southern way of life" and the weakening of the nation.

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[66] Amy Lynn Heyse, "Rhetoric of Memory Making: Lessons from the UDC's Catechism's for Children," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 38 no.4 (2008) : 416-18.

[67] Ibid., 16.

[68] Heyse, "Rhetoric of Memory Making," 417-418.

[69] Ibid.

To legitimize the racial hierarchy constructed in their collective memory, the manual identifies of race as a divine creation, explaining that "God made all the people of the world. He made some of them white, he made some of them black. He made some of them yellow. And he made some of them red."[70] This synthesis provides race with a divine credibility; race is important because it was specifically created by a higher power. Perhaps more importantly, this assertion places color as the primary differentiating factor between humans. Establishing color as the differentiating factor among humans taught children to immediately categorize people by color and allowed the Citizens' Council to control the meaning of each classification.

The Citizens' Council created simplistic classifications of race that were easily understood and remembered by their younger audience. White men are classified in "A Manual for Southerners," as "builders" or creators. The Citizens' Council constructs a history of the white race as builders of civilization. According to one section titled "First Civilization Built By White Men," the first civilization, Egypt, was built by "pure white people."[71] Additionally, the text claims that white men built India, Greece, and America.[72] By oversimplifying, amplifying, and forgetting various parts of the historical record the Citizens' Council created a collective memory which positively associated white men as the creators of civilization throughout history. Alternatively, the historical characterization of black people was situated as the antithesis to that of whites. If whites

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[70] A Manual for Southerners," *Citizens' Council* (Jackson, MS), Feb. 1957, 1.

[71] A Manual for Southerners," *Citizens' Council* (Jackson, MS), Aug 1957, pg. 3.

[72] Greece and India are mentioned in "A Manual for Southerners," *Citizens' Council* (Jackson, MS), Aug. 1957 pg. 4, and America is mentioned in "A Manual for Southerners," *Citizens' Council* (Jackson, MS), Feb. 1957, 1 and "A Manual for Southerners," *Citizens' Council* (Jackson, MS), Mar. 1957, 3.

were seen as the builders of civilization, blacks were described as the destroyers of civilization. After describing each civilization built by whites, the Citizens' Council proceeded to describe how each civilization was destroyed by the mixing of races. In one section of the manual, the Citizens' Council constructs a history of Egypt:

> But about the time the Egyptians had built a wonderful country, they brought Negro slaves among them, it was not long before the Race-Mixers of those days began saying the slaves should be set free among the white Egyptians. And finally the Egyptians set the Negro free, cleaned him up, and taught him in their schools…now you can already guess what happened to the Egyptian nation…the Egyptian race was no longer pure, and their nation was no longer strong.[73]

The Citizens' Council constructed similar historical accounts for both India and Greece. These constructions explicitly blame the fall the ancient civilizations of Egypt, India, and Greece on the addition of black people into society. In this way, the Citizens' Council historically categorized black people as destructors of human civilization and placed them in opposition to the white race. Through "A Manual for Southerners," the Citizens' Council constructed a collective memory which sought to teach children a conception of race that followed the ideology of white supremacy. In addition to these conceptions of race, the Citizens' Council also constructed a collective memory of southern history which served to indoctrinate children in the ideology of white supremacy.

Southern history was highly idealized in the Citizens' Councils' construction of collective memory. This ideal view of the southern past worked to amplify the importance of the south within national history and worked to both absolve guilt and counter narratives of a shameful southern past marked by the atrocities of slavery and defeat in the Civil War. A large portion of "A Manual for Southerners," is devoted to

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[73] A Manual for Southerners," *Citizens' Council* (Jackson, MS), Aug 1957, pg. 4.

connecting the South and southerners with the development of the United States. In a similar fashion as detailed earlier in this work, The Citizens' Council lists important leaders from the south who contributed to early American history.[74] By amplifying the influence of the south upon the nation, the Citizens' Council tied the success of the nation to the southern tradition. Following this logic, the Citizens' Council implies that the southern tradition, or way of life, is integral in the success of the nation. Finally, the Citizens' Council defines the "southern way of life" as segregation, the implication being that segregation is an important part of the nation's success.[75]

In order to alleviate issues which complicated the notion of the southern way of life as segregation the Citizens' Council used rhetorical forgetting in shaping a collective memory. Most notably, "A Manual for Southerners" contends that slavery was forced upon America and that slaves were happy and treated well in the south.[76] By forgetting the Southern involvement in slavery, the Citizens' Council could focus the entirety of southern history on the issue of segregation.

The construction of race as a categorization of civilization and the construction of America's success as being dependent on segregation allowed the Citizens' Council to argue that segregation was critical to the continued success of the nation. In a section titled "Mixing The Races Will Make America Weak," the Council argues that "These people [race-mixers] are trying to change our way of life. They know we will be unhappy

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[74] Examples include George Washington, Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison.

[75] "A Manual for Southerners," *Citizens' Council* (Jackson, MS), Jun. 1957, pg. 3.

[76] "A Manual for Southerners," *Citizens' Council* (Jackson, MS), Mar. 1957, pg. 4, and "A Manual for Southerners," *Citizens' Council* (Jackson, MS), Apr. 1957, pg. 3.

if we change. Then our country will not be strong."[77] This ultimate consequence, while stated directly, is backed by premises inferred through the collective memory constructed throughout the manual. Thus, the collective memory constructed in "A Manual for Southerners" encouraged children to learn several basic ideological tenets: first, races were created and separated by God; second, the white race was responsible for the construction of civilization and the black race is responsible for the destruction of civilization; third, the United States was largely built by the South; fourth, the "southern way of life" is segregation; and fifth, the lack of segregation will destroy the country.

Conclusion

At the beginning of the Civil Rights movement, the Citizens' Council heavily influenced resistance efforts against integration. The Citizens' Council is perhaps most known for its use of economic oppression to stifle increased voting and political involvement of the African American community. However, the group's rhetorical influence during the mid to late 1950s was prominent, and is seldom analyzed. While the Citizens' Council projected their message through speeches, books, television programs, and pamphlets, *The Citizens' Council* newspaper provides the most comprehensive view of the rhetorical strategies used by the group in their fight for white supremacy.

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[77] "A Manual for Southerners," *Citizens' Council* (Jackson, MS), Aug. 1957, pg. 3.

Chapter 3

STORMFRONT: MEMORY AND A GLOBAL WHITE SUPREMACY COMMUNITY

The examples of the use of memory concerning the Civil War in the previous chapter illustrate how the loss of life, political ideologies, and social reconstruction that are tied to war can provide a powerful and useful framework to establish community. In their book *War, Nation and Memory: International Perspectives on World War II and in School History Textbooks,* Keith A Crawford and Stuart J. Foster note that "a sanitized public record of war, which is not the same as what actually happened, becomes a powerful weapon in the creation and maintenance of a sense of belonging and a source of popular memories that binds groups together and helps define them against the "'other.'"[79]

While the ability of war to facilitate the establishment of community is clear, the ways in which politics, attitudes and memories of war are constructed to establish communities is much less clear cut. Speaking of World War II, historian John Bodnar notes that:

> Today we frequently hear about the unity and patriotism Americans demonstrated in World War II. There was, in fact, a general sense of oneness when it came to waging the war, especially with the outburst of shock and anger over Pearl Harbor. And there were those who proudly served their nation. At the same time, because meaning we always debated, there were noticeable discrepancies on a number of fronts, including a distinct tension between idealistic rationales for the struggle offered by Franklin Roosevelt and the personal views expressed by ordinary citizens.[80]

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[79]Keith A. Crawford and Stuart J. Foster, *War, Nation, Memory: International Perspective on World War II in School History Textbooks*. (Charlotte: Information Age Publishing, 2008), 4.

[80] John Bodnar. *The "Good War" in American Memory*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 3.

Bodnar asserts that because of the various ways in which people saw or remembered the war, the debate and construction of national narratives of World War II became a "central feature of American public memory."[81] In other countries, the memory of World War II was also highly complex and contested, but remained "central to the cultural memories of most European countries, shaping both collective and individual memories."[82] In Europe, as in America, the memory of World War II helped shape the political and social atmosphere of many countries as they were "central to national mythologies, which served to stabilise and legitimise state authority, political order, and social cohesion in post-war societies."[83] The memory of World War II facilitates the construction of social identities on an individual level, a group level, a national level, and due to its scale and global social and political implications, the memory of the Second World War has been rhetorically constructed in various ways across the globe on the national and international stage.[84] The wide reaching, global impact of World War II facilitates the ability to rhetorically construct a collective memory that can be accessed by a global audience.

In this chapter, I examine how collective memory functions to create a global sense of community through a common memory of the Second World War and how such rhetorical use of memory provides a space to continually reformulate the history, ideology, and social practices of the international online white supremacist community

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[81] Ibid.

[82] Ene Kõesaar, Kristin Kuutma, Epp Lauk. "The Twentieth Century as a Realm of Memory," in *The Burden of Remembering: Recollection and Representations of the 20th Century*. Eds. Ene Kõesaar, Kristin Kuutma, Epp Lauk. (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2009), 19.

[83] Ibid., 20.

[84] A brief discussion of some of the memorial constructions of WWII in various countries and in academia can be found in Crawford and Foster, *War, Nation, Memory,* 9-12.

Stormfront.org. I begin by discussing historical "revision" on the Stormfront website. Next, I describe how Stormfront works to create a collective memory of the Jewish community as a global threat and uses this memory as a social gate-keeping tool for the Stormfront community. Finally, I examine how Hitler and National Socialism are constructed in Stormfront's collective memory to counter negative perceptions of the site's ideological tenets.

Stormfront

Created by former Alabama Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan Don Black in 1995, Stormfront.org, was the first major website devoted to white nationalism and white supremacy. Since its inception, Stormfront has grown massively, and is now regarded as the largest and most popular white supremacist website on the internet, boasting over fifty thousand visitors every day.[85] The mission of the website, according to its founder, is to "provide information not available in the controlled news media and to build a community of White activists working for the survival of our people."[86] Stormfront is described as a virtual community, a term indicating a "shared online space and communicative interaction between users" that can connect users without the traditional geographic limitations of non-virtual communities.[87] In the last decade, the amount of registered members on Stormfront has risen from 5,000 members to 258,987.[88]

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[85] "Stormfront," *Southern Poverty Law Center*. http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-files/groups/stormfront> , Don Black, "Contributions in November" *Stormfront.org*, http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t860284/

[86] Don Black, "Welcome: Guidelines for Posting" *Stormfront.org*. http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t4359/

[87] Lorraine Bowman-Grieve, "Exploring "Stormfront": A Virtual Community of the Radical Right." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*. 32. (2009): 990.

While this online community is based in the United States, it caters to a global audience and displays the slogan "White Pride World Wide" on the top of the website. Although it is difficult to ascertain exactly how many users and visitors hail from outside the United States, the "International" section of the website has produced 2,526,841 individual posts since its inception; the "Britain" section, at 822,362 posts, is the fourth largest section of the entire website.[89]

The site's ability to create an active virtual community is one of the major reasons for its continued growth. Creating a successful online community is extremely difficult; Stormfront's continued growth indicates that not only is there a demand for a community centered on white supremacy, but that the site's structure caters to its audience in a way that continues to attract visitors and members.[90] The structure of Stormfront provides viewers an easy way to access both general and specific content, and places them in a virtual space with others who may be seeking a similar experience. Dr. Jessie Daniels argues that the layout and structure of Stormfront is responsible for the popularity and success of the website because it supports "interactive member participation and content creation."[91] Stormfront's system of categorized forums provides an organizational structure that fosters a community which provides a space for white supremacists to discuss any topic.

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[88] Jessie Daniels, *Cyber Racism: White Supremacy Online and the New Attack on Civil Rights*, (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 107. The current membership is listed on the Stormfront.org homepage. The figure used in this article was recorded on Dec. 8 2012.

[89] This number was ascertained from Stormfront.org as of December 8th, 2012.

[90]Daniel, *Cyber Racism*, 106, 112.

[91] Ibid., 106.

Due to the website's global reach and its successful growth as a virtual community, Daniels asserts that Stormfront cultivates a "translocal whiteness." The term translocal whiteness is defined by Les Back as having three main structural components: racial separation, a relational other, and minoritization of whiteness. Racial separation occurs through the creation of a "simulated 'racial homeland'" where users around the world tie their racial lineage to Europe, thereby creating a perceived space of "racial separation" online. A translocal whiteness is also comprised of a "relational other," that is, the sense of an "other" outside the group that can be situated by each individual based on their specific perception of the "other." This allows a group to still maintain solidarity while allowing for variances in what group each individual views as a threat. Finally, the "minoritization of whiteness" in a translocal whiteness is the idea that whiteness is threatened, or under attack, on a global scale.[92]

In her book *Cyber Racism: White Supremacy Online and the New Attack on Civil Rights,* Daniels argues that translocal whiteness, or global white identity, is a "racial identity shaped by global information flows," that is "not tied to a specific region or nation but reimagined as an identity that transcends geography and is linked via a global network"[93] Because there is no physical white nationalist state or homeland for the users of Stormfront to occupy, the translocal whiteness constructed on Stormfront acts as a virtual white supremacist homeland where users come together due to their common belief in racial separation, a common (or several common) "othered" groups, and that the

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[92] Les Back, "Wagner and Power Chords: Skinheadism, white power music and the Internet," in *Out of Whiteness: Color, politics and culture*, eds. Vron Ware and Les Back. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001) 130-132.

[93] Daniels, *Cyber Racism*, 7.

white community is under attack.[94] This global white identity allows users to draw upon information, materials, and ideological discourse from a world-wide network of white supremacists, thereby bypassing some limitations of localized physical white supremacist groups.[95] The information, materials, and ideological discourse available on Stormfront covers a virtual endless amount of topics including information pamphlets and books, white supremacist themed music and poetry, dating, education and homeschooling, and finance. The website operates to provide complete white supremacist orientated community socialization, where users can access almost any information or topic from fellow ideologically like minded users. The translocal whiteness created by Stormfront allows people who follow the ideology of white supremacy to actively participate in a massive community of white supremacy in relative anonymity, thereby bypassing the stigma, danger, and consequences of participating in a physical and recognizable group. The virtual community of Stormfront and its ability to cultivate a translocal whiteness among its users is supported by the creation of a collective memory of World War II through "revisionist" history.

Stormfront "Revisionist" History

One of the more popular sections on Stormfront is the "Revisionism" section. The section, according to the website, focuses on "reexamining history, particularly the court historians' version of WWII." Upon viewing the content of this section, however, it is immediately apparent that "revisionism" is simply a thinly veiled name for the practice of

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[94] While there is no country which explicitly enforces a policy of white nationalism, there are efforts from some members of Stormfront to create communities of white supremacists, especially in the United States. For more information on this subject see the thread "Advance Scout" accessible on the front page of the Stormfront.org website.

[95] Daniels, *Cyber Racism,* 43.

Holocaust denial. Historians Michael Sherman and Alex Grobman explain that holocaust

"revisionists" should be considered Holocaust deniers because they "deny its three main

components- the killing of six million Jews, gas chambers, and intentionality."[96] These

characteristics certainly fit the "Revisionist" section of Stormfront, as half of the stickies

at the top of the page are links to the works of prominent Holocaust deniers, anti-Semitic

cartoons, common Holocaust denial arguments, and negative 'histories" of the Jewish

people.[97] Deborah Lipstadt argues that while the term "revisionism" is connected to

legitimate modes of historical research, "the deniers' selection of the name revisionist to

describe themselves is indicative of their basic strategy of deceit and distortion and of

their attempt to portray themselves as legitimate historians engaged in the traditional

practice of illuminating the past."[98] Thus, the users of Stormfront use the term in the

attempt to paint themselves as a credible source for information regarding the history of

WWII and the Holocaust. Under the banner of "revisionism" Stormfront users also

defend the actions and memory of Adolf Hitler, dispute WWII history, and carry on

general discussions about WWII history.[99] While the "Revisionism" thread generally

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[96] Michael Shermer and Alex Grobman, *Denying History: Who Says the Holocaust Never Happened and Why do they Say It?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), XV.

[97]"Stickies" are threads that always remain at the top of a particular section of threads, and therefore receive the most views from users. Moderators of the website will make a thread a "sticky" if they deem it especially important or relevant to the section. "Revisionism," *Stormfront.org*. http://www.stormfront.org/forum/f36/

[98] Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust-The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (New York: Maxwell   Macmillan International, 1993), 25.

[99]Examples of these can be found in: "An Overview of Hitler's Peace Proposals," *Stormfront.org*, http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t378972/, "German occupation of France," *Stormfront.org*, http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t867667/, "The best tank of World War II?," *Stormfront.org, http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t929002/*

focuses on WWII, the thread also discusses other historical events such as the American

Civil War and the September 11th,2001 attacks in New York, focusing on the function of

race in these historical events.[100] The collective memory constructed through Holocaust

denial threads helps to solidify ideological thought, socialize new members, and construct

an identity which is appealing to a global audience looking for a community that supports

the ideology of white supremacy. Unlike regional events, such as the American Civil

War or Apartheid in South Africa, the Second World War provides an event which had a

profound global influence. The memory of WWII is accessible to a global audience, and

therefore provides a perfect avenue to connect all members of Stormfront. Through

continued discussion and formulation of a collective memory of WWII via "revisionist"

threads, Stormfront users construct a sense of solidarity and "translocal whiteness."

Collective Memory of the Jewish Community

The most prominent feature of Stormfront's collective memory of World War II is

Holocaust denial. Denial of the Holocaust began first with the acknowledgement of the

Holocaust itself, and has roots in a long history of anti-Semitism throughout the world.[101]

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[100] A wide variety of topics can be found on the "Revisionism" thread. Often the topics are tied to
conspiratorial topics implicating the Jewish community: the American Civil War, 9/11, JFK. In fact, the
discussion of 9/11 has spawned its own sub forum within the "Revisionism" forum. For examples see
"Confederate State of America," *Stormfront.org*, http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t444000/, "9/11
Truthers- Convinced 9/11 Was in Inside Job," *Stormfront.org,* http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t425991,
"New Stabilized Video: The Zionist Driver shot JFK not scapegoat Lee Harvey Oswald Watch & see!,"
Stormfront.org. http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t613219

[101] Historical accounts and analysis of Holocaust denial can be found in Gil Seidel, *The Holocaust
Denial: Anti-Semitism, Racisms and the New Right*. (Leeds: Beyond the Pale Collective, 1986), Deborah
E. Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (Toronto: Maxwell
Macmilan Canada, 1993), Michael Shermer and Alex Grobman, *Denying History: Who Says the Holocaust
Never Happened and Why do they Say It?*(Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), *Holocaust
Denial: The Politics of Perfidy*, Ed. Robert Solomon Wistrich. (Boston, Jerusalem, Walter de Gruyter
GmbH &Co and Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2012)

On a fundamental level, denial of the Holocaust is driven by anti-Semitism and the goal

of revitalizing the ideologies of Hitler and National Socialism. The rhetorical shaping, or

destruction, of the memory of World War II, the Holocaust, and the Jewish community is

the central tactic Holocaust deniers use in an effort to legitimize Hitler and Nazi

ideology. According to historian Gil Seidel, Holocaust denial ultimately amounts to "an

attempt through language, through discourse, that is, through the social creation of

meanings, to erase our struggles and our history; to erase the memory of our dead."[102]

The erasure of the memory of the Holocaust is beneficial to proponents of National

Socialism because it allows them to trivialize negative views of Hitler, Nazis, and

National Socialist ideologies and therefore frame the Jewish community as "a

transnational figure of hate" involved on a global Jewish conspiracy.[103] In a report for the

Simon Wiesenthal Center, Dr. Harold Brackman and Aaron Breitbart describe Holocaust

denial as the "lowest common denominator of hate."[104] Moving beyond just white

supremacist groups, Kenneth S. Stern argues that "Holocaust denial…may be the single

most potent ideological force tying together a variety of extremists from around the

globe-including old Nazis, neo-Nazis, anti-Israeli Arab governments, American black

supremacists and others."[105] The perception of the Jewish community as masterminding a

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[102] Gil Seidel, *The Holocaust Denial: Anti-Semitism, Racisms and the New Right*. (Leeds: Beyond the Pale Collective, 1986), 9.

[103] Les Back, Michael Keith, John Solomos, "Racism on the Internet: mapping neo-facism subcultures in cyberspace. In *Nation and Race: The Developing Euro-American Racist Subculture*, eds Jeffery Kaplan and Tore Bjørgo (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998)

[104] Harold Brackman and Aaron Breitbart. *Holocaust Denial's Assault on Memory Precursor to Twenty-First Century Genocide?* (Los Angeles: Simon Wiesenthal Center, 2007), 16-18.

[105] Kenneth S. Stern, "Lying About the Holocaust: Inside the Denial Movement," SPLC *Intelligence Report* 103, 2001.

global power conspiracy is firmly reflected in the ideological views of Stormfront's

founders; in the "Introduction to Stormfront" thread placed at the top of the website's

homepage, Stormfront's central ideology regarding Jewish people is outlined:

> The Jews have been working together behind the scenes to gain control of all the
> TV stations, schools, newspapers, radio stations, governments, movie studios,
> banks, etc. - an all encompassing "Matrix" of lies - to destroy all potential rival
> groups and rule the world. And they are very close to achieving it. They managed
> to get our people's heads so far up their butts that Whites think that allowing
> millions of third worlders into the US and Europe will somehow "improve" those
> lands with "diversity" and economic prosperity.[106]

On Stormfront, the view of the Jewish people as a global menace creates a unifying factor

for all members. Stormfront users often use Jews as a universal answer to any

controversial (or mundane) event throughout history. Threads on the expulsion of Jews

from Europe,[107] Jews in the Roman Empire,[108] Napoleon and the Jews,[109] Jack the

Ripper,[110] Jews against the church,[111] and War history[112] are a few of the topics found in

the "Revisionist" section. The threads on the "Revisionism" forum which seek to erase

the memory of the Holocaust through denial or construct negative memories of the

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[106] "Intro Material for People New to StormFront," *Stormfront.org*,
http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t538924/

[107] "Chronology – Expulsion of Jews in Europe," *Stormfront.org*, May 30, 2007.
http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t392118/

[108] "Jews in the Roman Empire," *Stormfront.org*, Oct. 29, 2008.
http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t535884/

[109] "Napoleon and the Jews," *Stormfront.org*, May 11, 2004.
http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t131883/

[110]"Jack the Ripper Was A Jew," *Stormfront.org,* Dec. 10, 2009.
http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t664180/

[111]"The Plot Aginst the Church (by the Jews) by Maurice Pinay," *Stormfront.org*, May 31, 2008.
http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t494537/

[112] "Confederate States of America," *Stomrfront.org*, Dec. 11, 2007.
http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t444000/

Jewish community work to create a collective memory of the Jewish community as a central figure of evil. The focus on a single enemy acts as a powerful unification device throughout the Stormfront community. In order to unite the wide variety of members with varying locations, ideologies, socio-economic statuses, the Jewish community is placed as scapegoat for *all* problems, thus creating a single unifying factor for members; as Kenneth Burke notes, "men who can unite on nothing else can unite on the basis of a foe shared by all"[113] Burke notes that combined with a "doctrine of inborn racial superiority" the practice of projecting all evils on a scapegoat "provides its followers with a 'positive' view of life. They can once again get the feel of *moving forward, towards a goal.*"[114] While this goal may manifest differently for each person, the overall goal on Stormfront is the perpetuation and advancement of white supremacy.

Furthermore, Stormfront users deny the holocaust in an attempt to degrade the ethos of the Jewish community by portraying them as attacker rather than as victim. Rhetorically, the framing of the Jewish community as an insidious global threat asserts that "Jews are not victims but victimizers," thus allowing the denier to attempt to center the argument around the *claims* of Holocaust denial rather than the racist and anti-Semitic mechanisms inherent in their discourse and ideology.[115] This tactic is particularly noteworthy in threads on the "Revisionism" forum which seek to discredit photographs of the Holocaust. Communication scholar Barbie Zelizer argues that photographs of Nazi atrocities became a central way to remember the Holocaust, and in turn, the brutality of

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[113] Kenneth Buke, "The Rhetoric of Hitler's "Battle."" *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973. 193

[114] Buke, "The Rhetoric of Hitler's "Battle."". 202-203.

[115] Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust,* 23.

the Nazi regime.[116] Not surprisingly then, the members of Stormfront seek to discredit some of the more iconic photos of the Holocaust. In the thread "The Most Famous Holocaust Photo a Fraud," users post allegedly "doctored" or misrepresented Holocaust photos in the attempt to deconstruct the collective memory of the Holocaust, thereby placing the Jewish community as a centralized figure of hate while simultaneously ridding the Nazi party of the guilt connected to Holocaust atrocities.[117]

The collective memory of the Holocaust constructed by the Stormfront community is also used as a tool to evaluate, judge, and educate members or potential members of the community. Holocaust denial is often used as an identifying mark of group inclusion. For example, in one popular Holocaust denial thread, the user *Kaveman* comments:

> You can believe what you want, but I [sic] believe the holocaust did happen. My grandfather fought in the war, and he was one of the people who helped liberate the belge [sic] camp, which contained many Auschwitz survivors as it happens, and he can recall perfectly everything that was there, the horror is etched into his mind so firmly he can never forget it, ever.
> Though the allies probably did extract some of the information by torture or whatever, they [sic] were the times and it doesn't make the holocaust any less true. (*Kaveman*)[118]

Obviously, this comment staunchly goes against the collective memory constructed by Stormfront as it seems to confirm that the mainstream historian's version of the

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[116] Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory Through the Camera's Eye*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 141.

[117] "The Most Famous Holocaust Photo a Fraud," *Stormfront.org*, Jan. 18, 2013. http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t940784. Other similar threads are: "The Power of Cropping Photos…" *Stormfront.org*, Jan. 23, 2013. http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t941998, "Famous NewYorkTimes Holocaust Photo Exposed as a FRAUD," *Stormfront.org*, Feb. 12, 2013. http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t946889.

[118] Kaveman "Re: Top 10 reasons why the holocaust didn't happen." *Stormfront.org* December 19 2008. http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t553062/

Holocaust is the correct one. Immediately following *Kaveman*'s comment, another

member of the website asserts *Kaveman* is either "a troll or a noob."[119] Because

Kaveman's comment operated outside of Stormfront's collective memory concerning the

Holocaust, he is immediately identified as an outsider to the Stormfront community.

Following this post are pages upon pages of users refuting and attempting to "educate"

Kaveman on the "truth' of the Holocaust.

Stormfront has a strict policy against the attack of other white nationalists on the

forum. The "Introduction to Stormfront," thread notes that an "innate weakness" of the

white race is "a tendency toward petty disagreements and infighting"[120] and therefore any

offenders will be banned from the site. The rule forces members to respond to

oppositional values through relatively civil discourse, an approach which often leads to a

type of "educational" bombardment from other users that effectively silences opposition

and indoctrinates dissenting members while simultaneously promoting an appearance of

civility on the forums.

Stormfront relies on its structure and community to indoctrinate new members

and reaffirm its collective memory of the Holocaust and the ideological views of its

members. The website acts as a repository of information on white supremacist

ideologies, and the community members act as the facilitators of the information. Often, a

member who is new will ask a question, and the older members will not only give an

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[119]   These two terms are common jargon in internet discourse. A "troll" on internet forum sites can loosely be defined as a user whose comments are purposefully designed to go against the staus quo with intention to upset other users and illicit heightened emotional response. For this example, a "noob" can be defined as user who is viewed by themselves or other users as new and inexperienced in a particular discourse setting. *Galiziensoldat*, "Re: Top 10 reasons why the holocaust didn't happen," *Stormfront.org*, Dec. 20, 2008. http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t553062/

[120] "Intro Material for People New to StormFront," *Stormfront.org*, http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t538924

answer, but also will offer a host of reading materials and sources that the new member can consult to learn more on the topic. Often, these sources will refer to major Holocaust denial works, such as those of David Irving, or to a litany of videos, manifestos, and documents from across the internet.[121]

The continual cycles of refutation and indoctrination of posts serves two main functions. First, the use of collective memory as a gate-keeping tool helps to form a perceived separation of race; posters with dissenting ideals can either be dismissed by the community as "outsiders" or can be indoctrinated into the community. Those who are considered outsiders serve the dual role of the "other" and threat to white supremacy. Second, the question and answer between members serves to solidify their collective (absence of) memory of the Holocaust by evaluating which ideas, sources, and positions are acceptable to the community. These two actions, which cycle continually, work to solidify the Stormfront community by creating a translocal whiteness that is self sustaining.[122]

Collective Memory of National Socialism

Stormfront's recreated memory of the Second World War is important because it provides a narrative foundation upon which to support appeals to global white supremacy. This global movement is predicated on the political philosophy of National Socialism, yet the global condemnation of Hitler and the Nazi party during the Second World War creates a highly problematic situation for members who wish to practice, or

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[122] A more prominent example of this process on Stormfront outside of the "Revision" section is the "Opposing Views Form" which is specifically set up for outsiders to argue in opposition to Stormfront and have members refute the claims.

even draw upon, National Socialism as an ideology. In a basic sense, the ideology of

National Socialism is appealing to white supremacists because of its central belief in the

supremacy of the white race. However, many current white supremacist groups and

members of Stormfront have drawn upon the tenets of National Socialism to create a

political and social ideology for an international white community. Most commonly, the

members espouse a "pan-Aryan" view of National Socialism rather than a "pan-German,"

where National Social operates as an ideology to promote the welfare of the white

supremacist community around the globe and hopes to create a new white homeland.[123]

The social stigma against Hitler and the Nazis is extremely hard to overcome and

consequently, the validity of the theories of National Socialism are widely debated and

discussed, especially in the "Ideology and Philosophy" section of Stormfront. [124] While

adherence to the ideologies of National Socialism appears to be dominant on the website,

there is by no means a total consensus about the ideological path of the White Nationalist

movement, partly due to the difficulties in overcoming the memories attached to National

Socialism. Generally, the opinion on National Socialism fits into several main categories:

the belief that National Socialism should be absent from the movement completely, the

belief that the ideologies of National Socialism should be kept but connection to National

Socialism itself should be severed, and the belief that the ideologies and connection to

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[123] Euroblood. "Re: National Socialism." *Stormfront.org.*
http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t451603

[124] There are a multitude of threads discussing Hitler as "good" or "bad" and discuss how he should be framed within the movement. Some examples are: "Hitler was wonderful!!!," *Stormfront.org*, Jan. 1 2006. http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t258992/ , "Hitler Wasn't Wonderful," *Stormfront.org*, Jan 6, 2006. http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t260365/, "Is Hitler a liability for WN?" *Stormfront.org,* Jan 18, 2006.

National Socialism should be present within the movement. One member's insights on

National Socialism and the White Nationalism movement are revealing:

> National Socialism may indeed be quite appealing…However, at the same time it is anathema due to its association with a damnable regime whose sins are so odious in the eyes of the world that any sociopolitical movement willing to hitch its hopes thereto and take up the title of calling itself National Socialist is handicapping itself to an ocean of criticism and a handful of followers at best.[125]

This member's analysis illustrates one of the many ideological standpoints present on the

website. This response points to an awareness of the negative mainstream memory of

National Socialism and the Nazi Party and an understanding of why the connection to

such a memory works against the goals of the white supremacy community. Thus, while

the member agrees with the ideology of National Socialism, he/she believes that the

memory Hitler, the Nazi Party, and the Holocaust that are tied to National Socialism are

too strong to overcome. The standpoint of this user seems to be slowly gaining

momentum on the website, a point which I will elaborate on in the conclusion of this

paper.

Although some members of Stormfront question the validity of National

Socialism in the White Nationalism movement, The "Revisionism" section of Stormfront

functions largely in an attempt to reconstruct the memory of National Socialism in hopes

that it can regain its legitimacy. Because the memory of National Socialism is directly

tied to World War II, Hitler and the Nazi party, posters in the "Revisionism" section

work to reshape mainstream narratives of Hitler, the Nazi Party and World War II in the

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[125] KB Mansfield,"Re: National Socialism," *Stormfront.org*, Dec. 13, 2012. http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t451603-462/

belief that National Socialism could become an authoritative political ideology absent of the negative stigma placed on it by mainstream society.

The memory of Hitler and the Nazi Party is largely tied to the abhorrent events of the Holocaust. Habermas asserts that:

> There [in Auschwitz] something happened that up to now nobody considered as even possible. There one touched on something which represents the deep layer of solidarity among all that wear a human face; notwithstanding the usual acts of beastliness of human history, the integrity of this common layer has been taken for granted. . . . Auschwitz has changed the continuity of the conditions of life within history.[126]

The horrific events of the Holocaust affected humanity in a deep and jarring manner, and the memory and representations of Hitler and the Nazi party reflect this. Thus, the memory of Hitler and the Nazis is connected with the worst aspects of humanity and, beyond that, as a manifestation of absolute evil. Stormfront members attempt to combat this memory of Hitler and the Nazi party through the creation of a collective memory of Hitler which attempts to reconstruct the memory of Hitler not as evil but as a normal person and a visionary leader.

In the construction of the collective memory of Hitler on Stormfront, Hitler's military intentions are re-characterized as justified, necessary, or defensive and stress that Hitler had no intention of world dominance. The main issue with the stance that Hitler and the Nazi party ultimately wanted peace is the Nazi invasion of foreign countries. The "Revisionism" form is filled with threads discussing why Hitler invaded countries, especially countries which housed mainly white populations. In particular, the invasion of Poland is discussed with some frequency on the website. Many justifications are given;

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[126] Quoted in: Friedlander, Saul, ed. *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution"* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 3.

some cite that Poland was rightfully property of Germany, and that Hitler was only

reclaiming it because "Poland was the only thing between Germany and the Communist

Red Army."[127] Furthermore, it is also insisted that Hitler tried to make peace with Poland

to no avail, and was therefore forced into military action to defend Germany.[128] Other

members speculate that the people of Poland were taken over by Jewish Communists, and

therefore needed to be "liberated."[129] Other discussions assert that the invasion of Poland

was justified through the alleged "polish atrocities" on the German "abused minority."[130]

The invasion of other countries is similarly legitimized in various threads on the forum.

In the thread "Why Hitler Invaded the Soviet Union," posters cite a defensive strike as

the rationale for Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union, [131] thereby placing Hitler and the

Nazi party as potential victims who only acted due to the threat of harm.

By framing German invasion of other countries as a response to an outside threat,

Stormfront users pose a memory of Hitler and the Nazi party as the victims rather than

the aggressor. This reversal is important because it allows Stormfront users to view the

ideology of white supremacy as one working to *gain power for an oppressed community*

rather than one working to *retain power through the oppression of other communities*. In

this tactic, we can see rhetorical similarities to earlier discussed Holocaust denial

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[127] Transilvanian. "Re: Why did Hitler hate Polish people," *Stormfront.org*, Jan. 25, 2011. http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t775095

[128]Ibid.

[129] Rutten. "Re: Why did Hitler hate Polish people," *Stormfront.org*, Jan. 25, 2011. http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t775095-5

[130]"The Long History of Polish Atrocities Against the German Minority," *Stormfront.org*, Nov. 10, 2004. http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t164477/

[131]*Stormfront.org*. May 11, 2012. http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t893388/

arguments; by placing the Nazi Party as victims, they shift attention onto the actions of other countries and sideline the memory of Hitler as a tyrant. The reversal of the role of victim and aggressor is central to the rhetorical shaping of memory that takes place within the forums of Stormfront and is a common trope of the rhetoric of white supremacy.[132]

This rhetorical strategy is further developed through the portrayal of the Allies as overly aggressive and war mongering. Commonly, this portrayal is predicated through the description of allied bombing campaigns, particularly concerning Dresden. Stormfront members construct the memory of the bombing of Dresden as an ignored "Holocaust" of the white race.[133] The importance of contestation of memory over the bombings is apparent; one member, quoting from an article posted on another white supremacist website, argues that, "Dresden is only one single symbol of the Allied crime, a symbol unwillingly discussed by establishment politicians. The destruction of Dresden and its causalities are trivialized in the mainstream historiography and depicted as "collateral damage in the fight against the absolute evil – fascism."[134] The focus on the memory of the bombings is important to those denfending the Axis because the bombing's description, and prevalence, within mainstream collective memory signifies

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[132] For an example of this tactic being used to fight against the American civil rights movement see: Jason Morgan Ward., *efending White Democracy: The Making of a Segregationist Movement and the Remaking of Racial Politics, 1936-1965*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2011. 154.

[133] "Dresden - 13 February 1945 - A Real Holocaust," *Stormfront.org*, Feb. 11, 2010. http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t681652, "Dresden Holocaust 1945: An apology to Germany is due," *Stormfront.org*, Mar. 12, 2013. http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t897214

[134] Tom Sunic "Dresden: Death from Above," *Occidental Observer*. Feb. 20, 2013. www.theoccidentalobserver.net. Qtd. by Cybersaavy, "Dresden: Death From Above," *Stormfront.org*, Feb. 20, 2013. http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t948649.

the power relationship between the Allied and Axis powers. The collective memory constructed on the "Revisionism" forum on Stormfront describes the Dresden bombings as the worst atrocity of the war, and places a high significance on their memory in the attempt to situate the German people and by implication Hitler and the Nazi Party as the "true" victims of WWII.

Stormfront members also make an effort to reverse the roles of victim and aggressor by arguing that the bombing policy of the Axis as a response to Allied attacks. In a thread criticizing the bombing of German cities at the end of the war, user *Gustav87* argues: "How many Britons died total in 6 years of German bomb attacks? A fraction of those killed in Hamburg *or* Dresden. Further, Hitler forbade the bombing of British civilians until after Churchill attacked Berlin's civilian district, and even then he delayed action."[135] By arguing that the Allies engaged in immoral military tactics, Stormfront users are attempting to change the mainstream view of the Allies as heroic liberators and freedom fighters. Furthermore, by comparing Hitler's bombing tactics with those of the Allies and concluding that they were more humane, or at least more reserved than his enemy, Stormfront users hope to reestablish historical perceptions of the war, negate negative conceptions of Hitler, and shift blame onto the Allied forces. In addition to constructing a collective memory that reverses the role of victim and aggressor, Stormfront users also construct a collective memory that seeks to counter mainstream representations of Adolf Hitler.

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[135] "*Gustav87*, "Re: Bombing of German cities during WW II," *Stormfront.org*, Nov. 3, 2007. http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t424197

One of the more popular threads devoted to Hitler on Stormfront is dedicated to posting pictures of Hitler. Mainstream depictions of Hitler, like those shown on the BBC website, Biography.com and Wikipedia, generally show Hitler with a harsh, unsmiling demeanor, often in military regalia or engaged in a salute.[136] These images work to keep the memory of Hitler connected to ideas of militancy, tyranny, and evil (or at a very minimum, do not contest the connections). The images of Hitler on Stormfront, however, carry vastly different connotations. Many pictures lifted from Stormfront threads show Hitler in candid or non-military scenes.[137] These pictures, which show him signing autographs, posed smiling with children, and laughing with friends, shift the memory of Hitler away from his ties to the Holocaust by framing him as a "regular" person. Stormfront user *1:42 PM* describes the effect of candid or non-military pictures of Hitler upon Stormfront users: "it puts a more human face on the man most people consider to be an iron faced dictator. He laughed, he joked, he enjoyed the children of the members of his inner circle, he ate chocolate. A hero."[138] The commentary on such photos by users also works to construct and reaffirm the collective memory of Stormfront users. For example, accompanying the picture of Hitler signing an autograph for a woman, user *Dun na nGall* notes that "you frequently come across writing of senior members of staff,

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[136] "Adolf Hitler giving the Nazi salute during a rally in 1939." 1939. *AFP/Getty Images*. Apr. 5, 2013. http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/people/adolf_hitler, Apr. 5, 2013. http://www.biography.com/people/adolf-hitler-9340144, "Adolf Hitler," 1937. *Das Bundesarchiv*. April 5, 2013. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bundesarchiv_Bild_183-S33882,_Adolf_Hitler_retouched.jpg

[137] "The Hitler Pic Thread****," *Stormfront.org*. Nov. 18, 2007. http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t431741-4/ , "Hitler at Home: Never-before-seen wartime pictures," *Stormfront.org*. Nov. 18, 2007. http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t 862124, "The Hitler Pic Thread****," *Stormfront.org*. Nov. 18, 2007. http://www.stormfront.org/forum/ t431741-2/.

[138]*1:42 PM*, "Re: the Hitler Pic Thread****," *Stormfront.org*. Nov. 18, 2007. http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t431741-9/

generals, and those close to Hitler, testifying to his great sense of humour. It's something that you definitely get a feel for when looking at photographs and watching film."[139] These types of glowing and humanizing descriptions of Hitler are plentiful among "Revisionist" threads and help provide the context by which the members of the community evaluate a picture. The pictures, along with the positive context provided by the users, help to soften the negative view of Hitler by offering different perspectives of the man which contrast with the common representations of Hitler as evil.

Conclusion

Stormfront acts as a centralized community for white supremacists throughout the world. In a world where the overt display of white supremacist ideology is generally condemned, the translocal whiteness that is produced by Stormfront provides a way for white supremacists to form a group identity that may be impossible, or highly penalized, in the physical world. I contend that this global identity is sustained, at least partially, through the collective memory of World War II that is centralized in the "Revisionism" forum, but pervades throughout the site. The focus on World War II provides an ideological foundation for many white supremacists through the following of National Socialism. More importantly, World War II is seen as the central event in the white supremacist's battle against the Jewish community, a battle which provides possibly the strongest unification tool on Stormfront and within the white supremacist ideology. Although some members see the futility of arguing the merits of Hitler and the Nazi Party, the contestation of their memory is crucial to sustain the translocal whiteness

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[139] *Dun na nGall,* "Re: the Hitler Pic Thread****," *Stormfront.org*, Oct. 27, 2007. http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t431741-2/

created by the site and with it a sense of global identity within the white supremacist

community.

Chapter 4

CONCLUSION

The work done in Chapter 2 is significant because it allows for an expansion of the knowledge of civil rights movement rhetoric. Currently, the lack of scholarship on segregationist discourse provides a one dimensional view of the rhetoric of the civil rights movement; we cannot fully understand either side by studying them as a singular entity. By understanding both the integrationist and segregationist movements' rhetorical moves, we can better understand the civil rights movement as a complex system of rhetorical interplay with both sides reacting to one another. Chapter 3 begins the work of analyzing contemporary forms of white supremacist rhetoric. Stormfront provides a virtual community and "homeland" for white supremacists across the globe, sustaining this community in part through the shared memory of World War II. The strategies explored in these chapters can be applied to contemporary studies to help scholars easily identify white supremacist strategies or analyze how contemporary strategies have shifted or evolved since the 1950's. Ultimately, this work is important because it helps us better understand, and therefore more successfully counter, white supremacist discourse.

The potential for additional scholarship on the study of white supremacist rhetorics is massive. Further scholarship is needed to explore the immense amount of white supremacist discourse produced by groups and individuals who have been largely ignored by academia. The resources to complete this work are widely available; historical archives and white supremacist websites both provide a seemingly endless amount of research material on the subject of white supremacy, both historical and contemporary. As notable rhetorical theorist Kenneth Burke noted of Hitler's writings, "he was helpful enough to put his cards face up on the table, that we might examine his hands. Let us

then, for God's sake, examine them."[140] White supremacist groups have continually

allowed us a look at their cards, yet we have not taken full advantage of the opportunity.

In the fifty-eight years since the *Citizens' Council* went into production the social

and legal landscape of the United States, especially concerning race, has changed

dramatically. The events of the civil rights movement in the 1960's, and the laws which

were produced in this time, spurred massive changes in the country, and massive

changes in the ways white supremacy is defended. Although some rhetorical strategies

regarding race have changed, issues of systemic and overt racism still pervade American

society. While looking at the differences between the two case studies in this thesis will

not provide an exhaustive study of how white supremacy rhetorics have shifted, it will

provide some insight into the ways in which the rhetorical use of memory has changed,

remained the same, and how it might continue to shift into the future.

While much has changed in the years since the first publishing of the *The*

Citizens' Council, many of the basic rhetorical moves found in the newspaper (which

were hardly new at the time) persist in various forms in contemporary society. In early

2013, a brief attempt to revive interposition was made. Mississippi State Reps. Gary

Chism and Jeff Smith proposed a bill to form the "Joint Legislative Committee on the

Neutralization of Federal Laws," which would assert states rights through the selective

nullification of federal law.[141] Although the creators of the bill asserted that it was

intended to challenge federal health care and firearm legislation, the bill was condemned

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[140] Kenneth Burke, "The Rhetoric of Hitler's "Battle."" *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studiesin Symbolic Action*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973. 192

[141]"Mississippi bill would nullify federal laws," *Fox News.com*. Jan. 24. 2013. http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2013/01/24/mississippi-bill-seeks-to-nullify-federal-laws/

and compared to the civil rights era Sovereignty Commission which fought against integration.[142]

The Tea Party, which backed the Mississippi law, has come under fire for racist elements within the party.[143] In a similar fashion as the *Citizens' Council*, the Tea Party uses the past in service of the present, framing their members as the present day manifestation of the Founding Fathers and the "true" protectors of the country's traditional values. The party is constructed around a narrative which traces a legacy from the revolutionary founding of the nation. The party's website bears the rattlesnake symbol of the Gadsden flag with the famous words, "don't tread on me." The party views itself as "the type of Americans the Founding Fathers envisioned over 200 years ago as true Patriots of courage and valor," who "rally with a new energy, an energy reminiscent of pictures in old American History books."[144] The use of symbols and figures associated with the founding of the country does not indicate the support of white supremacy in itself. However, as Historian Clarence E. Walker notes, "the GOP has become the voice of white victimology in a supposedly post-racial and multicultural world," and the Tea Party, mirroring similar (albeit less overtly racist) rhetorical strategies that can be traced

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[142] "Federal law-nulification bill killed by committee chair," *Mississippi Business Journal.* Feb. 5, 2013. http://msbusiness.com/blog/2013/02/05/federal-law-nullification-bill-killed-by-committee-chair/

[143] Clarence E. Walker. "'We're losing our country': Barack Obama, Race and the Tea Party." *Daedalus.* 140.1 (2011): 125-130. , Shannon Travis. "NAACP passes resolution blasting Tea Party 'racism'." *CNN.com.* Jul. 16, 2010. http://www.cnn.com/2010/POLITICS/07/14/naacp.tea.party/index.html.

[144] "About Us," *Teaparty.org.* http://www.teaparty.org/about-us/

back through history, may attract members who more ardently support white supremacist ideology.[145]

Another rhetorical strategy which has persisted is the use of a central scapegoat group which acts as a unification device for white supremacy groups. This group often is an outside threat and often is represented by a national enemy. The Citizens' Council, who began publishing the *Citizens' Council* only two years after the end of the Korean War, focused on communists as the scapegoat for all disturbances to the status quo of white supremacy. Along with communism, the Jewish community has long been used as a scapegoat in the United States, becoming more prominent in the late 1950's among white supremacists due to the popularization of holocaust denial.[146]

The fall of the Citizens' Council, which largely coincided with the major gains of the civil rights movement, signaled the end of politically influential, large scale, overtly racist public white supremacist groups in the United States. Since that time, the white supremacist movement has generally been comprised of various small, ideologically varied groups including the Ku Klux Klan, Christian Identity, neo-Pagans, neo-Nazis, and racist skinheads.[147] The American Nazi Party (ANP), founded by George Lincoln Rockwell in 1958, is seen as the root to the popularization, and eventual integration, of Nazi ideology and symbolism throughout a large portion of the white supremacist movement. The push to connect white supremacy with Nazi ideology in the United States shows a significant break from the rhetorical strategies produced in *The Citizens'*

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[145] Walker, "'We're losing our country': Barack Obama, Race and the Tea Party," 125-130.

[146] Pete Simi and Robert Futrell. *American Swastika: Inside the White Power Movement's Hidden Spaces of Hate.* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 14.

[147] Ibid., 10.

Council. In 1956, the *Citizens' Council* ran an article titled "Race Mixers use Hitler's

"Big Lie" Tactic in War on the White South," which compared Northern "brainwashing"

tactics to those of Adolf Hitler.[148] In 1956, with the Second World War still relatively

fresh in the minds of Americans, the rhetorical use of Hitler in a negative manner played

off the fear of totalitarianism and total war that had devastated the world. However, with

the rise of the ANP and its eventual offshoot groups throughout the 20th century, the view

of Hitler and National socialism became revered in white supremacist groups, contrary to

the mainstream views. The use of Nazi ideology and symbols within the white supremacy

movement, particularly on Stormfront, provides some clues to the potential future of the

white supremacist movement. While Stormfront does not represent the entirety of the

white supremacist movement, Stormfront can provide some insight into white

supremacist community as it is the largest and perhaps most well known white

supremacist website. On Stormfront, the debate over the inclusion and connection to the

Nazi Party has been discussed repeatedly. In 2004, a thread titled "Should the SF

Community Oppose the Use of Swastikas in Avatars," was responded to for over three

years, the final post being written in late 2007.[149] While the majority of users seemed to

oppose the banning of Nazi imagery, in 2008 Stormfront banned the use of Nazi symbols

and also banned the use of racial epithets.[150] The discussion and ban of the use of Nazi

symbols on Stormfront points to an emerging sense of rhetorical understanding among

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[148] "Race Mixers use Hitler's "Big Lie" Tactic in War on the White South," *Citizens' Council*. (Jacksonville, MS), Mar. 1956. p.1,3.

[149] "Should the SF Community Oppose the Use of Swastikas in Avatars," *Stormfront.org, http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t148602*

[150] Heidi Belrich, "Gathering Storm," *Southern Poverty Law Center*. 2013. www.splcenter.org/home/2012/spring/gathering-storm

white supremacist leaders and followers. While many members still fully support Hitler and the Nazi party, the ban signifies recognition that the highly negative connotations connected to Nazi symbolism ultimately hurt the movement because they often immediately alienate potential members because they conflict with mainstream social standards. Thus, the banning of Nazi symbols and racial epithets attempts to present the Stormfront website as a legitimate social protest community.

Interestingly, this move mirrors the rhetorical position of the Citizens' Council, which purported itself as using legal and nonviolent tactics in the effort to separate itself from the Ku Klux Klan and situate itself as a legitimate protest group. Looking at the broader social atmosphere during the inception of the Citizens' Council and during the decision to remove Nazi symbolism from Stormfront, a pattern emerges that suggests that expansion is likely the reason for this rhetorical move. In both instances, the racial status quo, or the perception of it, was massively challenged. In 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education* threatened the institution of segregation. In 2008, the first black president was elected in the United States. Because these events represented a major challenge to the racial status quo within the country, the interest in protecting the status quo grew, drawing interest from people more moderate[151] on the ideological spectrum. According to the website, after the election of Barak Obama Stromfront's traffic rose to 600% its normal rate. In the thread "Introduction to Stormfront," this surge of visitation is explained:

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[151] I use "moderate" here to describe a spectrum of involvement and adherence to white supremacist ideology. In this use, continual members of Stormfront who are continually and consciously invested in white supremacist identity can be seen as more "extreme", while "moderate" represents members who join the site, and express a heightened interest in white supremacist identity due to a perceived attack on the racial status quo.

Many new White people who come here are understandably upset at how somebody like Obama (i.e., a left wing extremist with a mysterious and shadowy background who seemingly comes out of nowhere) could win the presidency. They also see how Blacks are gloating over Obama's victory. *These Whites want a strong opposite reaction to counter it* (Emphasis added).[152]

[152] "==>Into Material for People New to Stormfront<==," *Stormfront.org.* Nov. 11, 2008. Stormfront.org/forum/t538924

The decision to remove some of the more outwardly offensive symbols and words on Stormfont allows for the accommodation of this new, likely more moderate, demographic on the website. Essentially, the leaders of Stormfront have decided that, to an extent, the memories and connotations connected to symbols like the swastika and the lightning bolts of the SS are firmly and negatively engrained into the minds of the mainstream global population. As such, they believe their interests are better served by attracting more members through a veil of civility and moderation rather than through immediate and overt messages of white supremacy.

However, the Southern Poverty Law Center believes that Stormfront may be on the decline, citing personal issues of the founders, increased law enforcement presence on the site, an ever dwindling financial base, and a fifty percent decrease in traffic over the last two years. [153] If Stomfront continues to decline, it would seem to suggest that some white supremacy groups operate in a cyclical manner.

For example, In the 1950's, as outwardly violent groups like the Ku Klux Klan slowly began to migrate to the edges of mainstream social acceptance, groups perceived to have slightly more moderate ideologies such as the Citizens' Council flourished. A major challenge to the racial status quo creates a kairotic moment where people who normally might not engage with a group become interested, largely due to fear caused by changing social conditions. During this kairotic moment, groups may accept more moderate characteristics to fuel expansion. However, as time passes and mainstream

[153] Belrich, "Gathering Storm."

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society accepts social change, moderate members shift away from groups who are no longer identified as socially acceptable. Obviously, this process can operate on multiple levels, for example, the rise of political groups like the Birther Movement and the Tea Party can be seen as accommodating those wish to maintain the racial status quo, but do not wish to be connected to an outwardly white supremacist group like Stormfront.

The examination of the Citizens' Council and Stormfront through both a rhetorical and historical lens can offer a simple model that allows one to better understand the rhetorical operation and social nature of white supremacist groups. Given the reoccurrence of basic rhetorical strategy throughout history, a widespread, critical understanding and critique of the rhetorical moves past groups have made may foster a populace who can easily identify and controvert new instantiations of old rhetorical moves. Additionally, a better understanding of the social dynamics of white supremacist groups may provide foresight into when fringe groups will expand in numbers and potentially wield a measure of power and influence.

Extremist groups will always exist. And while these groups may never truly disappear from the social landscape of our society, we can take steps to make sure that their impact is as minimal as possible. In order to counter social inequality, we must have a robust knowledge of how it is maintained. The study of rhetorics of white supremacy, a project that has only been scarcely attended to, is essential in providing a full understanding of the institution of white supremacy. With this knowledge, we can work to dismantle white supremacy and create a more equitable society.

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